

FOUR SEASONS

MAGAZINE



ISSUE THREE 2009 • By George, That's Fashion! • **Aliona Doletskaya** • Truffle Sandwiches • **Louise Bourgeois** • **Marimelko**

Contributors



{ ILLUSTRATOR }

Dave Stevenson

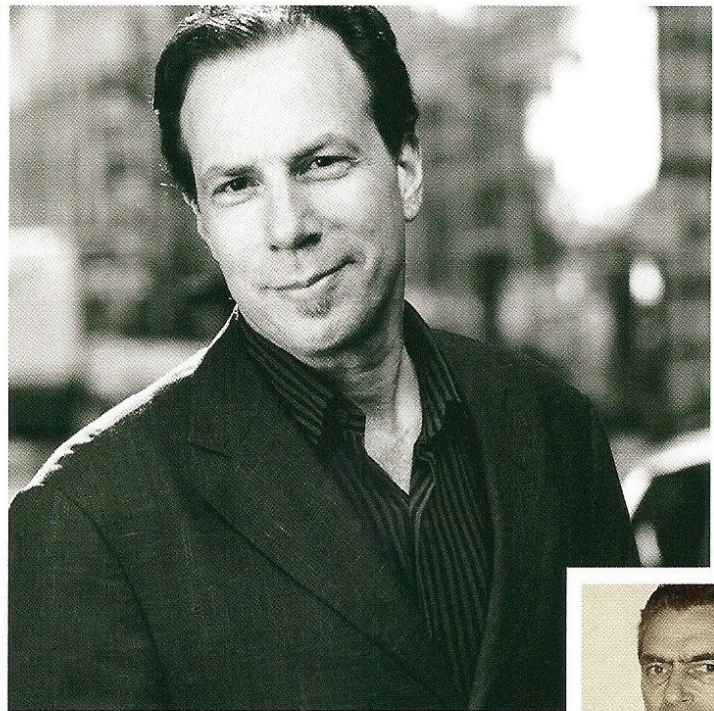
Dave Stevenson ("The World's Most Decadent Sandwich," page 60) grew up in the Sonoma Valley of Northern California and studied advertising and design in Denver, Colorado. He's been a freelance illustrator for more than 20 years, working with *National Geographic*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, Robert Mondavi Winery and Microsoft, among others. His work has appeared in *HOW*, *Print*, *Art Direction* and *Communication Arts* and he has received a Silver Medal from the New York Art Directors Club and a Silver Award from the San Francisco Society of Illustrators.



{ WRITER }

Michele Meyer

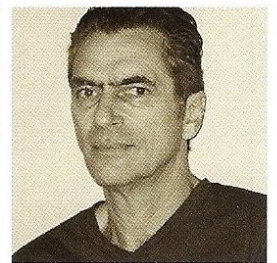
If fashion had rehab, Michele Meyer ("A Passion for Fashion," page 46) would have been committed in childhood. The daughter of a retailer, she signed up to cover Paris collections at age 10 (not that her allowance covered airfare). By age 20, Meyer mourned the rift of designer Geoffrey Beene and W's John Fairchild. Her dark garb served her well as she covered Paris, Milan and New York runways. A former correspondent for *Lucky*, *Allure* and *Women's Wear Daily*, she has also contributed to *GQ*, *Travel + Leisure* and *National Geographic Traveler*.



