



## **SWEDISH STYLE I TOKYO 10th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

*Initiated in 1999, Swedish Style in Tokyo is a contemporary cultural and commercial exchange project. In the fall of 2009 it celebrated its 10th anniversary. The key to its success throughout the years has been a genuine local demand and a common interest in creative cooperation. This year's event was held in various venues in Tokyo. It was run by Svensk Form in collaboration with Japanese and Swedish official and private partners. The following is a report on the background to SSIT, the realization of the 2009 event as well as some perspectives on its future.*

### **BACKGROUND**

Swedish Style in Tokyo began in 1999 as an independent project. I was living in Tokyo where my husband served as the Swedish Ambassador to Japan. The basic idea was simply to ask some key Japanese contacts what they knew about Swedish culture, art and design and what - and whom - they would be interested in seeing more of. Overall, the response was enthusiastic. There was a great interest in taking part of all types of new trends, the whole Swedish lifestyle concept. My Japanese contacts already had impressive knowledge of the Swedish scene, and of course they knew what would work in Tokyo. Thus it can be said that the project grew out of a genuine local interest in contemporary Swedish culture. It turned out that Swedish fashion had not been shown in Japan for over 30 years! We listened. After a while, the matchmaking process began. Swedish and Japanese partners were identified, and the process of finding funds could begin. The advantages of local collaboration are obvious; your partners become involved, you share the work and the costs, and you attract the right audience. The Swedish Embassy served as a natural meeting point, where all the arts met.

Since Swedish Style started, a large number of Swedish artists have travelled to Tokyo to share the latest within Swedish Fashion, Film, Photography, Design, Art, Music and Food. An all time high was in 2001, when the Swedish Crown Princess Victoria and the Swedish minister of Trade, together with some 200 Swedish participants attended the inauguration. When I left Tokyo in the end of 2002, the Swedish Trade Council took over the project for a couple of years, and thereafter the Embassy itself organized the event. Focus moved mainly towards design - a successful tool in promoting Sweden - and increasing business. The Swedish Style concept has also been used in various parts of the world by other Swedish embassies and authorities. Other countries like Australia, UK and the Netherlands in Japan have been inspired by the Swedish Style concept in Tokyo, asking for information and advice

on how to organize events of their own. In 2010, Finland plans to make a similar large scale official design promotion event in Tokyo in November.

Upon returning to Sweden and together with a group of enthusiasts, in 2004 I arranged a week-long mirror event promoting contemporary Japanese Culture in Sweden. TOKYO STYLE IN STOCKHOLM brought some 400 Japanese participants with performances in almost hundred different venues in Stockholm.

Thanks to the great enthusiasm of its many Japanese partners, Swedish Style in Tokyo is still in demand and continues to be an attractive meeting point between people, culture and business. Although Swedish Style moved out of the Swedish Embassy in Tokyo in 2007, and since has been run as a fully private project, the Embassy has continued to give nominal support, and continues to play an important role in the eyes of the Japanese partners and public.

In 2009, during the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, Svensk Form assumed the main responsibility for the organization: The focus was still on design and lifestyle.

## **PURPOSE**

The original aim has been to make contemporary Swedish culture, design and lifestyle known in Japan, to encourage Japanese visits to Sweden and to strengthen the collaboration between Japan and Sweden.

Mottos throughout the years:

“More people than products”, “Sharing, not showing off”, “Fun, Friendly and informal”

For the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary 2009, the overall title was “Swedish Love Stories.” The focus was on inspiring a sustainable urban lifestyle. Swedish Design has always been driven by the belief that good design can help to improve our everyday life. This longstanding humanistic approach and our appreciation of nature and quality materials is something we share with our Japanese friends. Today we find many examples of love stories between Swedish and Japanese design. We are moving towards a stronger social engagement. Different disciplines are working together to find new solutions. Artists and designers, with their non-linear and creative thinking, have a vital role to play. Designers as a link between consumers and producers can influence the production process. New thinking is needed.

## **EVENT DESCRIPTION**

Swedish Style in Tokyo 2009 took place from October 26 to November 6 2009 in connection with the Design Week, including the Designtide and “100 % Design” events.

“Swedish Love Stories”, the theme of the year, was expressed in a series of events: 4 exhibitions, 3 opening parties, 1 Swedish PechaKucha & music night, 1 public cake party celebration, 3 embassy seminars, 2 temple workshops, 2 Swedish glass tasting presentation and Swedish participation in Designtide. See enclosed event list for detailed information.

