

NEW STARS OF THE FASHION WORLD

DISCOVER THE TALENTS OF YOUNG FASHION DESIGNERS AT THE DESIGN FORUM FINLAND'S SUMMER EXHIBITION.

KAISAA PAAVILAINEN

FASHION follows the pulse of the times and its changes reflect changes in society. On the streets of Helsinki you can spot everything from tuned second-hand style, punk, rock and gothic, to a classically elegant business style. Where do fashion designers find their inspiration and what do they think about everyday street wear in Helsinki?

Paola Suhonen, the designer behind the brand IVANA Helsinki, is one of the most internationally well-known young designers of the new Finnish fashion scene. Her girlish print dresses have been spotted on people like **Uma Thurman**, **Kate Moss**, **Helena Christensen** and **Eva Dahlgren**. IVANA Helsinki's aesthetics can be called *fennofolk*, a style characterised by Scandinavian freshness mixed with pretty and bountiful Finno-Ugrian and Slavic elements. "Inspiration comes from living, not following trends. My sources of inspiration are Finnish nature, the sea and the archipelago, as well as rock, Westerns, festivals and hitch hiking," says Paola Suhonen.

IVANA Helsinki is sold in 25 countries. The reception has been the best

in Japan. "It is difficult to get into the Japanese market, but once you get there, the Japanese are the most loyal fans of the collections," says Suhonen. Her upcoming collection for spring-summer 2008 *Diamonds, Stripes & Revolver* contains contrasting elements. "The collection is a combination of sentimentality and innocence and on the other hand dark and tragic tones. The design has been inspired by great loves and losing them," says Suhonen.

A beautifully cut black cocktail dress is characteristic of **Tiia Vanhatapio's** designer style. The roots of her feminine couture trace a lifelong passion for opera and the film stars of Hollywood's golden era, like **Lauren Bacall**, **Bette Davis** and **Marilyn Monroe**. "I like black and there is always a presence of sensuality and sexuality in my design," says Vanhatapio.

She calls for more glamour in the way people dress in Finland. "I lived in the U.S. for five years. Even if there is also a lot of tastelessness there, people do also dress glamorously. Nobody would go into a big opening night in boots and a sweater," she says. "Finnish women are too afraid of losing their credibility if they wear ultra-feminine clothes."

On the other hand, Vanhatapio also wants to see personality and authenticity. "One must trust the feeling a piece of clothing gives. For example how much you want to cover yourself or show skin depends on your own feelings of comfort," she says.

Fashion is a field where art, industry, craftsmanship and commerce overlap. **Janne Lax** has managed to combine all these elements in his own shoe design. Lax produces small series of made measure shoes and sneakers under his label **St. Vacant**. "I don't advertise, the customers have found me. People come with their own wishes and needs for shoe design," he says. When asked about the Finnish streetwear culture, Lax says that it's possible to get inspiration from Helsinki these days. "Sometimes I say to myself: 'Hey, look at what kinds of shoes he is wearing.' Finnish men in general appreciate comfort over everything. That is one of the essential aspects of good clothing, without a doubt."

New Arrivals – Starring Finnish Fashion
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Design Forum Finland
Erottajankatu 7, Helsinki
Mon-Fri 10–19, Sat 10–18, Sun 12–18.



ALEKSI NIEMELÄ

OMRA dress for Marimekko. Design by Samu-Jussi Koski and pattern by Maija Loukari, Pesaroi. 2007.