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Note Design Studio and Klarna imagine the 'Modular Mailbox'

A speculative project on the future of online shopping



As the world shifts deeper into digital, once-essential everyday objects fall out of daily use, steadily becoming relics of a bygone age. The mailbox is a case in point. Ubiquitous, but increasingly underused, the mailbox has been superseded by the advent of online communication. With our messaging shifting further into exclusively digital channels, there is a risk that the humble mailbox may become entirely redundant.

At the same time, online shopping is growing exponentially, creating an ever-increasing number of parcels on their way to our homes. Meanwhile, people look for more personalised experiences, and new ways to live more sustainably.

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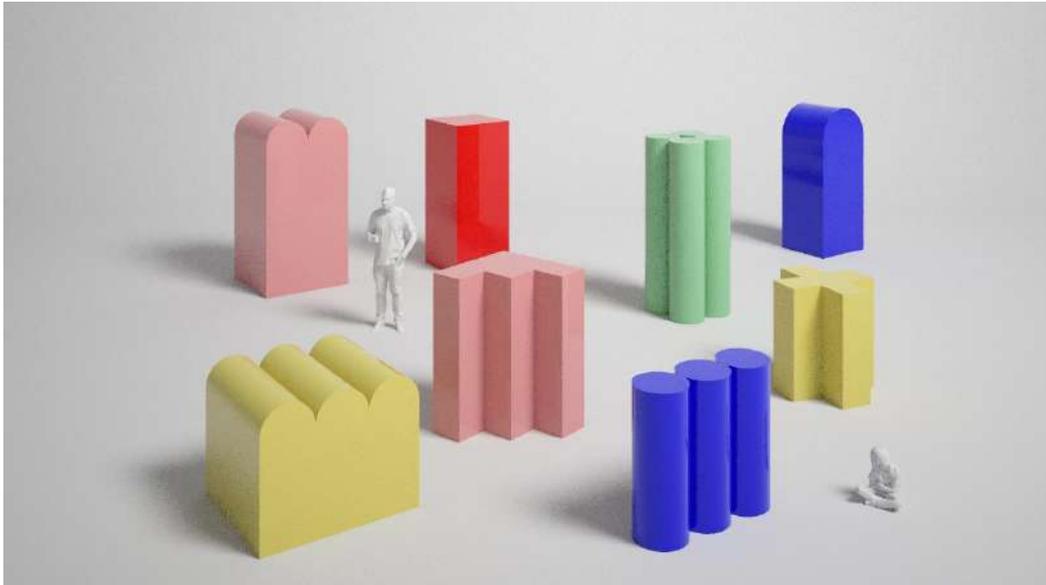
What if we could save the mailbox? What if we could reimagine it to serve the needs of the digital age as well as it did those of the analogue?

This was the challenge that online-shopping giant Klarna posed to Note Design Studio and as part of its newly launched Future Shopping Lab initiative. Attracted Note's cross-disciplinary approach, with projects spanning architecture, design and innovation, Klarna invited Note to play both the role of experts and as visual designers, tasked with bringing the concept to life.

Working with a panel of experts, the Note team have designed the mailbox of the future – not only a tool for receiving the things we buy online, but also a platform to enable new transactions and make life easier, both for individuals and the wider neighbourhood.

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A speculative project on the future of online shopping



The project is the result of close collaboration between Note and the academics and industry leaders recruited to Klarna's expert panel. They included:

- Daniel Heckscher – Co-founder and Head of Design at Note
- Cristiano Pigazzini – Design Manager at Note
- Ana Andjelic – Author of *The Business of Aspiration*, Sociology PhD and one of Forbes' Most Influential CMOs
- Iskander Smit – Director of Cities of Things Lab at Delft University
- Rasmus Fahlander – Director of Purchase Experience at Klarna

Focusing on the three areas of technology, retail and society, the group developed the hypothesis of the Modular Mailbox – a multifunctional system with social responsibility and sustainability at its core.

"Deconstructing the mailbox and the infrastructure behind it unlocks new possibilities."

