

Making the Market

Insights from Artists and Designers

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For the Reader

The world is open and full of opportunities for Finnish design and art. Tough competition, current unprecedented times, and global development create a new kind of need to stand out, to market and to build networks. Making the Market, a joint venture by Ornamo, The Finnish Institute in Germany, Institut finlandais and Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux, calls for curiosity and connection in the globally networked design world. Through exhibitions, discussions and guidebooks, Making the Market brings together professionals, makers and visionary thinkers of art and design with an aim to create new opportunities and global partnerships.

In this guide, eight Finnish or Finland-based artists and designers share their insights and tips for an international career. Crafts and unique design or collectible design have their own niche, but at the same time they are a global, growing market. The chapters of this guidebook help one to navigate towards a successful international career: *tell your story, take part*

in competitions and be proactive, apply for internships and residencies, nurture long-term collaboration, look for interesting partners, take part in group exhibitions, seize opportunities and build impressive content.

Wishing you inspirational reading moments!

**Ornamo, The Finnish Institute in Germany,
Institut finlandais and Finnish Cultural Institute
for the Benelux**

**“Social media can be more
important than websites.”**

Milla Vaahtera

Milla Vaahtera



Milla Vaahtera

Tell Your Own Story

“Moving on to a new medium, becoming a glass artist, was a turning point in my career. Soon after taking on glass artistry my Dialogue exhibition was accepted to the **DESIGN MUSEUM** through an open call, for which I am eternally grateful. Quite a few people noticed my work for the first time in that exhibition, and many works were sold to Japan through **AKIRA MINAGAWA**. That experience emphasises the sustained importance of art institutions for the careers of emerging artists and designers. Museum exhibitions validate you and open up doors.

I’m one of the founders of the **UU MARKET**, and I want to promote Finnish design globally. A lot of potential lies in small series production and

online stores. Equally important is that we artists and designers learn how to be bolder and more creative in our work-related communication. A well-thought-out Instagram serves as a modern business card or portfolio.

Currently I’m interested in the **COLLECTIBLE DESIGN** fair at Brussels and the design part of **CHART**. We’re living in a time of transition, and the whole events industry is re-defining itself. What will be the type and format of fairs and art events five years from now, and how can you showcase your own work then? It will be increasingly important to make your work visible on the web, if you wish to work internationally.”



Milla Vaahtera is an artist and a furniture designer working at the interfaces of sculpture and design. The themes of her work as an artist are appropriations of space, emotions and sexuality.

Vaahtera teaches creative thinking in Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture & in HEO Helsinki Evangelical College.

She is passionate about creating a new golden age of Finnish design and she is also the co-Founder of UU Market.

Vaahtera has graduated as a Master of Arts in 2010 from Aalto University, the School of Arts, Design and Architecture. She did her BA studies in Lahti Institute of Design in 2008

www.millavaahtera.com



Milla Vaahtera's Tips for Building An International Career

The ABC of PR

Art fairs are big investments – make the most out of them. It may be intimidating to speak to international press about your work at first, but you are certainly remembered more easily, if you open your mouth. Practise performing with your friends and colleagues, you can all learn from one another.

Go Back to Basics

If you are involved in many international projects you may sometimes lose yourself and forget why you make art and who it is for. Then it makes sense to take a step back. Turn off all your smart devices and do things you enjoyed doing as a child.