### **BLOND BUDDHAS**

The week started by a group exhibition by young Swedish creators at Komyoji temple in Kamiyacho, including Swedish glass, textile, craft, art and photographs. The project manager Aia Jüdes and most Swedish participants had had previous experience of relations with

Japan. Some **300 guests** attended the opening party. The following 3 days, Swedish fika was served at the temple combined with flower making workshops for 30 participants. The flowers were later used for decoration of the official 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake celebration at UN University. The event was supported primarily by EU JapanFest, Orrefors Kosta Boda and MarksPelle.

### **PRINCESS CAKE PARTY**

Since Crown Princess Victoria inaugurated the 2001 Swedish style event, "Princess Cake" pastry has become something of a SS trademark. A princess cake party was held in connection to the ecological farmers' market in front of the UN University Plaza on Saturday, attracting some **5000 visitors**. Defyra decorated the table, celebratory speeches were held, and the public was served princess cake, candy and Elderberry juice (Fläderbärssaft)

### **SPACE O - SWEDISH LOVE STORIES**

Thanks to the support by Mori Building, Svensk Form was offered an attractive space at reduced fee in the prestigious shopping center Omotesando Hills for the commercial interior design exhibit Swedish Love Stories. 20 companies and designers exhibited their products. Japanese design guru Teruo Kurosaki showed his private collection of Swedish vintage design. The event also included a design shop with Swedish products. **500 guests** attended the opening party, which was opened by the Swedish Ambassador, Ewa Kumlin and Teruo Kurosaki. During the following 6 days approximately **2000 visitors** saw the exhibition. An exclusive Swedish buffet was served at the opening by the Scandinavian Taste company and wine sponsored by Gala Wines. Project manager: Caroline Heiroth Architect: Katrin Greiling, Japanese partners: Designflow and Media Surf Communications.

### **UNG – YOUNG SWEDISH DESIGN**

UNG is a jury awarded exhibition of the latest in Swedish design, produced by Form/Design Center and Svensk Form in cooperation with Riksställningar and Stockholm Furniture Fair. The project manager Mathias Swinge installed the exhibition together with a technician from Riksställningar. The Swedish Ambassador gave an opening speech, Scandinavian Taste served a Swedish style buffet and Swedish DJ played music. **300 guests** attended the opening. The attendance for the whole week including seminars was approx **2000 visitors**. Japanese digital and print media took specific interest in UNG, see the enclosed press list.

### **PECHAKUCHA & BUNKAFUNKA**

The PechaKucha phenomenon started in 2003 based on a concept elaborated by Klein – Dytham Architects, owners of trendy night-club and event space Superdeluxe. The presentation format is 20 slides x 20 seconds, a concept that now has spread to 280 cities around the world. Klein-Dytham Architects have taken active part in Swedish Style since the start. The Swedes participated in two PechaKucha nights during the design week, one solely dedicated to Swedish Style in Tokyo. The Swedish night went on to BunkaFunka, organized by Jakob Edman, opening a platform for young musicians. 2 Japanese and 2 Swedish live bands performed until early hours. A successful night, attracting over **400 visitors**.

### **I ,ME AND MYSELF**

**50 visitors** came to listen to this talk show, where participants of Swedish Style made 20 minute power point presentations of themselves in the Swedish Embassy Auditorium in connection to the UNG exhibition. A good way to get to know the individuals and the extensive work that lies behind the exhibited products.

### **DESIGN & HEALTH SEMINAR**

Our longstanding supporters **Beauty Pollen** arranged their yearly health seminar at the Swedish Embassy in connection with Swedish Style, including presentations on Swedish design and health. This was a closed event, by invitation only, attended by **150 Japanese**

especially targeted representatives from the pharmaceutical and medicine sectors. The seminar was followed by a Swedish reception.

### **SAVING THE PLANET IN STYLE**

Approximately **30** students and professors were invited to the Swedish Embassy for an open discussion session on sustainability, drawing up visions for future collaboration within the context of the project Saving the Planet in Style. Speakers: Professor Fumio Masuda, Peter Thörne, Teruo Kurosaki, Ewa Kumlin and David D'Heilly.

### **GLASS TASTING**

Orrefors Kosta Boda took an active part in Swedish Style: Åsa Jungnelius made a presentation at the Komyoji Temple, and later in the week by introducing the unique series of wine glass Difference for the first time in Japan by designer Erika Lagerbielke. **60 special guests** were invited on two exclusive occasions to enjoy a meal with wine tasting, guided by Erika Lagerbielke through a range of her stemware Difference. The first event was held in fashion designer Junko Koshino's private apartment, the second in Restaurant Stockholm in Akasaka. Supported by Gala and Minato wines.

### **SWEDISH FASHION**

The Swedish Institute has produced a travelling exhibition, "Swedish Fashion, Exploring a New Identity", curated by Maria Ben Saad and coordinated by Anna Maria Bernitz, featuring contemporary Swedish fashion. In Tokyo the exhibition opened in MOT- Tokyo Contemporary Art Museum, right next to Rei Kawakubo and Martin Margiela. The opening was organized by the Swedish Institute in collaboration with the Swedish Embassy.

