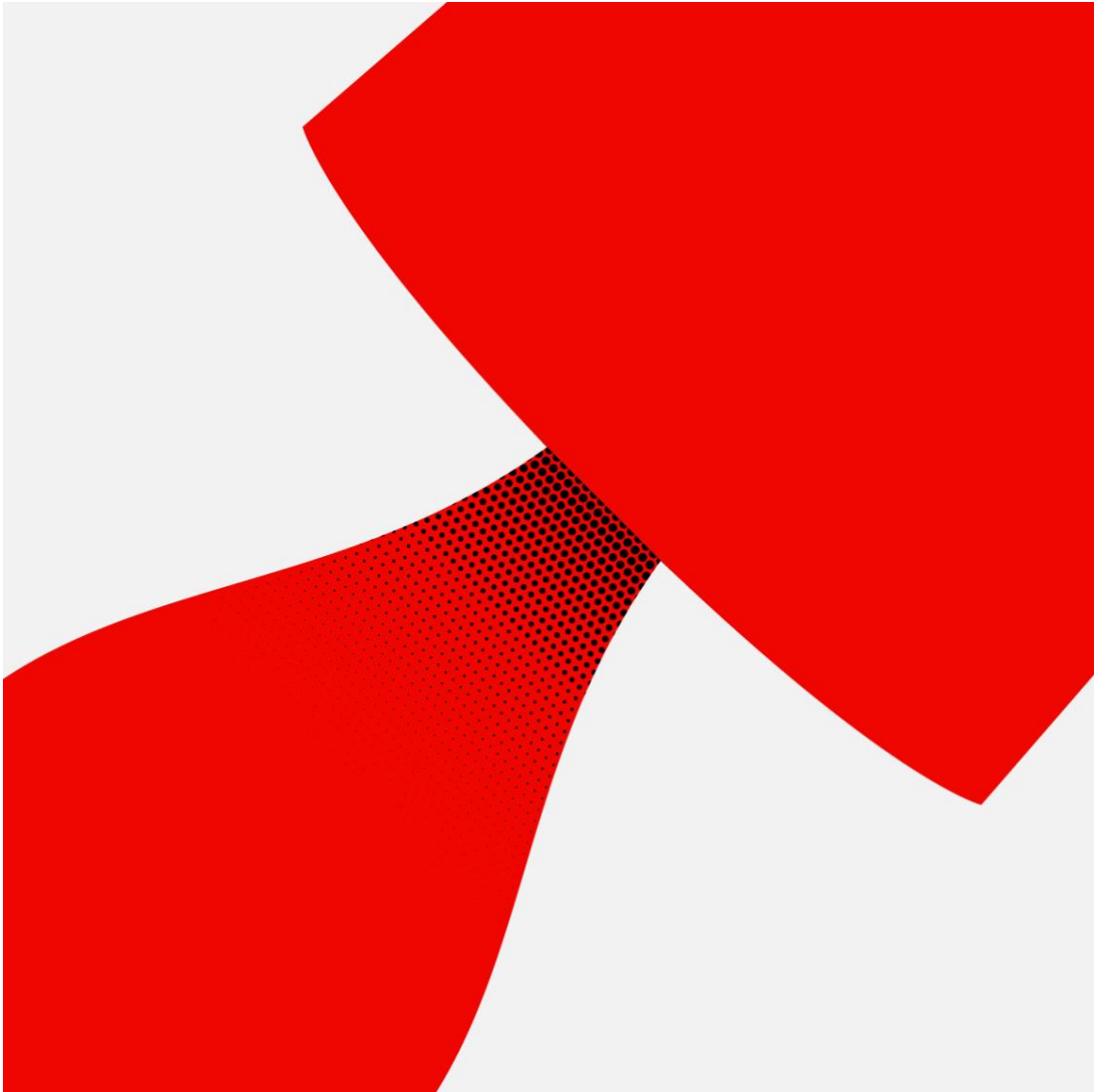




TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

100 IKEA objects we would have liked having at VINÇON

From 17 October 2024 to 23 February 2025 - Disseny Hub Barcelona



PRESS KIT



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INTRODUCTION

From **17 October 2024 to 23 February 2025**, Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHub) will be hosting **'100 IKEA objects we would have liked having at VINÇON'**, an exhibition that completes the **tribute to the emblematic Barcelona shop**, which began with the publication of the book 'VINÇON. 1929-2015' after the business closed in 2015, when the owners gave their extensive archive to Barcelona City Council, who housed it in the DHub Design Museum.