– Iskander Smit, Director of Cities of Things Lab at Delft University

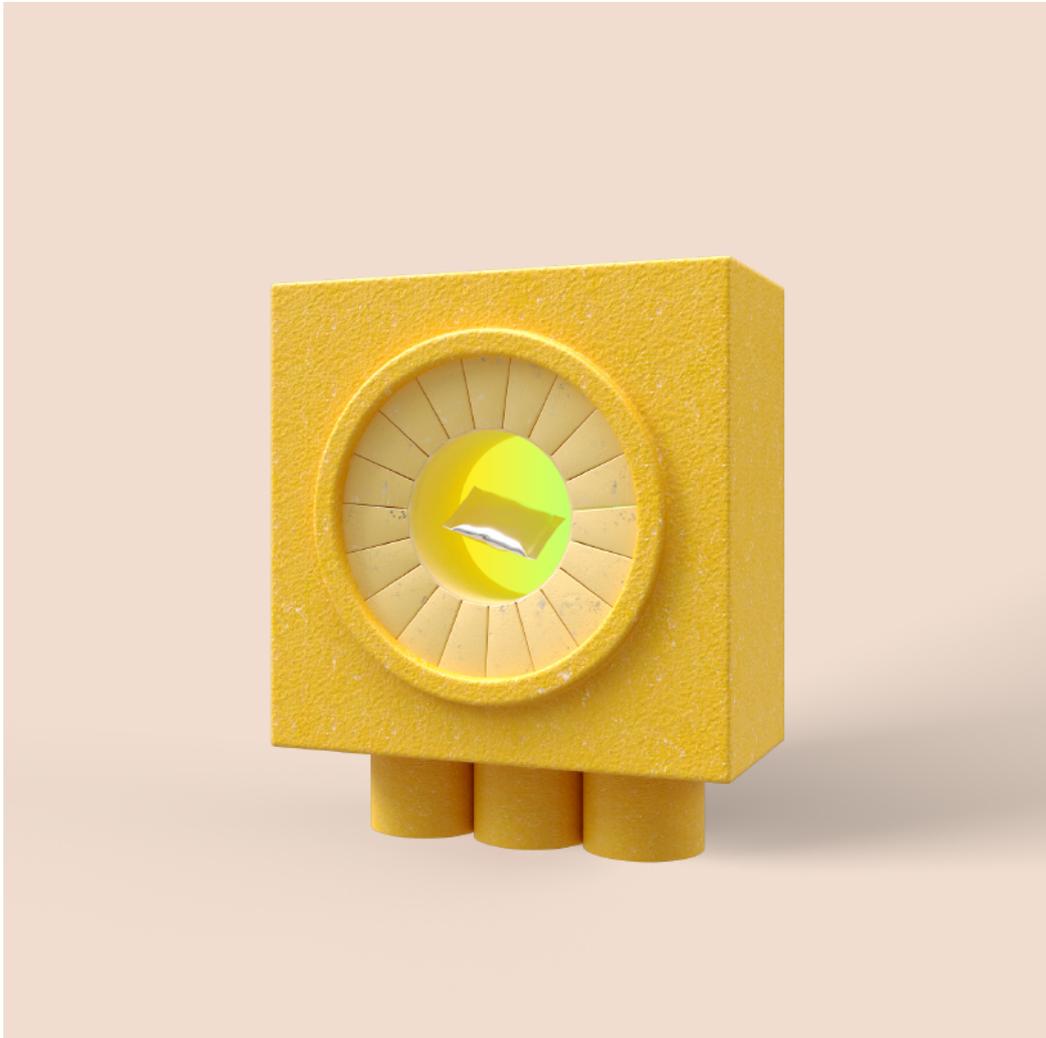
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The Modular Mailbox

The modular mailbox is a future-looking prototype with four core modules focused on shopping, sharing and sustainability. It is fuelled by AI, primed for connectivity, and designed to enable third-party partners to build niche modules to serve specific needs and experiences.

