

TUULI:



FINNISH FASHION SHOP FLOURISHES IN DOWNTOWN SEATTLE.

Mention Italian fashion at a party and you are likely to hear the words sophisticated, elegant, and timeless. Bring up French fashion and the names Chanel, Louis Vuitton, or Givenchy might get dropped. Ask about Finnish fashion and you will probably ... get a blank stare.

And those blank stares are what led Finnish-born Ulla Freeman to open her shop, Tuuli, on Seattle's First Avenue this past April.

"My main reason to open the shop was to bring Finnish designs to Americans," Freeman says. In a city filled with fashion choices, from Italian to Peruvian, Scandinavian fashion is underrepresented—or even misrepresented.

"Scandinavian design is way beyond the colorful sweaters and reindeer horns," she says.

So what exactly is Finnish fashion? How does a little arctic country with just 5.2 million people, living along the shores of 190,000 lakes, express themselves in fashion?

"It's a small country with few people. It's not a city life. We like the elements of nature in our designs," says Freeman. And those qualities are easy to identify: clean lines, bright prints, cotton

fabrics, and harmony with nature. The signature of Finnish fashion is, Freeman adds, "the simplicity. And we're not afraid to use colors."

Marimekko, the leading house of fashion in Finland, achieves the bold colors in their trademark cotton prints by using only dyes that are free from harmful chemicals. The same is true for Aarikka, the jewelry makers known for their chunky beaded wooden bracelets and necklaces. And the wood used in Aarikka jewelry? Finnish birch and pine. So, when asked what the name of her shop means, it's not surprising that Freeman responds that "tuuli" is also the Finnish word for wind.

Marimekko was founded in 1951 by Armi Ratia. Marimekko designs provided women with stylish, yet comfortable alternatives to the popular Bridget Bardot-type fashions of the time. The wide-brimmed sun hats

and graphic prints created by Marimekko in the 1950s and 1960s continue to be popular today.

"I absolutely admire this lady," Freeman says. "Her concept, her designs are fresh like they were invented in 2004."

Aside from the "top quality casual" Marimekko and Nanso cotton clothing, Tuuli also carries an assortment of Finnish bags, hats, and jewelry.

Kalevala Koru, the Finnish jewelry firm, formed in the late 1930's. Most of Kalevala Koru's distinctive jewelry designs are replicas of Viking artifacts unearthed in Finland, though the collection includes modern interpretations of archeological finds dating back to the Iron Age. The earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, and brooches are crafted out of silver, bronze, and gold. Native semiprecious stones such as spectrolite, granite, green agate, amethyst, and moonstone are incorporated into the jewelry. These ethnic designs were once worn only by Finnish folk dancers, but are now available worldwide.

Freeman says her shop has quickly become a gathering place for exchange students, visiting Finns, Finnish-Americans, travelers, and locals. In fact, Tuuli even found its way onto the annual "Best of Seattle" list published in August by the *Seattle Weekly* newspaper.

"I feel really good that Seattleites like the store," says Freeman. ~

**ABOVE:
STORE
OWNER
ULLA
FREEMAN**

**OPPOSITE
PAGE:
CLOTHING
BY
MARIMEKKO**

[STORY BY ANNIKA WALLEDAHL]

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