



Take a peek into our

P R O P C L O S E T

A guide to curating a prop collection for meaningful, organic styling

BY N O R D & M A E



W E L C O M E !

We are so happy that you have decided to download our little guide to curating a meaningful collection of styling props. Styling, to us, is so much more than just making things pretty. It's about creating a feeling, about breathing life into a setting. About making a scene feel lived-in and relatable. About connecting items and telling a story.

Our collection has been curated over the past 8 years and longer. Some pieces we use in our styling are family heirlooms handed down to us by our parents and grandparents. On the following pages we introduce you to a few of them, and we'll give you an overview of what we think could be an ideal start to a beautiful, organic prop collection.

Our collection is reflective of our organic, nordic approach to styling. For your own collection, you will need to factor in your brand style and feel, and make adjustments accordingly.

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A B O U T N O R D & M A E

Nord & Mae was founded by Michaela Egger and Lotta Norokytö and our studio is based in the north of Europe, in Helsinki Finland.

We created Nord & Mae to tell your story through truly personal weddings, intimate elopement designs and genuine lifestyle content. YOU are our number one inspiration for all our designs.

Come say hello on Instagram if you like this course or if you have any questions! We can't wait to hear from you.

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B A C K D R O P S S T Y L I N G B O A R D S & S U R F A C E S

The foundation of everything. We have too many, and our collection keeps on growing. Large studio backdrops, fabrics (and steamers to keep them nice and neat), styling boards in different sizes, rollable styling surfaces, stone and marble tiles, wooden boards, card stock in various colors.

Get yourself a couple of all-round styling surfaces and you'll be going far. They'll give you the freedom of styling anywhere (read: in the best lighting possible!) and they really set the tone for your styled setting. There's some great portable styling surfaces out there. If you're a photographer, take them to weddings, and you no longer have to run around looking for a good surface to photograph the invitation suite and boutonnieres on. Just look for the best light instead and shoot on your styling board. It makes such a difference!



S O U R C E S

- *home supply stores, fabric & hardware stores, artists & craft stores*
- *vintage stores, thrift shops and flea markets*
- *DIY your styling boards. Some great instructions can be found [here](#) and [here](#)*

There's plenty of amazing suppliers for beautifully made styling surfaces out there. Find a small list in our prop source guide in the end

T A B L E W A R E

If you're styling for lifestyle, entertaining, weddings, it's always great to have a few different sets of complete tableware at hand. Our collection has minimalist plates and glassware, plus flatware in different colors, classic dinnerware, organic handmade ceramic plates, clear glasses, colored glasses, vintage flatware and a lot more.

We keep most of our collection in sets of 6, but also own a few unique or more expensive single pieces that we use on their own for tightly cropped settings.



S O U R C E S

- *for vintage finds: flea markets, thrift stores, estate sales, antique shops*
- *for basic tableware we love stores like H&M Home, Crate & Barrel, Zara Home*

Tip: if you have your heart set on a certain look but can't quite find the right style, commission a set by a ceramic artist you love. You can find a list of our personal favorite artists in the source list in the end.

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B O W L S , P L A T E S
P I N C H D I S H E S
U T E N S I L S & T O O L S

This is definitely its own category separate from tableware for us. Why? Because we use these for so much more than dinner table settings or food styling.

We have an ever-growing collection of pinch dishes, little plates and bowls that we use for creating interest and dimension in our styling. On table settings, we place salt or other spices in pinch dishes and we use little bowls as votive holders. In stationery shots, they hold stamps, ribbons or string, in bathroom scenes little bowls and plates are great for holding jewelry pieces for example, and around the home any little collection of trinkets or every day objects can be held in a small bowl. Using a container like this will make a styled setting look more focused and authentic, and you can use this technique for drawing attention to the right places.

Utensils are of course important for food and home lifestyle styling, but we also use little pairs of scissors or other tools for craft & artist scenes, stationery settings and more. Use them where they fit into your styling logically.



S O U R C E S

- *thrift & vintage stores, flea markets, ebay*
- *home supply stores, kitchenware stores*
- *ceramic artists*

Tip: while traveling, pick up some pieces of local ceramics, wood-carved bowls and spoons, etc.

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C E R A M I C S

While we could have fit these into the previous two categories, we find that artisanal handmade ceramics deserve and own spot in this little guide. If anything has truly upped our game in organic styling, it's quality pieces like these.

Our love for handmade ceramics went so far that we started to make our own some years back. And through this experimentation with different clays and glazes, our deep appreciation for ceramic artists has grown even bigger. Pieces like this are always an investment. We don't buy sets of ten mugs, because we know that one single piece in a styled setting alone, can have a major impact already.



S O U R C E S

- *etsy*
 - *instagram for research - so many amazing artists out there. Go and find your favorite!*
- You can find a list of our favorite ceramic artists in the source guide at the end.*



T I P : F I N D B A L A N C E

This scene styled and curated by us includes contemporary tableware from Crate & Barrel, handmade ceramic pieces by Notary Ceramics, vintage wooden bowls and cutting boards borrowed from the place we stayed at.

The secret to an authentic styled setting is not to fill it all with organic, handmade ceramics, but to find balance and create imperfection that pictures real life.

Image by Anna Peters

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T E X T I L E S

Oh man, where do we even start? Textiles play such an important part in our styling. From blankets, throws, pillows for lifestyle shoots, over kitchen towels, napkins and table linens, to styling fabrics in various hues and textures used as backdrops or accent elements, we really use textiles in just about everything we style.

