

Tecollisuustalteen Litto ORNAMO  
Finnish Association of Designers ORNAMO

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• Interior Designers SID  
• Craftsmen and Designers TKO  
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XII ICSID  
1981 HELSINKI  
FINLANDIA HALL



ORNAMO  
70 YEARS





The basic characteristics of Finnish design are a closeness to nature and a certain modesty. Natural materials and the Finnish design tradition, which has always been close to people and their everyday life, are still the characteristics with which we can enrich international product design.

Finnish industry strives to value originality and quality in its products. This brings additional employment to designers working in industry. It is, however, not sufficient that factories should design products for the needs of the consumer, rather, the consumer should think of a product as his own. The reciprocal influence of designer and consumer comes from real collaboration. The designer should be cognizant of the conditions in which the consumer uses a product. The very best products are conceived as a result of many stages, of the awareness and experience of several different people. Only when this happens one can speak of achievements which enrich our society and cultural life.

Society is rapidly changing and becoming technologized and international and needs people who have creative ability and a sense of responsibility. I believe that ICSID, as the inter-

national organization of designers, promotes the development of these important human qualities.

I am very happy that Finnish designers want to participate in developing the field of design in their own individual way by inviting their colleagues from all over the world to look at our country and, above all, to discuss matters they consider important.

*Kalevi Kivistö*

Kalevi Kivistö  
The Minister at the Ministry of Education



## TWO TRENDS

Many scholars have, following the French usage, termed post-war Finland the 'second republic'. Compared to the pre-war republic, the second republic most significantly differs in the structure of industry and production, urbanization, the extent of its international ties and in its foreign policy. All of these sectors, the changes in which affected the whole nation, have also had an influence on developments in design, architecture and other fields of art.

One can, however, to general tendencies in thought which – even though bound up with social change – depict the ideative atmosphere more accurately than economic and political trends. One may speak of two major trends in post-war Finnish cultural life.

The first trend is tied up with the creation of international relationships in post-war Europe, where Finland was one of the defeated countries. In painting and literature, for example, the limited cultural ties and the avoidance of external impulses of earlier decades were felt to be mistakes – though the cry 'Open the windows to Europe!' had often echoed in many different places. Scandinavian art critics could think of Finnish art as being by itself, left behind.

Finland could not be satisfied with this. In the field of the pictorial arts, for example, Finland soon nullified the rest of Europe's and was almost too ready to, strongly supported by the public, receive all the manifold and opposing trends of Euro-American art during the 1960's. Pictorial art reached this position with the accompaniment of many internal contradictions and the strengthening social prestige of art.

Architecture and design had formed international ties in the 'first republic'. The International Style had helped to promote international dialogue in these areas and, in architecture in particular, this dialogue continued after the war with an Anglo-Saxon orientation.

Nevertheless, the Finnish public was surprised when Finnish designers made such an impressive breakthrough at international forums, starting with the Milan Triennale in 1951. Finnish and Italian design complemented one another in this and many other exhibitions, even though Finland's modern design wave of the 1950's mainly identified with the broad spectrum of Scandinavian design. One may exaggerate and say that Finland used architecture, design and

sport as strong weapons when fashioning an identity in the economic boom-tinged 1950's.

The second trend might be described as criticism of the first, and perhaps as criticism of the uncritical reception of internationalization which may still be seen in the fields of the visual and other arts as well. National values were strongly emphasized during the first republic, and the second republic's art inherited much that was fundamental and basic from as early as the pioneer days of the 1800's. In the 1960's, however, people woke up to notice the all-embracing expansion of foreign influence, spanning everyday life from home decoration to the 'consciousness industry' of the mass media.

The Finnish development also had its domestic causes, amongst others, widespread urbanization and industrialization, which, proceeding at Europe's most rapid pace, altered Finland from a traditional agricultural country into a Western European market economy country. Finland is now experiencing the advantages and disadvantages of these changes. Many people who have moved to the cities feel themselves to be without roots. They are unable to bring their old environment with them to high-rise dwelling areas.