Note's modules transform the concept of the mailbox from a static object, serving solely as a tool for receiving things, into a platform that supports circularity, facilitates new transactions and makes life easier. Each modular mailbox is a part of a wider, connected network, where all modular mailboxes, and the services they enable, are connected and easily accessed digitally.

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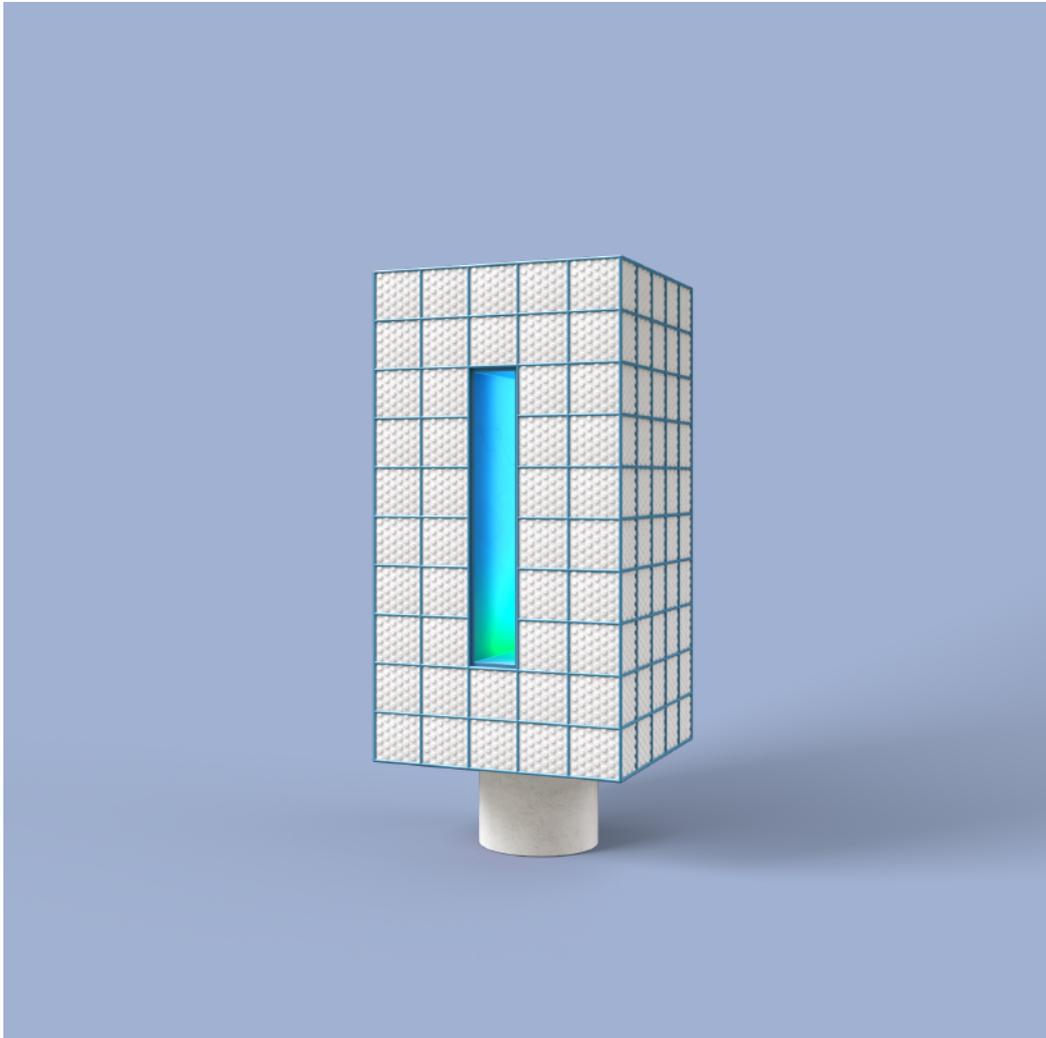
Module #1: The In- and Outbox

This module features space that can hold incoming deliveries of different types, such as packages or food. It also includes space for outgoing parcels, such as returns or things sold on eBay. This makes returns instantly available for others to buy, allowing neighbours to act on hyperlocal shopping opportunities. As a result, neighborhoods themselves become shoppable.