The exhibition is based on an **original idea by Fernando Amat**, the heart and soul of VINÇON, who, together with **Sergi Amat**, proposed selecting 100 items created by IKEA that they would have liked to have had in their shop as the content of the exhibition - a nod to the Swedish brand. The curator, **Juli Capella**, developed the initial idea with a view to going beyond the selection of the 100 objects and establishing **a play of mirrors between the two brands**. Two key points of reference in the world of design in recent decades that have similarities, although they are clearly different in terms of scale.

This comparative analysis, which examines 14 items that range from the history and the founders to statistics and geography along with naming, the logo, communication, advertising, bags, the democratisation of design, the promotion of culture and the architecture of the shops, **highlights differences** like geographical scope, turnover and type of management. **Yet it also brings to light certain traits** shared by the driving forces behind them, the importance the two brands have placed on aspects like communication, naming, a sense of humour and the promotion of art, and their shared commitment to good design and the democratisation of that design.

The conversation that the exhibition establishes between VINÇON and IKEA **allows for reflection on factors such as what good design is, and how it impacts people's everyday lives**, the five values of democratic design (form, function, quality, sustainability and price) and the interrelationship between functionality and aesthetics. The exhibition provides information on the prices of the pieces chosen, which is rather unusual in a museum. It does so with the intention of opening a debate on the social importance of pricing when choosing a product. The play of mirrors between the two brands also raises other issues beyond design, such as the **values that determine purchasing decisions** in consumer societies, and the **social and ecological implications** they end up having.

A group of people from outside the world of design and another group of professionals from within the sector examine all these issues in a **debate presented in audiovisual format as part of the exhibition that invites visitors to consider the meaning of design today**. The guests participating in the debates are designers, writers, journalists, and philosophers: Mercedes

Abad, Joana Bonet, Manuel Delgado, Òscar Guayabero, Nani Marquina, Ana Mir, Marc Morro, Rosa Pera, Lluís Permanyer, Oscar Tusquets, Juan Evaristo Valls and Anatxu Zabalbeascoa.

The exhibition is complemented by a **research and creation workshop** which will be held in parallel. The Reviu workshop, devised by designer **Curro Claret** and the **TAKK** architecture and design studio (Mireia Luzárraga and Alejandro Muiño), with the participation of different social organisations from Barcelona, aims to **build a hypothetical show flat** right in the Dhub, one **that meets people's basic, everyday needs**, beyond commercial considerations. To do so, **discarded materials will be used**.

The history of one of Barcelona's most distinctive and unusual shops

VINÇON closed its doors for the last time in 2015, after almost 75 years of singularly unusual commercial and cultural activity. **The business dates back to the 1920s**, when Enrique Levi opened a business specialising in the import and wholesale of fine china. Years later, he joined forces with his brother-in-law Hugo Vinçon, and they rented premises on Passeig de Gràcia, and from 1940 onwards, decided to call the business Regalos Hugo Vinçon. It was a point-of-sale for glass and fine china, with a space to exhibit art and extensive storage space for goods. One of the employees, **Jacinto Amat, took over the company** in 1957. Shortly afterwards, his sons **Juan and Fernando** joined the business, which took a new turn when **they took over the reins** after the death of their father in 1967. After much thought, Juan and Fernando came up with an idea that was to transform the shop into one of the most distinctive and emblematic in the city.



Façade of the VINÇON shop on Passeig de Gràcia

The two brothers began to bring international design to Barcelona, making choices based on their own intuition and an almost curatorial sensibility. This keen eye for choosing items that appealed to the people of Barcelona and Spain's opening up to trade after the lean years of the postwar period led to an increase in sales. Beyond its commercial activity, the company turned **La Sala Vinçon** into the **first space in Barcelona where people talked about design as culture**, at a time when there was as yet no institution in the city that promoted design. This gallery **ended up hosting 316 exhibitions, all of them free of charge**. The crisis that had been dragging on since 2008, coupled with competition and the touristification of Passeig de Gràcia led the family to decide to close the shop in 2015.



