Rebekah Rousi

Marimekko:

Gender and Nation through Text and Image
– an International Perspective

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

This research investigates the representations of prominent female corporate leaders (Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen), staff and female consumers in the advertising, media and anthology texts of the Marimekko Corporation – a Finnish textiles and clothing company. The thesis also examines how these representations have changed in the 56 years of the company's existence, and how gender has played a part in defining the nature of Marimekko production. This is furthered by a discussion of the gender hierarchies at play in the fields of design and craft (textiles being traditionally classified as craft and a domain historically dominated by females)

The theoretical basis of this analysis consists of Judith Butler's (1990) concept of 'performativity' and the notion of gender as a performance, in addition to 'interpretive framing' as described and demonstrated by Anu Koivunen (2003). Nation is also a central theme, as in this research gender is considered to be a series of culturally bound performances. Homi Bhabha's (1990) theory on the formation of national identities through series of narratives is used to read and reconstruct the narratives of Marimekko in relation to Finnish national discourse. To decipher these narratives, analysis of articulation is employed. This is done by observing repetition and usage of symbols, expressions and descriptions in media and anthology texts, and pictorial and textual advertising material. These are then linked to the Finnish socio-historic context. Concepts of the 'monument-Finnish woman' as examined and described by Koivunen (2003) have provided the framework through which representations of Marimekko's female leaders, staff and consumers are connected to various Finnish national discourses.

Textual materials written in the English language have been used to gauge the way that 'Marimekko (Finnish) women' are being constructed and marketed to an international audience. The material chosen for investigation includes: Marimekko anthologies Phenomenon Marimekko (Rahikainen-Haapman, Kaarakka & Vuorimaa Eds., 1986) and Marimekko: fabrics, fashion architecture (Aav Ed., 2003); journal, newspaper and online articles; in addition to Annual Reports from 1999 to 2006 and Marimekko News from 1999 to 2006.

The 1977 catalogues The Traveler and Playtime have been used as a basis for comparing the earlier versions of Marimekko construction of the female consumer to the most recent, as their themes encompass the ideas of the professional, independent Mari Girl of Armi Ratia's leadership (1951-1979). The 1970s catalogues are compared to recent fashion collection catalogues of amongst others Ritva Falla, Mika Piirainen, and Niina and Kalervo Karlsson, to see how the representations of female leaders, staff and consumers have changed over time. The Marimekko Corporation has long been known as innovative, and as "keeping with the spirit of the day" for this reason, the advertising material in particular has proved significant, as it has seen a divide between the Marimekko female consumer and the professionally active Marimekko female leaders.

Asiasanat – Key words

Marimekko, gender, female, woman, Mari Girl, nation, representation, articulation, design

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Tiivistelä – Abstract

Tutkimus tarkastelee suomalaisen tekstiili- ja vaateyritys Marimekon tunnettujen naisjohtajien (Armi Ratia ja Kirsti Paakkanen), henkilökunnan ja naiskuluttajien representaatioita yrityksen mainonnassa sekä yritystä käsittelevissä journalistisissa, tutkimuksellisissa ja mediateksteissä. Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan, kuinka nämä representaatiot ovat muuttuneet yrityksen 56:n olemassaolovuoden aikana ja kuinka sukupuoli on määrittänyt Marimekon yrityskuvaa. Lisäksi tutkielma tarkastelee sukupuolihierarkioiden merkitystä designin ja käsityön kentillä (tekstiili on perinteisesti luokiteltu käsityöksi ja sen alue on historiallisesti naisvaltainen).

Analyysin teoreettinen pohja rakentuu Judith Butlerin (1990) 'sukupuolen performatiivisuuden' käsitteelle sekä Anu Koivusen (2003) soveltamalle 'tulkinnalliselle kehykselle'. Sukupuolen ohella kansallisuus on keskeinen käsite, sillä sukupuolen nähdään koostuvan kulttuurisidonnaisista teoista ja suorituksista. Tutkielma nojaa Homi Bhabhan (1990) teoriaan kansallisten identiteettien muodostumisesta tarkastellessaan Marimekkoa koskevien kertomusten suhteita suomalaisiin kansallisuuden diskursseihin. Menetelmällisesti tutkielma pohjaa artikulaatioanalyysiin: analyysin kohteena ovat symbolit, niiden käyttö ja toisto, mediassa ja antologiateksteissä julkaistut representaatiot, kuvalliset ja tekstuaaliset mainosmateriaalit, joita tarkastellaan suomalaisessa yhteiskunnallis-historiallisessa kontekstissa.

Tutkielma keskittyy englanninkielisiin aineistoihin tarkastellakseen tapoja, joilla Marimekon (suomalaisten) naisten kategoriaa on rakennettu ja markkinoitu kansainväliselle yleisölle. Tutkimusaineisto sisältää antologioita (*Phenomenon Marimekko*, 1986; *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion architecture*, 2003); ammatillisia julkaisuja, sanomalehti- ja verkkotekstejä, Marimekon vuosikertomuksia ja yritysuutisia vuosilta 1999–2006. Rakenteellisesti tutkielma jakautuu neljään käsittelylukuun, joissa tarkastellaan Marimekon yrityshistoriaa ja -kuvaa (2), Marimekkoa käsittelevien tekstien sukupuoli- ja kansallisuusdiskursseja (3), yrityksen mainontaa ja naiskuluttajuuden representaatioita (4) sekä naispuolisten yritysjohtajien representaatioita (5).

Marimekon naisjohtajien, henkilökunnan ja kuluttajien muuttuvia representaatioita analysoidaan rinnastamalla vuoden 1977 muotikatalogien *The Traveler* ja *Playtime* representoima naiskuluttajuus viimeisimpiin muotikatalogeihin (Ritva Fallan, Mika Piiraisen ja Niina ja Kalervo Karlssonin kokoelmat). Armi Ratian johtajuusaikana (1951–1979) naiskuluttajuutta representoitiin ammatillisen, itsenäisen Mari-tytön hahmon kautta. Marimekolla on ollut pitkään innovatiivinen ja 'ajan henkeä' mukaileva yritysprofiili. Marimekkoon liittyvien sukupuolirepresentaatioiden analysoiminen osoittaa, että sekä yrityksen profiili että sen mainosmateriaaleissaan hahmottavat naiskuluttajat ovat sidoksissa sen naisjohtajien julkisuuskuviin ja niissä tiivistyviin kansallisuutta, designia ja sukupuolta koskeviin arvoihin.

Asiasanat – Key words

Marimekko, sukupuoli, nainen, Marityttö, kansallisuus, representaatio, artikulaatio, design

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1 Introduction

> "From the beginning, rather than simply designing textile patterns, Armi Ratia worked to formulate a vision of the modern woman and her needs […] It [Marimekko] was a small but visionary firm, not averse to risk-taking, unlike most contemporary Finnish firms. More remarkably, it competed on the basis of its design prowess at a time when other Finnish companies for the most part did not."
>
> (Ainamo, 2003, 175-6)

The Finnish textiles company Marimekko has held fascination for scholarly writers and journalists since its beginnings in 1951. Texts about the Marimekko Corporation have covered everything from corporate operations, gender, design and textiles to architecture. Masters theses such as that by Anja Turunen (2002) have taken ethnographical approaches to analyse the application of Marimekko designs and clothing. In addition, research texts such as Antti Ainamo's *Industrial Design and Business Performance* (1996) have investigated the way that 'design' ('good'-'experimental') has corresponded with business performance. This Masters thesis takes a textual approach to examining the company. With the phrase: "to formulate a vision of the modern woman and her needs" as a starting point, I have sought to analyse how the *vision* of the "modern" woman has been constructed in Marimekko anthologies, journalistic texts and advertising material.

As 'modern' is a relative and temporal concept constantly in various stages of renewal, this study focuses on the development and construction of the 'vision' or 'image' of modern women throughout various periods of the company's existence. Further, not only does this study analyse images of a generic notion of modern (Finnish) women, but it specifically identifies the impact that public profiles of the female corporate-heads have had upon and in relation to representations of the female consumer.

The Introduction chapter of the study outlines the research background and development process regarding how the focus of my research and question were arrived upon. Due to my approach in analysing textual and pictorial material the theoretical framework and methodologies are discussed jointly. The theoretical concepts illustrated in the introduction are the tools that have been used in my analysis. Therefore, this chapter goes about summarising the key concepts comprising gender, representation,

nation and narrative, performativity, articulation and framing. The concepts may seem plentiful, but they are intrinsically linked to the operations of the material that has been analysed. After discussing the theories and materials the chapter goes on to describe the role of Finland in the international design field and the importance of design in the Finnish context. Finally, the introduction chapter is concluded with an outline of the thesis structure.

1.1 Thesis Background

My interest in the Marimekko Corporation stems from my background as an Australian printmedia artist. As an artistic printmaker, I know all too well of the limited options and recognition available to printmedia artists in the labour force — particularly amongst the Australian creative industries (Tucker, 2004, n.p.). The ability of the artistic printmaker to exercise a fully creative art practice while being employed by a design company is a less heard of event on Australian shores. Those who are employed by production companies generally fall under the categories of graphic designer, product designer, or printer (which is often a purely technical job role). Therefore, recognising the existence of companies, such as those found in Finland, which employ artists to design products, and encourage art production, has been inspiring. The adaptability and encouragement of 'artistic thinking' is what I believe stimulates societies' adjustment to changing economic and technological circumstances.

When I first began to consider this Masters thesis during the early months of the Nordic Arts and Cultural Studies, and Digital Culture programmes, I was interested in investigating the possibilities of a totally digitalised concept of the Marimekko Corporation. The idea had formed when considering one of Finland's most successful export textiles companies, existing in the context of a globally competitive Information Society. Considering arguments set forth by Richard Florida (2002) in relation to the ways economies and labour force participants (workers) are needing to adjust and adapt to creative industries, and taking into account the boom of virtual consulting and information technology companies here in Finland, I began to wonder what the role of a textiles and clothing design company would hold in the near future. The idea of a 'virtually' based printed-textile company may seem a little far-fetched, but from what I have discovered while analysing much of Marimekko's material reflecting on the 1950s through to 70s, is that the company was broadly pitched to materialise artistic ideas. In other words, through not binding its production to one specific line, the company had

and still has flexibility in adjusting to market trends and demands. It was the combination of the possibilities of how far and into what directions a printed textiles company could be taken in relation to an actively expanding Information Economy that drew my initial interest. The matters of concern that I felt were important were related to what Marimekko has achieved, what it could have achieved, what it might not have been able to achieve, and what it can achieve in the future.

When I considered the above points I began to wonder whether the matters of female leadership, female producers, female consumers and an overall gendering of the company as a whole, played a part in determining the past, present and future directions of the Marimekko Corporation. Gendering of the company took particular preference in the earlier stages of the thesis development as I hypothesised about Marimekko being viewed amongst the teams of Finnish designers and design companies as a 'female company'. Yet, the further the research progressed, the more I began to see the importance of not Marimekko as a female entity, but the way in which it constructs and presents an image of its female customer, in addition to the ways 'others' (those interacting with the company) see the role of the female figurehead(s) — Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen. Most of all, the question that has developed through the research is "How has the image of the female corporate leader, and the female consumer changed over the years, through representations of Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen and the Marimekko 'woman' in text and image?"

1.2 Theoretical Framework and materials - Gender, nation and articulation

This section discusses the theoretical framework upon which this thesis is based and also outlines the analysis material. 'Gender' is the first of the theoretical concepts to be outlined. Discussion of the construction of gender is combined with theories of 'performativity' and 'framing'. I also mention the way that through performativity and framing gender is considered in this research as being culturally constructed and nationally specific. This then leads into a brief summary of the concepts of 'nation' and 'narrative'. 'Articulation' is introduced as a concept and an analytical framework and the section is concluded by an outline of the materials used in the analysis.

1.2.1 Gender, Performativity and Framing

For several decades feminist writers have been analysing terms and categories such as 'gender', 'sex', 'woman', 'female' and 'femininity'. 'Sex' and 'gender', have

been posed as opposites by feminist groups in the past. 'Sex' has often been associated with the biological, and 'gender' with the cultural. However, Monique Wittig (cited in Butler, 1990, 18-19), Simone de Beauvoir (cited in Butler, 1988, 522) and Teresa de Lauretis (1987, 2-5) in particular have provided arguments to assume that sex, and sexual differences are also culturally determined. Although interpretations, terminologies and discussions are always open for debate, a pattern recognised in each of their texts is that the above terms have been constructed, framed and repeated in specific contexts for specific purposes. Butler (1990, 23-25; 1988, 527-528) in particular has argued that 'woman', 'sex' and 'femininity' have been culturally constructed or made 'real' through performative acts. This then leads to the understanding that the interpretation and usage of these terms differ from one context to the next. Many highlight that 'gender' automatically assumes 'woman' or 'female', as it is the act of 'othering' or 'making different' from the hegemonic male norm. This is particularly apparent in the contexts of academic 'gender studies' and political 'gender equality'. Butler (1988, 526) in fact discusses how the repetition or rehearsal of performative acts inscribes gender into the actor.

In conjunction with Butler's writings on performativity, de Lauretis (1987, 3) expresses that rather than being determined by human biology, gender is a process of effects created through bodies, behaviour and social interaction. In reference to Foucault, de Lauretis expresses that the construction of gender is attained through "complex political technology" (3). In other words, gender as exhibited through establishing opposites, or *difference*, cannot be detached from distinct socio-political frameworks. It is within this framework, and with emphasis placed on the discourse of national culture that this thesis takes shape.

Anu Koivunen's book *Performative Histories, Foundational Fictions* (2003) provides a detailed framework for the readings, interpretations and construction of several versions of the 'monument-Finnish woman' in national cultural production. The process of monumentalisation is important to clarify at this stage, as it assumes the construction of a monument or symbol. In other words, to performatively embed descriptions, notions and concepts in collective consciousness through constant reference and repetition to them via cultural outlets such as text, speech, art, film theatre

etc. (Koivunen, 2003, 46)[1]. It is Koivunen's descriptions of representations of Finnish women, and her means of analysing "interpretative frameworks" such as publicity material and reviews, of the *Niskavuori* films, instead of the films themselves, that I greatly rely on for my own material analysis. Koivunen (2003, 13-15) hinged her research on the basis of interpretative framing, or the framing through which individuals are guided to understand particular phenomena — in this case, fictitious characters and their relation to national narratives. Erving Goffman (1974) describes 'frames' as tools which allow the user "to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (10). Frame analysis, according to Goffman, is the practice of analysing the grounds which determine events and the subjective involvement of individuals in these events (10-11). This may be viewed in the strategy of Marimekko rhetoric, linking the company's characters and profile to not only Finnish symbolism (flags and artefacts such as ryebread), mythologies (*Karelia* and *The Seven Brothers*) but also to international design and art movements.

Koivunen draws upon Butler's (1990; 1993; 1997) concepts of performativity to analyse elements of history and cultural recollection (regarding the *Niskavuori* films) in terms of what is "given-to-be-seen" (Silverman, 1996, 122), or framed. In other words, Koivunen uses the interpretive framings as forms of performativity, whether that be through media coverage or appropriating and repeating specified images through speech. Koivunen draws a clear link between the constructions of the female *Niskavuori* characters in post-production material and media with representations of women through foundational Finnish mythologies such as Elias Lönnrot's *The Kalevala* (1835) and Aleksis Kivi's *The Seven Brothers* (1860s). Koivunen's usage of performativity as a process of constant cross reference and repetition leads to the discussion of Homi Bhabha's (1990; 1994) sense of narrating the nation — or in other words, constructing the 'woman' through narrations of nation[2].

1.2.2 Nation, Narrative and Representation

At this stage of the thesis, amongst discussions of the cultural construction of gender, it is important to define two concepts at the heart of this investigation. Nation is the term constantly referred to during the analysis in terms of repetitive rhetoric and

[1] Koivunen (2003, 115) discusses how although monuments are constructed to be visible, once the meanings of the monuments become fixed and embedded in public consciousness, they seem to become invisible.

[2] Refer also to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991).

symbolism. Narrative is that which is being investigated in the Marimekko texts. Narrative does not refer to one, but to many stories. Bhabha (1990; 1994) relates to the use of 'other' stories to explain one (i.e. in colonialism the hermeneutic 'others' have been used to explain what one is not). Koivunen (2003, 16) however, uses the repetition of types, through the cross reference of stories to identify the narrative of nation as 'familiarity' — or that which is perceived as common sense. While Koivunen as a Finnish woman has needed to defamiliarise herself from the narratives, I as a foreign woman have needed to defamiliarise myself from international stereotypes, in order to use them as a tool to identify discourse in the Marimekko texts.