{ WRITER }

Steven Beschloss

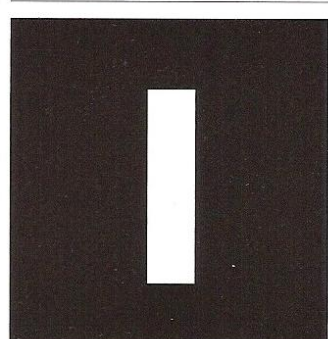
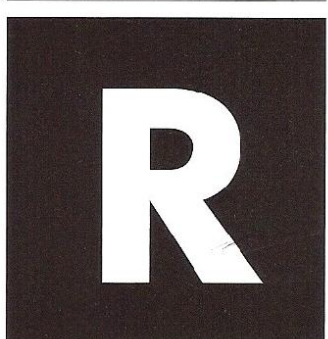
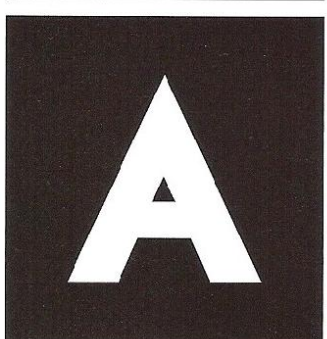
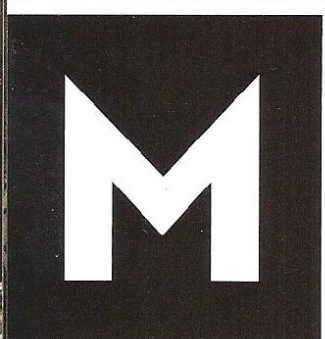
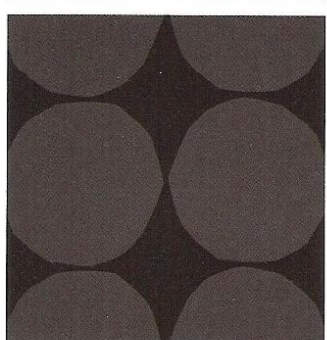
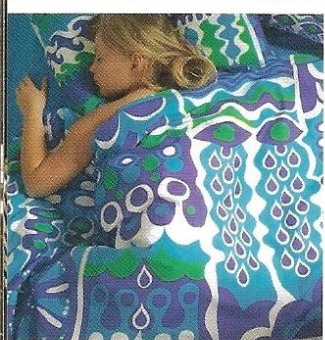
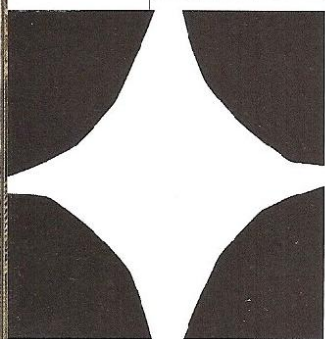
Steven Beschloss ("Marimekko: The Expression of Joy," page 84) visited Helsinki, Finland, in 1991, not long before the neighbouring Soviet Union collapsed. Inspired by the excellence of Finnish design, the special quality of the northern light and the dramatic stories emerging from post-Soviet Russia, he moved to the Finnish capital from New York, staying four years. An award-winning journalist and filmmaker, Beschloss has tackled assignments on culture and international affairs for *The New Republic*, *The Village Voice*, *GQ* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*—and he has made several films for European television, including *The Miracle*, shot in St. Petersburg.



{ WRITER }

Jonathan Lerner

Jonathan Lerner ("Indulging in Good," page 70) recycled his earlier life as an itinerant antiques dealer into a career as a feature writer specialising in topics such as historic preservation, architecture and urbanism, decorative arts and travel. His work has appeared in *Metropolitan Home*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Town & Country*, *Metropolis*, *American Craft* and many other publications. He lives in Atlanta, venue of the 2010 annual meeting of the Congress for the New Urbanism, for which he volunteers as head of media outreach efforts.



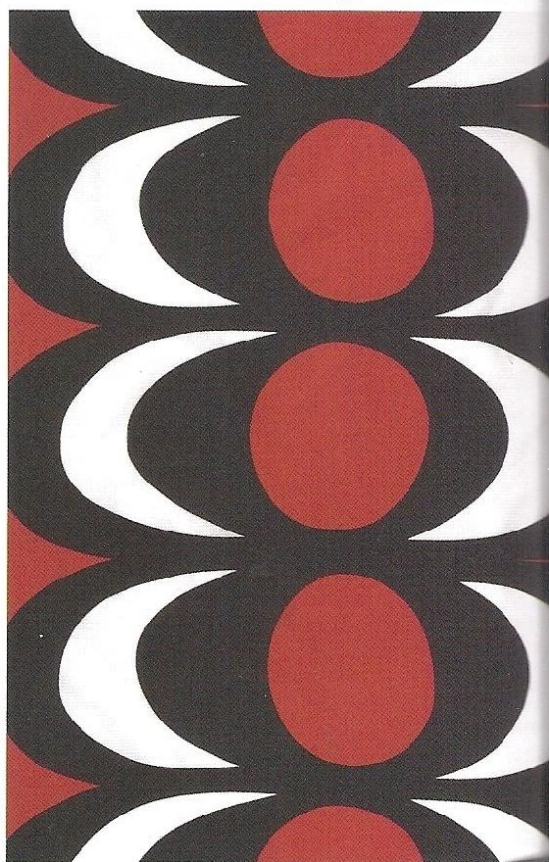
From the beginning, Marimekko was a bold blast of colour, a vibrant expression of joy. Launched in the spring of 1951 by Armi Ratia and her husband, Viljo, Marimekko offered distinctive designs that energetically opposed the conventional mind-set of war-ravaged Finland

