

# EVERY BODY



KAIKEN KANSAN  
MUOTOILUA

# DESIGN FOR

DESIGN FÖR  
HELA FOLKET

designmuseum

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DESIGN FÖR HELA FOLKET  
DESIGN FOR EVERY BODY  
8.4.-2.10.2022

CURATING:  
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## DESIGN FOR EVERY BODY

Finnish design has established a reputation as a flag-bearer for equality. Many of its most iconic design products have been perceived as having the ability to increase equality in our daily lives. The Design for Every Body exhibition addresses this idea. On what is this reputation for equality based? And what does equality even stand for in the field of design?

The ideals of equality and social justice extended into the sphere of Finnish design during the wave of international modernism in the early 20th century. The idea was that high-quality but inexpensive industrial products could help to improve the daily life of all. A good and beautiful life could be available to everybody, not just those who could afford it.

The exhibition explores the relationship between design and equality in the past century. It examines the ideal of equality in some of the most celebrated icons of Finnish design as well as in lesser-known projects. The past and present of design come together around the same questions. Who is allowed to design and on whose terms? Who do they design for? Whose work is visible, whose voice is heard?

Our understanding of equality changes along with society. The premise built by previous generations is not sufficient to guarantee equality in the future, and design professionals must continuously re-evaluate their own activities and understanding. Work for equality can never be finished.





## ICONS OF EQUALITY



photo for advertisement

photo:  
Marica Rosengård

Marimekko

1996

Design Museum

From early on, Finnish design has been strongly informed by international modernism's strive to produce everyday objects that would be beautiful, of high quality, and accessible to everybody. The development of industrial serial production in the early 20th century made this goal possible to achieve. Certain products in Finnish design history have gained the status of classics of democratic and egalitarian design: they have been seen to improve quality of life throughout society.

These products did not achieve a reputation for equality out of nowhere. Countless exhibitions and publications, museum curators, historians and companies have contributed to its building over the decades. In this room, we explore the ground in which these classics are rooted. What kind of ideals did the designer originally have, and how were these ultimately achieved?

These products that have acquired the status of classics or icons have defined understanding of equality in the design field. They have had an enormous impact on our design culture. Being such widely used objects, they also have had the power to condition our daily lives, and in so doing perhaps even contribute to partially outdated ideals of equality. Even design icons need to be reviewed critically: how do we perceive them today?

Kilta, Kaj Franck's tableware series, is one of the most widely recognized items of Finnish design. As early as the 1940s, Franck expressed his intention to “blow up dinner services”, referring to the extensive sets of decorated tableware that he found old-fashioned, unappealing and impractical. The Kilta series, on the other hand, was stackable and easy to wash, and its components could be purchased individually instead of having to buy the whole table service. Kilta was not an instant sales success, however. The public found it too stripped down, and thought its simplified form reflected a lack of wealth. A massive promotional campaign and a marketing tour organized in conjunction with the Martha Organization (a Finnish home economics organization) helped the Kilta tableware to find its way into countless Finnish homes.

Franck has been dubbed the “conscience of Finnish design”. Following the ideals of international modernism, his mission was to ensure that everyday life was functional and beautiful for everyone, irrespective of class or individual wealth. Modernism has been criticized for introducing a sort of tyranny of taste: by favouring form and lines so simple as to be austere, people's individual needs and wishes were often overlooked. In the 1970s, Franck himself admitted regretting his strictness and encouraged people to embrace the knick-knacks that gave them joy, as long as their production did not harm the environment.

Kaj Franck believed that articles for daily use should be simple and practical. He disapproved of unnecessary adornment, as reflected in his words, “The only gold I accept on the plate is that of the smoked Baltic herring; the only rose I find acceptable on the dinner table is the rose in the mouth of the Christmas pig.” In reality, only few consumers ended up setting the table with Kilta dishes alone. Instead, they were mixed with items from other tableware series found in people's cupboards.

In 1946, interior architects Annikki and Ilmari Tapiovaara won a contest to design the interior of Domus Academica, a student housing complex in Helsinki. The housing complex was primarily intended for students moving to the city from country areas who often had a hard time finding accommodation. The project was characterized by the design ideals of the austerity era, which favoured economical, hygienic and homelike interior design. These ideals steered the building of the post-war welfare state too, and the designers played an important role in making them reality.

The Tapiovaaras also designed the furniture for the student housing. The Domus chair, part of the furniture set, was also launched onto the consumer market, becoming a hit product both in Finland and internationally. The chair was easy to disassemble and pack. Despite being made from only two pieces of plywood, some wooden parts and a couple of screws, it was still a beautiful chair and a pleasure to sit in. The Domus chair became a classic that remains popular to this day. Although originally designed for students, the chair is no longer accessible to just anyone, the most affordable version of a new Domus chair being priced at €700. This is partly accounted for by the fact that the chairs continue to be manufactured in Finland, but the question remains as to whether the chair remains consistent with the original ideal of equality.