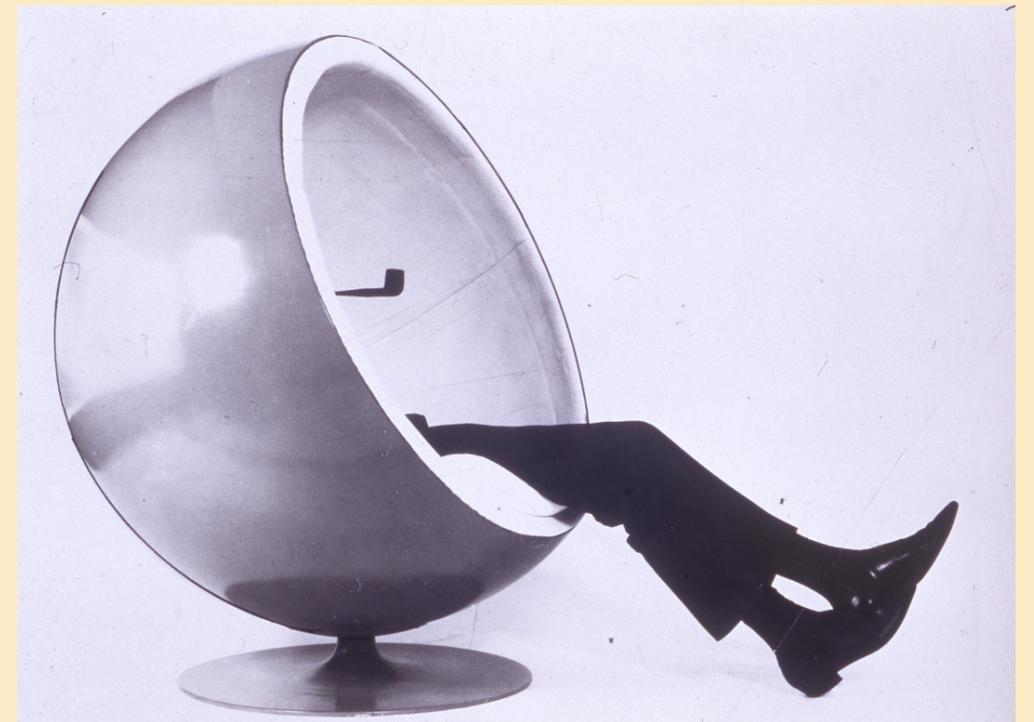
Content Production = Part of Every Week's Work

Instagram can be a pocket-size portfolio or a platform for artistic processes. Once you find your own style of public posting, make content production an integral part of your weekly work. Try producing a bigger batch of photos or videos in one go: It saves a lot of time and then you have content readily available, if you run out of time or inspiration. Social media can be more important than a website. It pays off to have a personal look in your online profiles. What do you want the professionals to see, when they look you up online?