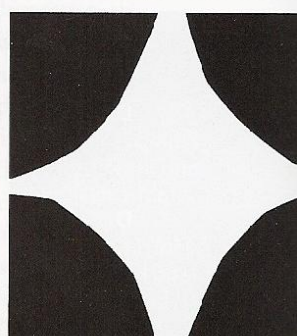
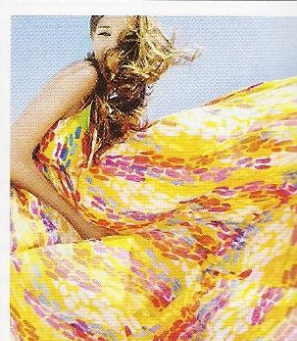
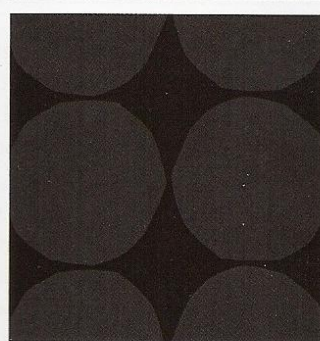
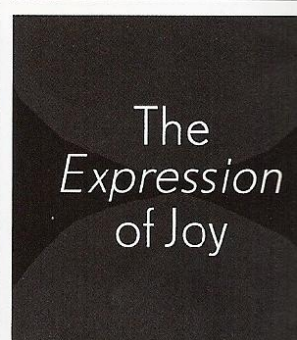
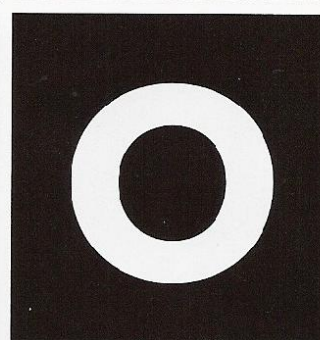
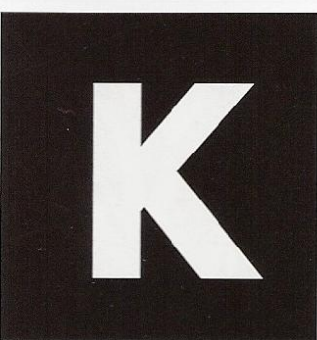
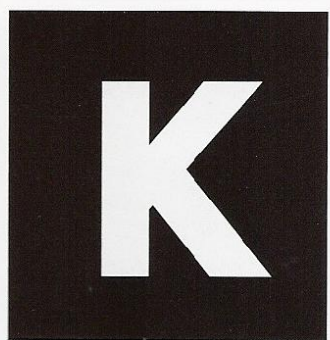
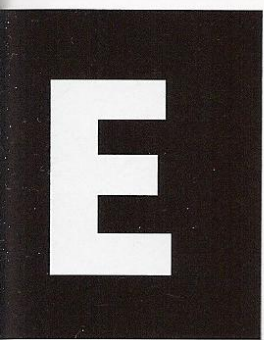
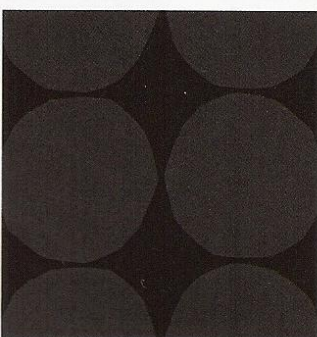
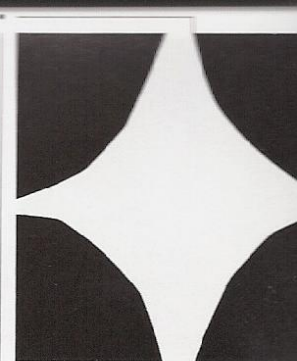
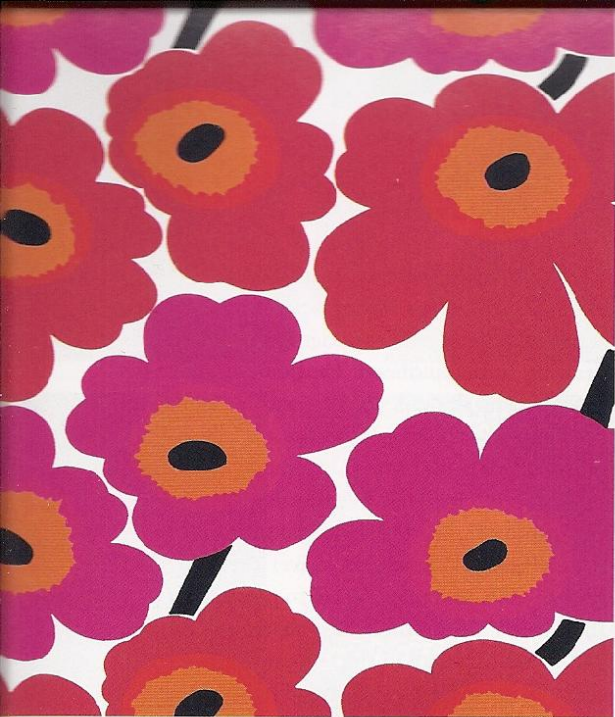
and the variations of grey that dominated everyday life. In the following years, Marimekko

