



The Radical Spirit of Marimekko

For over 70 years, Marimekko has infused art into the clothes and interiors of our everyday lives. Marimekko's colorful fabrics and openness to experimentation brought together the textile traditions of Finland with innovative and bold designs based on the changing tastes and aesthetics of the contemporary art world.

Marimekko has successfully blurred the lines between fine and decorative arts, cementing Finland as one of the most important design centers in the world. The ASHM exhibition *Radically Marimekko* traces the brand's path from industrial art house to its present-day status as a fashion icon. Marimekko continues to enhance our relationship with patterns and colors by bringing bold and vibrant sensibilities to life.

Marimekko emerged from the stark reality many Finns faced after the end of the Second World War. Families were torn apart and many of the homes in the Finnish

landscape were destroyed or confiscated. The Treaty of Moscow, signed in 1940, annexed much of Finnish Karelia, where Marimekko founder Armi Ratia (1912-1979) was born. The loss of her home and the destruction of her ancestral land forced Armi to create a new life for herself. She simultaneously felt a longing for the past and an impulse toward the future where modernity and collaboration would unite the Finnish people. Finns sought beauty, comfort, and a sense of place. Marimekko embodied the ideals of Finnish stoicism or, *sisu*, which is defined as perseverance in the face of adversity.

In her early twenties, Armi Ratia married the officer cadet Viljo Ratia and studied textile design in Helsinki at the Central School for Applied Arts, now the University of Art and Design. Viljo Ratia purchased a company called Printex, which produced oilcloth fabrics. Armi assisted her husband with running the business and soon found she



Top: Finnish entrepreneur and textile designer Armi Ratia in 1970, Markku Lepolan, JOKA Journalistic Photo Archive, Markku Lepolan's collection, Finnish Heritage Agency.

Above: Piilo Dress, 1966. Annika Rimala (1936-2014). Linsi pattern by Kaarina Kellomäki (b. 1943), 1966. Cotton. Collection of Dr. Kirsten M. Jensen and Freja A. Jensen

Note from the Director

I have become an enthusiastic Marimekko finder. Ever since I learned about the brand 10 years ago, I get so excited when I see someone wearing Marimekko, or notice something by the brand in someone's home. It's not that I am "brand conscious," it's that I find their designs spark joy in me, and it's like a game to test my eye and knowledge of their design aesthetic. Sometimes I recognize a specific design, but often I will see something that feels like Marimekko and when I check, it is!

When I was in graduate school, we called this process of evaluation and identification connoisseurship. That word has a very snobbish connotation for many people, but it doesn't have to be. It's really about how getting a deeper understanding of something (art, wine, a particular artist) leads you to be able to recognize good examples or a specific person's work. It can help you determine what is real, and what is an imitation. It's a little bit like the joy of doing a puzzle or solving a mystery.

Exhibitions at museums are often an invitation to take a deep dive into one artist's work. They can give you the background to appreciate something in a new way and train your eye to recognize what makes their art unique. When I see something by Marimekko now, it instantly makes me think of Finland because the brand is like a national costume [of sorts] and recognizably Finnish: bright, happy, and still avant-garde (or dare I say, radical)!

Hyvää Kevättä! (Happy Spring!)

Tracey Beck
Tracey Beck

The Philadelphia Flower Show *continued from front cover*

wanted to produce textiles of her own. Her connections to the wider world of Finnish textile production and the schools she attended put her in contact with a young designer named Maija Isola (1927-2001). Isola and Ratia worked together to produce some of the first printed textiles that would make Marimekko famous. Isola's textiles were unfortunately not popular with the public. Even so, Ratia felt the textiles could be applied to innovative clothing. In 1951 Marimekko was born, and the fashion world has never looked the same since.

drawn to the practicality embedded within Marimekko dresses. They were easy to put on, the colors and designs looked great, and the brand linked them to international art movements. The brand skyrocketed in popularity when the incoming First Lady Jackie Kennedy wore Marimekko on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in 1960. She bought the dress and four others at Design Research. Suddenly Americans were getting a taste for Finnish design and fashion. Unlike other European brands, Marimekko did not follow the style trends coming out of Paris and Milan. Ratia and her



Interiors of the Marisauna, 1966. Aarno Ruusuvuori (architect), Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki.