**“Through competitions even a
beginner may acquire consequential
contacts quite imperceptibly.”**

Eero Aarnio

Eero Aarnio

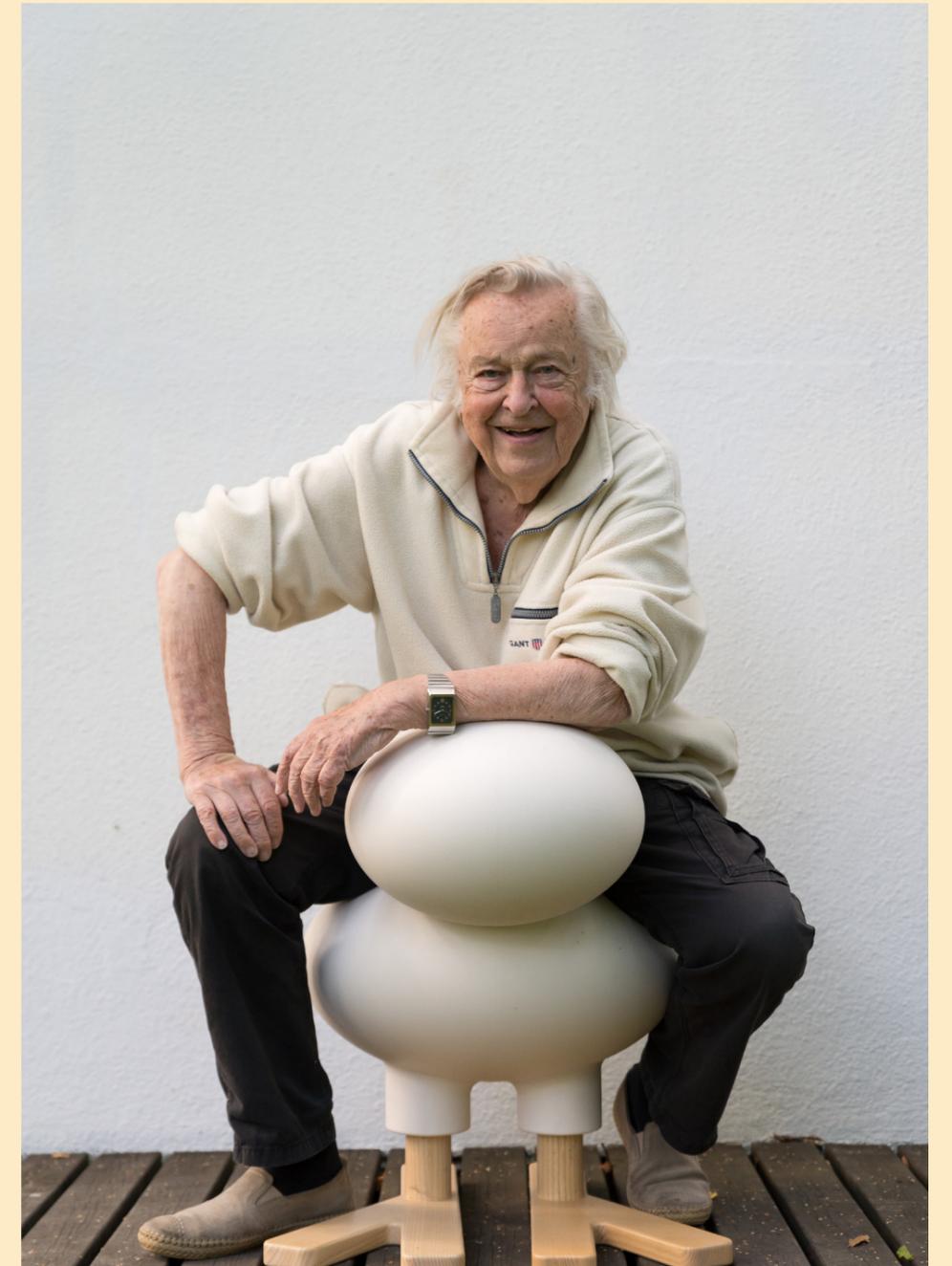


Eero Aarnio

Take Part in Competitions and Be Proactive

“My career took an important turn in Italy in the 1960’s, when I participated in the **CANTÚ INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE DESIGN** competition. The first time I participated I came third and a few years later, in 1964, I won first prize. The awards have brought about several Italian partners – I’ve been contacted directly and I have also been proactive myself. In competitions even a beginner may acquire consequential contacts quite imperceptibly.

But first you need a piece of work or a product that is both unique and interesting. I like to approach people directly, either by phone or by mail. It doesn’t matter whether you have a photo, a sketch or a prototype at hand. What matters is that you take the initiative and have an interesting idea backing the product up, and you have faith in it yourself. I’m very intuitive in my artistic work, but when it comes to contracts, I’m quite pragmatic. At the beginning of negotiations I present my tentative product concept and explain my proposal for licensing, royalties and payment schedules.”



Eero Aarnio is a Finnish interior designer, noted for his innovative furniture designs in the 1960s, such as his plastic and fibreglass chairs. Aarnio studied at the Institute of Industrial Arts in Helsinki, and started his own office in 1962. The following year, he introduced his Ball Chair, a hollow sphere on a stand, open on one side to allow a person to sit within. The similar Bubble Chair was clear and suspended from above. Other innovative designs included his floating Pastil Chair and Tomato Chair, a seat between three spheres.

Aarnio was awarded the American Industrial Design award in 1968. Aarnio's designs were an important aspect of 1960s popular culture, and in 2020s he continues his active design career.

www.eeroaarnio.com



Eero Aarnio's Tips for Building an International Career

Maintain Your Focus

Competitions, fairs and design events are very significant especially at the beginning of one's career: You don't really get to meet as many potential partners elsewhere. Keep your focus clear at these events – in other words, don't forget what you are trying to achieve there.

Contact People Directly

Make direct contact with interesting people and potential partners. International markets are really not that different. Send a message or call and ask if they are interested in your works or products.

Manage Your Contracts

Well-prepared contracts form the basis for all activity. When I start drafting contracts, I take the sample contract of my own trade union, Ornamo, and edit it to suit my personal needs.