Ask Mika Ihamuotila about his passion for everything beautiful, and he will tell you about Marimekko.

By Steven Beschloss

created a passionate world of sunshine and poppies, broad stripes and polka dots, man-made geometry and patterns from nature. The fabrics and frocks were playful, a visceral link to childhood memories and the very stuff that could make a grown man (or woman) smile. >>>





That world of beauty, which virtually every post-war Finn grew up on, was just what Mika Ihmuotila needed. In September 2006, Ihmuotila, who was the 42-year-old CEO and president of Sampo Bank, Finland's third-largest, discovered that he had a brain tumour. "You can imagine," says the father of four young sons, "what a shock it was for the whole family." And for him.

Ihmuotila had been on a very fast track to the top of the banking world, and that fall he received an offer to head an even larger Scandinavian bank. Yet after two successful brain operations and several months in the hospital, Ihmuotila began questioning his life and his chosen field. "It took some time to gather my strength," he recalls. "You lose your confidence." Gradually, the performance-driven banker

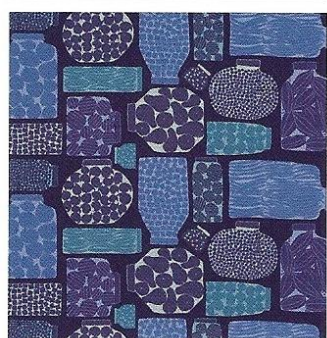
realised that he wanted something else: "I wanted to be in touch with my sensitivity."

Over the following six months, Ihmuotila was offered opportunities to buy and run various businesses in the financial world. But he reflected on the joy he'd experienced painting and drawing since childhood. He thought about his mother, who designs textiles, and his continuing fascination with design and the arts. Amid personal crisis, he made a life-changing decision.

Beginning in 2007, Ihmuotila pursued a controlling stake in Marimekko from CEO Kirsti Paakkanen, who took over the struggling firm in 1991 and returned it to profitability. Ihmuotila acquired his first shares in October 2007, and his stake in the company now equals 13%. "I invested my fortune in it," says the new

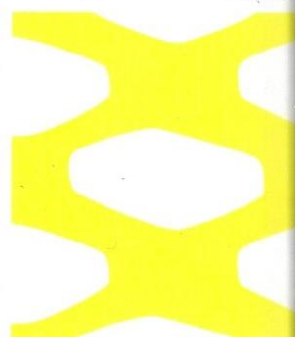
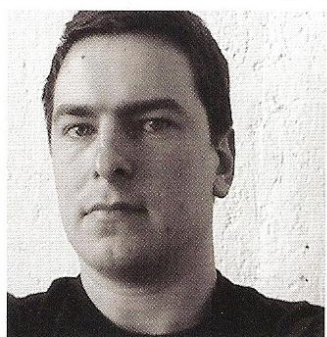
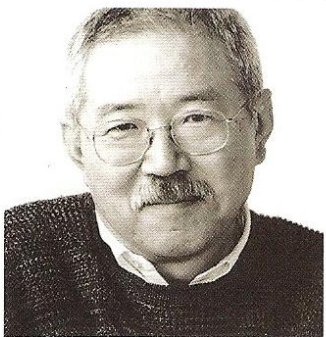
**Marimekko
has a network
of roughly 25
"extraordinarily
talented young
designers."
—Mika
Ihmuotila**