The first collection was introduced in the Spring of 1951 in Helsinki. The first store opened in 1953 and more popped up over the ensuing months and years. After its international debut at the Stockholm Sales Exhibition, Marimekko was shown in Brussels where Ratia met architect Benjamin Thompson (1918-2002) who became interested with the design brand. By 1959, Thompson was working with Ratia to bring the brand to America by featuring it exclusively in his new lifestyle store Design Research Inc., which opened in Cambridge, Massachusetts near the intellectual center of Harvard University.

Soon the brand became synonymous with college-educated women who were

designers, particularly Annika Rimala, felt that Marimekko should cater to how women feel in their clothes, rather than how the outside world sees them. Year after year, Marimekko pushed the boundaries of what could be done with fashion and print technology.

What made Marimekko radical? First and foremost, Armi Ratia. Ratia was a utopian dreamer. She believed in treating her employees

with respect and dignity. The company was almost entirely run by women. Marimekko provided amenities and benefits for its employees including a day spa, sauna, childcare facilities, and coffee and refreshments throughout the day. Artists continually owned their work and were included in the decision-making process for how their designs were used. Ratia's utopian ideals were woven into the very fabric that pieced together each Marimekko ready-to-wear outfit. The artist's name remained in the selvage and some dress tags even included their names. Marimekko dresses were simple, loose-fitting, and often versatile. These descriptors also fit the style of living that Ratia promoted. She based her design philosophy on the artists and architects of the Bauhaus, a school of art and design in Germany. Many of the residential houses coming out

of the Bauhaus featured clean lines and versatile spaces such as modern open-floor plans. Ratia believed these designs could be applied to the lifestyles of her employees. Working with Finnish architect Aarno Ruusuvuori (1925-1992), Armi Ratia devised a utopian town called Marikylä. Here, Ratia and her architects developed the Marihouse, based on the principles she applied to Marimekko clothing. Along with the house, they also designed what they called the Marisauna, a traditional Finnish sauna decorated with Marimekko textiles. The house and the sauna were intended to be living spaces for Marimekko employees. At the center of Marikylä was one of many Marimekko factories and office spaces. The village was to act as a “machine for living,” a term used by many international and Bauhaus architects. Ratia’s experiments with architecture were an unfortunate failure. Only one Marihouse was built and it proved to be unlivable. While Ratia’s foray into architecture was short, she instead focused on how Marimekko’s textiles, and eventually home goods, could fit into the modern world.

As the world changed, so did Marimekko. The brand was worn by students, who were protesting the economic and political changes in France in May 1968, as well as by students in America fighting for equal rights. Marimekko became the uniform of artists, designers, and even chefs. Georgia O’Keefe had several Marimekko dresses as did Julia Child, who wore Marimekko aprons supplied by Design Research. Child’s set was also decorated with Marimekko home goods. Armi Ratia’s son, Ristomatti

Ratia, founded Décembre Oy to showcase Marimekko lifestyle products for the home. It eventually became Marimekko New York which specialized in producing home goods that helped create dynamic environments for the modern homeowner. One of the lasting legacies of their collections was the duvet cover and sheet sets they produced for the American market. Later, they developed a whole range of products including towels, wallpaper, ceramics, and stationary. Many of these products still are emblazoned with a range of their most iconic designs, such as Maija Isola’s Unikko pattern.