Annikki and Ilmari Tapiovaara were partners in work and in life, sharing a design office and a design stamp for 20 years. With many of their sketches, it is difficult to say who should be given credit. Yet, while countless books and exhibitions have explored Ilmari's work, Finnish design history seems completely devoid of an understanding of Annikki as a designer.

Annikki Tapiovaara is just one example of an educated female designer who worked extensively, but whose achievements were overlooked even during her lifetime. Personality traits such as modesty and shyness have often been cited to explain the invisibility of Annikki and many other women. But, in reality, they were not given room because the work of women has traditionally not been deemed as valuable as that of men.



## STOOL 60

At the time of its creation, the Alvar Aalto Stool 60 was closely connected to the modernist ideals of the time: practicality, inexpensiveness and user well-being. Home interior design emphasized hygiene and furniture capable of adapting to consumer needs. The widespread migration of people to cities from rural areas had led to urban dwellings that were short on space and called for space-saving furniture. Aalto designed his stools to be stackable, to enable them to be put aside for cleaning the floor or a moment of exercise. The stool was designed for serial production, so its price remained reasonable. Since then, increased material and production costs and upgrades in the stool's image have placed it out of the reach of many consumers.

The technical solutions for the stool were designed by master carpenter Otto Korhonen's furniture and construction company in Turku. Korhonen had shown interest in wood-bending techniques even before his collaboration with Aalto. They carried out experiments in wood-bending together and in 1932 created a series of furniture that employed new techniques for bending laminated wood and plywood. These items were also used at the Paimio Sanatorium. After this, they went on to pursue a new innovation, bending solid wood. Korhonen's factory was able to develop a method for bending the hard wood of a birch into a curved shape. The furniture leg developed with this technique is known as the L-leg, named after its shape.

## TASARAITA

Tasaraita, the first unisex fashion collection in Finland, was designed by Annika Rimala for Marimekko in 1968. Inspired by the American youth fashion trends that introduced mineworkers' jeans and T-shirts into everyday wear, Rimala wanted to design a cotton jersey shirt that would suit every body, regardless of age, gender or size. The stretchy quality of the jersey material freed the body, was easy to care for and relatively inexpensive. Tasaraita ads portrayed people of all ages and shapes wearing these evenly striped shirts, trousers, dresses and underwear.

Over the years, Tasaraita has been hailed as a symbol of equality and liberality. When everyone looks the same, everyone is equal. This was a revolutionary idea in the 1960s, as only a decade earlier, many female bodies were still bound by corsets, and the thought of a man in a dress was unheard of. In the 21st century, the relationship between design and equality has grown increasingly complicated. The ideal of equal and uniform unisex ways of dressing has given way to individualized clothes that allow the expression of a multitude of transformable identities.

Questions of equality relevant to clothing manufacture have also become more complex since the 1960s. Most Finnish designs are no longer manufactured in Finland, but in countries where production costs are lower, making it difficult to ensure fair working conditions. Even if manufacturing conditions are as they should be, uncertainties remain within the production and processing of many of the raw materials in the global production chains.

## PUBLIC SPACES FOR EVERY BODY



Kari  
chair

birch

Martela

photo:  
Paavo Lehtonen

Kari Asikainen

1969

The concept of the Nordic welfare state is well documented as a society in which the state is actively engaged in offering equal opportunities to all of its citizens.

The goal of building and maintaining a welfare state has also been applied to the work of designers. Although Finnish design classics are largely produced for the private sphere of home, many projects in the design field also seek to meet the needs of the services and public spaces of the welfare state. Such design projects include urban spaces and furniture, public transportation, health clinics and schools, and many types of assistance tools.

Traditionally, design has been evaluated against the criteria of beauty and functionality, with only a very limited number of people allowed to determine what is beautiful and functional. But this approach is inadequate when it comes to designing public spaces. They must be functional for all users, irrespective of their individual characteristics. One of the central questions of designing a public space, therefore, is determining whose views and experiences will be taken into account in the process.

## DIALOGOS 2000A / ANTTI JALAVA, TOIVO SAVOLAINEN, CREADESIGN

Dialogos 2000A was one of the first communication devices designed for people with vision and hearing impairment. The portable device was made up of two interlinked keyboards with a battery or plug-in operated computer. The device could also be connected to the telephone network with an acoustic modem for data transfer.

Dialogos was a significant and ground-breaking invention, despite not working perfectly. Lack of experience in the design of similar devices led to problems which 1980s technology was unable to resolve. The device required a completely unorthodox method of reading Braille, for example: six fingers were required for reading instead of just one, which takes a lot of practice on the part of the user.

