

Professor and artist Oiva Toikka

- Born in Vyborg in 1931.
- Studied at the Helsinki School of Art and Design in 1953–56 and 1959–60.
- Worked for Arabia in the 1950s; started work as an in-house designer at Nuutajärvi in 1963. Designed many popular series of glassware, including Kastehelmi (Dewdrop), Pioni and Flora. Also numerous unique works, the most recognisable among these are the modular Lake Palaces and colourful Lollipops.
- Has received numerous awards, including a Pro Finlandia medal in 1980, the Kaj Franck Award in 1992, the Suomi Award in 2000 and the Prince Eugen Medal in 2001.
- His work is included in the collections of many prestigious museums around the world.
- The Birds by Toikka collection and the annual cubes are popular collector's items worldwide.



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Oiva Toikka's beloved birds celebrate their 40th anniversary

Over the past four decades, Iittala's Birds by Toikka collection has acquired an extensive and loyal fan base around the world. To mark its 40th anniversary, new birds and popular classics enter the collection this year.



Oiva Toikka designed his first birds in the 1970s, inspired by the unique atmosphere at the Nuutajärvi glass factory in Finland. Largely thanks to designer **Kaj Franck**, exceptional coloured glass expertise had accumulated at the factory since the 1950s, and, from time to time, the in-house designers had the opportunity to indulge in artistic creation and technical experiments. It is possible that the first bird landed in a glass installation by Toikka in 1969, but serial production began in 1972 with *Flycatcher*. Over the course of four decades, the number of individual designs has reached around 500.

As in nature, every bird by Toikka is a unique individual: a delicate and sympathetic character in its own right. When asked about his interest in birds in particular, Oiva Toikka says he finds the smooth shape particularly well



Oiva Toikka

suited for glass. "Glass as a material suits the shape of a bird, and the bird as an object suits glass," he explains.

Close collaboration between designer and glassblower

The designs come to life in close collaboration with the glass blowers of the workshop, where an idea leads to a final product in a process of discussions, trial and error. The underlying invention is a manufacturing method which does not require any cutting or grinding. Each individual bird requires a great deal of skill and experience. Each blower has his or her own role, and experiments are affected by their individual strengths and expertise. It takes true skill from an artist and the production team to produce the characteristic features of each species and still create a strong commercial product. This can only be achieved by an artist like Toikka who knows the possibilities of glass inside and out.

The bird collection was established as a permanent element in 1994. New designs were introduced at a fast pace, and in recognition of the international fan base the collection was given the English name *Birds by Toikka*. The collection has won over many art-lovers around the globe, especially in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and the USA. International success gradually led to a pivotal position in the Iittala collection.



Mirella, Mirella's egg, Annual cube 2012

New design inspired by the Design

The bird for 2012 carries the message of Finnish design. The black and white *Mirella* was inspired by Helsinki's title as the World Design Capital 2012. In his mischievous style, Toikka comments: "Black and white epitomise good taste and design." The "plumage" is created by rotating bands and grains of black glass over the white glass bubble. The 2012 egg in the *Birds by Toikka* collection is *Mirella's egg*, also in black and white, mouth-blown in a limited edition of 750 numbered pieces.

Toikka's Annual Glass Cubes have become valuable collector's items which are acquired as special souvenirs or to build a private collection over the years. Each cube is unique and features some of the finest techniques of glassmaking. The Cubes demand extraordinary skill of the glassblowers as well as the grinders who finish them off. This year's Annual Cube, the thirty-fifth in the series, follows the austere black-and-white theme set by *Mirella* and *Mirella's egg*; the delicate shell figure within glows through the clear, polished glass. A limited edition of 2,000 numbered pieces are being manufactured.

Special bird to mark the anniversary To mark the 40th anniversary, Iittala is introducing new birds and popular classics. The special anniversary bird, *Festive Catcher*, references the first bird in the series, *Flycatcher*, and will also be manufactured in a limited edition of 2,000 numbered pieces. To mark the World Design Capital year of Helsinki, some renowned black classics have returned to production: the magnificent, now slightly bigger *Raven*, which was in production in 1998–2002, as well as the smooth-lined *Crow*, manufactured in 1982–1998. The small and popular family of *Puffballs* grows with a slightly more robust member: new bird, *Kuulas*, is the colour of bright Seville orange.



Raven