The Power of Face-to-Face

Communication takes place so predominantly on screens now that we sometimes forget how powerful it is to meet people face-to-face. You will be remembered if you drop by in person and ask for an opportunity to speak with those who make the decisions. Always remember that you are an equal partner; the other party has the machinery and markets, but you have the product concept.

**“I’ve felt that my audience is not
restricted to Finland.”**

Man Yau

Man Yau



Man Yau

Apply for Internships And Residencies

“Staying in residencies has had a profound impact on my career. Residency periods provide a way of acquiring relevant contacts organically, and they are also opportune environments for exploring new dimensions in your own work. Residency working periods often last for months – it is quite different from setting up a gallery exhibition in two weeks, for example. There’s enough time to establish long-term relationships, if you put some effort into it.

I’ve known from the very beginning that I want to do international projects. My work is multidisciplinary and falls somewhere between design

and art. I’ve felt that my audience is not restricted to Finland. It has been natural for me to do projects and exhibitions abroad, and that way also the critique I get seems more valid.

In this day and age I feel it is my responsibility to carefully consider when going abroad is truly justified. Are the existing residency programmes, which often require flying, viable? We should constantly consider new ways of finding partners, audiences and connection.



Man Yau lives and works in Helsinki, Finland. She graduated with a Master's degree from Aalto University of Art and Design specialising in ceramics and glass design. Currently she is working on her second Master's in sculpture at the The Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts in Helsinki. Yau's works thread a balance between traditional methods and craftsmanship and industrial, detailed form and quality. Essential to her practice is working with demanding materials such as stone and glass, which require slow and delicate techniques of carving and cutting. Her works often underline commitment in time and labour, yet her aesthetics and form reflect the fast pace of consumer lifestyle.

Yau has been working in several countries and residencies in the past few years, such as Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park in Japan, Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute in China and Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris. Yau has been nominated as "Young Talent of the Year" by Helsinki Design Awards, and her works have been presented in solo and group shows in Finland and United States among others.

www.manyau.fi



Man Yau's Tips for Building an International Career

Apply for Internships Right from the Start

I was studying at Aalto University when I applied for an intern position assisting **PETER COFFIN**, a contemporary artist based in New York. That three-month period was pivotal in many ways. Internships may be decisive especially at the early stages of one's career. Apply for internships that challenge your way of thinking.

Co-operate

I've taken part in many multidisciplinary projects, such as making fashion together with **SOPHIE SÄLEKARI** and street clothing with **CTRL CLOTHING**. Some projects have been pure design, some have entailed contemporary art and some have fallen somewhere in between. The main thing is that you shouldn't think about your own brand or how something fits your "artistic image". Be curious instead and strive for new ways of combining your skills and knowhow to something new. By working across disciplines I've acquired quite an extensive network. It gives a clear advantage in this industry.

Talk About Your Work

The majority of my international projects have started by me directly contacting parties I thought were interesting. Or then I have just met someone by chance in a bar, and it has turned out that they work as a curator or something – sometimes a casual encounter may lead to long-term co-operation. I find it quite easy to talk about my own work – a skill for which I'm truly grateful.

Concentrate on Your Own Thing

To me it has been important to only engage in meaningful projects – I don't want to do things only because they might bring me loads of attention. Especially when I work abroad I try to pay constant attention to the actual reason for working internationally – in other words my art – and then I try to do my work keeping that in the forefront of my mind.

**“Finding the right partner
may take time.”**

Kristina Riska

Kristina Riska



Kristina Riska

Nurture Long-Term Collaboration

Functional, longstanding relationships between gallerists and artists are established through mutual trust and honest work. Intermediaries – gallerists, agents and consultants – are just as unique as artists. Finding the right partner may take time, but its worth its weight in gold.

A significant turn for my career was the arrival of gallerist **PHILIPPE DENYS** from Brussels in 2003. He came to Finland in order to export an exhibition to Belgium, and I was one of the Finnish artists selected to take part in that exhibition. That marked the beginning of my partnership with Philip, and I got to experience the privilege of working with an excellent gallerist. The collaboration was fruitful to us both: Philip took

my work to art fairs and sold a few large items every year. It was a shock in many ways, when he suddenly died after we had been working together for seven years. In addition to being tremendously sad, the tragedy also crystallized how important a foreign contact such as Philip can be. If I tried to do everything a gallerist does, I wouldn't really have any time left for artistic work.