Interior of the VINÇON shop on Passeig de Gràcia

VINÇON was a key player in the explosion of Barcelona design. All the international guides spoke of Vinçon as a key milestone in the new Barcelona and Spanish design. **It served as an influencer, mouthpiece, cradle, disseminator, exhibitor, interconnector and internationaliser of the sector.** This is why DHub wants to recognise this role, firstly with the publication of the book *Vinçon 1929-2015*, published by Barcelona City Council, the Institute of Culture, the Design Museum of Barcelona and the Tenov publishing house, and now through this exhibition focusing on the shop's cultural legacy. The exhibition also has its own publication, which includes the pieces chosen, the VINÇON - IKEA leaflets, a summary of the debates and an interview with Fernando Amat.



VINÇON shop window display



AREAS OF THE EXHIBITION

Introduction

An emblem of each of the two brands welcomes visitors to the exhibition. On the floor is a **carpet with the slogan ‘Welcome to the independent republic of your home’**, one of the milestones in IKEA’s advertising campaigns in Spain. If you look up, you see the **VINÇON sign with the famous neon letters** on the wall, which is how many people who live in Barcelona still remember the iconic shop on well-known Passeig de Gràcia. The entrance is a highly visual expression of the duality of the exhibition.

Leaflets: VINÇON and IKEA: a comparative analysis

The first area in the exhibition offers a **comparative analysis of VINÇON and IKEA**, based on 14 elements: history, founders, statistics, geography, brand strategy, corporate image, communication, bags, naming, inclusivity, products, emphasis on art, shop architecture and advertising strategy. It **presents the similarities and differences** between the two brands, one global and the other local. This duality reveals major differences such as scale, but also certain historical parallels and points of convergence can also be seen, especially in the quest to promote good design.

1. HISTORY. The beginnings of the business

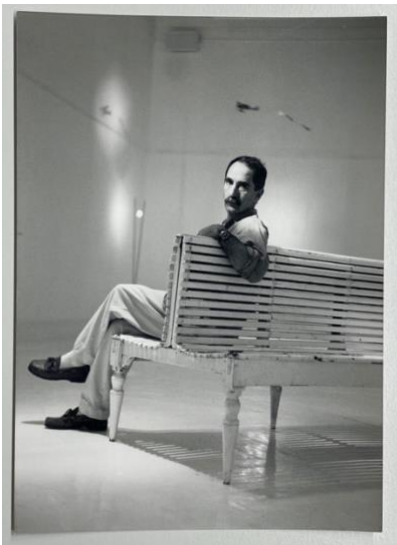
Both companies were launched in the 1940s with the aim of offering household products with a contemporary design. In 1940, Regalos Hugo Vinçon opened on Passeig de Gràcia, premises which had just 200 square metres of public display space. In 1957, Jacinto Amat, until then an employee, bought the business. His sons Juan and Fernando took over the business in 1968 and turned it into a self-service shop - a novelty at that time. They also opened a space solely devoted to alternative design and launched a collection of seasonally themed window displays. In the 1980s, they added the first floor as a furniture showroom. They also launched the collection of bags, a section devoted to Asian products (Vin Chong), one to relaxation (Tinc Çon) and another to cooking (Kitchen Çon). With all the additional spaces, the shop came to occupy a surface area of almost 3,000 square metres. Furthermore, in 1997 the brothers opened a shop in Madrid, which closed in 2011, and in 1998 they launched a website that became an online shop in 2005. It’s the only commercial establishment to have won the National Design Award. The global economic crisis in 2008, competition and the touristification of Passeig de Gràcia affected the company, which ended up closing in 2015.



IKEA started out as a mail-order company in Älmhult, a small town in Sweden, in 1943. The first catalogue was created in 1951, and two years later a showroom was opened where buyers could see and try out the furniture before buying. The first flat packs appeared on the scene in 1956, the aim being to facilitate transport. This gave rise to the concept of 'self-assembly' and made it possible to lower prices. 1958 saw the opening of the first brick-and-mortar shop, the first of what was to become a chain of establishments that produced their own goods, and two years the cash and carry system was introduced: the customer collects the product and takes it home. Restaurants inside the shops were another addition. And IKEA began to expand into Europe, and then beyond, soon becoming global in scale. On the Iberian Peninsula, the first shop opened in Badalona in 1996. Online sales started in 2001. Today, it is the world's leading furniture retailer.

2. FOUNDERS. The people behind the companies

Both organisations had visionaries at the helm, people who understood design as a vital part of a contemporary social system. To some extent, the Amat brothers and Ingvar Kamprad had parallel life stories as standout figures of today. They embodied the successful forward-looking entrepreneur who pushes forward and meets new needs within society.