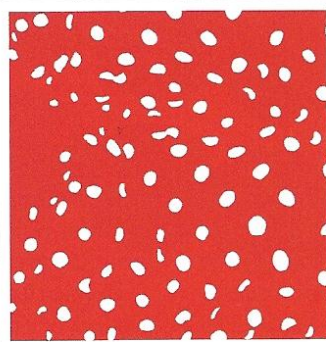
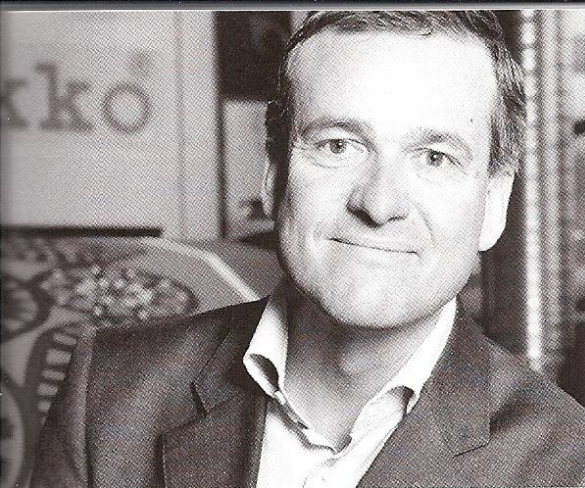
this page, left to right:
**Designer Aino-Maija
Metsola and her
Metsän Kuningas
fabric design;**
**Designer
Anna Danielsson
and her Bottna
fabric design**



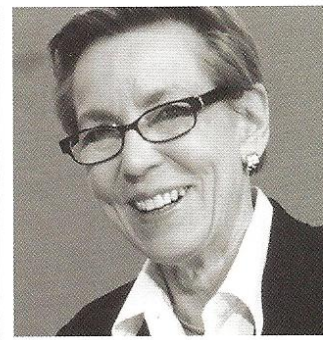
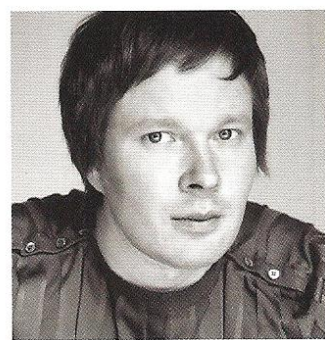
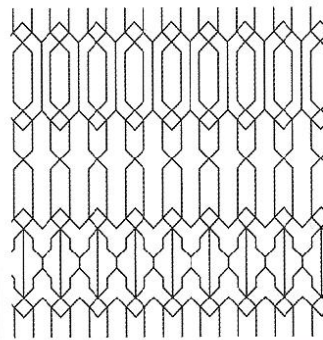
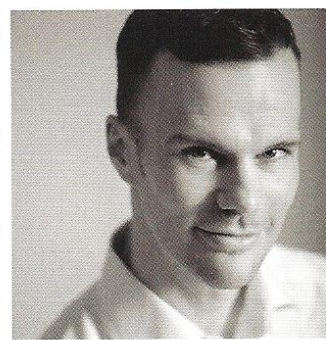
left to right:
**Designer
Björn Dahlström
and his Stilla
fabric design in green;**
**Designer Erja Hirvi
and her Purnukka
fabric design**

left to right:
**Designer
Fujiwo Ishimoto
and his Paratili
fabric design;**
**Designer
Harri Koskinen
and his Puhdas
fabric design**





left to right:
Marimekko
CEO
Mika Ihamuotila;
Pikku fabric
design by designer
Hennamari Asunta



this page, left to right:
Jaakkaru
fabric design by
designer
Klaus Haapaniemi;
Ginkgo
fabric design by
designer
Kristina Isola

CEO and president. "In Marimekko, I finally got the chance to combine my experience in leading and expanding companies with my passion for everything that is beautiful."