A few units were custom-made for users, and a lot of effort was put into international marketing, but the development process was obstructed by technical issues, poor usability and difficulties in finding companies to invest in R&D, and it was soon cancelled. However, just a few years later, the technology had evolved to such a degree that note-taking devices connected to mobile phones were launched for people with vision and hearing impairment.

## KARI / KARI ASIKAINEN

In the latter part of the 20th century, designers were eager to contribute to building the Finnish welfare society. One of the key elements was the provision of new types of public spaces with furniture that would be both functional and aesthetically appealing. The Kari chair, designed by Kari Asikainen, was one of the most successful examples of this. Production of the chair began in 1969 and continues to this day. It has been suggested that the Kari chair is probably the most widely distributed piece of furniture in Finland. These very practical chairs can be found in countless libraries, health centres, government agencies and other public spaces.

A public space sets high demands for a chair, as people of all body types must be able to use it. According to its designer, the secret of the Kari chair lies in the simplicity and timelessness of its appearance, but also in its inexpensive price, stackability and firm build. Despite these features, the chair rarely makes it onto lists featuring the most celebrated design classics. The Kari chair reminds us of one of the definitions of good design: a product is a success when it works so well that no one pays it any attention.



## SURAKU / ULLA-KIRSTI JUNTILA, JARI MÄKYNEN & WORKING GROUP

Accessibility refers to a physical environment suitable for all user groups, irrespective of their functional capacity and individual bodily features. Part of the City of Helsinki's wider accessibility planning programme, the SuRaKu Cards contain guidelines for planning, building and maintenance of accessible urban spaces. They are used by designers and builders to ensure that street areas and green spaces, pedestrian crossings and resting places are safe and accessible for all users. The cards specify dimensions and locations for items such as dropped kerbs for pedestrian crossings, handrails and stairs.

In the planning of equality and inclusion in public spaces, design plays a key role. Industrial designer Ulla-Kirsti Junttila is a pioneer of urban planning. Beginning her career in the 1970s, she wrote her thesis for the Helsinki University of Art and Design on street furniture, their role and importance. Although easily overlooked, if you know what to look out for you can spot Junttila's accessible designs in the benches, railings, paving and traffic light poles on the streets and squares of Helsinki.

## AINO MARSIO-AALTO & MAIJA HEIKINHEIMO

As part of their work at the Artek design studio, Aino Marsio-Aalto and Maija Heikinheimo co-designed numerous facilities for children. Many of these were connected to A. Ahlström's pulp and paper mills in Sunila, Varkaus, Noormarkku, Kauttua, and other locations. Driving these assignments was the need to incorporate mothers into the labour force at the mills, but also factory director Harry Gullichsen's goal of improving workers' living conditions. Children's centres, nurseries and child health clinics were established in the mill communities. For these modern institutions, Marsio-Aalto and Heikinheimo designed completely new types of furniture and spaces that took the needs and dimensions of children into account.

At Artek, the designers worked anonymously, signing their designs with the agency's name rather than their own. As a result of this policy, many of the designs have been allocated to Alvar Aalto. However, modern research has made it possible to assess the role of the other designers at Artek. We do know that Marsio-Aalto and Heikinheimo used to work in very close cooperation, working around the same desk: Marsio-Aalto would produce the first designs of a product or space, and Heikinheimo would pick up the design from there, finalizing the drawings.

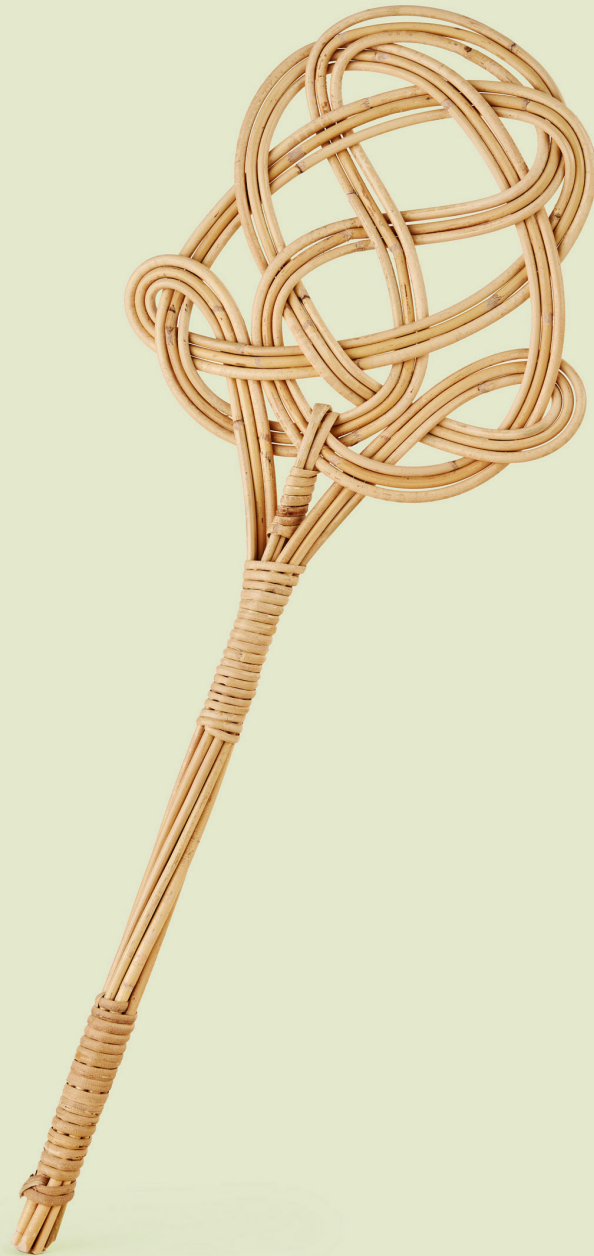
# WALL TILES FOR THE CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION METRO STATION / SEENAT