Fernando Amat

Juan and Fernando Amat were born in 1936 and 1941, respectively. Fernando joined the family company at the age of 14. He was put in charge of window displays and created an interior design department. When their father died, the brothers decided to change direction, only selling items they would like to have in their own homes. They discovered that their taste matched that of many other people in Barcelona. They also promoted good design and art via their gallery, La Sala Vinçon, which hosted 316 exhibitions. Amat became a tireless interconnector of designers and businesses, a Barcelona and Spanish

design guru and a nexus of international contacts. In 1985, the third generation joined the company: Yolanda and Sergi, and later Joan Enric, the children of Juan, who died in 2014.



Ingvar Kamprad

Ingvar Kamprad was born in 1926 in Pjätteryd, a town in southern Sweden. At the age of 17, with money he was given by his father for the good marks he'd achieved at school, he launched his first company which sold everyday items. Over time, he came to specialise in mail order furniture, and decided to create a showroom where customers could try out the products. He ultimately turned the business into a brick-and-mortar shop and decided that the brand would design and manufacture its own products. He led the brand's growth until 1986, when he delegated management of the company to his children. Kamprad died in 2018 at the age of 91.

3. FIGURES. Objective data

VINÇON and IKEA represent two business extremes in the world of design. One has a limited, local mission while the other has an expansive, international vision. VINÇON never achieved a turnover of even 1% of IKEA sales in Spain. Globally, IKEA now has a turnover 3,142 times higher than VINÇON did in its best year. On the other hand, the number of items offered by the two brands is similar: almost 10,000 products.

4. GEOGRAPHY. Two spheres: local and global

VINÇON stayed in the historic Casas Carbó on Passeig de Gràcia since it opened in the 1940s. However, it also created small, ephemeral branches in Galeries Astoria de la Rambla, the Cooperativa Militar de Barcelona and the town of Calella. Finally, it withdrew to its central location and grew there, first by expanding upward to the first floor, and later to Pau Claris, Provença and Rosselló streets, all within the same city



block. In 1997, a second branch was opened in Madrid, with a small, ephemeral branch in San Miguel Market.

IKEA was founded in 1943 in a remote village in southern Sweden, but without a brick-and-mortar shop. Instead, it only sold via mail order, taking advantage of milk lorries. It was not until 1953 that the first permanent showroom opened in Älmhult, making it possible for customers to see and touch the goods that would later be delivered to buyers. 1965 saw the opening of the company's flagship store in Stockholm, and in 1973 the first shop outside Scandinavia opened its doors in Switzerland. In 1985, the first store was opened in the United States; in 1998 the first one in China, in Shanghai; in 2000 in Moscow; and the first in South America in Chile opened in 2022. IKEA opened its first shop on the Iberian Peninsula in Spain in 1996, first in Badalona and later in Alcorcón. The company currently has 18 shops, 7 urban shops and 35 planning spaces, which along with the order delivery points scattered around the country, total more than 100 customer contact points. Spain ranks 16th in terms of global sales. Today IKEA has 471 shops in 63 markets on five continents, and its expansion plans continue.

5. STRATEGY. Democratising design

Both brands have worked to democratise design in general. Their slogans are similar. Both highlight the fact that they offer a wide range of contemporary goods, even though only IKEA adds the differential value of affordability.

VINÇON's strategy was always extremely intuitive. It was based on the sensitivity of Amat's choice of products, which were in tune with the tastes of an elite clientèle that grew exponentially in the 1980s and 1990s. The company had no marketing plan or rigorous market studies. Its key ploy was mixing high quality design with local or international folk products, with distinctions based not on authorship or price, but on functional and communicative value.

However, IKEA's ideas were clear and unequivocal: the democratisation of design. To make it possible for good products to reach as many people as possible. Its success lies in fulfilling a complex, self-imposed equation in each product: combining function, form, sustainability, quality and affordability. And the company is aware that this can only be achieved through a global productive critical mass. Economy of scale is key. Plus, it also highlights environmental concerns, a factor that is becoming increasingly important.

6. INCLUSION. Design for all

Both companies view design as a universal source of solutions. But they also cater to very specific communities and groups that require special consideration. Both believe that nobody should be left without the benefits of design.