Armi Ratia passed away in 1979 and since then the company has gone through a number of changes and revitalizations. Marimekko expanded into making jackets, knitwear, and even wool dresses. Fashion designer Marja Suna brought a rejuvenated spirit to the Finnish brand. Though Ratia



Dress, 1965-1970. Annika Rimala (1936-2014). Keidas pattern, 1967. Cotton. Collection of Dr. Kirsten M. Jensen and Freja A. Jensen/Freja A. Jensen

didn’t live to see the company expand into new territory, Marimekko continues to carry her imagination and artistic vision. Marimekko has become deeply connected to the outward identity of Finland. It can be said that Marimekko is the modern equivalent of the Finnish national dress. It is one of the most recognizable brands in the world that means something different to each person. Marimekko is bohemian, traditional, intellectual, simple, and without exception, Marimekko is radical.

The exhibition *Radically Marimekko* will be on view at ASHM from March 30 through September 24, 2023. Visitors are invited to step into Marimekko’s vibrant and bold world of patterns and colors through the fabrics, vintage clothing, and household object on view. Join us for an opening reception on Wednesday, March 29th from 5 – 8 pm. This event is free and includes remarks by ASHM Curator, Christopher Malone, and a screen print craft with the Fabric Workshop and Museum, and light refreshments. RSVP on our website.

The *Radically Marimekko* exhibition is supported by grants from the ASHM Auxiliary, Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, Finnish-American Society of the Delaware Valley (fasdv.org), Midsommarklubben, and an anonymous foundation. Funding for the American Swedish Historical Museum is supported by grants from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

ASHM Honors Finland at Spring Ting

The American Swedish Historical Museum is excited to celebrate Finland at our Spring Ting Fundraiser on April 29th. Join us for an evening with a three-course dinner by Jeffery A. Miller Catering, a silent auction, and a visit to the Museum galleries and the *Radically Marimekko* exhibition.

Our Spring Ting Dinner and Auction raises critical funding for educational programs offered both at ASHM and throughout the Philadelphia region. We hope to see you at Spring Ting on April 29th to honor Finnish contributions and support ASHM! Tickets begin at \$125. Can’t make it to the dinner? Support the Museum through our online auction that will run April 19th- 28th.



Spring 2023 Upcoming Events and Registration Info

To Register For Events

call 215-389-1776, or visit online at www.americanswedish.org/calendar.htm



Monthly Programs: Toddler Time

10:30 am – 11:30 am

The third Tuesday of each month ASHM offers specially designed programs to introduce Swedish culture through art, science, and literature in uniquely fun and creative ways to children ages 2 to 5 years old.

Tuesday, March 21 - Five Senses
Tuesday, April 18 - Save the Earth!
Tuesday, May 16 - Marimekko Shapes
Tuesday, June 20 - Celebrate Sweden!

Virtual Field Trip Friday: House of Emigrants, Växjö Sweden

Friday, March 24th
12:00 – 1:00 pm

Take a break from your day, whether at home or work, to be immersed in a Scandinavian cultural experience. This month we will visit the House of Emigrants in Sweden and view their exhibition on the history of the great wave of emigration to America in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the experience of Swedish emigrants coming to the United States. The virtual tour is 45 minutes long and presented over Zoom. \$5 for members and \$10 for nonmembers, pre-registration is required.



Easter Family Day Sunday, March 26th 2pm-4pm

Introduce your little ones to Swedish Easter traditions. Families can make Swedish Easter crafts, dress up as Swedish Easter witches, and take part in an egg hunt. Free for members and children 2 years and under, \$10 for non-members. Pay at the door.



Radically Marimekko Exhibition Opening Wednesday, March 29th 5 – 8 pm

The American Swedish Historical Museum is proud to present the much-anticipated exhibition Radically Marimekko! Join us for the exhibit opening reception including remarks by ASHM Curator, Christopher Malone, and a screen print craft with the Fabric Workshop and Museum. This is a free event with light refreshments included. RSVP online is appreciated.