Luckily a representative from the **HOSTLER BURROWS** gallery in New York had seen some of my works at Denys' art fair stand, and it didn't take long before I signed a new representation agreement with them. Nowadays Hostler Burrows represents several Finnish artists.



Kristina Riska works in Helsinki on the 9th floor of the Arabia factory building. Since the 1980's her works have been large but delicate ceramic objects. Along the years her works have gradually developed from jar-like objects into more multifaceted sculptures. Her starting point is often the relation of the pieces to the space they occupy, and also the juxtaposition of the objects. She works on several objects at a time, and thus the objects already start interacting in the studio. The color palette of Riska's works is frugal and the finish on the surfaces is often matte. Aesthetics are secondary to the message. The works combine ugly with beautiful, rough with sublime, and the contradictions between these are particularly dear to the artist.

Throughout her career Kristina Riska has been a freelance artist. She has organized several private exhibitions and participated in numerous other exhibitions in Finland and abroad. Her works are can be found in several museums and private collections.

www.kristinariska.com



Kristina Riska's Tips for Building an International Career

Learn to Negotiate

When you work with intermediaries, it's essential to always clearly agree on how sales revenues are divided. My works are large, so for me it is important that the gallery pays for the transportation as well as the crates needed in the deliveries. In my current deal the gallery also provides me with the photos of my works, for which I'm grateful.

Double-Check the Contract

I have consulted lawyers during my career – if you are going to sign a binding long-term contract, it makes sense to have it checked by a professional. Also pay attention to the geographical coverage of your contract. You shouldn't have too many contracts at the same time.

Talk About Your Work

Currently I'm represented by **HOSTLER BURROWS**, and in Finland by **KAI FORSBLOM**. I have some longstanding clients, collectors, but otherwise all sales need to go through galleries – even if people contact me directly through Instagram.

Support Your Colleagues

Marketing doesn't come naturally to me, and I find advertising my own pieces particularly awkward. I've often thought that it might be easier to promote the works of friends and colleagues before you have an established relationship with a gallery. We could all benefit if we helped one another more.

**“I may live in the countryside and still I
keep abreast of what’s happening in the
leading galleries around the world.”**

Teemu Salonen

Teemu Salonen



Teemu Salonen

Look For Interesting Partners

“My co-operation with the **TODD MERRILL STUDIO** in New York started in 2019. I had travelled to Brussels to the **COLLECTIBLE** fair, where my work was on display, and only when I arrived I found out that Todd Merrill was there too. I had been following that gallery for a long time, and as soon as I saw their stand at the fair grounds, I knew I had no alternative: I had to muster up my courage, go over and introduce my portfolio. Luckily I stayed at the fair for a couple of days – the gallerist was really busy, and I had to wait for my moment for quite some time. It paid off in the end: we signed a representation agreement after the meeting.

I produce my website contents myself. I decided to use English on my website from the beginning in order to reach larger audiences. It’s thrilling how social media enables me to live in the countryside and still keep abreast of what’s going on in the leading galleries around the world. Finnish artists should really let go of the idea of being somehow on the outskirts of the global art scene only because of our geographic location.”



Finnish designer **Teemu Salonen's** iconoclastic work is an active renunciation of the simple lines and unadorned nature pervasive in the Scandinavian design that surrounds him. Placing form over function, he sees his studio practice as both experimentation and play, where a variety of materials and techniques can be merged to create unique objects of sculptural design.

For Salonen, making things by hand is an essential part of his identity as a designer. His years of experience as a curator in visual arts, coupled with degrees in carpentry and craft design, have developed into a singular perspective that marries elements of both classical and kitsch design. The sophisticated is skillfully laced with ostentatious elements of flourish, effortlessly rolled into one asymmetrical package.

www.teemusalonon.fi



Teemu Salonen's Tips for Building An International Career

Make a List of Interesting Galleries

I keep a list of galleries which I'd like to visit or which I might show my works to at some point. When you do your groundwork well and identify the parties you'd like to co-operate with, it's easier to approach the right people in the hectic fair environment. You can check on Instagram if the gallerists themselves are active. If nothing much happens in social media, it's likely that nothing much happens in the gallery either.

