

Inventor, entrepreneur  
and designer

**ALEXANDER  
LERVIK**

## Inventor, entrepreneur and designer — Alexander Lervik

For his design college graduation exhibition back in 1998, Alexander Lervik at the tender age of 26 had unknowingly hit on what was to become his winning concept. With his exhibition 10 stools 10 decades he had combined concept design, unlikely partnerships and innovations in what turned out to be his way in to the industry.



[1990's Stool](#)  
[1980's Stool](#)  
[1900's Stool](#)

This three-way design approach is defining for Alexander Lervik's almost 20-year career as one of Sweden's leading designers, whose quest for innovation speaks louder than the passion for creating beautiful objects.

"I rarely get hung up on the details or art-for-art's sake. What fires me is the desire to create a product based on a novel concept or invention. I see this as my forte, though some might see it as a failing in a designer", says Alexander.

### So what was the story behind 10 stools 10 decades?

"It was my take on 20th century design history. But more cynically, the motive for my graduation project was: 'How do I steal limelight from 400 graduates?'. That was what got me conceptualising the project as a storyline. Obviously, I never imagined things would come off as well as they did. The exhibition was on world tour for six years and was seen by more than a million people. For me personally, the highlight was a letter from Rolf Fehlbaum, owner of the global furniture brand Vitra, congratulating me on what he saw as an exceptional graduation project. The exhibition turned out to be my entry point to applied and industrial design", Alexander says.

### What are you working on now?

"For a while now, I've been working for the platform lift-makers Aritco on a brief to design a lift like a piece of furniture. It's taken three years, from a blank sheet of paper to the final product in which I designed everything from the shaft to the lift platform and also came up with a whole new solution for the control panel. My ambition was to come up with the ultimate flexibility for consumers, who have to be able to identify with their choice of lift through a range of options in terms of materials and colours", Alexander explains.

He goes on to add that lighting was a key element throughout the prototyping in that the lift walls are backlit under a surface covered in patterns or images. The lift for Aritco is due to be launched to tie in with Stockholm Design Week 2016 and will be the first-ever purpose-designed residential lift to reach the market.



Aritco Home Lift



Brighthandle

# Lighting as a recurring element



Lighting is a key element in a number of Alexander Lervik projects. It all started with a red-green LED door handle. In April 2001 Bright Handle was shown to the public at the home furnishing fair in Milan. Inspired by traffic lights combined with a 'Do not disturb' sign of the kind seen on hotel room doors, Lervik had designed a door handle that communicated by means of coloured lights. The door handle was a global success with articles in the world press such as the NY Times, Herald Tribune, Taipei Times and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, to name but a few.



"In Sweden, the Skugga ('Shadow') candle stick was the best-seller on the retail market. This was the result of an invitation from Galleri Pascal to show a piece at an exhibition themed on Advent. As the candle burns in Skugga, a beautiful shadow pattern is cast on the table, like a star 'waxing' as the candle 'waned'", says Alexander.



In 2007, Alexander Lervik's lighting exhibition Enlightenment, shown at the Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg, Sweden, was an experiment in applying what at that time was cutting-edge light-emitting diode technology to 18 new designs. This was the first exhibition in Sweden based specifically on LEDs.

"This was the exact point when LED technology had advanced to the stage where it could be used as a light source. This exhibition established my brand in light art", Alexander recounts.

Swedish TV ran a feature on Enlightenment which was seen by the art director at the savings and investments provider Skandia. She got in touch with Alexander, commissioning him to create a work of light art for the Skandia headquarters.

"I was given carte blanche to do whatever I wanted. I started researching the company, and discovered that there were a lot of good things to say about the company, and that the widely publicised Skandia corporate scandal was just so much water under the bridge. I decided to create a work symbolising the then 1,800 employees by means of 1,740 heads illuminated in colour by LEDs in a 3x3x3-metre cube. I'd previously designed a dance floor for the nightclub V in Stockholm, and realised I could apply the same technology, but this time, stack several 'dance floors' on top of each other to create a three-dimensional imaging screen, which was the result in the commission for Skandia", Alexander explains.

2013 saw the presentation of La Lumière au Chocolat; basically, a lamp made of chocolate. "It started with me asking myself "Can you make a lamp that gives off no light?". I realised that the answer was going to be something that changes form, going from dark to light. I'm an infamous chocoholic, so that's how I came up with the design medium. The lamp shade is made of chocolate, which melts as the bulb heats up, and the melted chocolate is caught at the base of the lamp where it sets and can be broken off in chunks and eaten. After that, you can buy a replacement shade. A video showing the lamp in action went viral, and after a month, had been viewed more than 400,000 times", says Alexander.



