

Posters from Finland. Tapani Aartoma, Kyösti Varis

Professor **Kyösti Varis** (born 1932 r.) is one of the best-known Finnish graphic artists. Even his earliest posters of the 60's designed for the advertising campaign of household appliances, were distinguished by his great sense of humour. He gained international recognition at 2nd International Poster Biennale in Warsaw 1968 for a poster on a society-related subject. His success contributed to the dissemination of the "Finnish school of poster," whose strength was based on speaking of social problems by means of black and white photographic posters. Varis often uses humour in his posters, which is his favourite tool. As an example one may use his poster that promotes safety on roads entitled "Wednesday without bumps," which portrays a man trying to carry an egg on the roof of the car he is driving. Kyösti Varis' posters show his interest in music and especially his love of jazz. The poster advertising the Jazz Festival in Pori depicts a clarinet winding like a snake and aptly symbolising his passion for jazz. Also the subject of sports, one of the artist's favourite leisure activities, is visible in his works. Varis designed a few posters to mark the Winter Olympics organised in Salpausselkä. Among his many posters devoted to sports subjects, there is a poster that shows the artist's negative attitude to the use of prohibited substances whose senselessness is symbolised on the poster by the depiction of a shortened measuring tape.

Kyösti Varis is known not only as a poster designer but also as the creator of advertising symbols and logotypes. The number of symbols that he designed for Finnish companies is sizeable. One of the most famous symbols is the logo of the Finnish Airlines, which, to this day, has been in use in its modified form for over 30 years. Currently Kyösti Varis runs his own graphic studio.

The graphic artist and Professor **Tapani Aartomaa** (born 1934) lectured in, among other places, the School of Industrial Design in Lahti, The School of Advertising Graphics, the Pekki Halonen's Academy and in the Industrial Design Institute in Helsinki. He is a mentor of many recognized Finnish graphic artists. His poster works are characterised first of all by his ascetic composition and typographic picture. Using primary colours of symbolic meaning is in the spirit of *Bauhaus* and constitutes a significant element of the message included in Tapani Aartomaa's posters. His poster "Stop" from the early 70's is a lyrical work that supports the idea of protecting the environment. Having the youngest audiences of his art, Tapani Aartomaa designed a series of amusing, colourful posters commissioned by the Museum of Design in Lahti. This optimistic series that conveys the positive power of art is an expression of the designer's style. Many of Aartomaa's works were inspired by nature, which on paper gets transformed into abstract forms. His collaboration with an interior designer Yrjö Kukkapuro resulted in post-modern chairs and common exhibitions to which the designer also created posters. From the beginning of the 60's Tapani Aartomaa has been creating book jackets. In the recent year the artist was involved in graphic development of books in the field of plastic arts. The artist actively represents designers that belong to various organisations. Tapani Aartomaa belongs to a group of leading designers of the Poster Biennale in Lahti with which he has maintained his links and with whose current head, Kyösti Varis, he has continued fruitful co-operation.

Ulla Aartomaa
Curator of Art Museum in Lahti

Exhibition Curator:
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