Ihamuotila's plan for Finland's iconic brand includes expanding its international presence, both by increasing brand awareness beyond its core of passionate devotees and fashionistas and adding to its retail network. In addition to its company-owned stores in Finland, Sweden, Germany and the U.K., Marimekko relies on a network of more than 50 concept stores run by independent retailers. These shops, which showcase the full range of Marimekko lifestyle goods, are found in Austria, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Scandinavia, Spain and the U.S. This year three concept stores opened in Japan, which already has 16 such stores, and one in Copenhagen, Denmark, its first.

Despite its international reputation and history—Jackie Kennedy's purchase of seven Marimekko dresses in 1960 was a turning point, followed by a flourishing in the pop movements of

Marimekko Design
previous pages, left
to right: Metsanvaki
design; Ritva Falla's
dress; Unikko design;
Kauris Bag; Onnen
Helmet bedding; Ma-
rimekko store; Kaivo
design; Kanteleen
Kutsu and Taikamylly
cup set; Mika Piirain-
en's dress; Kanteleen
Kutsu design

the '60s and '70s—Marimekko in 2008 still relied on Finnish customers for 73% of its revenue of €81.1 million. As Ihamuotila sees it, that's a clear opportunity for growth—and one key reason he wanted to lead the company. "I bought Marimekko with a long-term viewpoint," he says. Over the next few years, he plans to work with select retail partners to open new concept stores mainly in Europe and the U.S., which have traditionally been important markets to Marimekko. He may also carefully consider entering new markets, such as China, Brazil and parts of the Middle East.

Ihamuotila intends to release new products and launch new product categories in clothing, bags and interior decoration that draw on the strong emotions that Marimekko's classic designs evoke. On the streets of New York, you now might see a pair of Manolo Blahniks emblazoned with the iconic red poppy design. Or you might walk into a London penthouse and find Marimekko's new wallpaper, recently created in partnership with Sirpi, an Italian company. Or you might dine on a new collection of ceramic tableware with a "garden in the city" theme. "I see huge potential for new Marimekko accessories—scarves, bags, belts, shoes, jewellery and more," Ihamuotila says. "These are very natural product categories for Marimekko design."

Since the 1950s, Marimekko's archive of original print patterns has grown to more than 3,000, including more than 500 from Maija Isola, one of Marimekko's most revered designers. They are the foundation of its business, a deep reservoir of classic forms to reinvigorate in new contexts and categories. Yet Marimekko's creative team is determined to expand on this wellspring by infusing the brand with new designs from new designers, most of them freelancers who are given unusual involvement in the production process at the Helsinki factory.

Like his predecessors, Kirsti Paakkanen and Armi Ratia, Ihamuotila believes Marimekko's diverse portfolio of designs and colours lets customers "express themselves, their individuality and their own views of life." Prefer to wear black? Mix in a colourful Mari bag when the

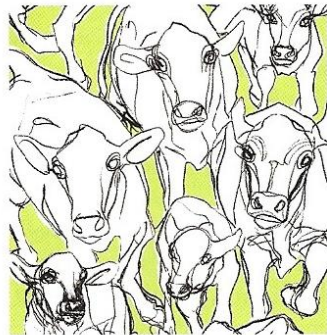
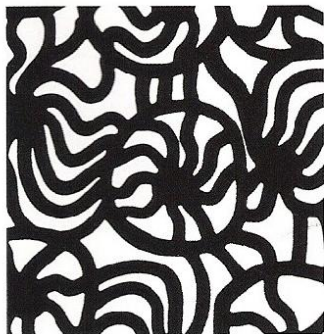
mood strikes you. Decorate in minimalist white? Splash in a colourful pillow now and then. The idea, Ihamuotila says, is to break the pressure to hide your identity behind a luxury brand.

Ihamuotila is determined to give freedom to Marimekko's network of roughly 25 designers. He tells them: "Go to your own sensitivity. Think about what inspires you. Don't think about what's happening in the fashion world. Be brave and follow your instinct." He gives this direction with confidence. "We have a team of extraordinarily talented young designers," he says. "We trust in their ability to interpret today's world in their own eyes with their unique style, while at the same time being committed to the Marimekko philosophy."