'Nation' as a word comprises two meanings, one being that of the politically constructed nation state, the other being the state of belonging to a local community or family. Ernest Gellner (1983, 48) has referred to the nation state as a "political roof" for the industrialised state. It absorbs smaller traditional cultural groups including tribes, religions and societies which have been gathered together to create a homogenised and centralised discourse of "effective citizens" (48) — as Hall (1992, 292) puts it "nation is a discourse". National identity has been expressed as an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983), and Hall (1992, 281-285) explains how national culture has been developed into a core element of modernity and industrialisation. Often, 'modern subjects' identify themselves culturally in terms of this 'imagined' nation-state cultural background. Identification is operationalised through instilling a 'purpose', meaning and attributes within individuals according to cultural and symbolic conditioning, taking place through the above mentioned narrative(s).

Cultural institutions are key players in this conditioning process but they do not stand alone in creating the discourse of national cultures. Instead symbols and representations are extensively relied on and repeated throughout the cultural environment (i.e. physical and communicative) to generate a seemingly consistent (though momentary) narrative that is interpreted by its 'subjects' as a 'reality'. Meanings are generated through the organisation and arrangement of symbology and representations (through histories, literature, popular culture and media), for this reason, nation is recognised as a discourse which has the power to influence our understanding of ourselves and to motivate our actions (Hall, 1992, 293). It is the construction of these narratives that I am interested in investigating through Marimekko material.

Through its strategic categorisation as being a Finnish national institution (Ainamo, 2003, 191), the Marimekko Corporation has taken a place in the discourses of

Finnish national culture. This being said, the company's public representations in anthologies, media articles and promotional material can be seen as reproducing various social and institutionalised values at respective moments in time. In other words, as our concepts of identity shift in the national and international context through the re-organisation of symbology and representations, these changes may be observed in remnants of the re-arrangements of the past (i.e. brochures, memorandums, articles). These re-arrangements are the representations which are analysed in this study. Analysing representation or investigating the "re-presentations" of what has already been represented (Dyer, 1993, 2) can be seen as intrinsically linked to the study of narrative. Representations refer not to just one source, but many. It is the performative action of repeating representations as a means to construct a sense of 'reality' through saturation that holds interest in my approach to the Marimekko anthologies and other published material. 'Woman' is the constructed category and label under study in this research. Most specifically, the characteristics ascribed to her in the process of gaining the extra classification 'Finnish' (nationalism) are what tie my analysis of Marimekko printed material to Koivunen's (2003) analysis of representations of the *Niskavuori* women.

1.2.3 Articulation

Articulation is both a theory and a methodology which has been discussed and debated extensively by authors such as Louis Althusser, Karl Marx, Ernesto Laclau, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg. The term 'articulation' according to the English language means ultimately "clinging together" or the joining of pieces to make a whole (Slack, 1996, 115). Hall (1986, 53) has described articulation as the type of connection that forms the unity of two or more elements in particular circumstances. The whole that is created through the linking of various elements is a "complex structure" comprising components related through difference as well as similarities (Hall cited in Slack, 1996, 115). Along a similar line Grossberg (1992, 54) describes articulation as the creation of identity on the basis of differences, in addition to linking different components such as text to meaning, or phenomena to politics etc. Articulation is described as the process of drawing connections from practices and affects, in addition to enabling practices to achieve varied and un-guessable effects (Grossberg, 1992, 54). Grossberg also considers articulation as a constant effort of practice re-positioning in the context of changing forces and power structures in order to

redefine the areas (or factors) of life by re-arranging relationships. This re-shuffling and adjustment may be seen in the changes of job fields, life-style trends and cultural policy, in order to adjust collective groups to changing economic and global conditions. This is one aspect to articulation that is kept in mind when analysing the changing representation of women in Marimekko advertising material, and the difference between the respective corporate figure-heads.

Another aspect of articulation I would like to draw attention to is the heavily debated and discussed articulation of Stuart Hall. In this study, Hall's definition is considered in regards to particularly the advertising and later Marimekko corporate rhetoric whereby two or more different linguistic elements are combined to form a particular meaning (Grossberg Ed., 1988, 53). Hall claims that the link is not necessarily long lasting, but for momentary purposes (social, political or economic) the portrayal of a particular narrative is used to gain a desired effect[3]. This more specific description of articulation has been used throughout the analysis process to draw connections between various national symbolisms, rhetoric and representational figures. The study in itself seeks to trace the changing structure of articulation, thus ultimately affecting the representation of key characters — i.e. producer and consumer — at different periods of time. This method of 'articulation' may be seen as "a way of characterizing a social formation without falling into the twin traps of reductionism and essentialism" (Slack, 1996, 112).

The critical perspective of this analysis comes in the form of my Gramscian style approach to reading articulation. In other words, in the context of deciphering the usage and struggle of gender within the discourses of national ideologies I use articulation to identify the power axes in the articulated meanings (Hebdige, 1996, 195), i.e. I identify how Armi Ratia's gender is used to either negate her judgement and leadership, or how it is used to present her as a hero amongst the norm of male executives. The analysis of articulation is utilised to determine the instrumental components used to assemble the image of Marimekko as a part of Finnish national and design discourses, in addition to identify the elements which are combined to formulate the 'we' and 'ours' in the imagined communities of Marimekko and Finland[4]. Agency must be established in terms of who is articulating or what is creating the articulation. In

[3] Grossberg's paper on "The Figure of Sub-Alternity and the Neoliberal Future" (2000) exemplifies this strategy within the changing politics of the Reagan to Bush eras, and the Thatcher to Blair eras.
[4] Refer to Baudrillard 1983.

the case of the textual analysis chapter a range of authors from previous Marimekko board members, to designers, journalists, friends and academic scholars are identified in relation to the content and purpose of their articulation. In the chapter on analysing advertising material it is the Marimekko Corporation itself that is identified as the body of agency. Its means are interpreted as not simply selling clothing, but selling the idea of a certain type of 'woman' consumer. The 'we' ('Mari Girl', 'Mari People') is challenged in regards to whom that may include, i.e. the Marimekko Corporation (staff) and consumers as one, or the corporation as 'we' and the consumer as 'you'. It is the combination of gender, nation, 'we' and the silent 'you' (it is not articulated as such in any of the textual material) that makes the study of Marimekko's articulation ever more complex.

1.3 Materials

My thesis is about analysing representations of personas, and representations of women in the context of an internationally and locally oriented Finnish company. The study of representation is not a study of 'reality' itself, as Richard Dyer suggests: "The analysis of images [and text] always needs to see how any given instance is embedded in a network of other instances" (Dyer, 1993, 3). In other words, one may read the network of instances as a source, or reservoir, of elements which may be selected and arranged to form particular representations (Hall, 1986, 53). Thus, the published material from and about the Marimekko Corporation can be seen as extracting and 'decoding' (or arranging symbolism in recognisable form for the reader — the act of articulation) elements from the cultural reservoir in a similar vein to other recognised entities in national discourses of Finland (such as foundational mythologies, political figures including Urho Kekkonen and wartime stories).

In this regard, this study is focused on analysing published materials produced by and about the Marimekko Corporation. All the material chosen and used in the study has been written in English, or feature English in conjunction with Finnish, which means that all the material under investigation has been created for an international audience. This selection was made deliberately, partly due to my own positioning as an international (Australian) researcher, and partly to gauge the representational devices that are employed by the company in the international context. Noting this, the selection of English textual material also excludes the vast amount of material written in Finnish, which not only recounts the company's history and promotional relations in greater

detail, but also provides greater emphasis on more locally specific symbolism and narrative. For instance, not as much attention is paid in my investigation towards Kirsti Paakkanen's childhood in Saarijärvi and its significance in terms of various Finnish national narratives (Leimu, 1992). This is due to the fact that the materials containing these narratives are in Finnish, which thus excludes the majority of the international audience.

The analysis takes place in a three part process. The first part concentrates on a close reading of the anthologies *Phenomenon Marimekko* (Rahikainen-Haapman, Kaarakka & Vuorimaa, Eds. 1986) and *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion, architecture* (Aav, Ed. 2003). In this process the gender relations inside the company are depicted through the tones and expressions adopted by authors of the anthology articles. Particularly in the case of *Phenomenon Marimekko*, representations of Armi Ratia and a phenomenon known as the 'Mari Girl' are analysed in relation to historical analyses. In the second part of the analysis (Chapter 4), advertising images in conjunction with text are examined in terms of the positioning of the models, their activity and background compositions. Catalogues that are specifically used are *The Traveler*[5] and *Playtime* (1977) due to the activity of the models and themes of the catalogues, in addition to timing during Marimekko's corporate history. These earlier catalogues are compared with the recent examples of the *Ritva Falla Collection* (Spring-Summer 2000) and *Jaana Parkkila Collection* (Spring-Summer 2000). The *Niina and Kalervo Karlsson Collection* (Winter, 2003/2004), *Mika Piirainen Collections* (Winter, 2003/2004 and Spring/Summer, 2004) and the *Marjaana Virta and Jaana Parkkila Collection* (Spring/Summer, 2006) catalogues have been used to gauge recent representations of the Marimekko consumer and articulations of their and the company's relationship to broader Finnish national discourses.

1.4 Finnish design and the label of craft

The modernist design context in which the Marimekko Corporation was established was one of a society that had a war-debt of 300 million US dollars to pay in goods at 1938 prices (Hawkins, 1998, 234). The concept of 'new' or the embracement of modernist designs as 'modern' was not a mere shake off of previous cultural and national restraints, but was also a political attempt to adjust the collective consciousness

[5] The "Traveler" is spelt this way on the catalogue.

towards a 'productive' mode of identification. Thus, the greater production, the higher the employment rate (including women) the faster the Finnish nation would develop as a Western society, and more importantly, the faster Finland that would pay the war-debt to the Soviet Union with a minimum of incurred interest and penalties[6]. Therefore, international promotion of Finnish design can be seen as a promotional campaign both to align Finland with the West and open strategic trading links to enable a faster economic recovery. Modernism in Finland was thus a design reaction to and for industrialism in tangent with the Arts and Crafts movement and Bauhaus. Modernism also served as a stylistic stamp for identification of Finnish design production.

Marimekko can be said to have been a part of these times when Finland forged ahead with international promotions of its modernist designs and was characterised in the paradigms of urbanisation and industrialism. Through personal liaisons, strategic outlet placements, publicity rhetoric and promotional exhibitions, the Marimekko Corporation was actively aligned alongside major names in the Finnish modernist design paradigm. In regards to the roots of international Finnish modernism in the late 1800s early 1900s, Harri Kalha (1998, 29) refers to the way that design approaches employed by Finnish practitioners were labelled by the rest of Europe as primitive and exotic. Particularly in the case of the international displays of textiles and *ryijy* rugs Kalha (1998, 30) cites that Scandinavian critics described the pieces as mystical and naïve, providing testimony to the connection between the Finnish people and nature. In other words, the writings of selected Scandinavian critics were to have demonstrated Finnish society as one which was 'pre-modern', less 'rationally' developed, and *feminine*.

This categorisation, while remaining a controversial point for academic discussion cannot be seen as entirely negative in the realm of the Finnish design industry itself. In fact, Armi Ratia's artistic decision to order Vuokko Nurmesniemi to imitate the work of another Finnish design Viola Gråsten (known for freehand patterns and outstanding colours) (Jackson, 2003, 49), may be seen as an active attempt to locate Marimekko's production in the tradition of international Finnish design. In addition, through this action Marimekko was being located in connection to the tradition of Finnish handicrafts, a predominantly female field. Further, the notions of an innate authenticity of form and connection to nature, both human and landscape (Kalha, 1998,

[6] In December 1946 Finland received such a penalty of $688,000 (US) due to its outstanding balance of $76 million (US; Hawkins, 1998).

29) were developed as a stylistic ethos and publicity draw card. At the same time as these stereotypes of earlier Finnish design have been embodied within Marimekko's design narrative, Marimekko connected with another international trend of Finnish design rhetoric, and that was the artistic freedom of the designers.

Kalha (1998, 36) provides an example where 'Othering' was used as an outlet for envy. As a reaction to the positive reception of Finnish design at the *Vårt Hjem* (Our Home) exhibition in Århus (1947), Kalha illustrates the down-grading description delivered regarding the Finnish designers as more or less unqualified. For example, Swedish designers such as Stig Lindberg (1946) openly suggested that they (Swedes) were classically trained painters who were required to design decorative objects for everyday use, balance the books and promote their own works. Whereas, Finnish designers were said to be mainly trained in craft aesthetics, allowed to experiment and indulge in non-functional forms. No wonder there was rivalry, as it was as early as this wartime period that the Finnish display, in comparison to other Nordic designs, was positively described as aesthetic household objects "a complete fusion of technology, colors and materials" (36). A prominent female textile designer of the earlier days of Finnish Modernism, Eva Taimi who had worked for other textiles companies, described Marimekko's success as being based on the creative freedom of the designers. This was something that seems to have lacked in Taimi's experiences at the Helsingin Taidevärjäämö (Aav, 2003, 34).

At the heart of my investigation lies the significance of Marimekko's classification as a *design* company in light of its production of textiles combined with a predominantly female-oriented creative staff. Focusing on the words of one of the first designers ever employed in the Finnish textiles industry, Taimi illustrates that creative experiences in the realm of the textile industry were few and far between. In other words, as seen above in Lindberg's criticism of Finnish designers being trained as 'craftspeople', a hierarchy between craft (repetition) and art/design (creativity and innovation) was used to subordinate various groups of practitioners. Through textiles being one of the only areas open to women in the Finnish field of industrial arts, the hierarchy of men as designers and women as creators (producers) was reinforced. The vast realm of design (architecture and furniture) as an area of innovation and imagination was left to those with the intellectual capacity to be creative (men), while

the field of craft (textiles was considered craft[7]), associated with imitation, repetition and tradition was designated to those who were more 'practical'[8] (women) (Svinhufvud, 1998, 200).

The subject of textiles in the domain of Finnish arts and design is another matter of concern. Most specifically the field of textiles, deriving from traditions of Finnish handicraft, was directly linked to women workers. Handicrafts and textile weaving were the areas that even aspirants for artistic occupations were directed towards if they were female (Wiberg, 1997, 33). Therefore, as fields such as architecture and sculptural designs (furniture, glass and wood) such as those produced by Wirkkala, Aarnio and Aalto were treated as independent design objects, worthy of emphasising the designers, textile-based designs such as *ryijy* rugs were treated more as collective — artefacts of cultural practice and tradition (Kalha, 1998, 44). This relationship of textiles in the design field, and females and textiles crafters (note not designers; Wiberg, 1997) makes Marimekko's connections as a textile design company, led by female figure-heads, all the more intrinsic.

I can link my fascination in regards to the field of Finnish modernism, the role 'women' (or female characters) and the current commercial climate of global 'informationalisation' to that which is written in Christopher Crouch's *Modernism in art, design and architecture* (1999). In my opinion Crouch's book highlights the significance of referring to a categorisation of cultural production (modernism) recognised for its innate nature of referring to and responding to industrialisation (industrialised processes), during a time when post-industrialisation is the 'buzz word' of the economic era. Crouch talks of how after approximately 100 years of the emergence of modernism new conditions such as the progress of the information economy and restructuring of industry, have given rise to the need for re-visiting the era when technology, mechanical reproduction, and mass consumption were seen as liberators to the 'common' worker. Crouch observes how "confronted with new conditions, with potential ideological chaos, artists and designers often retreat into the stylistic security of a nostalgic past" (8). This reverting back to modernism will be talked of in Chapter 5 in regards to the Amer Group, who tried to capture the 'spirit' of

[7] See Wiberg (1997)

[8] Mirjam Southwell (1997, 185-187) talks of how in product design women designers are hired for their practical approach to product development – thus, focusing on the process of 'doing' and 'repetition' (a conformity of action amongst users and designers) rather than the process of design as materialising the imagination. Southwell also stresses the lack of recognition of women as *inventors* and the emphasis placed on women as *users*.

a modernist Marimekko of the 1960s and 70s to revitalise a failing corporate body in the 'post-modern' 80s through the publication of *Phenomenon Marimekko*. It is also talked of in Chapter 5 in terms of Kirsti Paakkanen's revitalisation of the Marimekko collection through revisiting the 1960s designs of particularly Maija Isola. It is the latter successful move, during the late 1990s early 2000s which can be said to reinforce Crouch's suggestion that the 'common' worker, or the post-industrial consumer, is willing to revert to the idea of a nostalgic past to seek security and reason out of the present[9].