### **SWEDISH DESIGN WITH ASKUL AT DESIGNTIDE**

Since a few years, thanks to the connection made through Swedish Style, the giant Japanese mail order company ASKUL has worked successfully with some 25 Swedish Designers. At the Designtide, ASKUL presented an installation with Nina Jobs and with Stockholm Design Lab who has designed many of ASKUL's company profile products.

### **CKR AT CLASKA**

The Design trio Claesson Koivisto Rune has been active and present in Tokyo most every year during the Design week. They are working extensively with various Japanese producers. This year they presented new lighting with the Swedish Design company Wästberg at the Claska design hotel.

### **NIPPON DESIGN TALKS**

During the design week Design Nippon arranged a series of talks with international designers. Defyra gave an appreciated presentation on sustainability.

### **DESTINATION NEW SWEDEN**

Making use of the presence by VisitSweden and Svensk Form, Invest in Sweden arranged a seminar in the Embassy during the same week dealing with the increased interest in Japan for Sweden in tourism, design, food and entertainment. The seminar targeted travel agencies, companies and travelers and filled the auditorium to its maximum of **200** guests.

## **PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS**

Some 50 Swedish participants travelled to Tokyo for the event 2009, as per enclosed list. Detailed presentations of each participant and company can be found on [www.swedishstyle.se](http://www.swedishstyle.se) On the list you will find a mixture of invited designers, artists and representatives from exhibiting companies and organizers. More than half of the participants have already a relation with Japan, and the rest were newcomers. As the motto "more people

than products” indicates, one aim has been to strengthen personal relations for future cooperation.

Our main partners in Tokyo this year were Teruo Kurosaki and his team from Flowstone, Mediasurf and Ikejiro Design institute. They helped with local negotiations, building of the exhibition at Space O, volunteers, media and logistics. Kurosaki-san, one of the most influential persons on the Japanese design field, has been a supporter of Swedish Style in Tokyo since the beginning in 1999. This longstanding relationship with our Japanese partners is essential in finding the right venues, audiences and partnerships. There are many individuals who, on a purely voluntary basis, are helping Swedish Style to materialize every year, fueled by their enthusiasm for Sweden and Swedish Lifestyle.

Some of our Japanese partners have been loyal supporters for many years such as Takasago Thermal Engineering, Beauty Pollen, and EU JapanFest. Mori Building has also actively supported throughout the years, including personal engagement from Mr. and Mrs. Mori through friendship with Sweden, which enabled us to use the Space O at reduced cost in the prestigious shopping centre Omotesando Hills. Other partners have offered products; food from Scandinavian Taste, Gala wines and venues such as Klein Dytham Architects' Superdeluxe, fashion designer Junko Koshino and restaurant Stockholm.

On the Swedish side, official support was given by the Swedish Institute, VisitSweden, NSU (Nämnden för Sverigefrämjande i utlandet – a combination of public promotion authorities), Riksutställningar and the Swedish Embassy in Tokyo. The Swedish companies participating in the commercial exhibition at Space O paid for their space and own expenses. The company Scandinavian Wave works pro bono with the Swedish Style web.

## **ECONOMY**

The total cost of the 2009 SS event came to approx 1,3 million Swedish Crowns (17 million JPY) Considering the size of the event , the number of participants and the fact that Tokyo is an expensive world metropolis, this must be considered quite modest. This was possible thanks to the reduced rents, sponsored free products, venues and the dedicated work of voluntary staff. Still, the final cost exceeded the initial budget with about 150.000 SEK (2 million JPY) mostly due to unexpected costs in connection with the UNG exhibition in the Swedish Embassy. VisitSweden, Riksutställningar and Svensk Form have jointly covered these additional costs.

## **CONCLUSION AND RESULTS**

A key to the success of Swedish Style in Tokyo has been the close collaboration with local partners. The content has never been decided merely from a Swedish perspective, but closely tailored to meet an identified genuine interest on the receiving end. “Sharing, not showing off”. The importance of a demand driven approach for the success of any promotional effort in Japan (and elsewhere) cannot be stressed enough, since this is often forgotten in our general Swedish promotion efforts. The early involvement of interested local partners is also of great importance for the provision of the right venues as well as for the local feel of what works and what will not. Local partners must have a genuine intellectual interest in the success of a given project