VINÇON was one of the first shops in Spain to have a special section with items for left-handed people. It also sought to provide easy-to-use utensils and tools for the elderly. Beyond the profitability of these products, the company intended to create a supply for all kinds of users. This inclusive design concept extended to animals, with a specific section for bird nests and houses for dogs and cats. Furthermore, pets were welcome in the shop, as an innovative poster at the entrance announced: Gossos si. ('Dogs yes')

Maximum functionality and accessibility have always been IKEA's hallmark, and the company has always had the ambition and commitment to create items that can be used by as many people as possible, regardless of age, health or social status.

In 2017, with the help of ergonomists and physiotherapists, the Omtänksam (Considerate) collection of products was launched, developed for those times in life when people need additional support (for example due to age, pregnancy or illness) to facilitate maximum independence within the home. With the aim of taking this a step further, in 2019 the ThisAbles project was launched by IKEA Israel, aware that one in ten people in the country has a disability issue. They came up with 13 accessories to make some of its best-selling products more accessible. Using a 3D printer, everyone one can download digital open-access files to manufacture these adaptive prosthetics aimed at improving the interaction between the person and the object. In line with the concepts of flat-pack and self-assembly, the Better Shelter project, a temporary shelter for the displaced, was developed by UNHCR and the IKEA Foundation.

7. IMAGE. Beyond the logo

Both brands began with dubious logos with a lot of explanatory text. But over time, they took on a personality of their own. The 'VINÇON' comes from the surname of one of the company's founders. As was the case with many businesses at the time, the graphic brand was created by a commercial draughtsman from the printer's. Later, they used a logo based on dots, which was installed on the façade. In 1965, poster artist Josep Artigas was they commissioned to create a 'V' as a symbol. Subsequently, neon letters were made for the façade, which became a famous landmark in Barcelona's urban landscape. From 1972, this logo was combined with a new image created by America Sanchez, inspired by stencil lettering, and was used for all graphic communication until the company closed. The corporate colour was red, austere combined with black and white.



Evolution of the VINÇON logo

IKEA is an acronym of the name of the company's founder (Ingvar Kamprad) and the farm and village where he was born (Elmtaryd and Agunnaryd). The first logo read HANDELSFIRMA IKEA, that is, 'Ikea Commercial Company'. Shortly afterwards, it was simplified to IKÉA, with an accent on the letter 'E' which had shaded outlines. In the 1940s, the logo became a single lower-case word, which helped encourage people to pronounce it as a word, rather than spelling it out. In 1951, the Sandströms agency incorporated a cloud and reverted to capital letters. Gilles Lundgren, a famous in-house designer, redesigned the logo, tilting it slightly and giving it the trademark width it still has to this day. In the 1960s, the accent was removed, the cloud became an oval, and the letters were straightened again. It wasn't until 1984 that the brand was registered, and the logo became universal. It was very similar to the current one, with the trademark blue and yellow of the Swedish flag.



Evolution of the IKEA logo

8. COMMUNICATION. A different kind of relationship with users

VINÇON had a specific approach to communication inspired by several different Mediterranean designers, with iconic, diverse creations. In the case of IKEA, though each project has its own visual identity, but one that is also easily recognisable and understandable around the world. Both companies have used simplicity and a certain gentle irony in their communication.

VINÇON took an approach based on clear, direct communication with customers, treating them with respect, and at the same time with a good dash of humour. A functional explanation for each product was always offered, as was information on



quality, origin, manufacture and design, which was considered important. At the beginning, Mariscal's drawings were used as an information leaflet. Detailed information sheets were also printed so that visitors could learn more about each product, and information postcards were sent out. In 2003, when the online shop launched, the website was given an understated structure and visual identity. But some twists were also added, such as a ranking of the worst-selling items each month.

As for IKEA, its communication approach is a pioneering example of seeking connection with people, with a view to turning them into customers. It's also an example of conciseness and precision. The printed catalogue was a milestone in the commercial history of design. It was launched in 1950, and the last hard copy edition was published in 2020. Print runs of 200 million copies were produced, and editions in 32 languages were published in 50 countries. Over the course of these 70 years, the catalogue reflected not only the evolution of design but also of society itself. The instruction leaflets are another element of IKEA's iconic communications. Kamprad didn't want long written descriptions, and suggested creating easy, intuitive instructions based on the principles of clarity and continuity. With that goal in mind, he created a character who shows the steps to follow with drawings, diagrams and numbers, but no text. This makes it possible to use identical manuals worldwide, resulting in significant logistical savings.