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis examines the Marimekko Corporation from several viewpoints. Chapter Two serves as an introduction to the company and investigates the various aspects of the company's representational profile. Corporate history is combined with details about the image building process. The roles of key concepts such as gender and nation are also integrated into this overview. Chapter Three consists of an analysis of the textual material (including anthologies, articles and cross-company promotions) with the aid of establishing an understanding of the historical surroundings of the text. Alternate themes and perspectives of approach to Marimekko writings are highlighted and discussed, drawing connections to the historic significance of representations employed in the textual narratives. Finally, gendered characterisations of the corporate atmosphere and leading figure Armi Ratia are gauged, with careful attention paid towards the author's relationship to the company and Armi Ratia, and for what reasons the text has been written.

Chapter Four is an interpretative visual analysis of how the female Marimekko consumer is constructed in promotional material. Advertising texts from 1977 are compared to those from the late 1990s and 2000s to determine whether Marimekko's representational strategies and relationship has changed towards the consumer, and how it has changed. Chapter Five seeks to partially explain the findings of Chapter Four through re-constructing and interpreting the factors which have impacted readings of the

[9] Through arguments made by those such as Bryan S Turner (1987), Koivunen (2003) offers a complex discussion regarding the use of nostalgia in cultural production. Koivunen's observations range perceiving nostalgia as history in decline rather than progress (66), to nostalgia as a celebration of modernisation rather than backwardness (101). When observing re-released over recent years of products such as Marimekko designs and Beatles albums, one may observe that nostalgia is not simply the act of personal remembering, but through observing the consumption of younger generations, we may say nostalgia refers to the romanticisation of an idealised past (Koivunen, 2003, 112).

two corporate figures, Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen. In turn, the profiles of these figures, plus that of Amer Group, are used to establish a transitional sense of corporate image and commercial nature in the company itself.

Finally, the Conclusion illustrates the main findings of the analyses and attempts to briefly explain these findings. This is followed by explaining Marimekko's historical relationship with its current president Kirsti Paakkanen's motto "keeping with the spirit of the day" (Annual Report, 2004, 7). The thesis concludes with an overall summary of the contents of the thesis where I end on the note of adding my own opinion to Kimmo Sarje's question: "Is the story of Marimekko changing? Will it ne'er again tell of reconstruction, migration and the new influence?" (56)

2. *Profiling Marimekko*

2.1 Welcome to Marimekko – brief introduction to the business history

The following section will introduce you to the ways in which the Marimekko Corporation's history has been recounted in its major publications and journal/newspaper articles. The chapter highlights several key characteristics which have been noted over the years such as the design perspective of post-World War II Finnish society, the development of the company in terms of its 'character' and production, in addition to key elements in the company's product design such as 'simplicity' and nature. The format of this chapter is designed to give the reader a chance to witness various angles of the same history which have been retold numerous times before. Following the brief accounts of the business history and discussion of the Marimekko design ethos, the chapter moves in to one of several comparative discussions regarding Armi Ratia, Amer Group and Kirsti Paakkanen. Although the name of the company has remained the same, the point of this section is to identify Marimekko in at least four distinct versions: the early days, then the new Marimekkos of the 1970s to 1980s; the Amer Group Marimekko of 1986-1991; and the Kirsti Paakkanen Marimekko of 1991 onwards.

2.1.1 Business events

The story of Marimekko's timely emergence has been told in numerous texts such as newspaper and journal articles, and not the least in the articles of the books which are solely dedicated to Marimekko — *Phenomenon Marimekko* (1986) and *Marimekko: fabrics fashion architecture* (2003). The general direction of this story is that Marimekko was officially registered as a company in spring 1951, when it had been created as a platform to demonstrate the ways in which Printex printed textiles could be used for everyday purposes. The original clause of Marimekko's business registration states:

> "The purpose of the company is the production of all kinds of clothes and clothing accessories, including made-to-order, as well as their wholesale and retail, import and export".
>
> (Official Register of Trading Associations 1951, cited in Donner, 1986, 8)

One important characteristic to consider when observing the character of the

Marimekko Corporation and trends in its business history is that contrary to other design companies of post-World War II Finland such as Iittala and Arabia, Marimekko's ownership was totally private. Iittala and Arabia were financially supported by larger organisations, making the Marimekko more independent of greater commercial and governmental concerns. (Aav, 2003, 36)

2.1.2 The name

The task of considering a name for the company can be seen to symbolise the direction of the company's international trade orientations. The goal in developing the name was to consider the nature of the company's production (clothing), the target consumer (women) and the nature of trade (local and international). The name may be directly dissected into 'Mari' (an anagram of Armi), or the Finnish version of Mary, and 'mekko', the Finnish word for dress, describing a creation of women's dresses. The name was to be Finnish due to its locality and for national appeal, yet it was also be to easy enough for foreigners to say (Ratia, 1986, 23). Although the company was said to have been conceived merely to 'educate the public' on how to use Printex textiles (ibid., 1986, 23), the thought behind the name suggests forward-thinking in terms of a multinational future.

2.1.3 The logo

The Marimekko logo is usually described as written in the typefont of 'courier' (see Ainamo, 2003, 178). However, another narrative emerged to the surface when Pekka Suhonen (1986, 19) told of how Armi Ratia had put a team of artists to work to develop a suitable Marimekko logo. The story behind the logo presents Armi Ratia as a determined artistic director, in-tune with her desire of a logo distinct from that of other dressmakers. *Phenomenon Marimekko* (1986, 19) provides samples of the logos Armi Ratia rejected which comprised scissors and measuring tape, symbolism which would generally distinctly be used to illustrate a woman's dressmaker [fig. 1]. Advertising flair and connection to the media is demonstrated through the narrative of Armi Ratia emerging from her office with a headline for *American Interiors* in hand. The headline had been written in Olivetti type — simple, industrialised and straight to the point. Assigning Helge Mether-Borgström the task of reworking the type, Marimekko's logo and Armi Ratia's leadership are linked with industrial production and foresight. The production of Marimekko is left room to expand in all areas of the design industry.

Fig. 1. Draft Logos from 1950s (Taken from: Rahikainen-Haapman et. al., 1986)

2.1.4 The beginning

Often when describing the origins of Marimekko, the wartime greys and material shortages after World War Two are used to emphasise the significance of the company's production on the Finnish market. When Viljo Ratia (1986, 23) described Marimekko's first fashion show at Kalastajatorppa (and also one of Finland's first fashion shows; Ainamo, 1996, 131) he used the term "real experience". This "real experience" seems to refer to an authenticity of Marimekko's local production for the local market through using materials which were available such as linen, and breaking away from the reproduction of the greatly prominent imports such as artificial silk. Marianne Aav in her introduction to *Marimekko: fabrics fashion architecture* (2003) describes the society into which Marimekko was born, as a society that was "yearning for beauty" (25). Aav talks of how the atmosphere of those days was one which people were both in pursuit of romantic themes, while at the same time were in search for new design options. It is not always clear when reading these writings as to whether it was the consumers, the designers or the entrepreneurs who were seeking innovative alternatives, yet this rhetoric is prevalent in writings across the disciplines of Finnish design. This seems to be one of the 'truisms' embedded in the 'heroic' histories of Finnish post-World War Two design narratives.

Readers are presented with a 'from chaos to success story' of how in the beginning demand for Marimekko dresses exceeded the capacity to make them. Viljo Ratia's 1986 (23) account told simply of how the Ratias did not have the space or equipment to produce dresses to sell in response to the demand generated by the parade. Ainamo (1996, 161) tells of how in the excitement of demand at the parade venue Armi Ratia confidently told the audience that the dresses were for sale. Ainamo's (1996, 162) narrative then illustrates the blunders which occurred when lack of communication amongst Marimekko's owners (Viljo and Armi Ratia, and Riitta and Viljo Immonen) caused Viljo Ratia and Riitta Immonen to mistakenly lease two production premises instead of one. The tragic-comic opening scenario continues as the company does not have enough money to fund one plant let alone two, which is in addition to the equipment needed. Then Riitta Immonen, part owner and maker of the dresses for the fashion show is noted for expressing disinterest in producing more dresses for the company (Ainamo, 2003, 175). Finally the summer of 1951 disappeared and the Ratias

are left with an abundance of stock unable to sell.

At the same time as the opening business operations are presented in a suspenseful mixture of excitement, loss, comedy and mayhem, 'scarcity' is also featured as a characteristic of the Marimekko Corporation and Finland in general. Here, a triangular trait of scarcity may be devised through the circumstances of Marimekko's initial conception. In almost all narratives of the early times attention drawn to the lack of a spacious plant (ignoring or oblivious to the temporary double-up of leases), production staff and machinery are noted for their absence and Finnish society is characterised by its shortage of resources (Viljo Ratia, 1986, 23; Ainamo, 2003, 174). The rhetoric of Finnish post-war history is intricately linked to that of the personification of Marimekko. Thus, the background setting for the company is that of a nation that had just finished repaying a debt of $300 million (US) to Russia in 1951 (Hawkins, 1998, 234; Ainamo, 1996, 116). The debts had been repaid in goods at 1938 prices (with a 15% capital goods surcharge, and 10% consumer goods surcharge). Industrial production in Finland and ultimately the production of Marimekko were limited to the materials and processes that were available, sometimes being none at all. In turn, output requirements (i.e. in terms of style and fabric) needed to be as minimal and as basic as possible, in addition the production needed to be as flexible as possible. This is, in my opinion, why the character and image building of Armi Ratia, was crucial to Marimekko's existence at that time. If Marimekko's image was big, its commercial existence could be prominent without necessarily producing in extreme mass quantities.

The stylistic influence of 'scarcity' was not an entirely un-thought of trait. In fact, six years before Marimekko's business registration, designers such as Ilmari Tapiovaara had been characterising the positive influence of needing to create under more restricted circumstances. In his entry into Suomen Koristetaiteilijain Liitto's (the Finnish Association of Decorative Artists; Ornamo) 12th year book Tapiovaara writes: "…scarcity is discovering its own style, it will apparently be the most important element in our industrial art for the next few years, a stylistic factor created by necessity" (cited in Aav, 2003, 25). This scarcity may be characterised as a need to invent and push the boundaries of existing materials, a trait of Alvar Aalto's style of working, particularly after he returned from the United States. This mentality of stylistic challenge in the face of scarcity may be viewed particularly in Marimekko's early and classic designs such as the smocks and *Iloinen takki* (Joy jacket).

2.1.5 Why Floral, *Unikko*?

The designs of Marimekko have been described over the years as unique, bold, modernist, constructivist, carrying on a new form of Finnish folk tradition, and the meeting point of east and west modes of thought. All of these attributes being a summary of general descriptions of Finnish design and society, both post-World War Two and during the earlier stages of Finland's participation in the international arena, through *Scandinavian Design* exhibitions (Hawkins, 1998, 237-238; Kalha, 1998, 32). A defining quote and legendary narrative moment in Marimekko's history is Armi Ratia's "Why floral?" a question she is said to have posed to Viljo Ratia (1986, 23) when he gave her a piece of spare cloth asking her to design a floral pattern. Viljo Ratia is framed in the vein of a 'normalised' or follower-type of businessperson (even in his own words). Viljo Ratia's commercial instinct is said to have him assume that because everyone else was printing florals that this was what the consumers wanted. The character of Armi Ratia is defined through the keenly tuned marketer retort "And because everyone is printing them, you must print something else" (Ratia, 1986, 23). Armi Ratia is told to have recognised that there was more value in being different. Further, difference and *uniqueness* have been heavily repeated terms in Marimekko rhetoric, the most articulated (in various forms) and prominent example of this *uniqueness* lies in the most reproduced pattern of the company, *Unikko*, which is ironically a flower.

In all of the texts depicting the origins of Marimekko, Finland is constantly described as having been saturated with 'wartime greys'. There is also mentioning of a banality of style through being at the end of the European fashion chain. Finland was characterised as the Nordic area's poorest and least industrially developed nation (Ainamo, 1996, 112). Thus, not only was production and the economy lagging behind the rest of the Nordic countries, if not most of Europe, at least the Finnish society is expressed as resenting the role of being a 'hand-me-down' nation (Jackson, 2003, 49). Once again, whether this was sentiment felt by consumers or in fact rhetoric presented by the Finnish industrial producers and media, *Nuori Voima* (young power) magazine of 1945 had categorised the patterned materials available in Finland at the time as "scraps" (cited in Jackson, 2003, 49). These "scraps" were seen as the left-overs of what the rest of Europe did not want, yet the Finnish consumers had to accept. With this climate freshly in mind, Armi Ratia's rejection of floral patterns may not be simply read as a rejection of the flower. It might, instead, be seen as a rejection to follow suit of other

Finnish textile companies which were not only printing florals, but importing the pre-set printing rollers from countries such as Germany (Aav, 2003, 33). This narrative construction of a setting based on sameness in which the blossoming Marimekko brought colour is important to keep in mind during later discussions in this thesis regarding Koivunen (2003, 95) and the creation of a national landscape.

'Uniqueness' is constantly used to describe the character of Marimekko's designs, meaning that quite often writers have a tendency to ignore the companies, in whose traditions Armi Ratia's Marimekko had followed. Important to mention is that the emergence of these so-called unique designs can be viewed through tracing the history of forms and techniques of printed textiles throughout the early years of twentieth century Europe (Jackson, 2003, 46-48). Drawing on the influences of Wiener Werkstätte (Austria) which specialised in block-printing during the 1910s and 1920s, Paul Poiret's Artelier Martine (established in 1911; France) and Joseph Frank's contributions to Svenskt Tenn from 1933 (Sweden), the specificity of Marimekko's designs may be questioned. Jackson (2003, 48) notes that the often 'naively' classified styles of prints seen in Marimekko textiles, in addition to the textiles of predecessor companies can be read as an evolutionary strive for freshness, through the dismantling of life-like forms. Going back to abstracts and forms which carry connotations of the primitive was seen as pursuing the child-like, the young, and the fresh.

The above mentioned qualities, which frequently have been used to illustrate Marimekko's design ethos have also partly been attributed to Finland's geographical and cultural location between Sweden and Russia. Marimekko has been noted as particularly utilising the forms and ideologies of its geographical and cultural positioning in between Eastern and Western Europe. The so-called unique flavour of Marimekko designs has been said to be based on "western rationalism" on the one side and "the freshness and carefree spirit of the east on the other" (Jackson, 2003, 51). In other words, in tradition of post-Enlightenment Europe, rationality is the masculine characteristic attributed to the West, with its basis in the natural sciences and systematic reason, while the East is placed in the realm of the primitive, naïve and mystical 'other' (Hall, 1992, 281-85). In addition to the apparent categorisation of the rationalised and spiritualised sandwich in which not just Marimekko, but Finland in general finds itself (Kalha, 1998, 44), there is very little explanation given in Marimekko texts for why the styles of particularly Marimekko's printed patterns so closely resemble those produced in Western Europe. Further, it must be noted that the inspiration from particularly

Swedish companies such as Svenskt Tenn and Nordiska Kompaniet (NK), in addition to Finland's own Artek, played critical roles in shaping Marimekko's design identity.

Jackson (2003, 49) and Aav et al. (2003, 204) note how Marimekko's earliest designs produced by Vuokko Nurmesniemi (Marimekko's first designer) were directly influenced by Viola Gråsten's *Oomph* (1952) [fig. 2]. *Oomph* which had been designed for Sweden's NK, was one of Gråsten's better known designs featuring irregular triangle repetitions housed in greater circular forms. This had been the pattern to which Armi Ratia had referred when instructing Vuokko Nurmesniemi on what to design (Engstedt, 2006, n.p.; Jackson, 2003, 49; Aav et al., 2003, 204). The colours were characteristically bold for Gråsten's work, combining tones from bright yellows to deep purples, one can almost trace a style imitation of 'artefacts' which had also been collected from non-Western indigenous cultures during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Similarly, it is interesting to note that the Finnish born Gråsten — a feature in itself that may not be a coincidence on Armi Ratia's part — had produced other patterns, which I interpret as being closely connected to the Marimekko ethos of the time. Perhaps it is due to its later arrival, that Gråsten's pattern *Casa* (1954) has not been mentioned as an influence. However, the grid and line format of this partly coloured, black and white dominated pattern, illustrates architectural forms similar to Finnish wooden country housing, a theme which neatly rests in the eclectic worn-architecture and Finnish country lifestyle ideals of Armi Ratia's directorship.

When the 1950s are described, writers tend to focus on the means by which, in order to gain new ideas, designers reverted back to indigenous Finnish nature (Vihma, 1998, 83). Vihma claims that Marimekko, like the designers of the Finnish National Romantic movement and others (Bertel Gardberg and Paula Häiväoja) can be seen as adopting and repeating Finnish natural forms strategically. The natural forms of the nation (forms derived from the local nature) in question are seen to be geographically distinct, thus a defining and essentialising feature of so-called *national* design and culture. Koivunen (2003) talks of this reference to "the soil, the nature, the people and the culture of the home-region" (90) in specific regards to the use of Zacharias Topelius's *Vårt Land* (*Our Country*, 1875) to attempt to restore emotional attachment to the "home-region" after the war was lost.