When the first six stations of the Helsinki Metro opened for use in 1982, underground travel was a novelty for the city dwellers. Simo Heikkilä and Yrjö Kukkapuro, the interior designers responsible for the design of the stations, wanted to soften the user experience by employing natural materials, such as ceramics, to balance the stainless steel that dominated the station facilities. For the ceramic tiling project for the interior walls of the Central Railway Station metro station, they had to find a company with the capability to take on a large-scale project of 350 square metres, as well as the artistic competence to design it. The project was awarded to Seenat, a ceramics workshop run by Terhi Juurinen and Riitta Pensanen, located in the village of Palojoiki in Nurmijärvi.

Artistic vision was an important criterion in the selection process, but the metro construction agency did not view the undertaking as an art project. The handmade ceramic tiles were considered just another surface material, and the small workshop was bound to execute the project under terms and conditions similar to those applied to some of the most influential businesses in the sector. The contract negotiations were long and complex, and the massive order was eventually completed to an extremely tight deadline.

The present condition of the tile work by Seenat reflects its ambiguous status somewhere between a work of art and a surface material. As the project was never officially given the status of a public artwork, the tiles have not been maintained properly and are now in poor condition.

## WORK



carpet beater

rattan

Annansilmät-Aitta

photo:  
Paavo Lehtonen

Work is a fundamental element in the life of an individual. We spend a large proportion of our waking hours at work, and the compensation we receive determines our opportunities and choices to a large degree. Work can provide a sense of importance and feelings of accomplishment and success. Work can also give the individual a sense of competence, as well as the experience of being a part of a community, traditions and society.

In the world of work, equality and social justice are reflected in the opportunities available for individuals to work at tasks they enjoy in safe conditions. The achievement of this goal is not a given, however. Work opportunities are often restricted by external factors and dependent on gender or functional capacity, and compensation received for work is not always justified.

Design can contribute to promoting equality in working life. In the production of design items, opportunities for work can open up for people whose employment prospects might not normally be very high. Design can also be used to find solutions that improve working conditions and make work safer and less strenuous.

## DISH-DRYING CABINET / MAIJU GEBHARD

A dish-drying cabinet has been a fundamental part of the Finnish kitchen since the 1940s. A complete novelty at the time of its introduction, the cabinet was invented by Maiju Gebhard, a Finnish home economics teacher. During her long and productive career, she focused on studying and improving women's working conditions. From 1943, Gebhard was the director of the Home Economics Unit at Työtehoseura, the Finnish Work Efficiency Institute. The purpose of the unit was to find solutions to alleviate the burden of the most strenuous and time-consuming tasks that usually fell to women. Their work led to the development of firewood- and water-carrying tools as well as the celebrated dish-drying cabinet.

The primary goal of the dish-drying cabinet was to reduce the time consumed by household chores. Gebhard's calculations showed that a dish-drying cabinet would cut time spent washing dishes in half by eliminating the need to dry each dish manually, the assumption being that washing dishes was a woman's chore. From today's perspective, this assumption feels unequal. Still, one of Gebhard's most important achievements was getting people to see household chores as real work, the conditions of which could be improved.

## HARAMBEE GLASS BLOWERS / MIKKO MERIKALLIO & ORNAMO

Harambee Glass Blowers was a glass-blowing factory in Lelmokwo, Kenya, founded by the Finnish glass artist Mikko Merikallio. Initiated in 1973, the project set out to develop glass production in Kenya and employ a local workforce. The glass used in the Harambee production was waste glass from a nearby bottling plant. The items produced were sold to tourists, and the profits were channelled into the maintenance of the Lelmokwo School. The project was funded by the design organization Ornamo, which received development cooperation funding from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Harambee Glass Blowers is a good example of a wider 1970s phenomenon, with Western designers becoming interested in development cooperation projects. They felt that design had focused for too long on making luxurious things for the rich while neglecting the real needs of humankind. It is difficult to assess the real contribution of development cooperation projects, however. Despite their good intentions, the designers were always enmeshed in a complex network of political and financial gain that overlooked the wishes and needs of the local community. The Harambee Glass Blowers project operated for a few years before its already scant funding was cut off.