Invest in Your Portfolio

It seems that only few artists nowadays go over to the intermediaries to show their portfolios. Therefore it might be effective to resort to old school methods. Invest in a high-quality portfolio and dispatch it to the galleries you would like to work with.

Dare to Change Your Direction

The path of each designer and artist is different, there is no one way of making progress or finding contacts. Give yourself permission to explore and find your own style. The more you work in international projects, the clearer understanding you have of the methods that work for you. It's also important that you dare to change direction or resign from a partnership, if it doesn't work.

**“I like to think that your study path
does not determine what you can
do with your career.”**

Antrei Hartikainen

Antrei Hartikainen



Antrei Hartikainen

Apply For Group Exhibitions

My background is firmly in craftsmanship, I'm a carpenter by training. I haven't studied design or arts, and therefore I haven't been given direct examples of what is or isn't possible in my career. The world of international design started opening up to me when I started working at **NIKARI**. I like to think that your study path does not determine what you can do with your career.

Group exhibitions have been extremely important for me, especially in the early stages of my career. The first one I took part in was the **FISKARS DESIGN VILLAGE** New and Classics

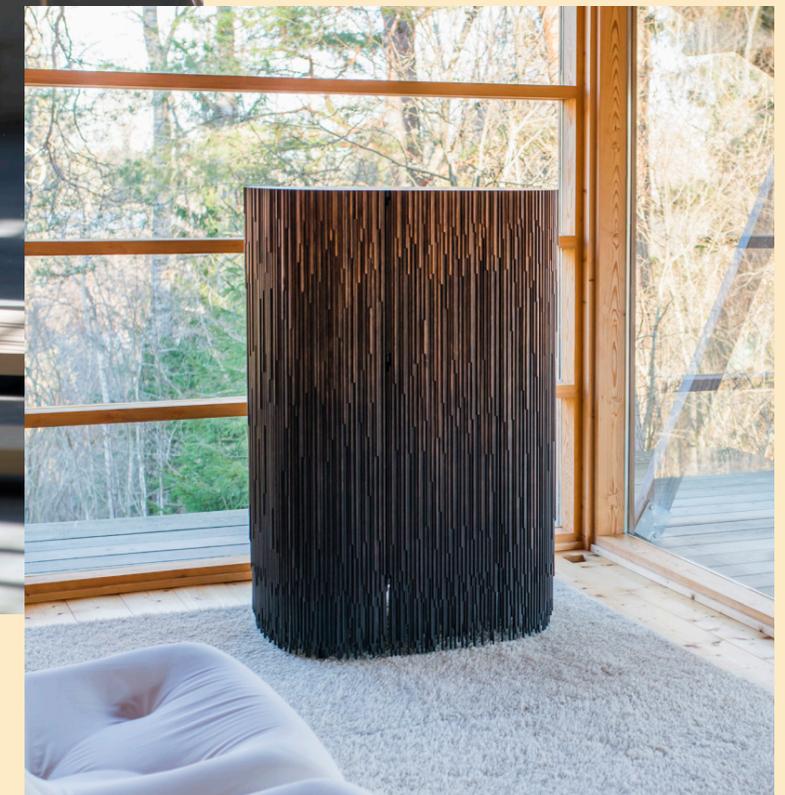
in 2012. The exhibition was first on display in the Design Museum, and from there it continued to the **BUDAPEST DESIGN WEEK**. Group exhibitions have generated business contacts, media contacts and all sorts of new acquaintances. In smaller, self-organized exhibitions, you need to gather everyone at the venue yourself, and that can be much harder. I feel it is important that I show up at the exhibitions where my pieces are on display. You always get to know some new people in them, and your network expands organically.



Antrei Hartikainen is a master cabinetmaker and designer from Finland known for his exquisite works in wood. The award-winning pieces, including functional products and pure art works, achieve heights of sensuality, elegance and craftsmanship. These important factors are emphasized in Antrei Hartikainen's work, which constantly seeks to challenge and blur the traditional categorizations between functional objects and visual arts. Hartikainen's sculptural approach can be studied through his organic body of work, which simultaneously highlights the inspiration drawn from his material of choice, wood.

