

FINNISH FASHION

Finland has reinvented itself in just one short century. Our national character and Northern heritage have boosted us to the top of all kinds of country rankings. Modern Finnish fashion was born during the heyday of Finnish design and architecture in the 1950s. Like Finnish design, Finnish fashion was practical, pared down and designed for everyday rather than celebratory occasions. Natural materials were important.



Photo credit: Marimekko

MARIMEKKO

Marimekko, which was established by Armi and Viljo Ratia in 1951, made highly personalised outfits from the outset. Its tradition of young, colourful and cheerful designs continues in its latest collections. Marimekko became an international phenomenon at an early stage. Jacqueline Kennedy, the wife of U.S. presidential candidate J.F. Kennedy, bought seven Marimekko dresses in 1960. This hit the headlines around the world, helping the firm to conquer foreign markets.

TALENT

Finland's clothes industry continued to triumph in the 1970s and 80s. On the world stage, Finnish designers were known for their cold-season creations in particular. However, the industry faltered in the early 1990s as a result of the recession and the collapse in trade with the East.

Unable to find jobs in Finland's clothes industry, young designers set up their own companies. One of the resulting success stories was Iwana Helsinki, founded by Paola and Pirjo Suhonen in 1998. Other rising stars include Samu-Jussi Koski, Anna Ruohonen, and Tuomas and Anna Laitinen. Talented Finnish designers have also worked for a number of major foreign fashion houses.



Photo credit: Raija Lehtonen

FUTURE TALENT

Finnish fashion is flourishing again and its future looks promising. In recent years, Aalto University has become one of the hottest design schools on the international scene – its students have enjoyed huge success at the Hyeres International Festival of Fashion in France. In 2012, the undergraduates Siiri Raasakka, Tiia Siren and Elina Laitinen won the main prize of the menswear collection. Satu Maaranen, who has since designed clothes for houses such as Marimekko, won the same prize in the following year. Three students from Aalto University were among the ten finalists in the 2015 Hyeres competition.

In addition, Finnish high fashion has achieved commercial success overseas. Examples include Balmuir, which creates interior decor products and accessories from high-quality materials such as cashmere, kidmohair, linen and leather.

Finnish fashion has become an international talking point. Many friends of fashion and press representatives are drawn to Finland in the spring for the Pre Helsinki fashion event, which includes Aalto University's graduate show.

The deeply personal nature of Finnish fashion differentiates it from the offerings of the other Nordic countries. Finland offers high-level, artistic design that avoids the pitfalls of calculated commercialism.



Photo credit: Raija Lehtonen,
Ivana Helsinki store

FAMOUS FINNISH BRANDS & DESIGNERS

MAKIA makiaclothing.com

IVANA HELSINKI ivanahelsinki.com
(Paola Suhonen)

AALTO aaltointernational.com
(Tuomas Merikoski)

SAMUJI samuji.com
(Samu-Jussi Koski)

R/H rh-studio.fi
(Hanna Riiheläinen and Emilia Hernesniemi)