# SÁMI DUODJI CERTIFICATE

*Duodji* is a North Sámi word for handicrafts made by Sámi people. Traditionally, duodji has referred to articles made for daily use and survival in nature. Handicrafts can be a key element in the identity of the Sámi people and express the personal history and world view of their maker. The Sámi artisans no longer make these items only for their own use, and they can be bought by anyone. The idea behind the Sámi Duodji certificate is to certify the authenticity of the Sámi product in terms of materials, manufacturing technique and maker.

The certificate is issued by the Sámi Duodji association, which has worked for decades to ensure the preservation and development of Sámi artisan culture. Handicrafts are an important livelihood for many Sámi people, but it is threatened by the commercial exploitation of their culture, trampling of Sámi peoples' rights, and widespread ignorance of the Sámi. The Sámi Duodji certificate and the association play an invaluable role in safeguarding livelihoods, skills and traditions, as well as increasing cultural awareness on a larger scale.

On sale in countless souvenir shops, these wooden cups imitate the traditional Sámi cup or *kuksa*. An authentic *kuksa* is made by hand using a birch burl that is processed in the direction of the grains of the burl. Each *kuksa* is a unique piece of handicraft, reflecting its maker's skill and experience with the material.

The wooden cups sold to tourists are merely mass-produced copies of the *kuksa*, and the manufacturing conditions and origins of the material are unknown. They exploit the traditions and culture of the Sámi people and eat into the livelihoods of Sámi artisans. An authentic *kuksa* cup can be recognized by the Sámi Duodji certificate.

# HEKTOR COVERALL / P&M DESIGN

In the early 1970s, interior designer Pi Sarpaneva and textile designer Maj Kuhlefelt founded P&M Design, specializing in designing workwear and work uniforms. Until then, design had not considered workwear of any particular interest, and Sarpaneva wanted to, in her own words, "get involved in things that had been done very poorly or overlooked completely." During their career, Sarpaneva and Kuhlefelt dressed Finnish State Railways employees as well as countless cleaning staff, factory workers and farmers.

P&M Design was a part of a larger phenomenon of Finnish designers becoming interested in workers' conditions. As recently as the early 1970s, hundreds of people were killed in occupational accidents in Finland every year due to lack of proper protective equipment and unsafe working conditions. These shortcomings were observed by designers, who became involved in the development of work environments and sought to develop work ergonomics, comfort and safety. The home environment, with its furniture and dishes, was no longer the only space they designed for, and items like hardhats, operator cabs and tractor seats began to play an equally important role in Finnish design.

In common with the Hektor coverall by Maj Kuhlefelt and Pi Sarpaneva, the Nokia rubber boot is included in the Design Museum collections, and as such is considered to have played an important role in the history of Finnish design. However, no information about the designer of the boot was ever recorded, and it is listed in the museum's database under the company's name only. In the world of design, the designer sometimes remains anonymous while the company manufacturing the products takes the credit. In some cases, further object details can be added to the item data if new information is acquired through research or other means.

Founded in 1919, the Annansilmät-Aitta company is located in Itäkeskus in Helsinki with a mission to sell products made by hand by visually impaired artisans. Among the most important products in the company's catalogue are hand-made brooms, woven baskets and cane furniture – it is the only manufacturer of cane furniture in Europe. The designs are based on traditional handicrafts and many remain unchanged from the company's early days.

Annansilmät-Aitta is owned by the association for the visually impaired in Helsinki and Uusimaa (Helsingin ja Uudenmaan Näkövammaiset ry or HUN). The organization advocates for the visually impaired, organizes support services and activities and helps the visually impaired find employment. HUN also organizes handicraft entrepreneur training for its members.

The primary goal of Annansimät-Aitta, rather than making profit, is to provide work for people for whom finding employment can be a challenge. The company's products reflect the types of values that can be associated with hand-made items. The meaningfulness of these items is not only determined from the consumer perspective, but is also based on the employment opportunities they can provide.

## MULTIPLE VOICES

Finnish society is composed of a number of parallel communities and cultures, not all of which are allocated the same amount of space in public discussion or in visual representations. Visibility matters, both in the sense of division of common resources and potential to wield influence in society. This refers not only to the attention and acknowledgment received, but also to a sense of inclusion and belonging.