Approximately **10.000 visitors** attended Swedish Style-events in Tokyo 2009. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was a friendly manifestation of the good relations between Sweden and Japan. The spiritual installation in the Komyoji Temple was a perfect beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The open cake party celebration by the UN University Plaza followed the

same pattern. The commercial design exhibition in Space O was realized on an extremely low budget, and therefore, despite a perfect location, it did not quite reach the desired quality level, neither in terms of content or number of visitors nor in terms of targeted client meetings. There simply was not enough money to spend on necessary material, PR on advertising or for inviting designers. When the goal is to increase the Swedish design export, further financing and long term collaboration with the official Swedish promotion authorities is needed. The companies have asked for more of a long-term strategy and identified some target cities suitable for national design promotion: Tokyo, Milan, London and New York belong to this category. Without basic governmental seed money, the quality level and management cannot be guaranteed. The exhibition with UNG – YOUNG SWEDISH DESIGN in the Embassy exhibition area was combined with various seminars on Swedish design, sustainability, health and tourism with very positive reactions from the public and the media. Unfortunately, the exhibition involved unexpected costs for the SSIT project since customary Embassy support with regard to press, pr and premises turned out to be limited.

Tokyo is a huge and attractive city. Many countries are competing with their nation branding. Many of them with more muscles and financial strength than Sweden. As a small country, we need to find alternative ways. Swedish Style in Tokyo was always run on a low budget, fueled with local enthusiasm, guerilla marketing and quality cutting edge culture, which received media attention and target audience. Offering a context, even with an experimental and problematic angle at times, has proved far more efficient than bigger and glossy national promotion efforts, sometimes perceived as mere propaganda. I dare say, that without the cultural essence, the business relations would not have followed and flourished as they have. The combination has been instrumental in creating business through a unique profile, personal relations and a positive image of Sweden.

Even though Swedish Style started as a broad lifestyle project, the interior and industrial design has been the most commercially successful part. It has resulted in increased export in related areas (see earlier reports from Swedish Trade Council) and new commissions for Swedish designers and companies. Unfortunately the latter is harder to measure since it is not included in official statistics. A company like ASKUL, for example, has engaged some 25 Swedish designers in the last few years.

Other results that are never visible in the official statistics, but valuable on a long term human level, are when creators and business people from different fields travel together and spend time together in a new and inspiring environment, out of their normal busy schedules. New collaborations, inspiration and ideas are formed with future results.

Having followed the development of Swedish Style in Tokyo during ten years, I have seen many of the early young volunteers becoming important ambassadors in our Sweden-Japan relations, several of them holding key positions in companies and organizations today.

In the end of the 90's, when Swedish Style in Tokyo started, Swedish design was booming around the world through Wallpaper, Stockholm New etc, and it also hit the trend setters in Tokyo. Today the Swedish design and life style has reached a much broader audience in Japan. Magazines are filled with Swedish design and shops with vintage products are popular. The image of Sweden is now directly connected to design, nature, humanistic perspective and quality of life. Design tourism to Sweden is increasing, and deepening. The term sightseeing is changed into "life seeing", and Svensk Form has been asked to create design tour packages for incoming tourists from Japan, including Swedish design history.

Recently, several new initiatives have been taken in the Sweden-Japan relations such as for example the web magazine [www.swedenavi.com](http://www.swedenavi.com) presenting non mainstream Swedish culture to Japanese readers or [www.scandinavianwave.se](http://www.scandinavianwave.se) introducing Swedish design in Japan or [www.myspace.com/bunkafunk](http://www.myspace.com/bunkafunk) a platform for music exchange.

## **FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

Will Swedish Style in Tokyo continue? Or is it time to move on after 10 years?

The bridge has been built and the flow continues. Since the start of Swedish Style, many companies and individuals have created their own personal and commercial relationships with Japanese partners. It continues by its own force. Several young companies are taking initiatives through the web, through social medias and other channels, thus creating ever closer connections between contemporary Sweden and Japan. It is time for the next step.

The concept Swedish Style in Tokyo can take on a new meaning, not merely as a yearly event in Tokyo, but as a platform bringing people together in the aim for a sustainable urban lifestyle. Still combining a commerce and culture. Fun, friendly and informal.

On a personal note, as a founder of Swedish Style, closely involved in the beginning and again for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I believe it is time to hand over to a new generation. Svensk Form can still be engaged in promoting Swedish design, provided that sufficient financing can be raised. Tokyo will always be a target city for the design companies, and the general Japanese interest for Swedish design and lifestyle continues to grow.

I thank everybody for their support for Swedish Style in Tokyo, since its beginning in 1999 and up until now on its tenth anniversary !



Ewa A Kumlin  
Managing Director Svensk Form and founder of Swedish Style in Tokyo

### **ENCLOSURES:**

List of events + invitations  
List of partners  
List of participants  
Economic summary  
Individual event reports  
Press releases and press list  
Photographs from events

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[www.swedish-style.se](http://www.swedish-style.se)  
[www.fru-form2.blogspot.com](http://www.fru-form2.blogspot.com)  
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