Attempts have been made to ensure the continuity of culture. One way to relieve the monotony and standardization of urban life is to surround oneself with the romance of tradition; if this is not possible, the new romanticism, brought about in accordance with the laws of the market can be used. This last perhaps means a revolt against the final stage of functionalism, against completely nuance-less 'economic functionalism'. Others, though, may put the question: is the new romanticism not an escape from reality, non-integrating, alienating. One will have to look for answers to these questions in the Finland of the 1980's.

A deeper trend has been found from a wider sphere, from activity which actualizes the Finnish national heritage over the whole of art in its entirety, from 'Kalevala', the national epos, to the hoary methods of building with logs, from the use of timber and traditional textiles, from 'pelimanni' folk music and folk dances to national light music and Finnish films. The dangers of isolation and alienation are apparent here, too, but the cry for help uttered on behalf of traditions is indeed an honest stand on the problem of the environment, viewed as widely as possible.

Finnish designers will, in the light of these trends, have a dual task in the late 1970's: they will have to ally their own work with the search for the Finnish identity both on the preservation and rejuvenation of tradition and in the sphere of international communications. Designers will have to accord to economic development in finding their solutions. International communications also take part in economic competition. This, however, should not be allowed to stand in the way of Finnish people's shy optimism for a bettering and integration of their living environment.

*Pekka Suhonen*

Pekka Suhonen, author, critic



## ICSID and ORNAMO

The development of Finnish industry started in the 17th century and it began to practice independent, consistent design about one hundred years ago. It has been demonstrated that the Finnish applied arts industry developed through the impact of domestic handicraft traditions and foreign form influences.

The industrial significance of wood pulp and paper, in terms of both dollars and tons, has always been very great. We nevertheless have to remember to develop those industries which operate at a high level of technical refinement and originality. – Industrial design is, in Finland, best known for the design of various articles pertaining to the home. Recent decades have, however, seen an adaptation and a widening of operations. Household articles have been joined as objects of design by technical equipment, electronics, transport equipment and working machines. – This process of change is illustrative of our industrial development.

There are two design organizations proper which work to develop product design in Finland: ORNAMO and the Finnish Society of Crafts and Design. – The Society of Crafts and Design

is by nature a 'promotive' organization; it arranges exhibitions and is active in the publishing field. It is also responsible for the administration of the Museum of Applied Arts. The Association's membership is made up of industrial enterprises and private persons. – ORNAMO has a very wide base and is the central professional organization of designers and artistic craftsmen. ORNAMO's membership is made up of the bodies which belong to the organization and the persons who do creative work belonging to those bodies. Its members represent the whole product and environmental design field. ORNAMO has been an active member of ICSID since the latter was founded in 1957.

The Scandinavian countries make up a cultural-political entity of, in global terms, an unusual kind. There is a long tradition of collaboration between the Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland – in the field of design. We shall continuously develop this cooperation in various ways.

Our built environment will, in the near future, be more and more made up of industrially manufactured components and elements. We are at this moment living in an age where

industry is struggling with itself, trying to come to grips with energy and raw material questions and pollution problems. We are moving on to more difficult and demanding technology. We have to underline the importance of creative thought and creative accomplishment. A new system of aesthetics is coming into being alongside the new technology. Functionalism has been driven to an unnecessary crisis. Reappraisal of artistic handicrafts is being of service to industry in leading it to check its stance with regard to the humane quality of its products. – Designers are looking around and asking: should one be a consultant or a confidant of one's commissioner? should one become commercial? should one participate in the export of planning? where do the limits of our responsibility lie?

We are part of a chain of events which with good reason be called a new industrial revolution. The primary question for designers is the design of ordinary products for ordinary people. The goals are practicability, durability, pleasant appearance and moderate cost. Technological change cannot influence these principles.

A designer should, if necessary, also be able to take a critical attitude in his work. The occa-

sional changes of direction and aims are of prime importance to us. This is the only way of guaranteeing a rational future for our professional activity.

The Finnish Association of Designers, ORNAMO, will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 1981. In connection with this we would like to stimulate our activity as a member of The International Council of the Societies of Industrial Design by inviting the ICSID Congress and General Assembly of 1981 to Finland. We are prepared to make the Congress a rich cultural event, to the realization of which the other Scandinavian countries will also contribute. Our endeavour is supported by Finnish cultural life and by Finnish industry.

*Antti Nurmesniemi*

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