Fig. 2. *Oomph*, Viola Gråsten
(1952; taken from Aav Ed., 2003)

2.2 The new Marimekkos

2.2.1 Stage One: 1960s to 70s

Marimekko can be said to have had several lifetimes. Its beginnings as a sales mechanism for pre-made Printex designs (1950s), followed by the utopian era of idealised possibilities of a total Marimekko lifestyle design (1960s), then capped by an economic rationalist 'back to basics' approach in the late 1960s, early 1970s. Fleetingly put, Marimekko's character and operations then went through new life-cycles in the 1980s under new, non-founder ownership of Amer Group, and the 1990s-2000s with the revivalist leadership of Kirsti Paakkanen.

The organisation of Marimekko appears to have evolved through changing attitudes in public expression and management whereby economic profitability began to override the concept of 'free-thinking'. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s, Marimekko's public image as a form of celebrity-style Finnish design company, grew both in Finland and abroad. Consumption was on the ever increase, and the sky seemed the limit, yet, as former board member Donner (1986) recalls, Marimekko maintained a state of extremely low share capital. In fact, in 1955 the company's only readily accessible asset was 53,615 Finnish marks worth of telephone shares at the 1952 mark value (Donner, 1986, 8). The comparatively low capital level has been attributed to 'dreams' or expansions which went past the realms of reality (Donner, 1986, 17; Ainamo, 2003, 184; 1996, 176). Or in other words, the rate of Marimekko's image growth, due to elements such as advertising campaigns representing a Marimekko-style world (seen in plans for Marikylä, discussed later) countered the actual returns from product fabrication and sales.

It is claimed that due to this extremely stagnant growth in capital, and the problem of possessing a name which was much bigger than its actual production, that in 1967 a decision was made to actively rectify the crisis that the company had found itself in (Donner, 1986, 9-10; Ainamo, 1996, 176-179). The scenario that unfolded in the lead up to the re-structuring will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, for chronological purposes, this will be shortly mentioned as a series of meetings which led to the importation of a group of Swedish business analysts, to evaluate Marimekko's operations to establish why the company was in economic hardship (Donner, 1986, 10). The results of this evaluation led to a total restructuring of the Marimekko Corporation taking place between the years 1968-71.

Donner refers to a "New Marimekko" which was born as a consequence of these

years. Management figures Jaakko Lassila, Aarno Esilä and Donner are presented as the major actors in Marimekko's structural changes (Donner, 1986, 10; Ainamo, 1996, 177-178). The structural changes included dramatic staff cuts and the cancellation of several product lines such as bags and other accessories. As a result of the restructuring "a result-oriented 'techno-structure' complete with fast, obligatory reporting was established" (Donner, 1986, 10). On the one hand a mentality of result-orientation had kicked in, and on the other hand the dream of Marimekko being an embodiment of total design (similar to the one man dream of Timo Sarpaneva) including glass, soap, architecture, furniture etc., had collapsed in order to focus on textiles. Ironically, when the accessory products, such as bags were reintroduced to the company several years later they were financially successful (Donner, 1986, 17).

2.2.2 Stage Two: 1980s to 2000s

The 1980s are mainly categorised as the first decade Marimekko had existed without its founder Armi Ratia. The 1980s was also known as the decade that Marimekko was said to have lost its character (also Armi Ratia) during the acquisition of Amer Group in 1984-1986 (Donner, 1986, 17; Ainamo, 2003, 188; 1996, 187). In addition to the conflict of corporate interest presented by a tobacco conglomerate purchasing a design company of ethical, humanistic rhetoric and entwined with academic and social movements, the designs produced by the company are said to have been a mismatch for the 1980s market. The 1980s national and international market is described as one which rejected the intellectual elitist fashions of the 1960s and 70s (Ainamo, 1996, 191-192). In my observations it was the combination of the lack of the strong female figure-head, the pricing and the 'retro' reputation of the then out-of-date printed materials that caused concern for the company.

Twenty-one years after Marimekko's separation from the Ratias and sixteen years after Kirsti Paakkanen acquired the company, Marimekko is in a state of increasing expansion and Finnish market prominence. The Kirsti Paakkanen Marimekko has been labelled the reign of rejuvenation by many authors mentioning Kirsti Paakkanen's name. This is despite the fact that only recently (2000-2004) animal rights activists boycotted Marimekko for the purchase and ownership of Grünstein Oy a fashion fur company (Valjakka, 2005). This era, as the others, will be discussed in greater detail towards the end of the thesis. However it must now be mentioned that Kirsti Paakkanen is known for undertaking many moves contributing to the survival of

the company and its current success status. Firstly, Paakkanen removed Marimekko from the Helsinki Stock Exchange, where it had been as a gift to the "people of Finland" (Armi Ratia cited in Ainamo, 1996, 147) since 1972. She analysed operations and product lines in terms of categories such as what was profitable and what was not, and where funds could be saved. On top of this 'clean-up' of operations she also 'revived' the image through employing new talent and resurrecting classic favourites, including *Unikko*. Moreover, in 1999 after the re-structuring and corporate stabilising Marimekko was once again listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange. Armi Ratia's concept of a total Marimekko has been re-awoken through re-articulation of 'classic' design and product lines via e.g. computer gear and promotional corporate products such as bank cards. In addition, past rhetoric has been taken out of the archives and re-applied to printed material such as annual reports and display manuals. Subsequently, Marimekko has managed to regain currency, through being articulated as mirroring its own former corporate and design culture.

2.3 The Changing Spirit of Marimekko

2.3.1 Marimekko's Image in an Overview

Publications such as the *Marimekko Display Manual* (2004, 2) insist that underlining the continued success of Marimekko is the corporation's maintenance of "truth" to the original business idea. Through the promotion of artistic freedom, it can be said that Marimekko's original business idea was not fixed to any particular product, rather it was 'free' to be influenced by trends in social and cultural spheres. This has allowed for greater ease of the corporation to adjust to changes in its social and corporate surroundings. To reinforce the notion that Marimekko is remaining true to its origins, the *Marimekko Display Manual* (2004, 2) goes further to suggest that "free reign" is given to creativity, in line with the corporation's traditional nature. The traditional nature alluded to is that of the much publicised 'every aspect of life' notion of Marimekko consumption that was promoted heavily by Armi Ratia during the 1950s and 60s. This notion is still utilised in various forms (i.e. Annual Report quotes) in today's Marimekko publications. However, the concept of "truth to the original idea" will be analysed in the next sections, due to my opinion that what has been observed through biographical texts, advertising and the annual reports, is more of an adherence to the "*spirit of the day*", than a continued utopian vision of a world of *total* Marimekko

design. In other words, the *spirit of the day* may be translated as the *commercial spirit of the day*.

2.3.1.1 Individuality

Returning to the discussion of design ethos, Marimekko's approach to production consistently runs closely in line with the modernist/post-modernist debates on authenticity. Authenticity may be applied as it has been in the discussion above, as a *unique* and original approach to design production. It may also be paradoxically seen in the replications existing on today's market whereby the re-introduced *Unikko* is used like the trademark itself, to identify 'authentic' Marimekko products over cheaper imitations[10]. The main Marimekko philosophy regarding 'authenticity' has stemmed from the artist movements of the 1950s and 1960s (Sarje, 1986, 50). In other words, the rhetoric mechanism both distinguishing Marimekko's production and protecting it from intellectual 'theft' has been arrived upon through embracing notions of expressionism (Armi Ratia's encouragement of designers/artists to research and experiment). In this vein, 'authentic' as 'real' or 'original', is coupled with 'individualistic' and 'individual'. The designs produced by the company are emphasised as being created through individual artistic expression. Marimekko has been a company personified for this characteristic and those who consume the products have been promoted as being independent and individualised consumers (Sarje, 1986, 52).

Donner's (1986, 10) observations highlight the contradiction in this perception of Marimekko consumption as being individualised (or authentic). The observations take place in terms of the company's (or Armi Ratia's) ideologies and its reception by the Finnish consumer society. Armi Ratia and those who wrote of the company, outwardly promoted Marimekko's products as expressions of individuality (Saarikoski, 1986, 43). Yet, what Donner (1986, 10) noted was that the consumption of Marimekko products had turned into a display of uniformity — a "uniform for intellectuals" (Tarschys & Hedqvist, 2003, 163). In other words, in Donner's opinion, in a collective based society such as Finland individuality was interpreted as a uniform code of expression. Repetition lies at the heart of mass-produced consumer culture, and prominence in itself feeds peoples' desire to consume (i.e. denim jeans and any seasonal

[10] In all department stores and novelty shops around Finland consumers are faced with multiple imitations of the infamous 'Poppy' (*Unikko*). When viewing these abundant flower patterns (ironically a mirror of Marimekko's origins) the 'fakes' are identified through varied colour configurations and slightly adjusted forms.

fashion; see Adorn & Horkheimer, 1944; Bourdieu, 1984), but within this example we may actively observe the conflict of the rhetoric of individualised consumption versus the mass-produced reality.

What makes Marimekko's case distinct is the smaller scale of production and its higher prices compared to industrialised counter-parts. Meaning that the products which were adopted 'uniformly' were done so in the knowledge that Marimekko was not produced and distributed 'en masse'. Further irony comes into play when observing one of the most worn patterns of Marimekko, *Unikko* (Maija Isola, 1964). The name of the pattern itself, meaning 'Poppy' in the Finnish language, connotes 'uniqueness' in the English language. The pattern comprises an abstract poppy, of almost anti-aesthetic composition in bold colours and large forms resting uneasily on clothing and accessories [fig. 3]. Thus, in my opinion what Donner (1986, 10) described when he noted Armi Ratia's dismay at the 'sameness' in application of Marimekko products was in fact an attempt to collectively express individuality. In other words, rather than to distinguish one individual from another, the usage of particularly *Unikko* was and still is applied in a way that distinguishes one collective from another.

To look deeper at the uniform application of *Unikko*, I would like to also suggest that this usage traditionally has expressed enthusiasm for the prospect of Western living in Finland, and is a form of subversion in retaliation to the 'bottom of the fashion chain' treatment Finland is said to have historically received. Finnish people were finally able to consume not just commercial imports, but their own commercial produce. The Marimekko products in themselves were not all that was being celebrated, in my opinion cultural products such as lifestyle magazines (Donner, 1986, 10) were another part of this phenomenon. Where the systematic imitation of pictures and hints in life-style magazines was depicted by Donner as uniformity, I interpret the similarities in décor and textiles application as an expression of jubilation for the fact that 'home grown' mass media and domestically originated fashions finally existed. This phenomenon, slightly distinguishes Marimekko and the application of its products from other Western European design corporations such as IKEA. As within the rhetoric of the other corporations there is an overt attempt to communally unify the current and potential global consumers (Lindberg, 2006).

Fig. 3. *Unikko*, Maija Isola
(1964; taken from Aav Ed., 2003)

2.3.1.2 'Truth' to 'culture'

Sarje (1986, 52) refers to a description in *Hopeapeili* 1979 of the Marimekko lifestyle phenomenon as being interpreted as 'the truth'. In other words, 'the truth' was posed as a form of timeless non-pretentiousness through material and form. Although Parisian trends were carefully watched by Marimekko designers and creative directors, the idea of Marimekko's products, was that it was possible to reuse the clothes — for clothes' sake — season after season. Thus, when one *Tasaraita* shirt got old the owner could go to the nearest Marimekko outlet and buy a new one exactly the same (Ainamo, 1996, 144 & 176). Directly demonstrating this mentality of not pretending that clothes should be anything but clothes (another point of contradiction, but a mindstate none the less) (Sarje, 1986, 52).

The matter of which came first seems quite unclear for a third or fourth party to determine - whether it was designers who adopted the simplistic 'truth' in their experimental approach to design, or whether it was Armi Ratia who implanted the ideas of the design ethos. In reference to some of Marimekko's designers, one can question as to whether Maija Isola embraced Armi Ratia's rhetoric to experiment, or whether Armi Ratia embraced Maija Isola's character for design. The work of Isola especially can be seen as encompassing artistic notions of constructivism as well as geometrical abstraction. Vuokko Nurmesniemi seemed to practice a design ideology which also shaped Marimekko's corporate image, and which viewed design as freeing people. Ainamo (2003, 176) describes Nurmesniemi as wanting to liberate women, particularly from strong conservative right-wing values (domesticity, church, 'Fatherland'). These notions not only directly criticise sentimentalities which had been harboured by the Finnish society since the civil war in 1918 between right and left (whites and reds), but also represented a 'fresh' international approach to a diminishing of cultural borders (Ainamo, 2003, 176). This will be further discussed in the section of "National Marimekko" later in the thesis.

Going back to an early Marimekko mission statement used for a loan application in 1954 Armi Ratia wrote:

> "Marimekko is the forest path between the practical Venla and the ethereal Anna (characters from Aleksis Kivi's immortal story 'Seven Brothers') projected into the highways and byways, homes and whole living environment of this changing world."
>
> (cited in Donner, 1986, 8)

Drawing on Grossberg's (1992, 54) notion of articulation the composition of this statement and its contents (mythical literary references), its context (a bank loan application) and its reference (to a design company), may be seen as attempting to establish a connection to the 'foundation' stories of Finnish culture and the rapidly changing cultural environment of industrialism. The statement was rejected in the context of the bank, however the memory and repetition of it through the discourse of Marimekko has somewhat immortalised and mystified the story of the company's own foundations. Armi Ratia may be seen as both a creative writer (as suggested by Donner) as well as a link between the industrialised design history and the legends of Finnish origins. The same strategy was repeated seventeen years later when in the face of major structural changes Armi Ratia (1971) wrote:

> "Marimekko is industrial thinking to create stage props for the living environment of the practical Venla, the ethereal Anna, the Seven Brothers and their international cousins, all ages, all races and colours, and the creative projection of all this into industry, marketing, and the satisfaction of the profit goals of the board of directors."
>
> (Armi Ratia, cited in Donner, 1986, 18)

This latest quote de-bases the 'Mari World' from that of the living extension of foundational Finnish discourse. Industrialism and indeed industrial thinking (economic rationalism) have been pitched as the production of superficial environmental objects (stage props) rather than acting as the definite path between practicality and conceptualisation. However, through these negative sentiments, resigned to the wishes of a board of directors (Donner, 1986; 18) Armi Ratia addresses the importance of the internationalisation of the company by referring to consumers abroad as "international cousins" of the Seven Brothers. In fact, adopting tones from Finland's national author Aleksis Kivi, past and present, national and international, mythical and commercial have been trademark tactics of Marimekko's 'language' all along. If nothing else, this characteristic of merging opposites in order to establish an image of a dynamic, national company is particularly prominent during times of Marimekko's stronger commercial presence. This matter will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter of "Reading Marimekko Advertisements". Marianne Aav (2003) terms this strategy as "selling a lifestyle and constructing a complete environment" (38).

The strongly binding link constructed between the Marimekko Corporation and the Finnish Nation State, can be said to have strategically saved Marimekko from

corporate collapse on several occasions. Ainamo describes the Marimekko Corporation as being a "national institution" (2003, 191), thus Marimekko cannot be deleted from the Finnish socio-political sphere, even if it had been archived in the Finnish Designmuseo during the 1980s. As far as tangible cultural meeting points for the company and Finnish national representatives were concerned, the Bökars manorhouse located 20 kilometres from Porvoo, may be classified as the Marimekko Embassy. Bökars was a platform not only to wine and dine business associates, but was a venue in which national and international cultural and political names (such as long term Finnish President Urho Kekkonen) were hosted. This was the meeting point for political and social decision makers, corporate entities, and creative minds to join together in Marimekko-style ritualised celebrations. Bökars, which in the name of Marimekko, was a manor house embodying Armi Ratia's Karelian lifestyle and functioning as a diplomatic meeting site for prominent national and international cultural figures. The use of this 'embassy' and the social functions it housed are what many attribute to Marimekko being classified as a 'cultural phenomenon' (Ratia, 1986, 24; Ainamo, 2003; 191).

