

Dear Reader!

Not only do I shop at IKEA, my studio is just a stone's throw from that blue building. Nothing else is as close to the place I work so I often end up going there for lunch. I've been trying to look at that place as an opportunity rather than blaming it for disturbing the neighbourhood. After all, IKEA with its semi-public sphere provides a certain element of freedom. No one there really cares who you are. With nothing more than expending a bit of cash you get stuff and disappear. It's a risk-free hunt.

It feels like the world reveres IKEA with admiration. The success of the company over so many years and in so many facets is impressive. It's the kind of company that is never in trouble and always puts environmental and social concerns at the forefront of its policies. But there is a matter that is rarely discussed. What is the consequence of everyone owning and being surrounded by the same physicality? Is the age of individualism based on literally sitting around the same table? With these dark thoughts in mind I wanted to make something personal based on IKEA inventory.

Armed with my iPhone 5s, freshly loaded with a new app that can take double exposures, I go there... Pumped up! My plan is to make simple images without going too crazy or trying to be too smart. Just to shoot slightly different angles of the same object and sandwich them with the app just enough to move the attention away from object to the image itself. I grab a yellow bag and that short pencil. I pretend to be normal. In the same way all the furniture is recognizable across countries, races, classes of people, so is the mapped tour I start to walk.

I have a long, personal relationship with many of the IKEA-items. The smallest white Lack table in particular (The standard table that even the poorest student can afford and which has become the definition of *a table*) has been a love/hate one of these relationships. And the Ivar chair. I've had more Ivar chairs than friends through the years. I want to portray Ivar! Although, he's really not that picturesque.

So I'm drifting along with the stream intensely photographing. There is nothing that isn't worth two snapshots. The Fargrik coffee mug becomes of no less value as the expensive Stockholm faux leather sofa. I try to abstract them both. The Lack table is no longer a practical object for the poor student. It's rich graphical material! The Ivar chair is not perceived as 'cheap chair' with its simple but appealing design. They are finally set free from all these traits with the camera as the liberator. But it is a mellow interference. Ivar should still be recognizable as himself in his new life.

It seems that for most people it's more appealing to go to IKEA than to go to the art museum although it is the total opposite regarding the value of objects. The IKEA-experience seems so directly connected to life. Buying something practical feels like an instant improvement. Even the harshly frowned upon IKEA-art will solve the problem of an empty wall. You are able to be the potential owner of all things around. Seductive low prices and sleek Swedish design make it so easy.

But during a break I take a look at my notes. A sentence that stands out reads, "Cheapness creates desire". Suddenly I feel I disagree slightly because my heart is no longer beating fast while browsing the price tags. Even the lowest priced items like the 59 Cent Fargrik coffee mug seem somewhat steep. Why isn't it 29 Cents? Or 19? Are these things really worth anything at all? I need a longer break obviously. And maybe after a while I will start to cherish and love the low prices again. While waiting I can feel one with a soulless planet sitting in my Ivar chair.

Photos are printed in the same size as on my phone.