Antrei Hartikainen has shown his works in numerous solo and group exhibitions all over the world. Antrei has been awarded with prize as a young designer of the year 2018 in Finland and shortlisted as emerging designer of the year 2019 by Dezeen Awards.

www.antreihartikainen.fi



Antrei Hartikainen's Tips for Building an International Career

Make a Media Kit

When arts and crafts were still mainly a hobby for me, I noticed how important good photographic material is. I rely on a few proven photographers, and I also shoot some details myself. It is crucial that you handle your publicity and communication well, and for that you need to have images available online. Journalists often need to get images really fast for their articles. If photos are available online in Hi-Res format, it facilitates both your and their work.

Create a Newsletter

A newsletter is an easy way of sending out information on exhibitions or upcoming works to your followers. If a larger piece, exhibition or installation has been on display or is about to be published, I've tried to prepare a press release with photographs or video clips of the work.

Be Available

I get loads of messages from students who ask for my advice on whether this or that event would be good or worth attending. Many companies and potential clients also send messages and ask about my work. If you post something on Instagram, you often get further inquiries. I think it is important to be reachable and to respond to all queries.

“An agent or a gallerist can connect you directly to the right people, and your own time is saved for artistic work.”

Laura Laine

Laura Laine



Laura Laine

Seize Opportunities

“I found an agent early on, when I was working as an illustrator. When I mailed my portfolio to an agency in Netherlands, I was studying for my bachelor’s degree and had a handful of published works to showcase. It was a decisive moment in my career – I feel that the agent was the first one who really opened my eyes to all the opportunities of the international art scene.

In 2013, I moved on to work with glass. The opportunity was unexpected: the curator of **THE DUTCH NATIONAAL GLASMUSEUM** had seen my illustrations and invited me to try making glass art. New material and art form has opened doors

to international group exhibitions and has taken me to work abroad, in the Netherlands and in the Czech Republic. I feel that my journey with glass is still in its infancy.

Even though the agency takes good care of liaisons, personal contacts are priceless in the art world. Work becomes much more nuanced when you know your business partners personally.”



Laura Laine is a Helsinki based artist who works as an independent illustrator, but also collaborates with photographers, stylists and art directors. She creates intricate hand-drawn characters that live in a surreal world of fashion, illustration and art. She has been working with glass since 2013 in Finland, the Netherlands and Czech Republic.

Selected clients include Vogue Japan, Vogue Italy, Vogue Germany, Givenchy, Elle, The New York Times, Sephora, Marie Claire, The Guardian, I.T. Store, Harvey Nichols, Pantene, H&M, Zara, Telegraph and GQ. She's also collaborating frequently with SHOWstudio and has exhibited her work in Tokyo, New York, London, Dubai, Los Angeles and Helsinki.

www.lauralaine.net



Laura Laine's Tips for Building an International Career

Find a Suitable Agency

Finnish art agencies are small compared to the ones in Central Europe and the United States, so you should look for a suitable agent without any geographic restrictions. An agent can connect you directly to the right people, and your own time is saved for artistic work. Don't hesitate to contact international agents or gallerists at the beginning of your career.

Avoid Calculations

In both glass art and illustration I try to work as hard as possible as hard as possible irrespective of whether the project has the potential to 'make it'.

I think it is valuable that you can work as an artist without constantly bearing in mind costs and benefits – and at same time I feel that the works I have created without any calculations have often been the ones that have opened up new doors later on.

A Well-Thought-Out Message is Effective

Looking back at the history of art, it is clear that some artists have always been keen to give interviews while others have made a conscious decision to avoid publicity. I'd like to think that it is still OK in our time to maintain a low profile. If social media is not your cup of tea, then you can post less frequently and focus on interesting, high-quality content. It may actually be charming to avoid constant exposure.

**“People are interested in the stories
behind the works and their maker.”**

Tero Kuitunen

Tero Kuitunen



Tero Kuitunen

Build Impressive Content

"I often wonder why product images tend to be so generic and plain, they all look the same? A designer has endless opportunities to showcase his or her work creatively – it all starts from drafting impressive content when you start planning a work of art or a product. What is your target group? What kind of a world could be constructed around the product? People are interested in the stories behind the works and their maker.