Along with the firm ties established by Marimekko's published material and functions, in connection with the Finnish nation, tradition, politics, cultural history, the company was also embedding its name politically through commercial achievement. In 1975, Armi Ratia received the Presidential Export Award. The award was significant in that it promoted Marimekko as a highly successful company worthy of serving as a role model to other Finnish companies (Ainamo, 2003, 187). Earlier than this, however, Marimekko had already been established as both a national emblem and a product name. To illustrate what I mean by 'product name' Viljo Ratia (1986, 26) tells of how he needed to battle to ensure that 'Marimekko' did not become a common noun. In other words, it was noticed at earlier stages of Marimekko's success, that small stores in country towns were labelling their dresses as "marimekkos". The registered trademarking of Marimekko's name meant that these occurrences were soon rectified. But while commercial exploitation of the companies' products and terminology sources was put to a minimum, the cultural signification of the Marimekko symbol was accentuated. Marimekko was posted in *Liitto* magazine (1964) as challenging the conventional codes "a flying banner against all conventions and codes" (Booth, 2005, n.p.; Ainamo, 2003, 180). This theatrically tinted statement has been repeated in numerous Marimekko texts throughout the eras, and poses Marimekko as an abstract

phenomenon rather than commercial entity. Marimekko's image seems to be that of a movement rather than a clothing and textiles company.

To reinvigorate this notion and place the *phenomenon* of Marimekko in the 'now', upon acquiring the company, Kirsti Paakkanen immediately adopted a role of spokeswoman after over a decade of a 'faceless', or anonymously run Marimekko. Kirsti Paakkanen re-awoke the public profile and 'spirit' of the company through organising public events (as Armi Ratia had done) and through presenting lectures on Finnish industrial policy. The first event Kirsti Paakkanen organised was a fashion show at the Swedish Theatre (Svenska Teatern). She employed strategies which could be likened to the utilisation of cultural figures at Bökars, whereby personalities such as the Finnish opera singer Margareta Haverinen were invited to sing and participate in the 1992 event (Ainamo, 2003, 192). The show was to signify an abundance of home-grown talent and the interdisciplinary nature of artistic forms. In addition to this, Kirsti Paakkanen was once more stirring interest towards Marimekko as a living cultural phenomenon. Kirsti Paakkanen's repeated philosophy is known as "…today Marimekko continues to thrive by embracing its past while keeping a sharp eye on the future." (Soros, 2003, 10)

2.3.2 The price

Conflicting with the Utopian image of an approachable Marimekko for everyone, is the observation of high prices when entering Marimekko stores. In an earlier paper, "Observing Mari's Dress" (2006) I wrote about the problematics of conflicting sources whereby some suggest that Marimekko products used to be inexpensive, while others explain that Marimekko has always maintained higher prices. I observed that the favourable recollection of the economic accessibility of Marimekko products, might be not be viewed so much as being due to 'cheaper' prices, but may be instead, due to better economic conditions of the consumers. Thus, I concluded that the phenomenon of Marimekko may be read as a barometer of Finnish society and Gross Domestic Product, through the 'average family's' ability to afford its products. This insight takes Aav's (2003, 41) view of Marimekko as a 'portrait of Finnish society' to a different dimension.

Part of the discussion included in my analysis of the structure of socio-economic clientele that Marimekko has and continues to attract, incorporates views offered by Donner (1986, 18) and Judith Gura (2004, 38). These authors discuss the paradox of

symbolism used in the clothing and furnishing designs (forms replicating mass-produced clothing) and traditions of production (industrial printing technique and sewing machines) in opposition to the actual prices of the products, and those who can afford them. Gura in particular, takes the "uniform for intellectuals" term that Rebecka Tarschys (2003, 163) has described, one step further in her description of the way in which clothing resembling quickly made mass-produced garments, is used by more affluent, intellectual consumers (mostly women) to represent individuality. In addition, recognition of 'fair trade' is mentioned relating to the fact that Marimekko products are Finnish made goods, adhering to Finnish work conditions and wage standards. In other words, while Donner argues that Marimekko products did (do) not appeal to the 'ordinary people', it is in my opinion, that it is not a question of appeal, but a question of affordability. Further, if Marimekko is viewed as a Finnish Institution, 'dressing' the Finnish people, the inability to afford a Marimekko product, may also state a lot in terms of the way in which an 'ordinary person' fits into the Finnish system at any given time.

There may however be a distinction presented in the usage of particularly *Unikko* (as with *Tasaraita* and *Kivet* patterns) as compared to other Marimekko products, in that the longevity of the designs also means the ability to reuse *Unikko* products throughout generations. Further, the ability to obtain *Unikko* through many more products other than just clothing lines means that for example the less expensive alternatives such as bandanas, serviettes, pencil cases and slippers means make chances of the 'average' Finn consuming Marimekko are much higher. This also leads to the possible explanation of the uniformity of *Unikko* usage. Marimekko stands for Finnish-based produce and industrialism, 'home-grown' fashion based in *tradition*, yet *Unikko* also stands for the ability to afford Marimekko, in one form or another.

Constantly throughout Marimekko texts is discussion in terms of the realities of costs of Marimekko production (in Finland, 'fair' working conditions), materials (high quality cottons, linens, wools, inks and technology etc.) and output (the overall presentation of these 'everyday' items), which form part of the corporate image themselves. The decrease in retail prices of Marimekko goods would have made the business sensitive to price competition (Donner, 1986, 18). This would have jeopardised Marimekko's ability to rival cheap imports, in addition to compromising many of the founding principles of Marimekko products — high quality, innovative, and Finnish.

This is a crucial characteristic to consider when analysing the viability and longevity of a national company which still maintains three factories in its national boundaries.

2.4 Is it a girl or a boy?

2.4.1 The company

The typical customer of Marimekko in earlier years as with today is characterised as a well-educated, wealthy woman, despite the fact that the company strives to appeal to all (Maaniemi, 1986, 86; Gura, 2004, 38). Marimekko is said to cater for everyone from "babies to grannies" *even* "for men" (Maaniemi, 1986, 86). During the early stages of this research development, the idea of gendering the Marimekko Corporation was embellished. In one particular paper titled *'Unikko' and the technological workings of economic genderisation – establishing a concept of gender within Finnish design and technology* (2006), I reflected upon the concept of 'othering', particularly in light of the mythical and feminine qualities of Finnish design as set forth by Harri Kalha (1998, 44). This concept was then re-applied on an organisational and national scale, focusing on the role of the 'female other' in Finnish industrialised and post-industrialised societies. In my paper the role of the Marimekko Corporation as the female 'other' of Finnish design, possessing and reflecting the qualities of nurturing and optimism in the face of drastic industrial change was considered.

In texts about Marimekko many opinions regarding the nature of the designs, the leadership and the gender of Marimekko demographic targets have been voiced. This was something of particular concern throughout the major structural stages of this research. The rhetoric of a Marimekko 'for everyone' as demonstrated in writings such as Sarje (1986, 49), pointing towards a uni-sex company, and the gender distribution of Marimekko staff, including administrators, board members and designers, attempt to suggest an 'equality' of roles and ideologies throughout the Marimekko Corporation. Further, in regards to the existence of males in this so-called 'female run' environment, one may witness that even in the late 1960s a vast majority of the decision-makers of the corporation were men. These included Viljo Ratia, Urpo Immonen, and the Marimekko planning committee, consisting of Jörn Donner, Jaakko Lassila, Aarno Esilä, Klaus Waris, Tapio Wirkkala, Eino E Suolahti, and Pekka Kuusi (Donner, 1986, 9). To present Marimekko as a purely female owned and run company, catering for women's tastes, is somewhat inaccurate. However, it is through analysing the opinions

and phrases expressed by earlier writers of the company, that I hope to establish the importance that particularly the images of women, had upon Marimekko's public personality, and subsequently how this was played upon during the corporation's journey through Finnish national design discourse.

Aav (2003) talks of how Marimekko has been a company "whose ideological and aesthetic choices have been in the hands of women" (15). Aav seems to be attributing a form of courage, possibly that which may only be harboured in the depths of a woman, to justify Marimekko's tradition of recruiting freshly emerging designers, who without an established track record were allowed to be creative and to experiment. In fact, Marimekko was publicised as a ground-breaker and risk-taker in employing unknown artists. The corporation has also been classified as unique for its earlier era as a company which concentrated on marketing its products and image to educated and independent women (Wiikeri, 1986, 34). Looking past the isolation presented in the rhetoric of Marimekko it can be seen that the company and its promotional strategies did not so much present a once-off liberating corporate figure, but capitalised more on the social environment of the time. During the 1960s and 70s in Finland and abroad, the single, head-strong, professional woman who was aware of her wants (economic and sexual) was a prime commodity in mass media, the arts and academia. The woman was separated from the family through her liberation from the duties of solely being the wife, mother and girlfriend (Radner, 1999, 9). But as Radner points out the "single girl" was not merely any woman, she was a young, girlish woman with a pay-cheque in pursuit of consumer goods. The consumer fundamentality of this image is further discussed in the Finnish context by Saarenmaa (2005, n.p.) whereby Marimekko is given as an example of the fashion industry which capitalised on the economically independent woman in the pursuit of pleasure.

The fact that Marimekko represented a company run by a strong female figure surely plays a part in the discourse of its corporate success. Anonymous businessmen were not the ones who were seen to be perpetuating feminist discourse in the company's publicity. It was, in fact a woman, who had succeeded — at least publicly — in having a family and a multinational corporation too, thus putting to rest claims by writers such as Ellen Willis (1969) who suggested that women who chose to marry were labelled somebody's (man's) wife (Radner, 1999, 9). This in itself appears to be the defining factor when considering Marimekko's significance against the background of two decades of feminist commercialisation. To reinforce this notion, in "[o]ne way or

another, gender was part of almost everything written about Marimekko and Armi Ratia" (Aav, 2003, 36).

2.4.2 The Marimekko woman

The image of the Marimekko woman, in the eyes of publicity, as well as in the eyes of the consumer, has constantly been the subject of Marimekko texts. Anttikoski (2003), Aav (2003) and Gura (2004) are just some who repeat the familiar in terms of seeing Marimekko as 'calling' to independent and educated women. The professional intellectual women that Marimekko spoke to were expressed in Finnish and international magazines as being those who had no time to think about clothing, but were concerned with following the latest fashions. Women now possessed their own disposable income and were encouraged to not only decorate themselves but their homes in any way they saw fit (Radner, 1999, 12). The image of consuming women had developed from women who were attached to families (being husband pleasing wives and mothers) to women attached to their work and their own interests. In other words, the major shift in public representation of women was that from being men's possessions to people who were able to possess (emotions such as desire and material objects) (Radner, 1999, 2 & 10-11). This argument corresponds with observations made in my analysis of the promotional material discussed in Chapter Five.

Being in tune *with the spirit of the day*, Marimekko, and mostly Armi Ratia, caught on to the utopianism of the 1960s. Along with creating clothing products to suit the fashion ideologies of socialist protests, Marimekko also possessed its own concept of the 'Single Girl'. The Single Girl, as described by Radner (1999) was a "utopian fantasy of a woman free from social and sexual constraints" (10) such as those which could be seen limiting women in earlier generations. There were several versions of the Single Girl[11] which differed in some ways from one another, but one of the common denominators of the Single Girl across descriptions was that she had the right to fulfilment on her own terms (Radner, 1999, 10). As a result of feminist protests and the introduction of the pill[12], women were now able to enjoy a promiscuous sex life without being tied to a husband and/or children. One particular example seen in Helen Gurley Brown's Single Girl (cited in Radner, 1999, 10-14) however, was that the Single Girl need not always be single. Instead, Gurley Brown, former editor of *Cosmopolitan*

[11] Including Helen Gurley Brown and Betty Friedan.
[12] See Radner (1999, 1-3) for more information on the outcomes of the sexual revolution.

magazine and pioneer behind the contemporary format of women's magazines, instead saw the ideals of the Single Girl as a means of priming her for maximised desirability[13] in addition to developing resistance for when the traditional marriage breaks down.

In a similar vein to the independent will of the Single Girl, the Mari Girl was used by Armi Ratia to describe the ideal affiliate of the Marimekko Corporation and its products and was repeated throughout the rhetoric of promotional campaigns (Sarje, 1986, 55). The Mari Girl, unlike the skinny, subdued sex-kitten of Helen Gurley Brown's Single Girl (Radner, 1999, 14), was a woman of all shapes, sizes and ages, her defining physical feature was her mode of consumption. While reference to the term 'girl' rests neatly in some feminist discourses of the 1960s and 70s, in my opinion this label and treatment of equality from one woman to the next, assisted Marimekko in gaining greater favouritism amongst women, who contradictorily enough, wanted to be seen as girlishly desirable. This 'want' would have been re-enforced by the *model* of independent women expressed in the saturation biographies, articles and documentaries of successful 'mannequins' in the Finnish press at the time (Saarenmaa, 2005). Further analysis of the term 'girl' can be seen in Radner's (1999, 15) observations of Gurley Brown's version whereby the 'girl' may connote youthful and marriageable at any stage of life.

Sarje (1986, 55) established a narrative of the Mari Girl as an autonomous woman, whose life was at the mercy of sudden changes, and multiple roles. The Mari Girl was told to be simultaneously a warm mother, "an excellent 'home spirit' skilled at cooking, a good mixer, mood creator, as well as being a keen fisherman" and Sarje adds that she "would rather marry an architect" (1986, 55-56). In addition, in this statement the Mari Girl seems to be destined to marry, choosing a creative professional partner rather than perhaps a businessman. One aspect however that Sarje takes further than Gurley Brown is in relation to the importance of job selection. Rather than purely having access to her own funds, the Mari Girl is described as not being satisfied with just a job, she would rather instead have a career. The professional traits that the Mari Girl exhibits include an imagination, inventiveness and decisiveness, yet at the same time she should be able to cooperate. In other words, the Mari Girl is an idealised version of Armi Ratia, despite the fact that in other *Phenomenon Marimekko* texts the

[13] "You've got to make yourself more cupcakable all the time…" (cited in Radner, 1999, 15).

ability to maintain the domestic image of Mari Girl, was near impossible for Armi Ratia herself.

A different spin on the Mari Girl is also described by Sarje in his reference to *Norsk Dameblad* which on December 7th, 1960, described the Finnish Mari ('Girl' is not mentioned) as the modern version of women from the Finnish folkloric *Kalevala*. This places emphasis on the attributes of pride, independence and self-aware feminism, as being innate traits of Finnish women (Sarje, 1986, 56). It draws connections between modern Finnish women and their reputation for having a strong relationship to folkloric traditions and mythologies. This analogy by *Norsk Dameblad* might be read in terms of Kalha (1998, 44) in that the realm of Finnish modern design and its people are once again being painted with the exotic, mythological brush. If so, it also draws attention to the distance at which women's independence, and career life was removed from the rest of the Western societies. Or, an alternative reading might be placed in the hands of Koivunen (2003, 134) who observes women-centred feminists as strategically referring to folklore and history in order to identify the women's role in nation building in light of masculine-centred rhetoric.

Koivunen (2003, 147) gives a direct example of the way Loviisa Niskavuori (the matriarch, guardian of the Niskavuori estate; and business woman in various versions) is likened to the character of Louhi in *Kalevala.* Louhi is one of the main characters of the mythology which was assembled through the collection of lyrics sung mostly by women. Louhi is seen as a sorceress and a warleader, while at the same time is the motherly centre of the family. Louhi was actively chosen as the image of Finnish women as far back as the 1920s, whereby an alternate reading made by Elsa Heporauta of the traditionally negatively portrayed character (Kalevala Women's Association) saw Louhi as an 'monument' of power in women, which was possibly more important than motherliness (Koivunen, 2003, 148). This may explain why less care is taken in regards to describing and picturing Armi Ratia and the Mari Girl with a family. It is in addition an explanation that compliments the notion of the woman 'doer' seen in the 'Single Girl', who strives for economic power and independence rather than that of the 'selfless' mother (Radner, 1999, 12).

It must be noted however, that in the Finnish context, writings from particularly the early to mid-1900s have not equated motherhood to a soft version of 'motherliness'. Instead, independence, toughness and strong-will (Koivunen, 2003, 137) which are commonly associated with ideas of 1960s Single Girls were already positive

characteristics when considering the motherhood of Finnish women during the Second World War in Finland. Ideal Finnish women in general were seen as "heroic" mothers (Koivunen, 2003, 140) self-sacrificing for their families and estates as the men were fighting battles. Rather than brandishing the women as the property of men and *their* paternally-centred family, certain discourses of Finnish women saw them take on a role of "social motherhood", where they were not just mothers but educators and "the moral backbone of society" (Koivunen, 2003, 151)[14]. In Armi Ratia's case 'motherhood' shifts from the home and war-torn nation to the company, in which some representations serve to demonstrate Armi Ratia as a fickle mother figure. Possibly due to Armi Ratia's age (middle-age even at the time of Marimekko's founding) the "Old Mother" presented by writers such as Tanttu (1986, 85) takes on a somewhat Mafioso form. On the one hand, Armi Ratia is said to have thrown parties on boring days, handing out oranges at spring and handing out novelty travel packs (stick and bundle, or tar soap and mouth organ) when people went on holidays. On the other, Tanttu (1986) writes about Armi Ratia's concern for her own possessiveness of the *female* staff "[c]lasping all to her bosom and keeping them there…" (85). This type of description and reference to the older, female corporate figure corresponds with Koivunen's (2003, 170) mentioning of "a mother complex" (from the 1950s), where generally in connection with the mother-son relationship, the mother is depicted as being pathologically possessive.