9. ADVERTISING. Atypical advertising

Both VINÇON and IKEA have shied away from conventional commercial advertising. Both of them have sought out a unique strategy showcasing them as an authentic, special brand, different from all others.

VINÇON decided not to use paid advertising, but rather to strengthen its in-shop communication with customers and use alternative channels to promote itself. Its only television advert, shown on the Catalan channel TV3 in 1989, took a tongue-in-cheek approach, showing the two owners, Juan and Fernando Amat, questioning the need to produce an ad, and ultimately deciding against it. But it had already been broadcast. Once again, the relationship between design and culture was clear in the short film directed by Bigas Luna.

In the case of IKEA Spain, the 'Welcome to the Independent Republic of Your Home', created by the SCPF agency, was based on the idea that your home is a place where you get to be yourself and make your own decisions. The advert ended with a doormat with the slogan printed on it, and the company ended up producing these given the high demand. When the company first opened in Spain, it came up with another slogan with a sense of humour on full display: 'At last, Swedes who aren't coming to sunbathe'. IKEA has worked with highly prestigious advertising agencies and film directors such as Spike Jonze and Wes Anderson. Its campaigns have always been imaginative, daring and

groundbreaking. One example is the pioneering advert created for US television, which for the first time showed a gay couple deciding on a table for their home, which led to a great deal of controversy.

10. PRODUCTS. Back to basics

VINÇON was a multi-brand shop that scoured the international market in search of products it felt would fit with the company's goals. In contrast, IKEA manufactures its own products with a specific purpose and strategy. Nonetheless, VINÇON did create numerous products in cases where a gap in the market was identified. These were usually basic products. In 1975 a calendar designed by América Sánchez was produced, featuring essential information only: the numbers of the months and the days, all in a large, highly visible font. That was all. No illustrations. To this day, even after the closure of VINÇON in 2015, the calendar is still being printed. A watch with a similar aesthetic was also produced, with the same simplicity, and using the same font, reproducing the typical lights found on the stalls at the La Boqueria market. Gadgets and gift items with a dash of humour were produced too, such as the 'economic crisis ham', an inflatable plastic ham rolled out in 2011.



Calendar produced by VINÇON in 1975, designed by América Sánchez

Meanwhile, IKEA has produced hundreds of thousands of products since it was founded. Some 10,000 products that the company either manufactures directly or are manufactured externally exclusively for its shops are currently on sale, including design classics such as the Billy bookcase, of which more than 60 million units had already been sold in 2017. It's estimated that there's one Billy for every 100 people in the world, and they continue to sell at a rate of one every five seconds. Ingvar got the idea of flat packs and self-assembly from Ovendals, a supplier in Hultsfred, Sweden. He was shown an unusually robust table with new adaptations that made it easier for customers to assemble. It was a turning point.



The Billy bookcase, one of the IKEA products that's become a design classic

11. BAGS. Carrying and telling others about your purchases

Bags are a generic symbol of shopping. But both for VINÇON and IKEA, they're also part of the brand identity, albeit from two diametrically opposed perspectives. VINÇON changed theirs twice every season, while IKEA's are always the same.

In 1972, Fernando Amat commissioned América Sánchez to design the first bag. She came up with a hand with six fingers representing the six letters V-I-N-Ç-O-N, the nails painted in corporate red. Since then, there have been numerous models by a wide range of creators. In 1995, there was a bag by American artist Barbara Kruger, who in 1987 had created a poster with the slogan 'I shop therefore I am', playing on the famous Descartes quote. Amat contacted her following the exhibition in Barcelona and asked her permission to use this anti-consumer slogan on VINÇON's bags. The conceptual and artistic motifs on the bags led to some collectors keeping them as graphic design trophies, and as a symbol of the evolution of local aesthetics.



One of the historical versions of the VINÇON bag. Design by Pati Nuñez from 1989.

Frakta is IKEA's famous blue bag. It was launched in 1993 as a robust, reusable, multi-purpose bag, and since then, hasn't changed in design or price. In 2017, luxury brand Balenciaga released an imitation bag designed by Demna Gvasalia costing €1,700. IKEA's reaction was to launch a campaign establishing six ways to tell if the bag was an original, one of which was the price: €0.75



Frakta, IKEA's famous bag

12. NAMING. The importance of naming

Naming has been part of the identity of both companies, an extension of an extension of communication strategy capable of creating its own language. Using humour and practical categorisation systems, needs are addressed in a particular way in order to stand out in a context at once local, diversified and universal.