"If you're a frequent online shopper, you will no doubt return a lot of products over time. This makes the way in which returns are handled very important, both in terms of experience and sustainability."

– Daniel Heckscher, Co-founder and Head of Design, Note Design Studio

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Module #2: The Recycling Box

This module features space for recyclable waste from household and e-commerce.

Like a paper-shredder, the mouth of the module grinds and atomises materials, compressing them into a high-density recyclable block. These can easily be stacked on top of each other, like LEGO, making it easy for logistics service providers to utilise empty space in their delivery vehicles. They collect the recycling at the same time as they deliver parcels to the Modular Mailbox, creating a circular loop.

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“Everything in the world of recycling is horizontal. Just by making the entry point to the module vertical, you can tell that this is a different way of approaching recycling.”

– Cristiano Pigazzini, Design Manager, Note Design Studio

“Instead of having a few, large, recycling facilities, it would make greater sense to build a structure on smaller cells, transforming every household into a micro-hub for recycling.”

– Daniel Heckscher, Co-founder and Head of Design, Note Design Studio

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Module #3: The 3D-printer Box

This module features a multi-material 3D-printer that enables users to print small products and spare parts, cutting down on shipments and increasing the reparability of existing products. The module is flexible, depending on the size and characteristics of the object to be printed, and connected to e-commerce platforms that allows users to buy printable products or 3D plans. The printer can also be made available for others in the community to use.

"3D printing is a potential revolution for reparability."

– Iskander Smit, Director of Cities of Things Lab, Delft University

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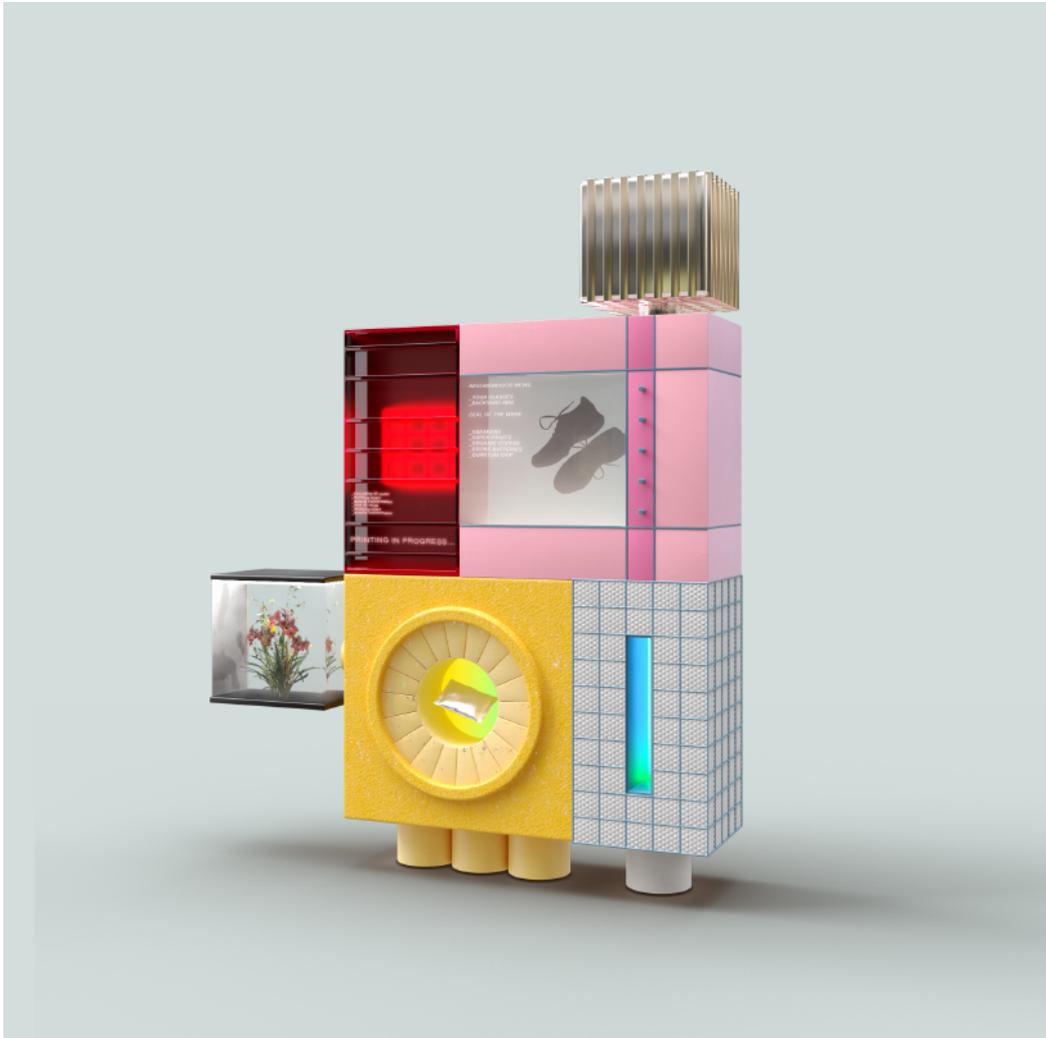
Module #4: The Sharing Box