2.4.3 Gender neutrality

The Marimekko for women and men emphasised by promotional films such as those discussed by Sarje (1986, 48) and clothing lines which incorporate patterns like *Joka Poika*, *Tasaraita*, and *Kuskipuku* (Driver's suit, Pentti Rinta) emphasised the notion of demographic equality. At the same time as Marimekko is constantly associated with its corporate image of woman leadership and the appeal to women consumers, 'neutrality' is also promoted in the boundaries of the corporation through marking an incorporation of both women's and men's clothing in its product lines. As I attempted to describe Marimekko as a female corporate design entity in earlier research stages, views were projected by other participants in thesis seminars which were aimed

[14] Important here are the notions of matronhood and motherhood, both are concepts Koivunen (2003) discusses in great detail. Notions of matron and 'housewife' overlap (146) in their nature of being fixed to property, but from what I understand, where the 'matron' stands on her own as an unmarried protector of estate, whereas 'mother' in addition to being married and having a family, possesses maternal qualities such as a strong love, hidden beneath a peaceful "shell" (Koivunen, 2003, 149).

at ‘neutralising’ Marimekko, through highlighting its unisex appeal. In an idealised way this notion of a world of sexual indifference, or a world where due to the lack of binaries, gender is not constructed, once again corresponds to aims of some feminist movements of the 1960s. During this time movements wherein women would opt for lesbianism to create a neutralised gender were heavily written about and discussed (de Lauretis, 1987, 18 & 24; Wittig, 1983, 64). Considering the positioning of Marimekko in connection to various Finnish national discourses, and the realisation that the nuclear family was still considered the ‘norm’, attempting to erase men from the consciousness of the company, or to directly promote neutrality through lesbianism would have been somewhat risqué.

Instead, men featured in the ad campaigns and those described as working in less senior positions inside the company seemed to be neutered. That is, it is in my opinion that the men presented in Marimekko’s texts were considered not to be the *masculine* ‘norm’. There are problems presented in the dialogue of these male representations which range from the basic concentration of image of men consumers as adhering to professions in the cultural and art sectors (architects, writers, representatives of so-called ‘soft politics’), to the description of men as being “unaffected” when wearing Marimekko clothing and running towards a flagpole with women (Sarje, 1986, 48). Describing the short Marimekko film produced in the 1960s by Aito Mäkinen, Sarje articulates:

> It opened on shoreline scene full of happy Marimekkoites. Sweet girls and women in their marimekkos and unaffected men in marimekko shirts ran, frolicked and played among the windswept rocks. They appeared to be trying to get somewhere. They approached the flagpole rising from the rocks, hoisted a flag of colourful Marimekko cloth, and appeared to be saying in their minds: “The rag shall free us”.
>
> (Sarje, 1986, 48)

As well as accounting for women-centred feminist approaches which referred to folklore and history to illustrate ‘Finnish women’ (Koivunen, 2003, 108) there seems to be a supernatural quality ascribed to the Marimekko Corporation through the writings of men. It is as if, in the spirit of Karelian folklore tradition, and the bond of women ‘creators’, somehow the presence of unbalanced gender relations is diminished in the context of the company. However, the focus is always driven back towards women. “The power of the rag” (the name of Sarje’s 1986 article), with all its greatness

endorsed and catalysed a programme to liberate women. Through dressing women in a straight dress, reaching down to either the knees or ankles, the less complicated garment was supposed to help solve the problems of how the wearer was treated professionally and socially. Naturally this assumes that perception lies in the actions and the 'being' of that which is perceived, or in other words it incorporates the understanding that it is females who gender themselves in correspondence with their dress. This ignores the notion of gender constructed as a performance of binaries (Butler, 1990, 23), whereby women are created to be 'not' men. The straight dress was described by sources such as *Pohjolan Työ* (May 25th, 1964) as a means by which women were liberated, and was seen as a challenge, to the wearers and to their surroundings. (Sarje, 1986, 48)

2.4.4 Size and Shape

Female curves were often removed from clothing designs of Marimekko's early days. The garments were criticised for being un-curved and un-frilled, covering the wearer in a 'sack-like' fashion[15]. The "women are sexy, not the clothes" (Wiikeri, 1986, 34), was the standardised reply Armi Ratia offered when journalists hinted towards the basic-ness in Marimekko clothing cuts. This may be seen as drawing even more attention and curiosity to the woman's torso and sexuality, than what had previously been established amongst other leaders of women's fashions. It also marks what Radner (1999, 20-22) terms as the transition in female sexuality. In many other areas of the mass media the 'Single Girl' was being portrayed as a sexy, child-like working girl who both was able to choose her sexual partner(s), yet still be the object of the male gaze. Through my readings the 'Single Girl' appears to represent not so much a symbol of the sexual revolution, but more a feisty, re-vamped interactive toy for male consumers. The Marimekko 'sack' posed a challenge to this — women could choose their partner(s) before they were seen.

Viljo Ratia (1986, 28) stated that the company's unwritten policy was to dress *women*. The rhetoric of functional garments, especially for women was connected with the image of the 'sack'. Particularly in Marimekko's demographics of stereotypically slightly older, intellectual, professional women, there may have been more direct intention to flatter naturally larger curves. Armi Ratia herself was known for being a larger sized woman (Wiikeri, 1986, 34).

[15] See Tarschys & Hedqvist's (2003) discussion on "By Any Name – Still a Sack".

2.5 The nature of Marimekko production

The components of Marimekko's production processes that will be discussed in this section range from factory production, quantities, and printing processes, to matters such as licensing agreements and the types of items produced by the company. To establish the management attitude towards the nature of the Marimekko Corporation particularly during its 1960s height, it is fruitful to begin this discussion by drawing on ideas outlined by Anttikoski (2003). Anttikoski looks at the way that Armi Ratia had described the nature of production for media representatives such as *American Fabrics* (1963). "I really don't sell clothes, I sell a way of living. They are designs, not fashions…" (Anttikoski, 2003, 85). In this text Armi Ratia goes on to distinguish herself as an architect rather than the artistic director of a clothing enterprise. She discusses the significance of the simplistic cut in comparison to a house, whereby instead of a family living in a house, a woman may live inside her dress.

The idea of intellectual female consumers is emphasised through establishing the characteristics of people who have not got the time to be constantly conscious of their clothing. Even the remarks on this material product, however, are packaged when Armi Ratia reverts back to the notions of herself as an agent for selling ideas rather than dresses. This poses questions in regards to the nature of Marimekko production and the corporate image as a whole in regards to whether the corporation is a producer of material goods or ideas[16]. More importantly in terms of the nature of the conglomeration of Armi Ratia, Marimekko and the nature of production, and specifically relevant to this study is Armi Ratia's statement: "I sell a new woman" (Anttikoski, 2003, 85). It is this new woman, that this study is focused on gauging.

In addition to the way that Marimekko production is promoted, it must be noted that the transitional image of Marimekko is also supposed to be altered between countries of major Marimekko interest. By this, it is meant that major international licensing agreements have been held by the USA, Japan, France and Great Britain, and Mexico. These licensing agreements give each licensee the flexibility to choose and adapt product sizes, colours and features, to suit the demands of the respective countries (Suhonen, 1986, 107). In other words, licensing conditions are publicly shaped by an

[16] Lindberg (2006) has addressed the concept of selling ideas through domestic design in her dissertation on IKEA's incorporation of the Swedish Folkhemmet's (Home of the People) ideologies into promotional rhetoric.

adherence to corporate ethics. These ethics are summarised as maintaining "the individuality of different cultures and people as well as bearing the social, financial and cultural responsibilities of the company" (Marimekko's Core Values, 2006). One could say that this level of social and intercultural responsibility is likened to the elevation of the company's production to ambassadorial operations.

2.6 Technology and Marimekko

2.6.1 Marimekko emphasis on production technology

The location and reference to technological and related advancements through printing and service techniques, is particularly important to observe when considering Marimekko as a model of 'Finnish Design', and as an 'Ambassadorial' figure. Through observing written histories of the Finnish design and architecture sector, it may be said that even before Finland's independence, Finland's society has been focused on establishing a sense of domestic and international nationhood based on industriousness and technological development[17] (Ainamo, 1996, 116; Hawkins, 1998, 249). This may be interpreted as Finnish authorities' conscious embracement of the pillars of Western modernity, establishing an 'us and them' distinction between Finland as a Western country and the 'non-West' (The Soviet Union). It is herein that the representations of women, and the representations of a company that mostly caters for women, becomes interesting. For on a representational level as well as on a functional industrial level, Marimekko is located within the Finnish Western technologised industrial (and post-industrial) society. However, the way that 'non-normalised' women consumers are 'spoken' to in the context of the normalised and mechanicised domain of the 'Western man', can be seen to gauge their positioning in relation to dominant technological structures and in turn discourses of nation[18].

Ainamo (2003) adopts a rationalised tone when describing the way that Marimekko's narrative demonstrates the 'evolution' of a design and fashion company from traditional handicrafts to mass production. He remarks that innovation was the key to the firm's early growth and success in addition to its "ability to stay on the cutting edge, acknowledging and mirroring social changes of the times" (192-193). This

[17] Multi-viewed accounts of this description can be viewed in the book *Finnish Modern Design* edited by Marianne Aav (1998).
[18] See Hall's discussion on the "Three Concepts of Identity" and "The Character of Change in Late-Modernity" (1992, 275-9).

"mirroring" could be described as a parallel effect whereby Marimekko's marketing decisions and moulding of its production and persona profile correlated to changes in the rhetoric of the progressively modernised Finnish state. Thus, traditions, technologies and processes that have been emphasised throughout the periods of Finland's industrial history (1950s onwards) are also depicted in representations and production provided by the Marimekko Corporation. Further, the correspondence of Marimekko with the Finnish State does not just end with economic and technological advancements, but it also capitalises on social changes in Finnish society (as seen in the profile of the Mari Girl and adjustments of products to 'fit' the tastes of student protesters during the late 1960s)[19].

One of the most obvious factors implicating Marimekko with technological discourse is its specialisation in the field of textile printing. Printing technology in itself has a long and complex history in terms of the initiation of mass produced cultural material (i.e. books, newspapers, graphics etc.), and in this case it is intertwined in evolution of the Finnish design history[20]. The printed products of Marimekko can be said to be the key identifier of Marimekko's trademark textiles. *Unikko*, *Tasaraita*, *Piccolo*, *Appelsiini* and *Kivet*, to name but a few, can be seen as customary flags, waving down customers and onlookers from displays in the most diverse of places, drawing awareness to the company's presence, even if the products are not on sale near these displays[21]. Although Marimekko was established as a dressmaking company — Printex was the initial provider of the prints — the printed patterns themselves have been synonymously linked to Marimekko's corporate identity. Marimekko itself had its beginnings in a 20 square meter shop, run by one seamstress and one cutter. Extra production took place through external contractors. It was not until 1955 that Armi Ratia is noted for making the bold decision to invest in several industrial sewing machines and one button machine (Ainamo, 1996, 165)[22]. This was followed by the acquirement of extra space to accommodate the printing activity, leading, in turn, to an

[19] This is despite Marimekko's mistake in purchasing Grünstein Oy in 2000, which caused Marimekko to be on the opposite side of social and animal activist protests, more of this is discussed in Chapter Five.

[20] Wiberg (1997, 67) notes hesitance in the acceptance of print in the field of Finnish textiles, favouring instead woven forms.

[21] Examples of this can be seen in window displays of products such as Levi jeans and shoe stores. Marimekko designs are almost a stylistic national back-up, establishing a context in which the unrelated products (which are for sale) can be used.

[22] Curiously in Viljo Ratia's (1986) explanation of the sequence of events it was the corporation that decided to purchase the machines. However, Ainamo (1996) claims that Viljo Ratia, the company's landlord and a bank manager were shocked when the legal owner of the company Armi Ratia, made the decision to spend when the group has decided to tighten the budget.

expansion of staff of between 12 and 15 employees (Viljo Ratia, 1986, 24).

In the tradition of block-printing, with simplistic, bold and solid coloured forms, screen-printing was embraced by Marimekko as its primary textile printing technique. Screen-printing, which had gradually taken the place of block-printing from the 1930s onwards, was seen as a cheaper, efficient and more accurate means of patterns reproduction (Jackson, 2003, 50). However, this technique does have flaws which vary depending upon the machinery available to industry. Aav et al. (2003, 204) go into detail about how difficult the *Tiibet*[23] (Vuokko Nurmesniemi, 1953) pattern was to produce by Printex. Difficulties experienced are said to have ranged from colour flaws due to faulty equipment (broken steamer) and inadequate composition of ink. With the help of a group of Swiss engineers, following great efforts by Arvo Nurmi who had considered the material unprintable (also due to the type of fabric being used), *Tiibet* was successfully printed (Aav et al., 2003, 204).

However, even upon apparent success of machines as a whole, flaws are never entirely preventable. It was the prospect of facing numerous wastage items in storage, which had been marked by flaws, drips and smudges in the printing process, that Armi Ratia, twisted the concept of the 'original' to suit the marketing of these goods. In other words, rather than throwing away, or selling flawed goods cheaply, Armi Ratia is described as having named them "First Class", thus selling them more expensively due to their irreproducible qualities (Ratia, 1986, 28). Within this example there seems to be subversion of the technology, and in addition, a subversion of the paradigm within which mechanically reproduced textile prints are created. Armi Ratia is described as emphasising the increased value of goods which can never be intentionally recreated via devices of mass production, which ultimately locates a form of authenticity in the marks of human presence. Moreover, Armi Ratia has been represented as managing to manipulate the positioning of Marimekko's stance in relation to technology, through emphasising its ability to remain 'unique' and irreproducible[24].

[23] The two colour *Tiibet* pattern [Fig. 4], which includes the white fabric as a third colour, is a wide striped, solid colour print consisting of half the width area being one colour (i.e. dark brown) and the other half of the width area being another colour (i.e. earth brown). Along the length of the material the pattern is broken by continuous intersections of white stripes.

[24] Thus, through the faults of mass production, Armi Ratia attempted to capitalise on what Walter Benjamin's (1992) classifies as the "aura", whereby artefacts which can only be possessed in single quantities maintain higher value than those which many have the possibility of owning.