Marimekko's new CEO also trusts his own ability to recognise talent. He saw 26-year-old

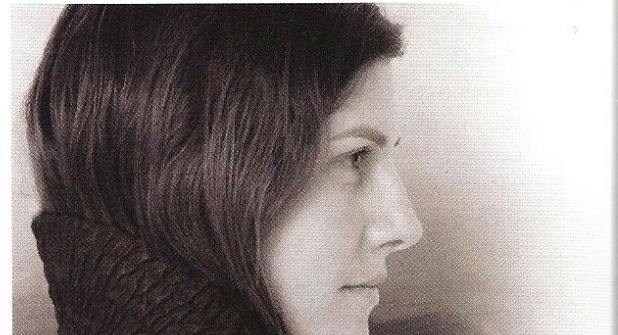
**Marimekko's
archive of
print patterns
totals more than
3,000, including
more than 500
from designer
Maija Isola.**

this page, left to right:
Designer
Maija Isola and her
Joonas fabric design;
Designer
Maija Louekari
and her Ruutukaava
fabric design



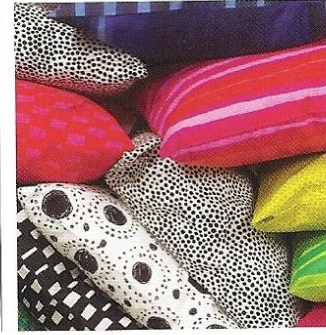
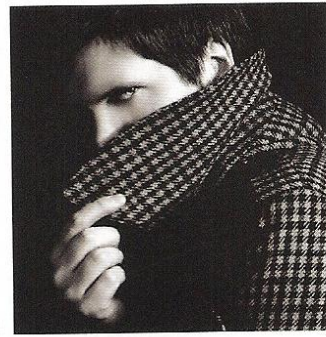
left to right:
Designer
Miina Äkkijykkä
and her Kevätjuhla
fabric design;
Designer
Mika Piirainen and
his dress in the spring
2010 collection

left to right:
Designer Nora
Fleming and her
Hevoskastanja
fabric design;
Marimekko
Creative Director
Virva Launo





left to right:
Designer Ritva Falla's
dress in the spring
2010 collection;
Ritva Falla
Home wares were
created in Maija
Louekari's Räsytö
pattern by designer
Sami Ruotsalainen



this page, left to right:
Latvassa Korkealla
fabric design by
designer Teresa
Moorhouse;
Colourful pillow
shams by designer
Vuokko Eskolin-
Nurmesniemi

Sanna Annukka's art work in British *Vogue*, sent her an e-mail and proposed collaboration. As it turns out, designing for Marimekko was a dream of the Finnish-British designer, who grew up in Britain but spent summers in Paltaniemi, a village in Finland, swimming and fishing in Oulujärvi lake and exploring the forests.

"Finnish culture and childhood memories of Finnish summers play an important role in my work," Annukka explains. Other inspirations? "I adore folklore . . . nature, wildlife, Finnish landscapes and the ethereal quality of light on a midwinter's day in Lapland." In fact, her textile collection for Marimekko is derived from the magic and naturalistic symbolism of *The Kalevala*, Finland's beloved national folk epic.

If such sources for fashion and design seem far-fetched or too ethereal for most labels, Marimekko's creative leaders have always expected their designers to pursue heartfelt concepts that connect to Finnish qualities of honesty, authenticity and belief in the future. Looking forward, Ihamuotila believes this path will benefit the company. "I think that the biggest trend in fashion and interior decoration in the next few years will emanate from people becoming tired of made-up brands, artificiality and the throw-away culture represented by large fashion trend companies."

Marimekko designer Samu-Jussi Koski underscores this drive to "push the brand forward without forgetting the strong roots the company has in Finnish culture and customs." It's a mind-set shared by Minna Kemell-Kutvonen, creative director for interior decoration, and other Marimekko designers, such as Piia Rinne and Noora Niinikoski, who have created knitwear and accessories for this year's winter collection. The duo have incorporated in this collection influences from Marimekko's bold floral prints as well as inspirations from melancholic landscapes to spooky carnivalism.

One can imagine Marimekko founder Ratia taking pleasure in such strong personal impulses. She was always seeking creative artists who could expand and refresh the brand. That tradition represented an attitude about life. No wonder Ihamuotila is inspired to keep faith with that history. "In Finland, we believe that happiness can be found when one is honest to oneself," he says. "Only then one can have the courage to express oneself and find *joie de vivre*." For a former banker determined to be true to be himself, it sounds like a philosophy to live by. **45**

Steven Beschloss, who writes about arts, culture and international affairs, lived for four years in Helsinki.