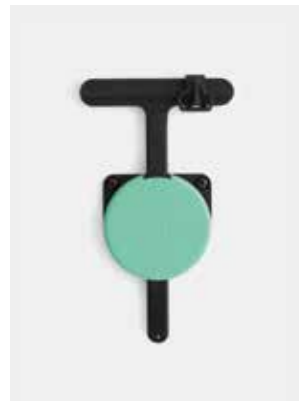
Shadow Candleholder  
Sense Lightswing  
La Lumière au Chocolat

# Design driven by technological innovations



Technology is a distinctly recurring factor in Lervik's work, and My Brain Lamp, one of the exhibits in Enlightenment, is perhaps the most remarkable object in Lervik's design career to date. The auction house that later listed the work described it as the first signature design for 3D printing technology in Sweden.

"During a trip to Asia, I saw an image of a brain in a magazine and decided that all those kinks and bends would look amazing lit up from the inside. When it came to it, I also realised that it would be awesome if it was a rendering of my own brain".



No sooner said than done: Alexander booked in for an MR brain scan at Karolinska Institutet, one of the world's leading medical universities. The scan generated 300 layered images of his brain. These were used to create the 3D file that was then put through a 3D printer to produce the final 'My Brain Lamp'.

The Lucy folding table, which received the Red Dot Award 2013, is another example of technology-driven design:

"I wanted to reinvent the folding table. In this design, the innovation is in the tension on the table legs, which locks them into place when either folded out or flat".

For Stockholm Design Week 2016, Absolut Art will be launching a revolutionary art wall-mounting system designed by Alexander Lervik.

"In autumn 2014, I was contacted by Absolut Art who wanted to create a concept that would make it easier for ordinary consumers to display fine art on their walls. I had an idea in the back of my mind for solving the problem I often had of getting works of art lined up level on an exhibition wall. I would hammer in a nail, hang the work, stand back and then end up having to move the nail a few centimetres and look again, which is tough on the walls and a test of patience. The solution is the XX wall mounting system which allows you to screw-fit the mount, then hang the artwork and then align it perfectly. The system is patented and the design was engineered in collaboration with the mechanical design consultancy Svensk Konstruktionstjänst", Alexander says.

## Unlikely collaborations

15 years after graduating from Beckman's College of Design, Alexander came up with the idea of doing a sequel to his first project with the stools, but this time he'd be commissioning other people to interpret his products instead of designing from scratch. So Alexander phoned five of Sweden's top photographers and got them all on board the project. He even ventured to get in touch with some of the world's leading photographers, mailing them to ask if they would be willing to contribute to the collaborative project. The answer was yes.

"The brief was simple enough; 'Pick any one of the chairs I designed over the years, take a photo in which it features in some way. You decide where to place it; it could be standing behind a container if you want'".

The project 15 chairs 15 photographers resulted in an exhibition and a book of 15 uniquely distinctive images from photographers the likes of Mary Ellen Mark, Martin Parr, Lynn Goldsmith, Vee Speers, Dawid, Gunnar Smoliansky and Annika Von Hausswolff, to name but a few.

One of Alexander Lervik's success factors appears to be a complete inability to limit himself or his projects and a strong urge to say "Yes" to the prospect of an interesting partnership. One example would be when the celebrated Swedish fashion brand Fifth Avenue Shoe Repair asked Alexander if he would be interested in some form of collaborative project. It all came together in the 3D-printed jewellery shown on the catwalk in February 2010.

"Astrid Olsson and I did textile mockups and then handed over to my colleague Joel Hesselgren who computerised the 3D designs which were then printed in metal. As a neat twist to this collaboration, a couple of years later, Fifth's founder, Astrid Olsson, designed a throw for my own brand, Tingest. I like that kind of design cross-over," says Alexander.