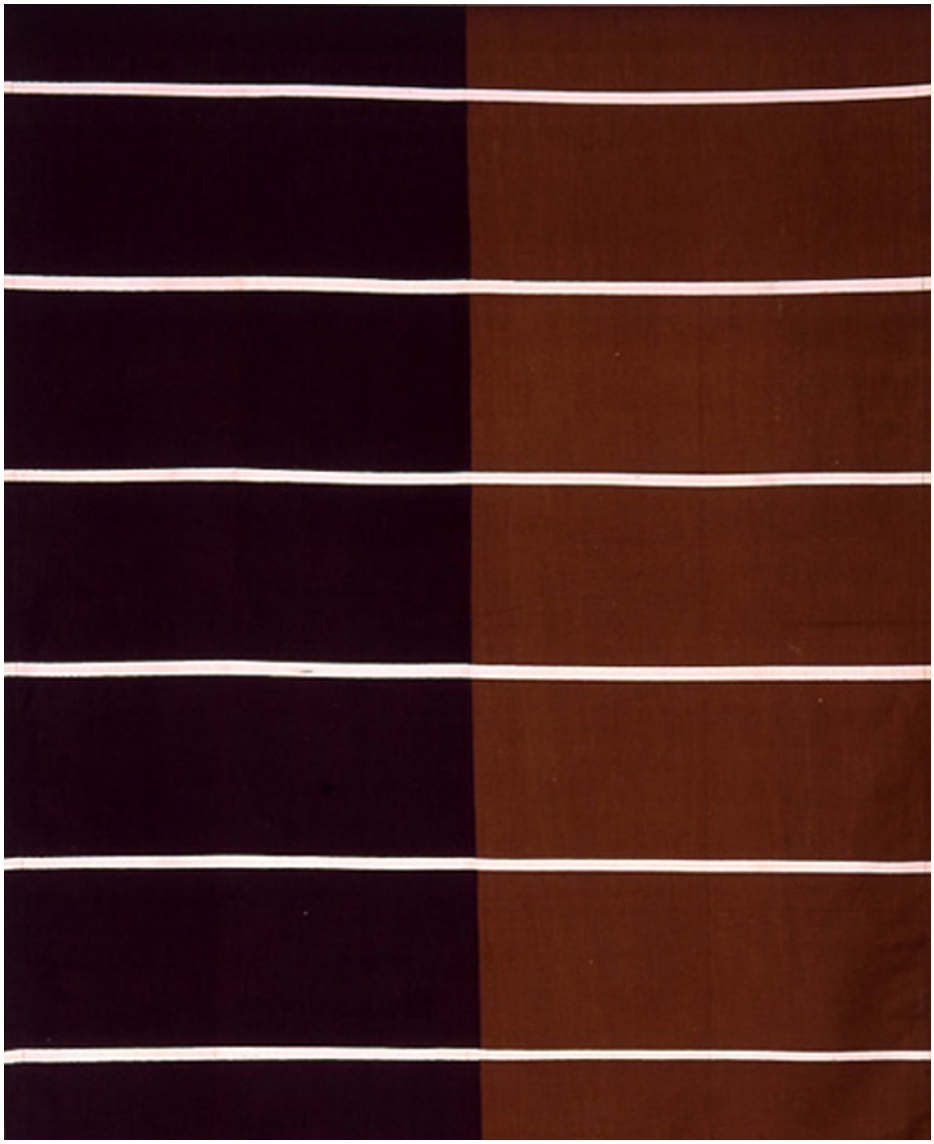

Fig. 4. *Tiibet*, Vuokko Nurmesniemi (1953;
taken from: Indana Choice)

The above example may highlight a means of capitalising on technological imperfections, but the debt towards the strengths of particular types of printing

technologies, is also ever present in Marimekko's textual materials. Even back to the basic reference of hand operated screen printing Armi Ratia has described the selected processes as strategic. For example, in some cases hand printing is explained to be preferred over industrialised machinery due to the fact that machines print the material too heavily. In other words, too much ink seeps through the fabric to the other side, which creates an untidy appearance in the sleeves of shirts when the wearers roll them up (Armi Ratia cited in Tanttu, 1986, 95). At the same time as this example demonstrates selectiveness in technology modes, the Marimekko texts of particularly the 1970s onwards, increasingly emphasise the 'up-to-date' state of Marimekko production and business operations.

At what seems to be regular intervals, spaced decades apart, published Marimekko material draws attention to its latest technological acquisitions, and forms connections between these updates and production results. For example, after Marimekko had taken part in the 1986 Frankfurt Textile Fair, Hilkka Rahikainen (cited in Suhonen, 1986, 86) describes the dialogue between design and production. This is phrased almost as if to assume that both production instruments and creativity were informing each other. Conclusions such as Marimekko's future lying in the field of colour development and printed textiles, almost projects a *scientific* laboratory-type approach to the company's areas of specialisation. In addition, alongside the in-sourcing of newer production appliances are the beginnings of a change in the *spirit* of Marimekko production. This change takes shape in Rahikainen's discussion as the marriage between precision and technologically informed aesthetic results. The repeated anthem of Marimekko as keeping with the "spirit of the day" (i.e. see the Annual Report 2004) is re-enforced by the way that production aesthetics, combined with the allowances of time and cost delivered by the up-dated technology fit into the increasing demands of a harsh and rapidly paced economy (national and global).

2.6.2 Shop-layouts, buildings and utopian communes as an expression of modernist sentimentality

In the formulation of articulating the associations between the Marimekko Corporation and its techno-economic Finnish context, one of the most observable, and yet easily missed elements at play is the meeting point between the consumer and the product. The shop-layout of any retail outlet is not just a matter of commercial logistics, but instead a complex process of psychological manipulation and sociological

interaction. The way in which the ethos of any given company is translated to its potential consumer takes place both through advertising and the physical engulfment of the consumer when they enter the retail environment of the company. Nikula (2003, 122) points out, that despite Suhonen[25] (1986) little media attention has been delivered in regards to promoting or analysing Marimekko's shop designs and lay-outs. It was the discovery of architect Aarno Ruusuvuori's shop lay-out drawings (dating back to 1962), that truly revealed the process of constructing the environmental image of Marimekko (Nikula, 2003, 122). Ruusuvuori's architectural office was primarily responsible for the design of Marimekko stores during the 1960s, starting with a commission in 1962 to create the Mittamari (Measure Mari) outlet. This design, as described by Nikula was to ignore the original interior of a 1930s basement premises by constructing several partitions and fitting cubicles, which were then painted white to form a backdrop for the outstanding patterns and colours of the products. Through cutting back on the interior decoration, and blocking out the reference to the 1930s apartment building, associations of Finnish functionalism were drawn upon in aid of creating that 'timeless' look for products and display.

A pattern of partnerships begin to appear when considering not just the lay-out, but the choice of structures in which Marimekko's early management chose to locate its outlets. Starting with Marimekko's first mid-Helsinki address in the Palace Hotel, designed by Viljo Revell and Keijo Petäjä, the building was considered the most modern Finnish office building of its time. Further, the interiors of the building had been designed by Vuokko Eskolin-Nurmesniemi's husband Antti Nurmesniemi — meaning that the ensemble of architects (including Revell and Petäjä) and designers impacting Marimekko's physical retail appearance were all directly known for being the "creators of Finnish modernism" (Nikula, 2003, 121). Further, in 1964-65 a Marimekko store, Vintti (Attic) appeared on the floor above Artek in another landmark of Finnish modernism, the Alvar Aalto designed Rautatalo (Iron House, 1955). This indicates a formulation of strategic moves, directly physically locating Marimekko environmentally within the Finnish modernist paradigm.

[25] Suhonen contributed an article titled "Environment's Architecture" to *Phenomenon Marimekko* (1986).

Sautter et al. (2004)[26] in their reference to numerous retail environmental theorists emphasise the importance of the physical encounter a customer has to a company's products. They and many others such as Philip Kotler (1973) attribute this research to the "conscious designing of space to create certain effects in buyers that enhance his purchase possibilities" (cited in Sautter et al., 2004, 14). In my opinion this view extends towards the lay-out contributing to establish an image of the company, where customers are not just buying a product through need or impulse, but consuming the company as a whole[27]. In other words, through the publications pertaining to the lay-out of Marimekko stores both in instructions and description, it can be observed that the stores have been set out not just to arrange the products to be aesthetically appealing but to formulate the commercial transaction into a cultural experience.

To *personalise* and integrate the stores into the 'narratives' of Marimekko the corporation adopted names for each outlet in the Helsinki area to reflect the characteristics of their locations or specialisations. What makes the functionally descriptive names of the shops so distinct is the choice of old and playful Finnish words used for these names. For example, the children's clothing store was called Muksula, a playful name for Kids' Place/Village (opened 1958). A fabrics and accessories outlet was named Kammari, an old word for Chamber (opened 1960). Piironki[28], an old Finnish word for Chest of Drawers (opened 1960) was the name of the store that specialised in fabrics. The custom clothes outlet was called Mittamari, Measure Mari (opened 1962) and the fine clothes outlet was called the Boutique (opened 1964). Finally, the store that was opened in Rautatalo was called Vintti, the Attic (opened 1965) as it was located upstairs (Nikula, 2003, 122-123). Thus, while the shop fittings dimensions of the stores were actively designed to minimise time and place specificity, the names of the shops worked in contradiction to create a company environment that was located in tradition (the shops for fabrics and accessories) and oriented towards the whole family (the children's clothing store). Greater detail deserves to be paid towards the specificity of these names in a following research project.

Nikula (2003) repeats Marimekko rhetoric in relation to the arrangement of shop interiors through describing them as a combination of "international modernism" and

[26] In their review of retail environmental literature Sautter et al. (2004) describe the environmental psychology in terms of the S-O-R (Stimuli that causes changes to the state of Organisms which then cause avoidance or approach responses) paradigm by Turley and Milliman (2000)

[27] I see this as consuming the 'total' experience of the company.

[28] Some online dictionaries such as: http://www.hallituskatu14.com/dict_p.html; relate 'piironki' to the Pori dialect. 'Lipasto' is the word commonly used throughout Finland.

"Finnish tradition" (122). Nikula mentions this as occurring partly through the merging of the old with the new, however, based on the way the manipulation of the Mittamari store site was described, it seems as if any trace of time has been attempted to be erased. Even in images and texts which have been published over the last several years the merging of "old" and "new" in reference to the lay-outs themselves, may be seen as mostly an idea. The "international modernism" may be emphasised through the characteristically minimal white cube style lay-out, but the reference to "Finnish tradition" seems to exist rhetorically, in associations of the company's history, store names, nostalgia of its products usage, and through pictorial symbolism of summer cabins and lake front saunas.

One trademark characteristic that was emphasised through repetition in Marimekko stores, starting with the Vintti store, was a steel grid which hung from the ceiling parallel to the floor. Nikula (2003, 123) refers to Pentti Piha's invention, of a steel grid, to which all of the stores dimensions accord with. For example, instead of featuring clothes racks which stand on the floor, the "space grid" provides support for hanging the clothes racks, increasing associations of the ultra-modern. This not only released the flow of the floor space, but also accentuated the forms of the dresses. Further the clothing cubicles and shelving were also adapted to the dimensions of the space grid (60cm square for the cubicles and 30 by 80cm for the shelving).

In newer stores such as the recently opened store in Kamppi Centre, Helsinki, the ceiling grid has been abandoned for a preference in parallels of extended shelving, complimented by elongated windows revealing the architecture outside. The over-accentuated quality of the steel space grid has now been replaced by understated straight white beams, drawing more attention to the products themselves. One store in Helsinki located at the Swedish Theatre has been allotted the role of a theme store. Contrary to the attempts to disengage the shop-fittings from specific styles and eras, the Swedish Theatre store incorporates contemporary Marimekko print designs on the floor and walls. Thus, the shop fittings dominate the environment, setting a themed frame through which the store's products are perceived. In my observations I see a more direct relationship between this themed store and the earlier 'functionalist' inspired shop-layouts. Through saying this I mean, that in relation to the statements of post-modernism (and proven in the later under-stated shop-layouts), the prominent exposure of industrial steel grids served more as a decoration and reference to modernism than as a function. Thus, while earlier Marimekko shop-layouts created a modernist frame

through which the products were to be consumed, the themed store similarly frames its products in the vein of unfunctional patterns and décor, setting the mood for a guided and prioritised digestion of particular designs, rather than a seemingly unbiased presentation of anonymous produce.

There has been an overlap and repetition of two distinctly separated concepts in the discussions of Marimekko shop-layouts. The paradigm of 'modernism' or 'Finnish modernism' (functionalism) has constantly been combined to discuss and refer to the concept of 'modern' — pertaining to that which is new, contemporary and fresh. 'Modern' is the key word behind many publications referring to the Marimekko outlets from all eras of the company's existence. Like the didactics that followed the introduction of the characteristically bold prints of the company and the simplistic approach to clothing construction, 'modern' can be isolated in many texts. Marimekko's Helsinki street front image as presented in a 1968 advertisement in *Helsinki-Viikko* was cited as "varied and absolutely modern" (Nikula, 2003, 129). The previous quote is positioned closely to Suhonen's (1986, 78) description of the former Forum store with its international connotations drawn from deep-colours, recessed tables, roundish wallings and art décor floor. Suhonen contrasts this 'internationally' stylised store with the then newly re-fitted Esplanade Store which was said to have been "refashioned with modernistic and structuralistic methods similar to some early stage of modernism" (78). Curiously, the phrasing of "some stage of modernism" acknowledges modernism as an historical cultural paradigm and in particular this paradigm is linked to a 'Finnish' form of style through its juxtaposition of so-called international influences.

With this in mind, it should be no surprise that during times of post-industrialism, and thus the ultimate rhetoric of the 'post-modern', direct verbal and literary reference to modernism has been lessened. However, the term 'modern' has not. In texts such as Kirsti Paakkanen's Annual Report President Report (1999) the re-located Forum outlet is described as featuring "completely new, airy and modern interior décor. The new look led to significant sales increases at both stores (Paakkanen, 1999, 4)". 'New' and 'modern' are repeated numerous times in the 1999 Annual Report (4) and Autumn/Winter News (1999-2000, n.p.) alone, although literally much of the transformation that has taken place seems to have only occurred through subduing the industrial steel fittings. Thus, post-modernism in Marimekko's terms may be likened to a statement made by Rowley and Slack (1999) in their description of the ethos of the

virtual (online) store, whereby "post-modern environments" are sites "in which time and place…lose meaning".

2.6.3 The spirit of the day – the phrase of the millennium

If the rhetoric of the "waving pennant against the sea of convention" was a catch-phrase of the earlier Marimekko, then the term "keeping with the spirit of the day" is the 'flexi-phrase' of the present Marimekko. Through non-specifically identifying the company with any cultural or technological movements, yet at the same time indicating that it is well-aware of societal trends, Kirsti Paakkanen leaves Marimekko's production and operations open for adaptation to whatever circumstances lie ahead. The term also suggests that the company is 'up-to-speed' with the latest developments and is aware of client's needs within the developing society (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.). Amongst the slogans of the eras however, are terms which recur from one corporate development to the next. These include terms such as "the latest know-how", "open mind" and "a faith in the future" (cited in Suhonen, 1986, 86). Further to this, a description of the changed characteristics of goods appears to be avoided, at the same time as the humanist side to the company's profile is protected through repeating words such as "personable" and "flexible" (cited in Suhonen, 1986, 86).

The tradition of incorporating production machinery into the image of the Marimekko Corporation has not waned during the sixteen years of Kirsti Paakkanen reign. If nothing else, through current observations, it may be said that in almost every Annual Report released from 1998 onwards[29] new purchases and advancements have consistently been featured. Examples may be seen where a sequential focus is demonstrated to assure the readers of the Annual Reports and 'Seasonal' *Marimekko News* that investments in technology are investments on the present, the future and the customer. It is important to establish at this stage an understanding of the audiences of each of the mentioned texts. The Annual Reports, to be found under the hyperlink 'investors' on the Marimekko website (http://www.marimekko.fi/fi), are most specifically that of investors. These are people who own shares in the company, which means that they are the ones who have interest in the current, past and future value of their investments in the corporation. The 'Seasonal' (depending on the season)

[29] This marks the latest re-entrance of Marimekko onto the I List of the Helsinki Stock Exchange in the year 1999 after its removal from the Stock Exchange in 1985. Subsequently Marimekko entered the Main List of the Helsinki Stock Exchange in 2002. For more details please refer to: http://www.marimekko.fi/ENG/marimekkocorporation/history/2000/frontpage.htm

Marimekko News audience is the direct customer, who may have acquired a copy of the newsletter upon a visit to a Marimekko store, or may be a member of the Marimekko mailing list, or alternatively possesses a Marimekko customer card or Master Card. In greater detail these two groups represent acutely different interest groups, however the ways in which these individual groups are being addressed are quite revealing to observe side by side.

In the 1998 Spring *Marimekko News*, corresponding with the then current re-organisation phase of Marimekko's internal structure, came public the news to the customer that the company had expanded. Not only did the news report mention that a new production plant had been acquired, but it also told of how new machinery had been purchased and new employees had been hired. A mode of seeming transparency can be gauged in the way that the customer had been drawn into the production room, to understand how the company's new purchases would affect the future of their own purchases. In addition, the news was stressing that through these expansions efforts to develop quality would be intensified, drawing attention to the company's choice of the "best" materials and impeccable workmanship. Thus, the concept of mass production was altered into a concept of elevated quality in production.

The Spring-Summer 1999 *Marimekko News* (n.p.) describes how the focus of the then present year (1999) and the following year (2000) would be on reforming the structure of Marimekko's operations. The reasoning for this is specified as aiding the improvement of service. Here, the customer is given insight in regards to the updating of the store systems network, which connects each Marimekko shop to a central source. The text subsequently refers to an increase in flexibility that the change in technology will allow regarding inter-store communication and international store communication. Through the location of this news, it seems that the customer is supposed to understand that they will benefit from this flexibility — possibly in their search for finding various hard to reach product items. Ultimately, when re-analysing the move of an updated IT network, this description of a system's "reform" seems to carry the publicly overt statement that Marimekko is a part of the information society, and that it is capitalising on the available information networking solutions. This leads the consumer to understand that not only in production has technological advancement taken place but also within the arena of the consumer, allowing for a more convenient and reliable shopping experience.

