

Finland national day

Helsinki, as World Design Capital 2012, showcases Finnish spirit

Every Dec. 6, the Republic of Finland and its people celebrate the anniversary of the country's declaration of independence from the Russian empire in 1917.

Finland is a Nordic country situated in the Fennoscandian region of Northern Europe, bordered by Sweden to the west, Norway to the north and Russia to the east, while Estonia lies to the south across the Gulf of Finland.

World Design Capital

This year, World Design Capital (WDC) Helsinki 2012 has taken place at home and abroad. Its theme is Open Helsinki: Embedding Design in Life.

The WDC is an initiative of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (Icsid), which every second year recognizes one global city for its accomplishments in utilizing design as tools to improve social, cultural and economic life.

Finnish design has a long and distinguished history. It is no exaggeration to say that design is ever-present in the Finnish lifestyle. While respecting traditions and cherishing the past, design represents the country's future.

Helsinki is a vibrant, international metropolitan area with a strong design tradition, a rapidly changing urban structure and a shared vision to become the global leader in the international field of design. The Helsinki metropolitan area is home to 1.2 million inhabitants.

The WDC Helsinki 2012 program contains more than 300 projects. Half of them are development projects in which different approaches to design are used to an exceptionally broad extent. The other half of the program presents a variety of

events, exhibitions and encounters showcasing design and its many forms.

The WDC Helsinki 2012 year started with 30,000 citizens celebrating the New Year's Eve of Design on Dec. 31, 2011. The beginning of February was marked by WDC Helsinki 2012 Open Doors Weekend and hundreds of simultaneous events presenting design in surprising forms and places. The World Design Capital Gala gathered the global design community together in early February.

The opening of the WDC Helsinki 2012 Pavilion in May was the start of one of the busiest months in Helsinki during the year. The temporary wooden pavilion located between the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the Design Museum in Helsinki was a key meeting place. Between May and September, the pavilion held events and activities that communicate the concept of the 21st century museum. The numerous events in May included Aalto University's MoA'12 Masters of Aalto festival and events presenting Finnish and Nordic fashion.

September was the most design-intensive month in the WDC Helsinki 2012 calendar of events. Helsinki Design Week 2012 fills the city, spreading into many locations. Everyday Discoveries, an International Design House Exhibition, conveyed a broad view of contemporary design and compared current design standings between different countries. Habitaré, the largest furniture, interior decoration and design event in Finland, offered hundreds of exhibitors, high-class specialist exhibitions and areas, as well as an inspiring program for both profes-



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sionals and the general public.

One of the WDC Helsinki 2012 goals is to demonstrate the benefits of design in solving the challenges of urban life. The program presented around 150 projects exploring the new uses of design as well as transforming the city into an increasingly better place.

Kulttuurisauna is a new public sauna honoring Alvar Aalto's 1925 manifesto on the need for reviving the sauna culture in Finland. Kamppi Chapel of Silence, a new landmark piece of wood architecture, uses innovative design for improving urban landscapes and creating an attractive

living environment. In the Finnish nature Center Haltia, opening in early 2013, new architecture will meet with nature, providing a gateway to Finland's nature as a whole. A new meeting place for food, design and urban culture, Abattoir, brings together farmers market-style markets, pop-up restaurants and design events.

365 Wellbeing is a project led by Aalto University, incorporating designers into finding new patient-centered solutions for municipal well-being services. The project also encourages the exploration and adoption of healthier lifestyles and designs functional, pleasant and healthy environments. Redesigning 925 aims to redesign the working practices of office work. The goal is to increase the efficiency, environment and creativity of working life. The new City Center Campus Library of the University of Helsinki is a new architectural site and a pioneering learning environment in the center of Helsinki.

New design-intensive processes started in the fields of urban planning, built environment, open source information, data visualization and design education. Many other projects took place connecting with nature in various ways from urban gardening to Internet-based tools for identifying species.

The WDC Helsinki 2012 program includes approximately 100 exhibitions that cover a wide range of design and questions the boundaries between art and design.

As part of the WDC program or coinciding with the WDC year, various exhibitions related to Finnish design are being held around Japan.

The following are some of the

recommended events related to Finnish design:

• **"The Essence of Finnish Design and Culture"** presents around 240 artworks spanning the various fields of painting, literature, architecture and crafts, including the products of designers and brands that made the highlights of the golden age of modern design. A focus will be made on the "Moomin" series, as a symbol of the natural background of Finnish lifestyle. Through the world-famous story created by Tove Jansson, the exhibition explores the keywords of Finnish lifestyle and design. Also, the exhibition introduces the national romanticism movement and artworks of other artists from the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, such as the painters Akseli Gallen-Kallela and Pakka Halonen. These artists have embraced the landscapes of Suomi (Finland) or the mythical world of the national epic "Kalevala" as a source of creativity that leads to postmodern design out of Finnish spirit. Moreover, the chapter 3, as an epilogue to the exhibition, will also introduce the latest initiatives of the 21st century toward eco-housing and public transportation in the lineage of Finnish "Good Design."

The exhibition has traveled around Japan, having taken place at Aomori Prefectural Museum of Art, Utsunomiya City Museum of Art in Tochigi Prefecture, Shizuoka City Museum of Art, and is being held at Nagasaki Prefectural Museum of Art through Dec. 24. It will be held at the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art from Jan. 10 to March 10, 2013.

• **"Glass Design from Finland,**

the Land of Forests and Lakes" is being held at the Suntory Museum in Tokyo through Jan. 20, 2013. Most of the exhibits, showcasing the history and the current designs of Finnish glass art, come from the Finnish Glass Museum in Riihimäki. The exhibition is timed for the Christmas and New Year holiday period, providing an opportunity to enjoy the expansive world of Finnish design and share the joy of art in life. During the exhibition, Finnish design and artworks will be available at the special store inside the museum.

• **"Finland Textile Art"** is taking place at Dazaifu Denmangu shrine in Dazaifu, Fukuoka Prefecture, through March 10, 2013, featuring works by Finnish textile designers Dora Jung and Maija Isola, as well as Japanese designer Fujio Ishimoto, who has been serving Finnish brand Marimekko since 1974. Also, installations featuring Marimekko textiles by Japanese designers unit ima are on display in the grounds of the shrine.

Information provided by the Embassy of Finland.

Congratulations

to the People of

the Republic of Finland

on the 95th Anniversary of

Their Independence



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