Absolut Art



3D printed Jewellery for Fifth Avenue Shoe Repair



My Brain Lamp  
Absolut Art  
Photo by Martin Parr /  
15x15x15 project



Lucy Table for Johanson

# Furniture designer and entrepreneur



Photo by [Brendan Austin](#) / 15x15x15 project



Photo by [Mary Ellen Mark](#) / 15x15x15 project



Photo by [Dawid](#) / 15x15x15 project



[Pilot Chair for Johanson](#)  
[Bubblechair for Moroso](#)  
[Rib for Johanson](#)

As a furniture designer, Alexander Lervik designs pieces for Swedish names such as Skandiform, ADEA, Moroso and Johanson Design. Chairs hold a great fascination for him, and he explains that it started with the stools project at college and was reinforced by the exhibition Five Playful Chairs (2005) featuring both the celebrated Light Swing and The Red Chair. The Red Chair, of which only 10 were made, was acquired by museums and art collectors and is regarded more as a work of art than a regular piece of furniture.

The Light Swing, as the name suggests, is a swing for indoor and outdoor use made from LED-lit acrylic and hemp rope. On the back of a feature in the NY Times, the Light Swing was widely publicised on the internet, featuring on more than 30,000 blogs after it was first presented in 2005. For Johanson Design, Alexander has designed a huge range of pieces from chairs to conference tables and complete lounge systems such as Reform. Besides design work, Alexander also has a strategic role in the company:

“For the past 10 years, I’ve been creative director for Johanson Design and helped to transform the brand into one of Sweden’s leading furniture names. In that time, I’ve personally witnessed how expertise and passion for genuine craftsmanship is slowly disappearing with the rise of a new generation of consumers. This was one of the reasons why I started Tingest in 2013.

Tingest produces distinctive functional designs by some of Sweden’s most talented designers, and the whole collection is retailed by businesses such as the home department of the NK department store in Stockholm.

“Being involved from conceptual design to final product in store with respect for both honest craftsmanship and the environment was a long-held dream. This is why the majority of the products are made in Sweden at small factories dotted around the country.

So what do you have lined up next? “Both the lift project for Aritco and the collaboration with Absolut Art spurred my interest in innovation and industrial design. It would be mind-blowing to do something really offbeat”, muses Alexander Lervik.



Dandy for Johanson



Bikupa for Tingest



Red Chair



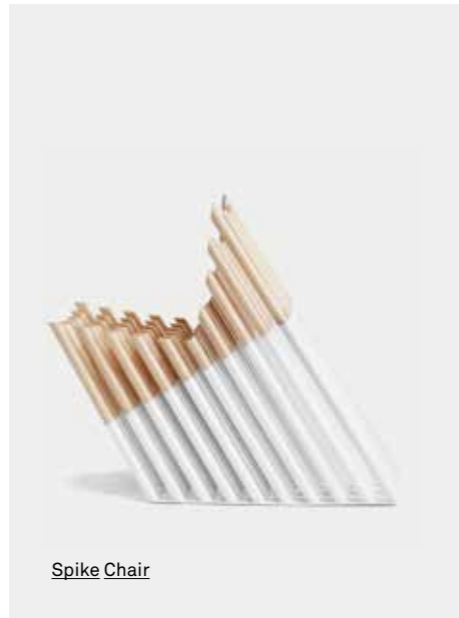
Dimma for Tingest



Mikrofon for Tingest



Mr Jones for Adea



Spike Chair



Edith for Johanson



Trädrona for Tingest



Dimma for Tingest



Mr jones for Adea



Storm for Johanson



Dimma for Tingest



Twilight for Nelson



Eye for Johanson

#### Facts at a glance

Alexander Lervik's design studio in Stockholm, Sweden is also staffed by a studio manager, Joel Hesselgren and a number of trainees.

#### Age

44

#### Based in

Södermalm, Stockholm.

#### Family

A family made up of his wife Elin, four children and their boxer Lucy.

#### Selected public works

Represented at Nationalmuseum, Sweden's premier museum of art and design in Stockholm; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo; and the Röhsska Museum of applied art and design in Gothenburg.

#### Selected awards

Form +1, Design S, Red Dot Award, best of the best 100 % design, Excellent Swedish Design, Svenska ljuspriset (lighting excellence award).

#### Current and forthcoming design work

Lift for Aritco; art wall-mount for Absolut Art; Edith armchair, Dandy chair, Storm sideboard and Reform conference table for Johanson Design; Mr Jones sofa and armchair for ADEA; wristwatch, table, chair, stool, lamp and mobile for own-brand Tingest; and a storefront and atrium exhibition at the NK department store in Stockholm.





[www.lervik.se](http://www.lervik.se)