ASHM Virtual Member Chat: Marimekko & Scandinavian Fashion Wednesday, April 5th 6:00 – 7:00 pm

All ASHM members are invited to this exclusive discussion group. Museum members will have the opportunity to gather as friends to socialize, learn more about the organization, and get a behind-the-scenes peek at collection objects and exhibits. This month we get a look at the Marimekko exhibit with Curator, Christopher Malone. We encourage others to share pieces from their own vintage Scandi style! This members-only program is free and held over Zoom. Visit our website to register for the program or become a member today!

Family Earth Day Sunday, April 23rd 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Join us in FDR Park for activities on recycling and sustainability. Families can learn about composting, get creative with recycled crafts, and make starter plantings! This program is free. Check our website more details and registration.



Spring Ting Saturday, April 29th 6 pm

Join us at our special fundraiser, featuring a silent auction and three-course dinner. Tickets start at \$125, RSVP by April 7. Call or check our website for more information.

Family Craft Workshop: Paper Dolls Saturday, May 6th 10:30am - 12pm

This workshop for kids 8-18 will introduce families to fun Scandinavian-inspired crafts. Participants will make their own paper dolls with clothing inspired by Marimekko patterns. Space is limited. Tickets are \$5 for member children and \$10 for non-member children.



"Sisterhood of the Varjo Dress" Virtual Talk with Alexandra Lange Thursday, May 25th 6:30 pm

ASHM hosts design critic, Alexandra Lange, for the talk "Sisterhood of the Varjo Dress: Women who wore Marimekko and what it meant to them," to discuss how radicals wore Marimekko. This talk will dive deeper past the fashion element of Marimekko clothing and explore the meaning designs had for feminist icons. Price \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Register online to receive a Zoom link to the lecture.

Scandinavian Celebration Day Sunday, June 4th 12 – 4 pm

Many Scandinavian countries mark their national pride through a day of celebration. This year we are coming together as a community to celebrate the history and culture of each group at the Museum. Learn about the traditions of each country through food, music, language conversation tables, a quiz walk through the exhibitions, and meet and greet opportunities with local Honorary Consuls. Don't miss this free day at the museum to learn and explore. Be sure to dress up and show off your cultural heritage! This is a Free event.



Midsommarfest Saturday, June 24th 4pm-7pm

Celebrate summer at our annual Midsommarfest, complete with food, drinks, homemade Swedish pastries, music, and maypole dancing, as well as outdoor games for all. Please see website for more information.

Spring Ting Online Auction



April 19th- 28th

Are you looking for a unique gift for yourself or someone else? Check out our online auction! Our annual online auction includes jewelry, Swedish glass, antiques,

textiles, gift cards, books, artwork, and tickets to experiences.

You can bid on items from \$20 to \$2,000. The auction helps to support the Museum's education programs, events, and exhibitions. Bidding opens at 12:00 pm on April 19th and will close on April 28th at 8:00 pm. To learn more and to access the auction site visit our website.

Images from Recent Events

Photographs by ASHM Staff



◀ Families petting a reindeer at Sami Traditions Toddler Time.



▲ Guests enjoying the smögásbord at the Julbord Dinner.



▼ Families listening to story at Toddler Time, with Education Manager, Rachel Kiskaddon



◀ ASHM volunteers at our Christmas Market.



▲ Shoppers our Christmas Market.



▲ Visitors listening to a tour by Executive Director, Tracey Beck, at the Glögg tasting event.



▲ Child performers in our Lucia procession at the Christmas Market.



◀ Erik Heinike, a volunteer in The Pea Soup Committee serving dinner.



◀ Diners at our Pea Soup Dinner.

Contributions

Do you want to make a contribution? There are several easy ways to support us. Visit our web page americanswedish.org/support or call **215-389-1776** for more information.

