Civil union

BY NOLAN GILES

It’s a common story in the design industry: a creative company or niche manufacturer has financial woes but gets snapped up (or “rescued”) by an enterprise with a new face. With a bit of cash and some marketing pizzazz, the brand is reignited and the design legend continues (or, in the best cases, grows). When it’s not pure spin, these stories are commendable, particularly if fading skill sets and jobs are being saved and great design is being done. Yet, in an industry where “independent” carries as much cachet as “hand-crafted”, a large company buying a smaller brand is not an easy sell.

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In the US, growing 50 per cent a year on year. The acquisition received little press but the move was smart. Muuto can capitalise on Knoll’s knowledge of the US market, while Knoll gains knowhow in the “affordable luxury” arena where Muuto is triumphing.

Muuto CEO Anders Cleeman says consolidation is a natural consequence of tough competition. But will Muuto’s cool Scandi reputation take a knock?

“Honestly, I don’t think so,” says Cleeman. “We have seen acquisitions in cars and fashion. When design companies get together we can learn from each other and find the right fit to be more successful.”

Selling design today too often involves the product becoming a story and, in some cases, the story ends up with more appeal than the product. “Synergy” might not have as nice a ring to it as “artisanal” but it could be the more useful word to use in a conversation about putting more good design into the world. — (m)

Carl Hansen

STOCKHOLM

Danish furniture manufacturer Carl Hansen & Son, renowned for its collection of classics by Arne Jacobsen, Hans.J Wegner and others, is continuing its expansion with a flagship store in Stockholm. In connection with the opening, the company also launched designs from its archives, including a desk designed by Jacobsen and Paul Kjaerholm’s rite chair in wicker (pinewood).

Located in the Östermalm district alongside most of the city’s design shops and showrooms, the space was converted from a bank into a shop by Stockholm-based Triangles Architecture. Materials such as blonde wood, concrete and limestone create a harmonious space.

“Our main objective has been to showcase the exclusive quality and craft in Carl Hansen & Son’s furniture”, says architect Trianglo. “The space should have a sense of times past but still point towards the future and the expansive power of the brand.” — 166

Segersthdethuset

SWEDEN

Students at Uppsala University are working this year on an updated campus courtesy of Danish architect from Copenhagen. A stone’s throw from the city’s 16th-century castle, the Segersthdethuset extension is thoroughly modern. The indoor spatial plans encourages social interaction: there’s a sun-lit atrium and a timber staircase that connects floors and makes a fine architectural talking point. — N