

PRESS RELEASE

KURU CHAIR BY MARTELA WINS THE FENNIA PRIZE 2012

Martela has been awarded the Fennia Prize 2012 for the Kuru chair designed by Antti Kotilainen. The Fennia Prize “is an opportunity for businesses to stand out through innovative, responsible and economically significant design” and is awarded to companies who use design as a strategic function in their operations. The evaluation criteria focused on three core issues; usability, responsibility and business aspects.

The original idea for the Kuru chair arose after a top-down analysis highlighted a need in the product portfolio; Martela did not have an efficiently stackable multipurpose chair with an easy-to-use row connector. To fill this void, combined with a need to update the mid-range, a new product family was created and Kuru universal chair was to be its first product.

This is where the designer, Antti Kotilainen, entered the picture. Martela had needs, Antti had ideas, and this was when the Kuru chair started to take shape. Antti quickly developed a clear vision of the Kuru chair, and one of the biggest challenges of the project was to maintain this vision when discussion moved onto the topics of R&D, manufacturing, technological feasibility and economic viability.

Antti states that while communication with the company is of key importance, the designer must focus on maintaining a clear vision for the product. His first thought when approaching Kuru was architecture. “One must constantly visualise the product in its environment in a building and interacting with people; the most important thing is that the products are good in use and do not just look good on an exhibition pedestal.”, he stated. One of the biggest challenges designers face is the balance between form and function, and with Kuru Antti wanted to bring the two together. The front of the chair features a clear horizontal line, which becomes more significant when they are used in a row, and this is then combined with a curved backrest to create a growing pattern. This horizontal line is tapered enabling easy movement of the chair and the modular design allows for efficient stacking and features an easy-to-use row connection mechanism. Regarding human interaction and ergonomics the chair enables both active and passive sitting with a good posture that is neither too strict nor too casual.

But perhaps the greatest triumph of Kuru lies in its details. Martela Design Director, Petteri Kolinen, states that one of Antti’s greatest strengths is his ability to meticulously focus on the details. Antti says they are the most important thing, they tie everything together and the combination of the details makes the product. For example, the self-supporting shell works as a frame; the zinc connector combines the frame, legs and armrest as well as an integrated row connector; the

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silhouette of the seat shell is thinner on both edges creating a light visual appearance; the construction of the chair enables versatile variations of the chair including upholstery, size for different international markets, and expansion across the product family; material consumption has been minimised yet the chair meets the EN13761 standards; the used raw materials are at least 80% recycled and metal components are chromed with eco-friendly Green Chromium; all components can be easily separated after use for recycling; and the classic design ensured a long product lifecycle.

According to the competition website, the Fennia Prize is an international design competition for firms and companies. Its objective is to support the production of high-standard products and services and to promote the competitiveness and internationalisation of industry. This international competition is arranged by Design Forum Finland and the Fennia Group. The individual Fennia Prizes are awarded to companies in recognition of the comprehensive and innovative use of design for creating and realising products, services and business concepts, and in product development, manufacturing and corporate image matters. The competition is held every two years and was known as the Pro Finnish Design Prize until 2003.

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Martela Oyj is a design company specialising in ergonomic, innovate furniture and complete solutions for implementing changes. Our products and services improve the functionality and atmosphere in a variety of spaces, including offices, educational environments, hotels, hospitals and welfare centres. Martela is a family business, founded 67 years ago and a Finnish market leader that works in a responsible way in all of its business areas. With 637 employees throughout Scandinavia, Poland and Russia, Martela is listed on the NASDAQ OMX Nordic stock exchange and had a turnover of 130.7 million euros in 2011.

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