This module contains a storage room for products that the owner wants to share with their neighbourhood. It supports community sharing and growth of local sharing economies, enabling people to look for available solutions close by before buying new products.

"So much innovation has been done on getting things to your home. The innovation I believe is missing is getting things out of our homes."

– Ana Andjelic, Author, *The Business of Aspiration*

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An infinitely expandable system

Besides the four core functions, the Modular Mailbox provides endless opportunities for additional modules. Third parties can develop niche modules that users can add to their Modular Mailboxes. These might include variations in module size or capacity, a drone-pad module to support drone deliveries, or even brand-specific delivery modules, designed to enhance brand perception and the users' unboxing experience.

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Klarna's Future Shopping Lab

Future Shopping Lab is a newly launched research wing of Klarna, one of the world's leading online shopping companies. The lab develops speculative projects and future-facing scenarios that offer a provocative look at how the shopping experience – from retail and city planning to technology and logistics – is rapidly changing. Its research explores the different challenges consumers will be facing in the future, and generates new perspectives and ideas on the evolving world of shopping.

These scenarios are explored through a collaborative process where employees and experts gather to develop hypotheses, which world-class creatives then bring to life through visual prototypes designed to be inspirational and fun rather than functional. Note's Modular Mailbox is the first scenario to be explored in the Klarna Future Shopping Lab.

"While the prototypes developed by Klarna Future Shopping Lab are not part of our commercial product development at Klarna, their purpose is to inspire and create discussions around how the future of retail might look like. Guided by our philosophy of removing unnecessary friction, we believe that a lot of improvements can be made in different areas of the shopping journey that are beneficial to both consumers and retailers, and to society as a whole."

– Rasmus Fahlander, Director of Purchase Experience at Klarna

Notes to editors

For more information, images and site visits, 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 team of 14 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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Klarna

Klarna was founded in 2005 in Stockholm, Sweden with the aim of making it easier for people to shop online. It is now one of Europe's largest banks, providing payment solutions to 90 million consumers across more than 200,000 merchants in 17 countries. Klarna offers direct payments, pay-after-delivery options and instalment plans in a single-click purchase experience that lets consumers pay when and how they prefer to. Over 200,000 merchants, including H&M, IKEA, Expedia Group, Samsung, ASOS, Peloton, Abercrombie & Fitch, Nike and AliExpress, have enabled Klarna's innovative shopping experience online and in-store. Klarna is ranked number five on the 2020 CNBC Disruptor 50 list, is the most highly valued fintech in Europe with a valuation of \$10.65 billion, and is one of the largest private fintechs globally.

klarna.com