

Mikko Laakkonen, MA

FURNITURE DESIGNER OF THE YEAR '14

The Finnish design organisations Grafia and Ornamo have been presenting awards to their most eminent members since 1981. The criteria for the awards include innovation, contemporary design, interest value and a successful career.

In the awards ceremony held on 7 February 2014, the Furniture Designer of the Year Award was presented to Mikko Laakkonen, MA, who has built a versatile and highly successful career.

Mikko Laakkonen (b. 1974) trained as an instrument builder at Ikaalinen College of Crafts and Design. He was a keen guitar player and focused on building guitars and basses. Laakkonen believes that in order to build an instrument one must also be able to play it.

He continued his studies earning a BA in furniture design at Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences and then a Master's degree at the University of Art and Design Helsinki in 2006.

In 2009, Mikko Laakkonen received the Young Designer of Year award and this spring he received the Furniture Designer of the Year 2014 award.

He has also been awarded several prizes for his individual design works during his career. Despite his young age, Laakkonen has secured his position as a widely acclaimed and esteemed designer.

He has been running his own design agency since 2004. Before this he worked for many years and gained experience with a number of different design agencies. He praises his colleagues, who form a crucial support network providing invaluable feedback on challenging design tasks.

His favourite assignments are those involved with designing everyday articles. In design, the essential thing is not to lose sight of where and how the object is going to be used. In addition to aesthetic considerations, the object must fit its practical purpose. A well-designed object will have a longer life-cycle and is therefore also environmentally friendly.

Mikko Laakkonen has worked with several Finnish and international companies. The aim in this type of cooperation is to design the right article for the right company. Therefore it is vital to learn as much as possible about the company and its culture, and to analyse what type of article would match its specific needs and requirements before embarking on the design project. One cannot apply the same design approach with every company.



Martela Oyj

phone	+358 (0)10 345 50
fax	+358 (0)10 345 5744
address	Takkatie 1, Box 44, FI-00371 HELSINKI
VAT	FI01148912
internet	www.martela.com

Mikko Laakkonen has designed the well-known Kaari coat racks in Martela's collection. The name, which means 'arch' in English, was inspired by Eero Saarinen's legendary Gateway Arch in St Louis.

The Kaari magazine rack was launched at the Stockholm Furniture Fair at the beginning of February and will be available in Martela's collection later this year.

Media contacts:

Leena Puttaa-Sollo,
Martela Oyj
Brand and Communications Manager
telephone +358 40 84 95 480
e-mail: leena.puttaa-sollo@martela.fi

Martela Corporation designs and supplies ergonomic and innovative furniture and provides interior planning services. Martela's products and services help realise the full functional and aesthetic potential of working spaces as well as learning environments and care facilities. Established 68 years ago, Martela is a family business and the market leader in Finland. The company is listed on NASDAQ OMX Nordic. In 2013, Martela employed 770 members of staff in the Nordic countries, Poland and Russia, and its consolidated revenue was EUR 132.3 million. Martela adheres to sustainable practices in all areas of its business operations.

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