Blankets, throws, pillows: we stock a range of textures and tones (that we also use for our wedding and event styling), but for starters we'd recommend just a few blankets/throws in neutral colors. Get one you'd imagine being used at the beach when it gets a little chilly (maybe a thin linen throw in a warm grey or sandy tone?), another one that will look great in a sleek contemporary home (whites and creams in luxurious, but subtle fabrics) and one that would suit a well-designed cottage in the mountains (we'd choose wool!). This way you have a beautiful range to play with for a variety of different settings. We use some of our throws as table linens and some of our table linens as throws or flat lay backgrounds. With a good piece of quality fabric, the possibilities are endless.

Smaller fabric pieces, napkins, kitchen towels: We use all of these almost interchangeably. We own fabric pieces that we use as napkins as well as styling fabrics when a scene needs softening up, as kitchen towels or cleaning rags in kitchen scenes. In keeping with our organic style, we are most partial to natural materials in our fabrics. Cotton, silk and linen are our favorites.

Tip 1: Keep large pieces of fabrics on rolls instead of folding them up. That way they won't crease and you have a smooth fabric surface to work with

Tip 2: Feel your materials before buying them. Lay them out in a flowing motion and see if the fabric is soft enough to create organic movement instead of folding in stiff ways.

S O U R C E S

fabric stores, etsy, homeware stores (check Ikea, Zara or H&M Home), lifestyle boutiques

PAPER, STATIONERY & ACCESSORIES

We are stationers too, so our collection of these pieces is endless. But apart from using them for pure stationery shots that show off our designs, we also utilize paper for other styling.

A lovely sheet of handwritten calligraphy for example can function as a backdrop for close-up shots of smaller items like jewelry. A lifestyle table top scene illustrating perhaps the life of a collector, could include stamps, old letters. A product can be styled and presented in a gift wrapping scene.

Find our fave sources in our guide at the end.



A PAPER & STATIONERY STYLING KIT COULD INCLUDE:

card stock in letter & card sizes

handmade paper

handwritten letters or vintage post cards

pretty paper scissors, paper clips

paper twine to tie together bundles of paper

pens and calligraphy tools + ink

envelopes in different sizes & colors

a few well designed pieces of stationery

calligraphy pieces (place cards, letters)

stamps (we love vintage ones)

a wax seal kit notebooks

tissue paper, newspapers, kraft paper

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R I B B O N S & S T R I N G S

We love ribbons and strings in styling. They're wonderful for bundling up pieces to create a feeling of containment and organization. At the same time they add softness and texture to any environment.

We curate a growing collection of wide to super-thin ribbons and ribbon scraps. Silk, velvet, cotton. Spools of hemp and paper twine to bundle smaller pieces or use for styling in more clean / minimalistic settings.

Tip: Prepare your silk ribbons for a shoot by pressing them with a hair straightening iron. It's the fastest, easiest way to luxurious, smooth ribbons.



A side note: Styling ribbons have become so popular that we see them used for all sorts of styling these days, to the point where their use may not make sense in a setting at all. Think about the story your ribbon tells in a shot. An open ribbon around a stationery set for instance makes total sense: somebody just opened what is maybe an invitation set and the ribbon held it together. Ribbons and flowers: yes! Someone is probably about to tie a beautiful bouquet. So, like with everything else, just ask yourself if a silk ribbon will make sense in a setting before using it.

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N A T U R A L E L E M E N T S

We are collectors. We find a pretty pebble or seashell on the beach and we'll take it home with us. We collect drift wood and pretty pieces of tree bark or root, we pick up pine cones and forage grasses and dried flower pods.

All these are a great way to add a more organic feel to a setting – selectively. We use them in flat lays, table settings, any lifestyle scenes that feel too stark or cold. Anything that needs an organic, natural touch.

Try playing with different textures to create contrast and interest.



S O U R C E S

- nature is your number one source, start keeping your eyes open during walks and you'll discover the most beautiful pieces*
- when travelling elsewhere, discover how different the nature is in other parts of the world. we often take a bunch of dried florals and grasses home in our hand luggage*
- flower shops, floral designers, garden stores*

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O U R S O U R C E S

We have listed a few of our favorite sources on the next few pages. We have a deep appreciation for artisanal work, and each piece we procure for our collection is an investment that elevates our styling. These days we rather spend on a beautiful handmade plate than on an entire set of generic dinnerware for the same price bought at a general store.

To find your own favorites, search through instagram hashtags, see if creatives you follow tag their suppliers in posts, check etsy and similar online market places. If you're looking for a special piece, many artists will commission custom orders.

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S O U R C E S

S T Y L I N G B O A R D S & S U R F A C E S

Locust Collection - portable, rollable surfaces. We adore these!

One Stone West - beautiful stone look backrops in a variety of styles

Heirloom Bindery - gorgeous fabric-bound styling boards and styling blocks

Adorn - handmade, textured styling boards

C E R A M I C S

Look up a few of our favorite ceramics artists on Instagram! Then check out @love_ceramic for more.

Notary Ceramics

David Holden

Mette Duedahl

Marie-Helene Clauzon

Florian Gadsby

Sarah Jerath

Illyria Pottery

Henry Street Studio

Yuka Ando

Ryuta Fukumura



S O U R C E S

R I B B O N S & T E X T I L E S

Silk & Willow

Froufrou Chic

Seidenband

Lancaster & Cornish



P A P E R & A C C E S S O R I E S

Saint Signora

Scribblers

Pressed Paper

Idyll Paper



V I N T A G E

Prints & Props by Linda Lomelino

The Vintage Kitchen Store

Saint Signora

Pedlars

L I F E S T Y L E & H O M E

The Future Kept

Aerende

Made Trade



T H A N K Y O U !

We hope you found some inspiration for curating your own meaningful collection of authentic props to elevate your styling.

If you enjoyed this little guide, please pop on over to Instagram and let us know about it. If you have any questions, just send us a message. We love helping out fellow creatives! If you want to be kept up to date when we release more resources such as this guide, sign up for our mailing list.

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