

NOTE

Rethinking public space

Note designs Plinth outdoor seating system for Vestre



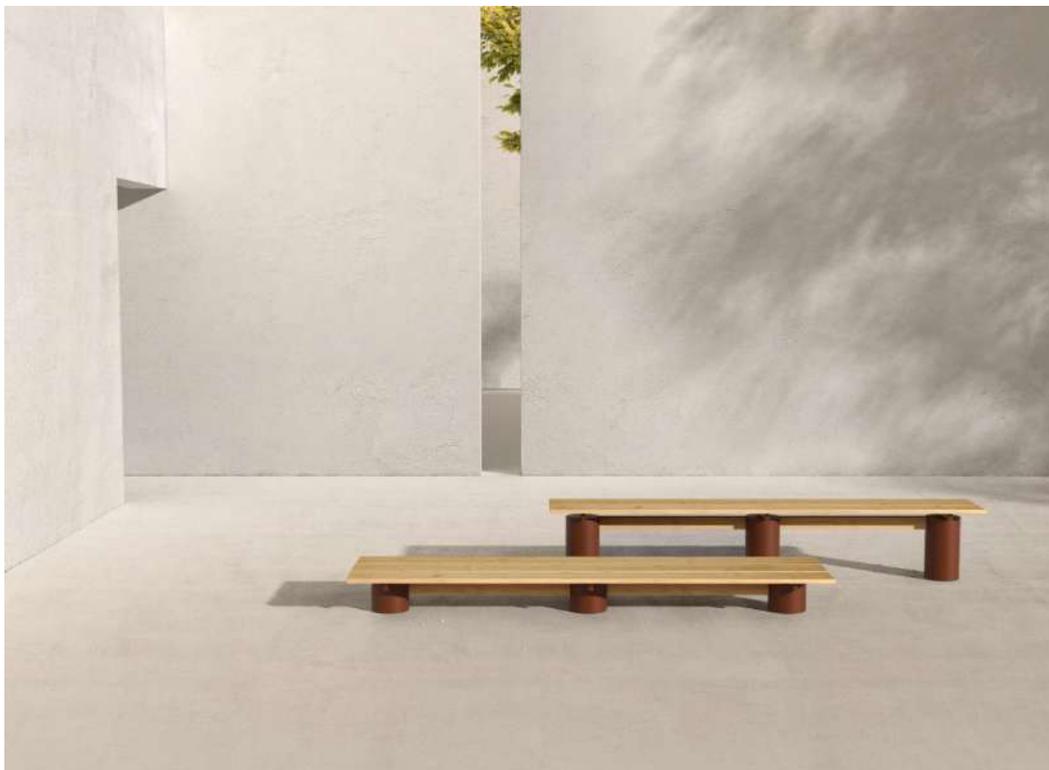
For a normal design studio, it would have been a simple brief: design a new picnic bench. Note, however, is not a normal design studio. The Stockholm agency's first commercial design for Vestre – a versatile modular seating system named Plinth – is more than simply a bench and table; it's the result of a deep-dive interrogation into how we interact with outdoor space across different climates and cultures.

Note has been collaborating with Vestre for two years, most recently winning the best stand award at Stockholm Furniture Fair 2020 for their reusable carbon-conscious installation. Plinth represents the first time the two have joined forces to launch a new series.

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The two companies have always shared an enthusiasm for exploring the more philosophical issues surrounding a specific product, considering the social role it plays and how people use and respond to it. As a result, Note and Vestre have established a relationship built on mutual curiosity and trust that is much richer than that typically found in more transactional designer-brand relationships, and which leads to a greater range of creative possibilities.

Philosophers' picnic



Asked to develop a design for a picnic set for the future, Note's immediate response was not to reach for the sketchbook, but to think about what 'future' actually meant.

