



INTERVIEW

# Finding the Odd Standard

In short, Odd Standard are makers of restaurant tableware. The company is founded and run by Constance Kristiansen and Tonje Sandberg, two product designers with extensive background in development and production of tableware. The two worked together at *Figgjo* for many years and found a common fascination for the experience of eating, and how tableware products could enhance this experience. It was their wish to explore all the possibilities that different materials and techniques offer, which made them leave their safe and steady positions and dive into the world of entrepreneurship.

—The first thing we discovered is that chefs and designers are very much alike; we just use different tools. It is all about composing an experience, using time and effort to do it.

It's almost hard to remember a time when gourmet food was served on flat, white barrels with silver cutlery. Today, a visit to a restaurant is just as much about the performance as the actual eating. This is what Odd Standard is all about, and the duo spends a lot of time exploring different materials and techniques when creating new products. They're trying to discover an oddity—something you can't quite put your finger on. Like the feeling of walking into a room that feels warm and cozy.

—You can never really say what it is. Nobody ever goes, 'Oh, it's the drapes, the drapes are what makes this room feel like this.' You just get the feeling that someone cared. Someone spent time on this, says Tonje. —It's very much about the customer experience, but at the same time, also an homage to the chef who took the time to pick that perfect piece of salmon. Putting it on a regular plate would almost destroy the whole thing.

Odd Standard wants to make products with the same love and compassion the chefs put into every single serving. They think this is more important now than ever, since people travel more these days—we see more, experience more, and learn more. Most people can make amazing food at home and get less commonly surprised by things. When eating out, people need to get something they can't get at home, and when looking at Odd Standard's product range... let's just say it's anything but.

Among their long and impressive range, you find porcelain cones—to make a more tactile and interacting eating experience; juniper branches, serving as little trees where you can hang salmon, salami or anything you'd like; small round plates with unglazed handles, where the handle is given a small hole for no special reason. Plates made of paper. Plates made of several layers of textiles. Ceramic plates in black clay that gives an impression of cast iron rather than ceramic. Flake-like ceramic bowls with thin and rough edges, made from lava-flecked beige clay. Glass melted onto their *Woody board*, resulting in a glass standing by itself, but more perfectly on the edge of its wooden companion. And these products are a part of their standard product range. You should see their custom design, called *Odd Orders*.

—It's not important for us that the products are pretty. We want them to awaken curiosity. But at the same time, it's not about making the craziest or most trendy objects. Let's take the cappuccino as an example—it used to be something only the cool people knew about. Now it is a given, just like pizza, which used to be an exotic thing in the eighties. Trends come and go. What was unique a few years ago will be a norm later.

They traveled around Scandinavia collecting thoughts and ideas from famous chefs for what would be the perfect tableware. Their goal was to find the recipe for how they could enhance the experience of eating even better. Be it a gourmet restaurant or a low key place, they gathered all the inspiration and information they could get, and discovered that chefs and designers aren't really that different. And thus began ODD STANDARD.

It's the designers' constant curiosity and their passion in the process that have gotten them to where they are today. By trying new things all the time, they've learned a lot about how the materials behave. Constance and Tonje are always curious to see what the product decides to look like, based on the material they've used—will it work or will it fail? The failing part has become more and more important.

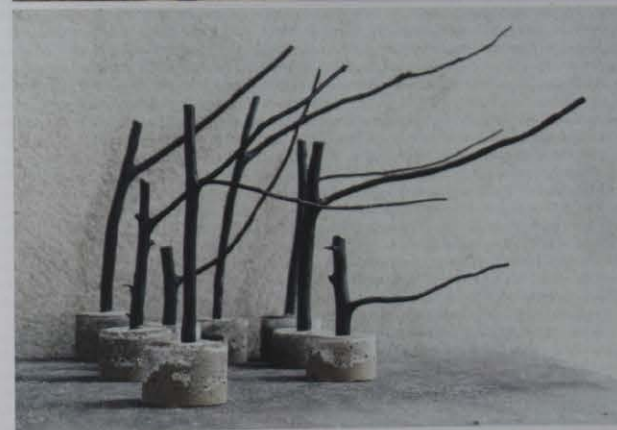
—Mistakes used to be a bad thing; a sign of failure. Now it's cherished. A mistake can become a plate we didn't think of, or a shape that fits well with a certain type of food.

Odd Standard have never been more than just the two of them, but Constance and Tonje don't see themselves as a small company. Everyone they work with is considered their colleague, always enhancing and challenging their process.

—The balance is the most difficult. We need to know when to take advice from outsiders and when to stick to our original thought. People can have brilliant ideas, and we always listen to them, but it's easy to get carried away. It's very important for us to remember what we wanted to achieve in the first place. Always finding that oddness and nurturing the joy of giving someone a whole new dining experience.

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OPPOSITE PAGE: PORCELAIN CONES NAMED HOLD ME.  
ICING SUGAR PLATES AND JUNIPER BRANCHES