In the case of the Barcelona shop, the VINÇON brand comes from the surname of its German founder. The letter 'ç', though it is used in Catalan, made the name stand out. Far from seeing this as a problem, it was used to give brand a strong, somewhat mythical, personality. The unusual '-çon' ending was also used in the naming of different services or sub-shops that were attached to the parent company: Vin Çong for items from Asia, Tinc Çon for bedroom items ('tinc son' means 'I'm tired' in Catalan) and Kitchen Çon for kitchen items. To celebrate La Sala Vinçon's one hundredth exhibition, it was renamed Sala Vincent in tribute to several artists, inspired by Vincent van Gogh's self-portrait. Furthermore, in 1991 VINÇON funded an expedition to the Vinson Massif, the highest mountain in Antarctica, to add a 'ç' to its name.

The strange, difficult-to-pronounce names of IKEA products follow a mnemonic system devised by Ingvar Kamprad. He was apparently dyslexic, and to help him remember each piece, he decided to give them names instead of numerical codes. This would make each product friendlier and more memorable. IKEA has thus spread Swedish language and spelling around the world, turning a problem into a fun challenge and a hallmark of its identity. The 2,500 products named each year follow certain rules:

- They must be 4 - 12 letters long.
- The names must be Scandinavian.

- Each product category is linked to a different theme. For example, furniture and household items are often linked to geographical areas, animals, plants, etc.
- In many cases, names include Swedish letters such as å, ä and ö.
- Off-limits: Swedish or Scandinavian surnames, words that are brand names in other countries and words/names associated with artists or fictional characters.
- They must be valid in all the languages of all the countries where IKEA is present. Words that are offensive or rude in any of these countries cannot be used.

13. CULTURE. Beyond shopping

Both VINÇON and IKEA seek to go transcend purely commercial aims and promote design as a culture. This was evident with initiatives such as La Sala Vinçon, and the museum IKEA opened in what was its first shop.

La Sala Vinçon opened its doors in a building that had been the studio of *modernista* painter Ramon Casas, located in the shop's attic, in 1973. A total of 316 exhibitions were programmed, open to all and free of charge, some focused on conceptual art, and others on renowned designers such as Alessandro Mendini, Philippe Starck, Achille Castiglioni, Ron Arad, Ingo Maurer, Santiago Calatrava, Jean Nouvel, Marc Newson, Oscar Tusquets, Konstantin Grcic, Ronan Bouroullec, Michele de Lucchi, Droog Design, Martí Guixé, Rafael Marquina, Carles Riart, Fernando Salas, Grup Transatlàntic, Martín Azúa, Curro Claret, Álvaro Catalán, Nacho Carbonell, diez + diez, Antoni Arola and more. For decades, it was active as a centre for design culture at a time when Barcelona had no such institutions. As such, it could be considered a sort of early design museum in the city.



Maria Güell exhibition in La Sala Vinçon

The Ikea Museum was opened in 2016 in the building occupied by the chain's first shop. It houses all the documents and artefacts relevant to the company's development, which are displayed in both permanent and temporary exhibitions. Visits to the museum offer a chronological overview, with dioramas of the different decades to show the functional and aesthetic evolution of contemporary living spaces. The museum also

provides information, photos and videos on the history of the company and the social and historical context on its website, holds experimentation workshops and exhibitions, and produces social publications.

14. SHOP ARCHITECTURE. Labyrinths of seduction

The shops are conceptualised as just another design product. VINÇON was located on a block in Barcelona's Eixample district, while IKEA has recognisable buildings located on the outskirts, and now in city centres as well. But in both cases, there is a labyrinthine structure intended to encourage consumption.

VINÇON's story is centred around the Eixample district in Barcelona, a symbol of the city's urban fabric and of design culture in the bourgeois heart of the city. The shop was located in the same block of houses as Antoni Gaudí's iconic La Pedrera building, and gradually grew, becoming a busy hive of activity with exits on three different streets and a large terrace. To attract visitors, the business created impressive shop window displays that changed every week. Inside, the first area showcased promotional items and new products. Wide shelves, black walls and ceilings, all aimed at focusing the attention on the piles and piles of products. There was an area for children, and VINÇON was a pioneer in providing toilets for customer use.