New Members

October 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022

Friend

Bekah Haimovitz

Organizational

Alusiv Inc.
Belmont Hills Library
Free Library of Conshohocken
Lansdowne Public Library

Household

Anthony Aguilar
Richard & Pam Alt
Ann-Sofie Bjork
Johan Detter
Kristine Dowd
Boris Elfstrom
Allegra Esposito
Charlotte & David Johnston
Daria Keyser
Meghan Koenig
Erik & Lauren Landström
Hannah Laurison
Harry Mazurek
Frank Resci
Lars Rosenquist
Nancy Turner
Jason Verdu
Bo Wingertz

Individual

Christine Barnabic
Lori Griswold
Cheyanna Michael
John Peterson
Eva Wengler
Philip Williams

Senior/Student

Sue Ensor Todhunter
Adam Gelb
Susan Merrow

In Memoriam

The ASHM community lost some very special members in the last few months. We send our condolences to their friends and family.

David L. Anderson
Marianne Baeckstrom
Agneta Bailey
Dale Clark
Mary Jean Clark
Wayne Pollock

Annual Giving and Contributions

October 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022

Serafimer

Anonymous
Elisabeth Brown
Red Moose Charitable Trust

Vasa

Anonymous
Freeman's
Henrietta Tower Wurts Memorial
Robert & Norma Thorne Charitable Fund
Kristina & John Antoniadis
Karin Bergqvist
Olof Bergqvist
Gregory Brown
Capozzi Scaramuzza Foundation
Margaret Copeland
Mary McCoy
Margot Patterson
Sandra Pfaff
SWEA New Jersey
Fanny Warren

Gold

Clarissa Bonde
Ken & Kerstin Cook
Carl M. Lindberg Family Foundation, Inc
Duane Malm
Ulla Martz, *in memory of Anna-Mari N. Martz*
Nord Cascading Unitrust Fund
John & Kristina O'Doherty
Cynthea & James Traverso
Verdandi Lodge No. 3, I.O.S.
James & Sofia Walker
Whibco Inc.

Silver

Anna-Lena Bromberg
Emily Christiansen
Claudia Curtis
William Honig
Eddie Talerman & Dyan Simon
Melissa & Tom Weismann-Hooper
Kim-Eric Williams
Ulf Åkerblom

Bronze

Anonymous
Linda & Kenneth Alexy
William & Tracey Beck
Alison Bennett
Lisa Caplan
Donna Cashdollar
Hilma Cooper
Joan Green, *In Honor of Amy von Sydow Green*
Samuel W. Heed
Ulla Heinicke
Eva & Bill Hohman
Thomas & Mary Ann Hudson
Kathi & Richard Keefe
Karin Kornaga
Leonard Kudlack
Norman Marcus
Roger & Margareta McCrea
Mary Anne Carlson Morgan
Timothy Nurvala
James O'Riordan
Kristina H. Smith
Rudy & Jean Soderlund
John C. & Susan Soffronoff
Shirley Stengel
Gretchen & Luke Walker
Sargit Warriner

Friend

Sally Allenstein
Keith Anderson
Tracy & Steve Carr
Brian Clancy
Jill D'Andrea
Jane Doe
Marna Feldt
Carla Fiske
Richard Goldberg
Dawn Gould
Celeste Greene
Elly M. & Len Yngve Gustafsson
Christine Hobbs
Lisa & Bill Hoffman
Eva Elisabeth Hohman
Midsommarklubben,
In memory of Wayne Pollock
Ellyn Miller
Kenneth Nuttall
Mary Anne Powell
Douglas Raichle
Brian Rivest
Christian Roden & Norman Lawrence
Ellen T. Rye
Lynne Schaefer
Chris & Lise Seger
David & Mary Segermark
Karin & David Svahn
Selma Olsen Tepper
Linda Mattson Thurstlic
Kerstin & Bjorn Tyreus

Thank you to the following donors who contributed the cost of hosting live reindeer for our November Toddler Time:

