

Birds by Toikka in 2009

## 'The man of big gestures' comes up with more new surprises

One of Finland's most famous glass artists, **Oiva Toikka**, toured Central Europe this autumn. He has just got back from a tour, during which he visited Iittala stores in Antwerp, Amsterdam, and Hamburg. One of the Netherlands' leading dailies, NRC, featured a headline interview with him, entitling the piece 'A man of big gestures', and describing him as someone who 'is not interested in millimetres or in honing details' – a good insight about someone who says that he came up with the design for his annual bird, egg, and cube for 2009 by chance.



Chance or not, the designer has again challenged what is possible in the world of glass. A delicate tracery, akin to an engraving, adorns the white surface of the new bird. In the case of cube, a white ball of glass with a similar tracery-like surface has been trapped inside a block of solid transparent glass. How has it been possible to apply such a delicate design to the surface of the molten glass?

### Some dirt and spike moulds

Oiva Toikka always likes to say that his pieces are born out of a close collaboration with the master glassblowers at the Nuutajärvi glassworks. He also emphasises that working together on the floor of the glass works can result in misunderstandings, as it can be difficult to hear what someone says, people can make mistakes – or something can simply just go wrong.

"The mistakes are interesting, though; you can always learn something new from them," he says.

The graphic feel of Toikka's new pieces for 2009 was largely the result of a 'fault in the production process'. The team at the glassworks found that dirt was adding grey and brown shades to the molten white glass, which gave Toikka the idea of putting the effect to work as a design feature!

A new type of 'spike mould', brought back from America by the Nuutajärvi team, has been used in producing the new Toikka bird. The hot molten white glass is first blown into a bubble and then some dirt is put on it. Then the glass bubble is blown into a mould full of spikes. These spikes create small bubbles of air in the glass, and when the glass is removed from the mould, the dirt in the bubbles spreads across the surface to form a tracery-like pattern. Dirt has helped give birth to a delicate new pattern.

### Majestic owls and penguins

The Birds by Toikka collection for 2009 includes an impressive new variation on the owl theme that has fascinated Toikka for many years – an eagle owl known as Uhuu, with an expression that is certain to get people's attention. The owl is another *tour de force* of the skills of the glassblowers at Nuutajärvi and features lustre in its surface finish.

"Penguins are such sculptural birds in their own right that one doesn't need to add anything," says Toikka, describing Ping and Pang.

The black and white pair is a perfect match for the clean-lined style popular in much of design today. The smaller Brisk and Tilda birds are an ideal response to the many people who have asked for smaller birds, and feature restrained pale and beige colours. 'The man of big gestures', with his love of colour, has come up trumps again.

### **Birds by Toikka to appear in November**

Oiva Toikka is a very versatile artist and has worked in a number of other areas as well as glass, including set, costume, and textile design, and his career to date in all of these media is covered very comprehensively in *Oiva Toikka – Glass and Design* (WSOY, 2007) by Jack Dawson of the University of Sunderland.

He is best known, however, for his birds. Collectors and others will be glad to hear, therefore, that WSOY will be publishing a new catalogue of Toikka's birds, *Birds by Toikka*, in November that will feature colour images of nearly all the birds produced as part of the normal collection since the beginning of the 1970s. The catalogue will also feature a large number of special-edition birds produced for companies and organisations. All in all, the book contains details on over 350 birds and is sure to make a perfect gift for everyone with a liking for Oiva Toikka's birds.

### **Product information:**

#### Available from 3.11.2008:

Annual cube 2009, 80 x 85 mm, numbered limited edition of 2,000

#### Available from 2.1.2009:

Annual bird 2009, Raakel, 240 x 210 mm

Annual egg 2009, For Raakel, 90 x 130 mm, individually numbered

Brisk, 100 x 50 mm

Ping, 85 x 147 mm

Pang, 78 x 118 mm

Tilda, 105 x 56 mm

Uhuu, 160 x 260 mm

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