

Joint Iittala - Åbäke project:

Iittala's new Local Mugs for London

Iittala is renowned for products that include both Scandinavian design classics and the work of young contemporary designers. As part of an effort to encourage young people to think about the role design plays in people's lives, Iittala has brought in the London-based design office, **Åbäke**, as a partner for its Local Mug project. The project will see **Kaj Franck's** classic *Teema* mug from 1952 reinterpreted and given a new identity by creative partners in four cities across Europe.

A meeting in a Parisian café in 1936

The story behind the London limited edition mug designed by Åbäke begins in 1936, the year that **Alvar Aalto** designed his iconic 'free form' vase. It was also the year that **Meret Oppenheim**, **Pablo Picasso**, and **Man Ray** met in a Parisian café, and where Picasso's eye was caught by a fur-covered bracelet that Oppenheim happened to be wearing. Following the meeting, Oppenheim created *Object*, a fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon that went on to become one of the most well-known works of the Surrealist period. The piece is now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

A Local Mug for London in 2008

The fur 'covering' for the Teema Local Mug created by Åbäke is part of the ceramic surface and a powerful visual feature – and can be enjoyed by anyone, even if they do not know the story behind it.

The design references the Surrealist 'original' very effectively, and shows how the introduction of what might seem an alien material can change the way we look at a familiar object. The object in question here is Kaj Franck's classic Teema mug, a functional design that works anywhere, at home, at work, or elsewhere. People often have a very close relationship with their mug today, and it is often in their hand when they come across new ideas or meet new people. A mug invites people not only to drink a cup of tea or coffee, but also to interact and share their thoughts.

Iittala's limited edition Local Mugs are designed to open up a world of new, personal stories.

A mug leads to glass letters

Åbäke projects are often characterised by unexpected creative associations. When visiting Finland to find out more about Iittala's history and operations, Åbäke's members were particularly inspired by the glassblowers at the company's Nuutajärvi glassworks – and all this resulted in a series of glass letters especially hand-blown at Nuutajärvi for the London project. These were then used with Man Ray's camera-less technique that creates photographs by exposing objects directly on photographic paper to produce a series of large posters with the text: '*Meret, Pablo et Man au café (Meret, Pablo and Man having coffee)*'.

As part of the Local Mug initiative, Iittala's Teema mug will be reinterpreted in London, Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Helsinki with the help of Åbäke, **DUS Architects**, the **Byggstudio** design studio, and the **NOW** design and architectural office.

Product information:

London Local Mug, the Fur Mug, price 20 £, limited edition of 500

Available only at Iittala flagship store starting 29th of May

126 Regent Street, London, W1B 5SD

shop.regentstreet@iittala.com

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Iittala is a leading homeware design brand, and offers a wide range of products representing the best in modern Scandinavian design

Åbåke is an art and design collective based around four people: **Patrick Lacey**, **Benjamin Reichen**, **Kajsa Ståhl**, and **Maki Suzuki**, who were contemporaries at Brighton University in England, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and the Royal College of Arts in London, where their paths first crossed in 2000. Åbåke projects are often multidisciplinary and involve events in which the partners involve themselves very personally.

Åbåke is taking part to an exhibit PAST–FORWARD 15 May – 3 August 2008.

29 International artists disrupt, manipulate and re-play existing structures of cultural production curated by Vincent Honoré for the Zabłudowicz Collection, <http://www.projects-space176.com/>

The fur cup & Meret, Pablo et Man au Café, done in cooperation with:

The cup, a Kitsuné product

The trip to Nuutajärvi (iittalic and the Rayograph) with NOW

The Glass alphabet (iittalic) with Susanne 'Suski' Koskimäki, assisted by Matti Vilppula

The Rayograph with Klaus AJ Riederer

The Bistro table with Markus Bergström

The Soundtrack (the castafiore sentence in Finnish) with Johns Lunds

The 'glass' concert: Tuomas Toivonen (NOW) and Yuri Suzuki

LINKS:

www.kitsune.fr

www.nowoffice.org

www.kar.fi

www.markusbergstrom.com

www.yoyooyoy.dk

www.iittala.com

www.myspace.com/abakespace