Interior of the VINÇON shop on Passeig de Gràcia

IKEA, on the other hand, has a unique layout. Shops are divided into three different areas: dioramas representing domestic life in a series of different rooms, areas for individual product selection by typology and a large warehouse area where the chosen products are collected on trolleys. This labyrinthine design forces shoppers to visit the whole of the store. There's also a parking service, a childcare facility and a self-service restaurant. The shop design is like a play in three acts, culminating in the purchase of the selected items in flat pack format, to be collected and later assembled at home. A rounded customer experience.



Image of an IKEA shop

The selection

At the heart of the exhibition are the **100 IKEA items chosen by Fernando and Sergi Amat** as the ones they would like to have had in their own shop. The selection was made following a **trip by Fernando Amat to the IKEA Museum** in Älmhult, Sweden, as well as **several visits to the IKEA shop** in L'Hospitalet with his nephew and **looking through both old catalogues** and the current online one.



Fernando Amat outside the IKEA Museum in Älmhult

The criteria for choosing the pieces are the same as those used for years by Fernando and Sergi Amat when they would travel to buy items later to be sold at VINÇON. They were guided by aesthetic and functional preferences, as well as price, but **above all by instinct**, considering what they themselves would like to have in their homes.



Fernando Amat at an IKEA shop, choosing the 100 items



Fernando and Sergi Amat choosing the 100 items

The exhibition, designed by architecture studio MAIO, **displays the 100 items as if they were part of an artistic installation, hung on the wall. The name and price of each is specified**, with the aim of sparking discussion on the importance of price in design.

This area also features a **selection of fifteen-some pieces with commentary**, explaining the functional characteristics and providing information on the design and production process.

The debate: What is design for?

The exhibition concludes with a space that seeks to **help visitors reflect on how professional designers perceive design themselves, and also by society in general**. Two videos present different players in the creative and cultural spheres engaged in a free flow of ideas. The debate has a broad political focus and is structured around two ideas: how the profession itself talks about its values, and how society perceives and assesses the contributions of design.



One of the videos features contributions of a range of people from outside the world of design, such as writer Mercedes Abad, **journalist and author Joana Bonet, philosopher Juan Evaristo Valls, anthropologist Manuel Delgado, critic and curator Rosa Pera, and journalist and historian Lluís Permanyer.** The second video puts the spotlight on designers themselves, represented by **architect Oscar Tusquets, designer Ana Mir, self-styled 'para-designer' Òscar Guayabero, designer and businesswoman Nani Marquina, designer Marc Morro and journalist Anatxu Zabalbeascoa,** who are joined by **Johan Ejdemo and Eva Lilja Löwenhielm, IKEA's global design directors.**

REVIU Living Lab

In parallel with the exhibition, there will be a **workshop on the concept of 'New Approaches to Domestic Life', which aims to move away from business dynamics in how design is talked about.** Designer **Curro Claret** and design and Mireia Luzárraga and Alejandro Muiño's architecture studio **TAKK** have created a 'living lab' that explores a possible kind of housing space made up of discarded furniture, reused materials, second-hand resources and assembled wooden boards. The project will be conducted in collaboration with **groups of people linked to different social organisations** in Barcelona. They will focus on a **re-think of housing needs,** seeking other ways of living that are more appropriate given current social and environmental challenges.

The format of this 'living lab' is based on the construction of an experimental show flat. On the museum floor, stencilled lines represent a generic domestic setting in the city: a 50 m² flat with two bedrooms, living room, kitchen and bathroom. The space will gradually be furnished over the course of the exhibition. In this way, **it will bring to life an experimental, alternative proposal that complements the idea of re-thinking our everyday physical environment.**

This participatory experience seeks to use the museum space to **experiment with and suggest alternatives to** the standardised, normative models of domestic furniture.



Disseny Hub Barcelona and Barcelona City Council have published the exhibition catalogue '100 IKEA objects we would have liked having at VINÇON'.



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100 IKEA objects we would have liked having at VINÇON

From 17 October 2024 to 23 February 2025. Disseny Hub Barcelona

Official opening: 16 October at 6.30 pm

Prices

General admission: €6 (includes admission to all other temporary exhibitions)

Discounted admission: €4 (includes admission to all other temporary exhibitions)

Combined general admission: €9 (includes admission to the permanent exhibitions and all other temporary exhibitions)

Discounted combined admission: €6 (includes admission to the permanent exhibitions and all other temporary exhibitions)