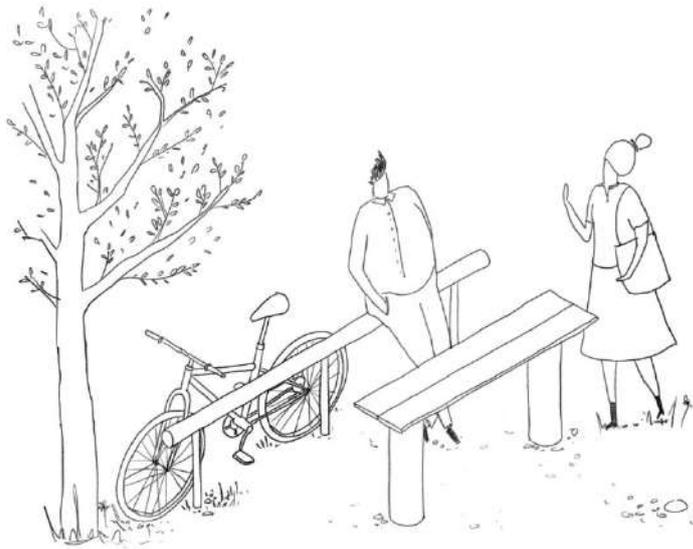
"The main challenge for us was to define what the future is, how it shapes our society and what society needs. Is the future something high-tech we have all seen in movies? Or might it involve going back to a more analogue

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society, one where we seek out each other's company and value the time we physically spend together?"

– Charlotte Ackemar, Note Design Studio

Note's research process for Plinth led them to examine in detail the social role that the concept of a picnic table plays across cultures, considering issues such as what picnicking means to people in different societies, how they use outdoor furniture, how they socialise outdoors, and how factors such as climate and weather influence these behaviours. They realised that the way people interact with public furniture outdoors is very different to their indoor behaviours. Inside, the unwritten rules of furniture function tend to be stringently observed, whereas outdoors, people are more inclined to use furniture more freely – sitting, stretching, exercising, working, eating, sleeping, playing, standing, leaning, or lying down as the need arises.



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Note swiftly realised that in order to design an outdoor furniture set with universal appeal, they would have to leave it up to the user to define the function of Plinth, adapting it to different needs and contexts. They returned to Vestre with a vision for an enormously flexible modular system built on a few key elements that could easily be deployed in different combinations and at different scales – making it suitable for any outdoor social scenario or cultural behaviour.

Timeless looks, production-friendly design



In a market where a lot of outdoor furniture has a highly 'designed' look that stands out, Note were determined to develop a more natural design language for Plinth that would fit in with its surroundings, whatever they might be, and which was timeless enough to enable Plinth to remain in place forever.

The core components of Plinth are a bench seat/tabletop, a base comprising one of more cylinders and an optional backrest rail. With such a small number of pieces needed to construct its numerous variants, Plinth can be produced with ease and efficiency.

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Elements can be combined in different quantities and at different heights to enable Plinth to be configured bespoke to its intended setting. The constituent parts are available in Scandinavian sourced metal and wood, with wooden components in Nordic/Scandinavian pine, and steel pieces available with either a powder-coated finish or hot-dip galvanised, which gives it a characterful texture that evolves over time.

Customers can choose from a range of colours, offering either a calm or bold palette, helping ensure Plinth takes on the character of its surroundings, rather than imposing a potentially clashing personality upon them.

Made for the future of everywhere



The way we use public space and socialise is changing – especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of us are spending more time outdoors, to exercise or meet with friends in socially distanced settings. At the same time, our attitudes and behaviours around strangers are shifting – many people are increasingly

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uncomfortable in shared public spaces. Outdoors there is a delicate balance between public and private, gathering and withdrawing that is still shifting.

Whereas a lot of furniture designed for public spaces may end up proving too prescriptive to be fit for purpose, Plinth is designed to respond to changing norms and social behaviours, not to dictate them.



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Notes to editors

Plinth launches on 22 March 2021 at vestre.com.

For product images and interviews, please contact Sabine Zetteler at sabine@zetteler.co.uk.

Note Design Studio

Founded in 2008 by Johannes Carlström and Cristiano Pigazzini, Note is a Stockholm based design studio working across the fields of architecture, interiors, products, graphic design and design strategy. Now comprising a large and varied team of designers, Note has grown to become one of the most internationally admired names in Scandinavian design, working with a wide range of international design brands and winning a steady stream of design awards.

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Vestre

Family-owned since its foundation in 1947, Vestre is a leading manufacturer of sustainable furniture for public spaces and urban environments. From its Oslo headquarters, Vestre collaborates with designers and manufacturers across Scandinavia to produce sustainable outdoor furniture. All materials are sourced in Norway and Sweden, and the production runs on 100% renewable energy. Vestre's products can be found in numerous locations both in Norway and around the world – from King's Cross in London to Times Square in New York.

vestre.com