A similar inequality applies to the past and the way in which it has been recorded: design history reveals only a limited amount of stories, told from particular perspectives. Museums and other memory organizations play an important role in selecting the stories that will be passed on to the generations to come. Whose stories will be included in the history of Finnish culture? Whose voices will be heard, and what kind of stories will be left untold?



plate

earthenware

Arabia

photo:  
Paavo Lehtonen

Esteri Tomula  
(decor)

Design Museum

## AFRICAN FASHION WEEK HELSINKI

African Fashion Week Helsinki (AFWH) was first launched in 2018. Although primarily an event, it is also a community and an organization that seeks to raise awareness of African cultures in Finland through activities that promote and visibilize fashion professionals with African heritage and their creativity. The annual fashion show organized as part of AFWH has been a hit, with large audiences at venues like the Gloria Theatre and the Tiivistämö Culture Centre.

The founder of AFWH, Samia Mohamud, says that fashion professionals of African descent lack a platform for showcasing their works, cultures and skills. Traditionally, the Finnish fashion scene has favoured a narrow understanding of what it means to be Finnish, from the designers to the aesthetics and colours of the objects. This approach is undergoing a change, however, and understanding of Finnishness is broadening. How can more space and opportunities be created for change? How can the design world become involved in the promotion of intercultural dialogue?

## ARCTIC INDIGENOUS DESIGN ARCHIVE / ÁJTTE SWEDISH MOUNTAIN AND SÁMI MUSEUM, SÁMI ARCHIVES OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF FINLAND, AND SÁMI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCE

The Arctic Indigenous Design Archive (AIDA) collects and conserves the work of *duojárs* (Sámi craftsmen, artists, and designers). Its aim is to ensure the preservation and continuity of *duodji* – art, craft and design connected to Sámi livelihood, traditions, and identity. AIDA strives to find new approaches to archiving *duojárs'* work while renewing archival practices to suit Indigenous worldviews and ways of life.

Through generations, *duodji* skills have been passed on word-to-mouth, falling outside archives that are based on a limited Western ideology of what is worth keeping. AIDA collects all kinds of materials that were saved during *duojárs'* creative processes: experiments, sketches, failed ideas, biographical materials, photographs, newspaper clippings. This way, a fuller and more authentic picture of *duodji* thinking and practice is archived.

AIDA works in close contact with Sámi *duojárs* in collecting, researching, interpreting, and exhibiting their work. This display presents a small selection of archival materials from Inka Maarika Kangasniemi (b. 1978), Inari Sámi designer and entrepreneur; Mihku-Ilmár, Ilmari Laiti (b. 1943), Northern Sámi Master *duojár* and a *duodji* education pioneer; and Katarina Spik Skum (b. 1971), *duojár* with a master's degree in *duodji* from the Sámi University of Applied Sciences.



In the 1970s, a course called Basics of Design and Communication (SVYP) was mandatory at the Helsinki University of Art and Design. The curriculum stated that one of the most important goals of the course was to help students find a “critical view on society”. Excursions to factory workers’ homes or homeless people’s shelters were organized as part of the coursework. The purpose of these excursions was to get students to think about what kind of design was really needed in society.

The contents of the course changed from year to year, but one of the repeated assignments was a visit to Helsinki’s less prosperous neighbourhoods to interview the residents and visit their homes. The aim was to find out, what a person needs in order to live a good life. Today, the reports written for these assignments and the accompanying photographs offer a thought-provoking trip back in time to the everyday lives of the people of Helsinki several decades ago. They also provide a record of lives that are seldom recorded in history. The course in its original form was removed from the curriculum in the early 1980s. What kind of lives should the designer of today study to help them in their work?

## DECORATION DESIGNERS AT ARABIA FACTORY

At the turn of the 20th century, decorative painting was dominated by men, both in Finland and internationally. This soon began to change, however – the shift eased in by the fact that porcelain painting had for a long time already been considered an acceptable pastime for women. International modernism viewed decorative work as belonging specifically to the female domain. A stereotypically female sensibility was thought to be needed for floral decorations, and the attention to detail characteristic of decorative painting was considered more compatible with the female character.

The hand painting department, which would later evolve into the industrial art department, was established at the Arabia factory in 1943, providing important work opportunities for many women as decorative pattern designers and painters. Many of Arabia’s most celebrated artists in the decades to come, Ulla Procopé, Esteri Tomula and Raija Uosikkinen among others, started out in this department managed by Olga Osol. Nearly all of the department’s employees were women. Working conditions in the department were strictly controlled, and these employees were meagrely paid. Arabia factory records tell us that the decorative designers and painters were very busy but, although their work was very important to product sales, they rarely received the amount of attention showered on the product designers.

Raija Uosikkinen, one of the most productive decoration designers at Arabia, once mentioned in an interview that, upon visits from journalists, the decoration designers were asked to leave the room. Only the male product designers were allowed to bask in the spotlight.

