

Kaj Franck's Kartio – 50 years of timeless beauty

Kaj Franck's classic Kartio range of glassware will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2008. In its sheer simplicity of form, the range is a perfect example of Iittala design – pieces that can survive the test of time and go beyond today's changing trends and fashions.



Kaj Franck was one of the most important designers of post-war Finland. His varied career as a designer and extensive work as a teacher had a major impact on Finnish design. Many of Franck's ideas, such as the importance of combining functionality and beauty, are something we almost take for granted today. Franck was a visionary, who stripped away many established ideas about everyday objects. He crystallised his approach in a letter to a friend as follows:

"For me, the only possible way to solve the problems of utility ware was to be radical and social. To go against the wavy line and the Scandinavian idyll with functionalism as the watchword."

- Lea and Unto Suominen, Letter 2.4.1997 – Kaj Franck, Teema ja muunnelmia (Theme and Variations, pp. 55-56), 1997

From one generation to the next

Franck's impact on Finnish designers can still be seen today. **Aleksis Perälä**, the young designer behind Iittala's new *Ote* range, describes Franck as one of his guiding lights. Describing the Kartio carafe, he says: "The carafe has been stripped of everything that's irrelevant, complicated, or highlights the presence of the designer." Perälä stresses that Franck wanted to understand the relationship between people and the objects around them in his designs: the aim of his philosophy was to create objects that would bring joy to their users every day.

Aleksis Perälä made conscious use of the heritage left behind by Franck and other Finnish designers in the *Ote* range, but at the same time he wanted to take everyday glassware a step further. The result is an exciting encounter between two generations. Perälä's approach shares the same absolute commitment and unconditional quality that Franck's does.

A colourist at heart

Franck often took basic geometric forms as the starting point for his designs: circles, squares, triangles – and in the case of the Kartio range, the cone, which is what the Finnish word means. He saw that by combining simple forms like these he could create a virtually limitless number of pieces.

Many people like to remind us, pointing to Franck's *Teema* range, that he believed a well-designed everyday item has no need of decoration, a strong colour speaks for itself. Franck was indeed passionately

interested in colour, and studied and developed colours extensively in his glassware and stoneware. He spent a large part of a visit he made to Italy in 1951, for example, studying how glass pigments are made and used in different processes in Naples and Murano in Venice. And in his art pieces, Franck made abundant use of everything these techniques had to offer.

It is not surprising then that the Kartio range has been available in a number of colours from the beginning. In 2008, we will introduce a new colour – turquoise blue – adding a fresh new dimension to the popular blues already available. All in all, this will bring the number of colours in the Kartio range to eight, in smaller glasses even nine.

Timeless beauty

Franck received numerous international awards for his designs and life's work, and his pieces are included in the MoMA collection in New York, among many others. The best proof of the continued dynamism of his designs, however, lies in the fact that they are still part of people's everyday lives today – fulfilling his own interpretation of the link between timelessness and beauty, which he described as follows:

“When we say something is beautiful, aside from referring to the logic of its function and the perfection of its style, we sometimes use the word timeless to express our deepest understanding of the concept of beauty.”

- Kaj Franck, Muotoilijan tunnustuksia (Confessions of a Designer), p. 43.

Kaj Franck's ideas have been an important inspiration for today's Iittala and its philosophy that true design is design that can stand the test of time. Timeless design – and the inner beauty that expresses this vision – lies at the heart of Iittala and its products.

Product information, new products:

Tumbler 21 cl, turquoise blue

Tumbler 40 cl, turquoise blue

Decanter 95 cl, turquoise blue

- Kartio available in totally eight colours: turquoise blue, clear, grey, sand, ultramarine blue, moss green, light blue, blueberry blue and 21 cl even brown

Kartio special packages:

Tumbler 21 cl, turquoise blue, 6 pcs

Tumbler 21 cl, clear, 6 pcs

Tumbler 21 cl, 4 pcs: turquoise blue, clear, grey, sand

Tumbler 40 cl, 4 pcs: turquoise blue, clear, grey, sand

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