Claudia Curtis
Paul Muther & Ulla Dagert-Muther
Jill Ferguson
Lisa & Bill Hoffman
Antoinette Maccari-Klingsberg
Frank Sanders
Fanny Warren

In October, 2022, Virginia Swedberg, a valued member of the ASHM community passed away. The following donors have given gifts in her memory:

Kristina & John Antoniadis
William & Tracey Beck
Görel Bengtzon & Roman Hrycushko
Elisabeth Brown
Jon & Lori Cilley
Ester Citron
Ken & Kerstin Cook
Andrew DeBoer
Joseph & Karin Hampel
Andrew & Pamela Harlem
Ulla Heinicke
LaVonne & Eric Johnson
Kristia & Charles Kalb
Karin Kornaga
Caroline Rossy
William Stanley
Richard & Kathy Swedberg
Margaretha Talerman
The Brackens
Fanny Warren

Take a Closer Look at Marimekko!

Marimekko is a well-established and beloved brand that has garnered a worldwide following. The colorful prints transition from clothing to housewares and inspire us across generations in both vintage and modern pieces. There is so much to discover when it comes to Marimekko, ASHM has curated a program series to explore the intellectual and creative levels behind this iconic brand.

“Sisterhood of the Varjo Dress: Women who wore Marimekko and what it meant to them”

Virtual Talk with Alexandra Lange



Design critic, Alexandra Lange, will give a virtual talk diving past the fashion elements of Marimekko clothing by exploring the meaning their designs had for feminist icons. Her essays,

reviews, and profiles have appeared in numerous design publications including *Architect*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, and *Metropolis*, as well as in *The Atlantic*, *New York Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, and the *New York Times*. This talk is inspired by her 2017 *New Yorker* article “Jane Jacobs, Georgia O’Keeffe, and the Power of the Marimekko Dress.” The talk will be held over Zoom, Thursday, May 25th at 6:30 pm.



Family Craft Workshop: Paper Dolls

This workshop for kids 8-18 will introduce families to fun Scandinavian-inspired crafts. Participants will make their own paper dolls with clothing inspired by Marimekko patterns. During the program families will tour the exhibit and learn how Marimekko played with colors, shapes, and lines in fabrics. This will help them design their clothes for paper dolls. Space is limited. Tickets are \$5 for member children and \$10 for non-member children. Saturday, May 3rd 10:30am - 12pm

Design Date Night!

Looking for a radically different date experience this summer? The American Swedish Historical Museum and the Fabric Workshop and Museum are teaming up to create a fun night out exploring ASHM’s newest exhibition *Radically Marimekko*. Grab your sweetie or bestie and be immersed in the colorful world of the iconic Finnish fashion brand. Take inspiration from the exhibit and create your own set of custom-designed, screen-printed, cloth dinner napkins-- a true conversation piece for your next party! The evening includes a tour of the exhibition, a step-by-step screen-printing project led by the Fabric Workshop and Museum, and a sample flight of Scandinavian chocolate! The event will be held at the ASHM on Thursday, July 13th, 7 – 9 pm. Pre-registration is required.

The Gift Shop is stocked with presents for yourself or someone dear!

A selection of beautiful silver jewelry from Swedish Blue has arrived at the Gift Shop! The jewelry is handmade with Swedish blue stones, which can only be found at the site of a medieval copper foundry in Bergslagen, Sweden. The color shades in the stones are determined by the minerals they contain, which makes each stone and piece of jewelry unique. There is a range of bracelets, earrings, pendants, and rings in the different gorgeous designs of Knuten, Twisted Light, and more.

Excited to view the patterns in the exhibition *Radically Marimekko?* Bring home the latest Marimekko styles from our Gift Shop! The ASHM Gift Shop is stocked with gorgeous Marimekko items like umbrellas, mugs, and tote bags in iconic Marimekko patterns. Coming soon is a selection of Marimekko clothing in different sizes and patterns, so you can add a piece of Marimekko attire to your wardrobe!