The status of the decorative painters was even lowlier, spending long working days in extremely challenging working conditions. Their names have been omitted from the history of design, though their personal painting styles decorated items that found their way into countless Finnish homes: in these dishes of the Ara series, for example.

In recent years, the significance of representation has received growing attention in the field of graphic design. Who get to be represented in the images displayed in the media, advertising and other forms of visual culture? What kinds of roles and activities are allocated to them? Our contemporary culture surrounds us with an endless amount of images. These images play an important role in reinforcing or disassembling norms and stereotypes. Feelings of inclusion and acceptance are greatly boosted when as many people as possible can see people like themselves pictured in popular culture images.

In the work of an illustrator, the outlines of an illustration are determined by the individual or organization that commissions the project. The commissioner defines certain conditions, such as a topic, message or other meaning that they wish the illustration to convey. The illustrator can, however, decide on many things, including what kind of human figures are portrayed in the image. Illustrator Sanni Wessman began to pay attention to her tendency to always draw slim human shapes that recreated a beauty ideal only attainable for a few people, and made a conscious decision to begin to include human figures of different shapes and body types in her illustrations.

## IDENTITY



Roma jewellery

photo:  
Paavo Lehtonen

2022

Identity refers to the idea a human being holds of themselves. Who am I in relation to others and the world around me? Design offers tools for the construction and expression of an individual's personal identity. Items, such as clothes and jewellery, reflect not only personal history and individual taste, but also a sense of belonging to a group or community.

Sometimes objects, or lack of them, can become obstacles to self-expression. In the world of design, it is not a given that people and identities of all kinds are acknowledged equally. Often, designs are made for an imaginary ideal or an "average" person that barely exists in real life. When designers try to create something that works for everyone, many needs are overlooked. The diversity of human nature becomes visible when individuals are included in the design process.

## MUOTOILULUOTAIN / TUULI MATTELMÄKI, KATJA SOINI & WORKING GROUP

As part of their work, designers often make decisions based on their own assumptions of what people need or want. Design probes are tools that help the future users of a product or service to voice their ideas during the design process. They were developed in a London design school in the late 1990s, inspired by the French avantgarde group the Situationist International.

Industrial designer and professor Tuuli Mattelmäki has conducted pioneering research on design probes. Her goal in the Väinö project, completed in the early 2000s, was to explore how probes could be used to improve understanding of the lives of older people, and contribute to the design of better environments, tools and services for them to use.

The Väinö project's probe included elements such as a disposable camera, question cards and drawing supplies that were used by a group of older people to capture their lives, their dreams and their ideas about growing old and what makes for a good life. For example, they were asked to take a photo of the most uncomfortable piece of furniture they owned, capture the best moment of their day, and draw a map of their human relationships. The materials collected complemented the research team's assumptions with stories and personal descriptions that showcase just how different people, their lives and their dreams, really are.

## FFORA ACCESSORIES / LUCY JONES & JOONAS KYÖSTILÄ

FFORA, a design company based in the United States, strives to design and manufacture wheelchair accessories that are both beautiful and practical. The product range consists of bags, purses, cup holders, and tumblers, all of which can be attached to almost any wheelchair with a specially designed clamp functioning as a dock. This way, the accessories are securely attached and reachable without getting in the way of the wheels. The products are designed in collaboration with wheelchair users, who test dozens of different prototypes in order to give feedback about their functionality.

Joonas Kyöstilä, FFORA's former Industrial Design Lead, has stated that most accessories for wheelchairs have a medicinal appearance, which often makes their users uncomfortable. Wheelchair users should have access to fashion and aesthetics just like anybody. However, the design field has not properly addressed either the shared or individual needs and desires of the disabled population, and there is a lot of work to be done around making different bodies visible. Self-expression through fashion is for everybody.



## JEWELLERY IN THE ROMA CULTURE

Jewellery is used, not only to decorate the wearer, but also as a means of communicating messages. Throughout history, items of jewellery have been used to express the wearer's status in society and membership of one group or another, as well as the wearer's personal taste and identity. In the Roma culture, jewellery retains its special status to this day. Jewellery was originally extensively used for practical reasons: at a time when the Roma were not permitted to own land or settle permanently because of their minority status, they were forced to live a nomadic lifestyle and carried their assets on their person in the form of jewellery. And, like their traditional dress, the Roma use jewellery to communicate the wearer's identity as a member of a community.

In the Finnish Roma community, jewellery is passed on from one generation to the next, but at the same time the jewellery culture is in a constant state of flux. New pieces of jewellery are custom-made for their wearer, and sometimes inherited pieces of jewellery are melted down and the materials reused in new designs. In this way, the sentimental value of an inherited piece is preserved in a new style better suited to the new wearer. The jewellery designs are partly based on traditional elements, such as wide hoops, set gems and baton shapes, but they are combined into new, individual designs that reflect contemporary trends.