I've taken part in fairs actively from the start: right after we had established our **ANDBROS** product design company together with my three fellow students, we headed straight to international

fairs. We went to Stockholm, Paris and Frankfurt, and later we got the chance to participate in the **BEIRUT DESIGN WEEK**.

At the **SALON SATELLITE** in Milan I agreed to co-operate with the **WILD AT HEART** exhibition, which I curated. It seems that many projects have originated through happy coincidences. I have just been open to opportunities and present at the right places – and met the right people by chance.



Tero Kuitunen works as a spatial and product designer in Helsinki. He has graduated as a designer from the Applied Arts MA program at the Aalto University School of Art, Design and Architecture. Tero works as a product, concept and interior designer in projects for clients such as Supercell, Absolut Vodka, Aalto University and Ivana Helsinki. He is one of the founders of the Finnish award-winning brand Andbros. Currently Tero is working as a freelance designer with a vast experience in the design field. He has participated in international exhibitions and fairs in e.g. Beirut, Stockholm, Japan and Italy. In 2018 Kuitunen was nominated for product designer of the year at the AD Awards and in 2019 he curated the exhibition Wild at Heart – A Collection of Modern Finnish Design and Art at the 2019 Vienna Design Week.

Throughout his work, Tero wants to find something that moves and touches people. Materials and colours are often his biggest inspiration when starting a new design project.

www.terokuitunen.com



Tero Kuitunen's Tips for Building an International Career

Pay Attention to Photographs

Photographs are important, pay attention to them. Before you go abroad you should have a good selection of photos ready for the press and social media. I rely on professional photographers and pay good money for their work. I'm interested in Art Direction and image production: I enjoy creating entire visual worlds around the products. Styles vary. I believe that product images are more interesting if they have a 'clou'. The background doesn't have to be white, and you can incorporate lifestyle elements into the image too.

Storytelling

Highlight the story of the product or work. The narrative is often the thing that intrigues people: what was the inspiration behind your work? Social media offers loads of storytelling opportunities as it allows you to present your processes to your followers.

Selling Your Work Directly Through Instagram

Instagram's Direct Messages have become a growing sales channel, but it has its downsides too. I haven't really productised my works, my job is commission-based. It is surprisingly time-consuming to start the sales process from scratch after every inquiry. I've started producing files that contain relevant specifications and can be sent out to anyone interested in the product.

Photographs

Milla Vahtera

Hannakaisa Pekkala

Eero Aarnio

Harri Kosonen

Milena Törmi

Eero Aarnio

Man Yau

Paavo Lehtonen

Emma Sarpaniem

Diana Luganski

Sakari Tervo

Kristina Riska

Chikako Harada

Rauno Träskelin

Teemu Salonen

Petra Kotro

Todd Merrill Studio

Komugi Ando

Teemu Salonen

Antrei Hartikainen

Ville Vappula

Antti-Jussi Rantala

Katja Hagelstam

Laura Laine

Paavo Lehtonen

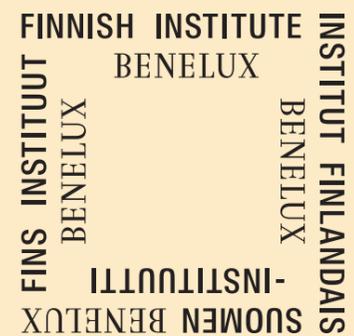
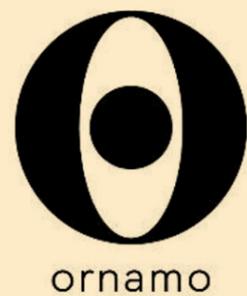
Diana Luganski

Ondrej Pomykal

Yen-An Chen

Tero Kuitunen

Maija Astikainen



Institut finlandais

Making the Market -opas

Ornamo ry

Production: Hilla Uotila

Graphic Design: Enni Koistinen

Translation: Delingua Oy

2020

ISBN: 978-952-69618-0-4