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# The circular sofa redefining Danish simplicity

## Inspired by mid-century styling, ARDE is pushing the boundaries of responsible design with the Aarhus Sofa

In an era where longevity and responsibility define modern living, the Aarhus sofa by ARDE emerges as a forward-thinking statement in innovative design.

Created by Danish designer René Hougaard (ARDE), this standout piece combines a minimalist Scandinavian aesthetic with an ambitious approach to circular design. With a solid wooden frame, refined proportions and comfort inspired by early 20th-century furniture-making, Aarhus stands apart as one of the few sofas in Europe designed for complete disassembly.

Awarded the prestigious Nordic Swan Ecolabel\*, the Aarhus collection - comprising sofas and matching tables - has been developed from the ground up to meet the evolving demands of modern homes. Recognized as one of the world's most rigorous environmental certifications, the Nordic Swan Ecolabel aims to promote responsible environmental progress. With its elegant wooden silhouette and enduring functionality, the collection brings together beauty, construction and utility - what Hougaard calls "the triangle" of great design.

"For me, it's always been about pushing boundaries as much as I can," says Hougaard. "The Aarhus sofa started with an idea: to design a piece that could challenge how sofas are made, particularly in terms of sustainability. I looked at historical furniture - how things were built 100 years ago - and realised we needed to cut away all the unnecessary layers. Instead of foam, we use steel springs. That's comfort with less waste. It's a great example of what can happen when you think differently."

### Circular thinking from the frame up

At the heart of the Aarhus sofa is an approach rooted in circularity. Constructed without glue, to allow for the internal structure to be easily disassembled, components can be repaired, replaced, or ultimately recycled - extending the lifespan of the product significantly. Aarhus sofa comes with detachable covers and reupholstery options to let you refresh it over time, extend its life, and reduce waste.

Global Artistic Director Helena Christensen adds: "René really strives to push the boundaries of what's possible with design. The shape, the forms, the construction of them, the production of the fabrics...everything that's being used but in a way that benefits the environment."

The solid wooden frame features a softly rounded trim, echoed in the cylindrical legs for a warm and timeless expression. Slim, sculptural arms create a framing detail that is both modern and subtly decorative. But Aarhus isn't just about looks - it's a high-performance sofa built to last.

Unlike conventional models reliant on hard-to-recycle foam, Aarhus incorporates steel springs in both the seat and backrest. These allow for uniform support and long-term durability while offering a surprisingly buoyant seating experience. As Hougaard explains, "I was inspired by old sofas - before foam existed. They were made with springs and horsehair, and yet they had amazing comfort. That's the direction I wanted to go in: back to common-sense solutions that still work."

## **Design that balances tradition and innovation**

Aarhus is not the typical Danish sofa. Where some Scandinavian seating leans boxy and foam-heavy, this design feels lighter, more open, and more refined. "I'm really happy we did something different here," says Hougaard. "It's more mid-century than modern box. It has that elegance - good proportions, a human touch in the materiality - and yet it doesn't feel nostalgic. It just feels right."

Inspired by the principles of elegance, proportion and construction he first studied in architecture school, Hougaard brings his philosophy to life in every part of the Aarhus collection. "To me, elegance is when everything just works - when beauty, construction and function meet in the middle. That's when you've got a product that people will live with, love, and keep."

Speaking about the wooden frame, Helena adds: "I love that the structure of the sofa shows. Like with fashion, I love it when you can actually see the craftsmanship instead of hiding it and in a way, the Aarhus sofa does that. It strips it down and creates a sort of raw beauty."

## **Matching tables complete the story**

The Aarhus coffee and side tables extend the visual harmony of the sofa, featuring the same solid wood craftsmanship and rounded trims. Designed to blend seamlessly with a wide range of interiors, they offer a cohesive, Scandinavian touch to living spaces.

Notably, these tables avoid traditional UV lacquer in order to meet Ecolabel standards. Instead, they feature a natural finish that brings out the texture and warmth of the wood, offering a tactile quality while still meeting rigorous durability testing.

## **Guided by responsibility**

For ARDE, responsibility is the guiding principle. "Sustainability is important, but I prefer the word responsibility," René says. "We turned over every stone - from materials to production processes. The product had abstract beginnings, and we had a super ambitious vision at first. Of course, in production, you make compromises, but it's still a step in the right direction."

This vision is what makes the Aarhus sofa so compelling: it doesn't just reduce impact - it rethinks it. From material sourcing to product lifespan, Aarhus represents a more thoughtful way forward in furniture design.

## **About ARDE**

ARDE is the design studio of René Hougaard, known for creating innovative products that blend utility, aesthetics, and progressive thinking. With a background in architecture and a commitment to pushing material and design boundaries, ARDE's work ranges from commercial hits like the Cupertino desk, designed for BoConcept, to bold experiments in sustainable living. Aarhus is his latest contribution to the evolving language of Scandinavian design.

\*Nordic Swan-certified in Copenhagen Fabric and Nordic Grain leather (in cognac and black colours); Excludes UK

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### About BoConcept

BoConcept was founded in 1952 in Denmark and is today the world's most global furniture retailer, with over 300 stores spanning 65 countries. The brand works with award-winning designers to create collections of furniture, accessories, and lighting for private homes and business spaces. Under the heading 'Live Ekstraordinær', BoConcept is committed to bringing its flexible Interior Design Service and industry-leading customisation to spaces both private and public – without compromising on design vision or aesthetics.

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