## OBSERVER/OBSERVED / IIRIS KAMARI

In the late 1960s, unisex fashion came into vogue, with the goal of designing clothes that would fit every body, irrespective of gender or body type. The purpose of uniform clothing was to achieve equality: if everyone looked the same, everyone would be equal. Our understanding of gender has grown since then. Instead of two, opposite sexes, today gender is perceived as a spectrum of different expressions.

The critical approach of fashion today views gender from a different perspective than these earlier unisex ideals. Designers do not seek to produce clothing bound to a certain gender, but neither do they want to create uniform, unisex clothing that removes all gender signals. Contemporary design emphasizes variety and the possibilities offered by clothing to express unique, flexible and fluid gender identities.

Iiris Kamari's Observer/Observed collection contains 40 pieces, the primary materials of which are hand-woven artificial fur and nylon tulle in a light tone. This exhibit consists of five layered pieces of clothing that can be worn either together or separately.



sculpture

cardboard

photo:  
Paavo Lehtonen

Howard Smith

1982

Design Museum

# WHO IS VISIBLE IN FINNISH DESIGN?

The human figure is a recurring image in design products and items. This display contains examples from the Design Museum collection of figures represented in objects throughout the history of Finnish design. Who has been viewed worthy of portraying? In which looks and roles have the subjects been captured?

Seen through a contemporary lens, some of the designs may appear amusing or strange, some even insulting. Stereotypes, racialization and exoticism abound. It is important not to paper over the mistakes of the past, however. They are showcased to remind us that to achieve equality we must identify power structures and achieve mutual respect, also in the field of design.

The Arabia children's tableware series Zoo was launched in 1951, using a decal decoration designed by Anja Juurikkala. The pictures include caricatures of indigenous peoples portrayed in stereotypical dress and features. The racism reflected in the series was detected early on, and the original decorations were not in production for long. They were replaced with animal motifs until production of the series was stopped completely in 1968.

The concept of the "male gaze", originally rooted in 1970s feminist cinematic theory, has recently been brought to wider attention. The concept means the practice of reducing the presence of a woman to the object of a man's sexual gaze, particularly in the arts. Michael Schilkin's portrait of a young African woman can be interpreted as an example of the male gaze in a work of art. Also present is the racialization dimension, referring to prejudices and assumptions based on the assumed ethnicity of the subject.

The story behind Schilkin's work has not survived, and it is perhaps doubtful whether this work should be exhibited at all. It is here because the presence of different types of "gaze" in Finnish design remains largely unprocessed. Who is entitled to become a maker or a viewer? Who is left with the role of the object?

In the 1940s and 1950s, Anja Juurikkala designed a number of articles for Arabia with a Sámi theme. Juurikkala is not the only Finnish designer to have used Sámi culture in their designs. Sámi symbols have been productized and commercialized by outsiders over the course of several decades, and these activities still continue despite a growing understanding of the associated problems. An image based on stereotypes is a means of objectification and therefore harmful. It is a form of exercising power that is used to fortify a Western world view and one's own status by emphasizing the otherness of minority groups.

FOR WHOSE

BODIES

DO WE DESIGN?

The humble chair is one of our most mundane objects, and chair design is one of the designer's basic tasks. The design process emphasizes the importance of user comfort and ergonomics. The principles of ergonomics have long been based on universal measurements used to design furniture and facilities suitable for every body. But, in reality, every human body is different and the standard body does not exist. How can the diversity of human bodies be taken into account?

This collection of chairs provides the seating for the events programme audiences. It is made up of chairs designed for different types of uses, situations and spaces, and for different types of bodies. There is a classic school chair, a senior chair, and the chair awarded the title of the best listening chair in the world. Can you find one that's comfortable for your body?

WHOSE


VOICE

BECOMES HEARD?

Museums have traditionally been considered havens of research information and expertise. Museum curators have been authorities in their fields and their views have not been questioned. Today, the idea that museums and exhibitions present absolute truths about the world seems outdated. Museums are increasingly seen as places where the visitors themselves produce knowledge and understanding of the world, based on what they see.

The work of a curator is still rooted in individual views and choices, however. In this space, you can hear a conversation between Kiia Beilinson and Nimco Hussein in which the two design professionals seek to provoke ideas on the many ways to approach the themes of the exhibition. Beilinson and Hussein have both, in their own work, addressed questions of equality and representation in design.





Central Railway Station  
metro station

2022

photo:  
Paavo Lehtonen

KAIKEN KANSAN MUOTOILUA  
DESIGN FÖR HELA FOLKET  
DESIGN FOR EVERY BODY  
8.4.-2.10.2022

CURATORS:  
KAISU SAVOLA JA ANNA VIHMA

VISUAL IDENTITY:  
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PHOTOGRAPHY:  
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EXHIBITION ARCHITECTURE:  
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