In the *Marimekko News* of Autumn/Winter 1999-2000 (n.p.), the turn of the millennium is highlighted as providing the company with both opportunities and challenges. The consumer is given privileged information in regards to the financial stability of Marimekko's operations. This financial stability is phrased in terms of the way it allows the company develop their service and products "…in the direction that best meets our customers' expectations" (*Marimekko News*, 1999-2000, n.p.). Again, the best interests of the customers are being singled as the primary motivations behind maintaining a stable financial basis. In this article Marimekko's 50th anniversary preparations are highlighted alongside the news of the new Kämp Gallery store. The Kämp Gallery store is labelled as being "unparalleled" due to its location, being in the middle of Helsinki, at the same time as another new store for specialties, located in Helsinki Forum was also to be opened. The news item then goes on to explain that through "demanding the highest possible quality in every area of operations, by keeping abreast of the times, but not forgetting the value of traditions, Marimekko has over the years become the flagship of Finnish clothing industry…".

In the Marimekko Annual Report of 2004, which now addresses the investors of the Marimekko Corporation, the focus is once more pointed towards investment. Only this time, the detail given to this group of readers is in more specified detail. The Marimekko Annual Report 2004 (17) describes how the Marimekko Herttoniemi textile printing factory had been modernised. The modernisation had taken place in the form of a replacement investment, phasing out older machinery in place of new screen-making equipment and an updated printing machine. On a somewhat clear level, this news item is designed to assure the investors that production plant expenditure is necessary for the continuity of the company's own printing production. There is a sense of nostalgia in the description of the old machine, which is destined to cease operation in the following few years, by using the term "dating back to 1973" (*Marimekko Annual Report*, 2004, 17). For those particularly familiar with Marimekko history, the purchase of the 1973 machinery marked the expansion resulting from the financial success, facilitated through the changes implemented from 1968 to 1971 (Ainamo, 2003, 184-187). The then "new Marimekko" of 1973 marked the period of the lowest number of staff (staff number being 288) following the structural changes, yet these changes, including investment in new machinery was to lead to steady corporate growth over the next decade (Donner, 1986, 10).

Over thirty years later, the Marimekko Annual Report (2004, 17) publicity of the

purchase of a 12-colour flat screen printer made by J. Zimmer Maschinenbau GmbH, Austria, can be seen as another attempt to slide Marimekko's image into the profile of the information society. This time, the pitch is not directed to the increasingly convenienced consumer as in the *Marimekko News* 1998, but to the financial stake-holders of the business – the investors. The mentioning of a rotary printing module may be interpreted by even the layperson as increasing productivity (i.e. allowing greater turn-over of products at one time, rather than relying on the traditional space consuming table screens). Following this, there is a description of the purchase of digital screen-making equipment, made in Switzerland by Lüscher AG. The company describes its approach towards the digital medium as an aim "to fully harness the state-of-the-art technology of the new textile printing machine" (*Marimekko Annual Report*, 2004, 17). No specifics are provided in terms of the ways that the screen-making process will be altered by the technology or what outcomes this will have in terms of product quality, efficiency and design (as Rahikainen 1986, 86, alluded to). The key phrase "state-of-the-art technology", brings the aspect of Marimekko's digitisation not simply to the production floor, but more towards an abstract level of embracement of the digital era.

3. ‘Reading’ Marimekko texts

This chapter introduces the texts which have been analysed in this research. It also discusses the ‘interpretive framings’ (Koivunen, 2003, 26-32) used in Marimekko anthologies and articles. By interpretive framing I mean the way that cultural products are packaged in order to guide the audience’s perceptions and reception of the product in question (Metz, 1995, 51). Analysis of articulation (Slack, 1997, 112-125) is also utilised to identify the components used to create frames (e.g. elements of Finnish folklore and feminist ideals). Through the biographical texts, journalistic texts and promotional texts, I look at the way that Marimekko is woven into Finland’s national narratives and connected to senses of Finnish cultural identity. I approach the texts in two different ways. On the one hand, the interpretive framings in the promotional material, articles and anthologies are analysed to establish an understanding of the way that female ‘actors’ in the company were portrayed and how the company represented women consumers. On the other hand, promotional material, articles and anthologies are used to gauge how representations have chronologically changed. The material is also used to form a comparison between the representations of both groups of women (producers and consumers).

Edward Said (1993, 180) writes of the difficulty scholars have in engaging with the epistemological status of texts. Said argues that authors and scholars of the human sciences are often caught within the frames of discourse[30]. It is the assumption of norms and unchallenged discursive frameworks that holds interest for me when analysing Marimekko’s texts. The complicity of ‘knowledge’ combined with the frequency of repetitive terminology and symbolism in Marimekko’s texts are closely monitored. Different perceptions regarding the industry of the Marimekko Corporation are discussed in the first section of this chapter. The second part of the chapter concentrates on investigating traits designated to the texts’ (company’s) characters in addition to the company itself. It must be specified at this stage that the texts under investigation have originated from different contexts and have been used for different purposes. This matter will be articulated again in the chapter, yet for comparison purposes it is interesting to place these multi-purpose texts side by side. The third section deals with discussing the social construction of what are considered as inherent national

[30] For instance it is claimed that one never truly knows their own culture until they are abroad.

characteristics presented and embodied by the company and its characters (particularly Armi Ratia). Observations made by Koivunen (2003) will be used as a basis to establish a form of uniformity adopted by Finnish cultural producers from the mid-1900s (1930s in the Koivunen's *Niskavuori* case) towards attaching their products to concepts of nation and 'Finnishness'.

3.1 The same history every time?

The following are examples taken from journal and newspaper articles, designed to summarise the history of the Marimekko Corporation. They are laid out in this thesis, against each other, to demonstrate the series of events, leading to the establishment of the company, as seen by the respective authors. They are also included in this chapter to illustrate the ways in which basic facts such as founding dates (1949 and 1951), the founding parties and the business production plus ethos, have been modified and re-arranged from one instance to the other. The first quote is taken from Sally Raikes' "Brave new whorls" article for the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper (September 4th, 2005):

> "The company was founded in 1951 by Armi Ratia, a 39-year-old textiles designer who persuaded her husband, Viljo Ratia, to abandon his oilskins factory and invest in her ideas. Using contacts from her art school, she set about recruiting a group of young women who would challenge the unimaginative floral prints churned out by competitors, and even the lines from big fashion houses such as Chanel and Dior. Together, they would introduce a brand-new style of textiles for clothes and interiors."
>
> (Raikes, 2005, n.p.)

This article was written by Raikes for the 'Spectrum' (cultural) section of *Scotland on Sunday* with the intention of promoting the *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion, architecture* exhibition (Glasgow, September 10th - November 8th, 2005). The title of the article "Brave new whorls" seems a paradox, as it attempts to refer to Marimekko as a form of 'convention breaker', yet the contents of the article nostalgically dwells upon Marimekko's recorded past. This is a move similar to what Ainamo (2003, 191) describes as a form of archiving — placing the corporation in history. Raikes frames Marimekko's inception through the presentation of Armi Ratia as a "textiles designer", seemingly wishing to form a business through her trade, "persuading" her husband, to modify his company to suit her design practice. It was "women" whom Raikes tells

were specifically recruited by Armi Ratia to form an innovative design team, producing a "brand-new style" of fabrics for fashion and interior.

Like what will be shown in the quotes below, Raikes pins the character of the company's designs to "Finland's optimistic, post-war ideology". In her article "Marimekko: Resurgence of a Finnish Phenomenon"[31] for the *Scandinavian Review*, Gura (2004) also emphasises the "optimism of the postwar years" (36) as a catalyst for Marimekko's success. This article is another which was written for the purpose of promoting the *Marimekko: fashion, fabrics, architecture* exhibition. However, Gura's article derives from the United States (as compared to the United Kingdom) and was written one year earlier. In this case, Marimekko's origins are summarised as follows:

> "The story began in 1949, when Viljo Ratia purchased a small company making printed oilcloth, renamed it Printex Oy and decided to begin printing textiles for interiors and fashion. He asked his wife Armi, then working in advertising but trained as a textile designer, to help him create new patterns. Told that everyone else was printing florals, the marketing-savvy Armi noted, "You must print something else. You have to be different."
>
> (Gura, 2004, 34-35)

Here it may be observed that Armi Ratia's former profession of working in advertising is mentioned. This is something that was not told in Raikes' summary of the business history. Further, Viljo Ratia is talked of in terms of purchasing the oilcloth printing company in 1949, and himself being the one to decide to convert production to printed textiles. Gura then discusses how Armi Ratia was recruited by Viljo Ratia to "help" create new patterns. Armi Ratia's experience in not so much textile design, but more advertising, is accentuated in this piece through the well-documented rejection of florals "You have to be different". In this small introduction to the business history, the function of Armi Ratia's gender, and the role of 'women' seems insignificant in comparison to Raikes' brief mentioning of Armi Ratia's recruitment of a team of women. With this in mind, the next quote taken from Hannah Booth's "Flower Power" in the *Guardian Unlimited* (September 5th, 2005 — also from the United Kingdom), heavily relies on the concept of 'women' to accentuate the significance of the company:

> "From its inception, Marimekko was in the hands of women. Even now, women occupy all the top positions. Founded in 1951 in Helsinki, it was initially

[31] Taken from the *Scandinavian Review*, Winter-Spring (2004).

> intended to be a collaboration between textile designer Armi Ratia and her husband Viljo, who ran a small printing company. Legend has it that Ratia, as a woman, couldn't get a bank loan, so it had to be done through her husband."
>
> (Booth, 2005, n.p.)

What is quite pertinent to note, is that although this is an article based on the same showing of *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion, architecture* in Glasgow, as described by Raikes, the editorial positioning and emphasis on gender presented by Booth possesses some contrasts. While Raikes' article was located in 'Spectrum', the culture section of the *Scotland on Sunday*, Booth's report was under the 'Women' section of the *Guardian Unlimited*. Further, not only is this article supposed to be written about 'women', but it is also sorted in the internet file under 'gender/story'[32]. The name "Flower power" is seemingly directly referring to the "power of women", flowers signifying the feminine. The quote seems to represent the Ratias' business arrangement as a pseudo partnership, through which the 'powerless' woman Armi Ratia realises her business potential through employing the 'power' of her husband's masculinity, to enter the economic circuit. The mentioning of how the pair was supposed to be "a collaboration" seems to have dropped in the last sentence, whereby Booth mentions how Armi Ratia obtained funding for the business through a bank loan arranged by her husband.

In the article "Finnish Fabric" (2004), written for *The Washington Diplomat*, Heather Nalbone focuses on articulating the "uniqueness" of Marimekko design, within the context of the Finnish textiles industry:

> "Today's Marimekko is the brainchild of the husband-and-wife design team of Armi and Viljo Ratia, who followed their urge to invent a unique brand of clothing in post-war Finland. Some say it was Armi's unique tactics that helped make the company a successful anomaly, such as her decision to employ young designers untrained in fashion design and her rejection of floral patterns in the 1950s."
>
> (Nalbone, 2004, n.p.)

Also written for the *Marimekko: fashion, fabrics, architecture* exhibition and originating from the United States (along with Gura's article[33]), yet one year earlier

[32] The full address of this 'gender/story' is as follows:
htto://www.guardian.co.uk/gender/story/0,11812,1562854,00.html

[33] It is necessary to mention that design historian Judith Gura is the director of the design history programme at the New York School of Interior Design. As well as working as an associate professor at

than the Scottish articles (and subsequent exhibition showing), Nalbone's article seems concentrated on establishing Marimekko as a company producing 'original' forms of textile designs. The exhibition is bound to its Washington context of the Finnish embassy. There seems to be an attempt to debase the description of Marimekko from a discussion on gender, and to re-focus the concept of Finnishness into something that is "hip", "neutral", and a "unique Finnish mix of adaptability and avant-garde"[34]. Postwar Finland is once again mentioned, and so is the rejection of floral patterns. What seems different in this article is the non-specific referral to Armi Ratia as being a 'woman' and sharing unequal business responsibilities. There is a subtle hint towards the significance of Armi Ratia's contribution through the way that Nalbone makes a special note in mentioning that "Some say it was Armi Ratia's unique tactics that helped make the company a successful anomaly". Again, "unique" is mentioned in the same sentence as Armi Ratia's name.

The 2003 Annual Report of Varma[35], a pension fund for private sector employees, features an entire page devoted to Marimekko. The article is named "Marimekko — a Finnish success story", seemingly moulding the company image into a Finnish corporate character. Its summary of Marimekko's history goes as follows:

> "Marimekko emerged in 1951 in a country that was recovering from the war. Armi and Viljo Ratia had decided to create something new, unique, durable and beautiful for Finland. There was a shortage in practically everything so the designers had to summon up all their creativity. Perhaps Marimekko's uniqueness was even drawn in part from its scarcity."
>
> (Varma Annual Report, 2003, 17)

In this instance, Armi and Viljo Ratia are positioned once again as a team. Armi Ratia's gender is not highlighted, but instead the couple is presented as a duo set to 'give' to the nation in the form of uniqueness, durability and beauty[36]. At this point it is becoming relevant that particularly in instances where Marimekko is being presented as a corporate Finnish body, to the international economic community (as seen in the

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the Pratt Institute, Gura also lectures at the Bard Graduate Center — the institution responsible for organising the exhibition *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion, architecture*.

[34] As mentioned in other parts of Nalbone's article.

[35] Varma is the largest superannuation company for employees of the private sector in Finland. During its history is merged with the Sampo-pension fund, which explains why the article devoted to *Unikko* bank cards is featured in the company's annual report.

[36] These exact descriptions are ideals presented in architectural policies across Finland, specifically in reference to modernist architecture. See 'Jyväskylä Architectural Policy' at: http://www.jyvaskyla.fi/kaavoitus/pdf/arkengl2.pdf

Finnish Embassy showing of *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion, architecture*) the Ratia pair are presented as an equal business partnership. Further, this article in itself seems slightly out of place at first in the context of a pension fund's annual report. However, the mystery behind the article of "a Finnish success story" reveals itself in the fine print below. Where the article ends there is the statement: "The extremely popular *Unikko* design has found its way to cloth, televisions, mousepads and bank cards". Thus, the unmentioned author may be indicating that this Finnish modern(ist) textiles company has not limited itself with textiles. It may also mean that in Finland, a textiles company cannot simply limit itself to textiles — particularly such an innovative and "successful" company. Or it may also be alluding to the fact that those who have participated in the Varma (Sampo) Pension Fund may be pleasantly surprised to see such a reminder of Finnish corporate success on their bankcards.

The following quotes are more examples of how the company's history has been condensed. Both are taken from Finnfacts and Finnfacts *Focus*, an international website and magazine designed to inform international readers about Finnish society, history and industry:

> "For those who do not know, Marimekko was set up in 1951 and is the leading Finnish design company in the textile and clothing sectors. The company designs, produces and markets high-quality clothes, interior decorating textiles and accessories with the Marimekko product brand in Finland and abroad."
>
> (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.)

> "The company's business concept emerged from a strong desire to create something new, unprecedented, durable, and beautiful for post-war Finland."
>
> (Finnfacts Focus, 2005, 21)

The top quote, taken from "Kirsti Paakkanen Finnish to the core – there's only one Marimekko" (2003), adopts the assumption that Marimekko is not just a household brand, but a household story through its introduction "For those who do not know…" In other words, these versions of history are designed as inlets for potential customers and visitors to Finland. The two quotes, as well as specifying the dimensions of the company as a textiles and clothing firm, demonstrate the repetition of themes such as the mythological rhetoric of providing postwar Finland with something "new", "beautiful" and "high-quality".

3.2 Textile-based, Design-based, Persona-based, Financial-based

The categories demonstrated in the previous section mainly focused on gender, national and value-loaded characteristics, i.e. "unique", "durable" and "beautiful". This section is based on the re-reading of articles from the Marimekko anthologies, and concentrates on highlighting several more themes. The writings of Marimekko can be broken down into categories which include: textiles, design, persona (marketing image — through corporate nature and lead figures), and finance. Marimekko has additionally been written about regarding architecture (Nikula, 2003; Suhonen, 1986) and demographics (Tarschys, 1986) however, I choose to incorporate these areas under the categories of 'design' (architecture) and 'finance' (demographics). The reason for placing such concern on the above mentioned categories is in correspondence with significant facets and delegations of the Finnish design industry, i.e. the field of textiles and handicrafts, and the political instrumentalisation of design etc. It is also interesting to observe the particular topics about which the authors chose to write, especially in regards to the gender, generation and connection of the author to the company. This particularly holds fascination in regards to Marimekko's reputation as a female run corporation and in consideration for the integrity placed on the company by the respective authors in relation to the company as a corporate entity. Corporate integrity is furthered through considering Marimekko's rhetorical significance in the wider Finnish societal context.

3.2.1 Textiles

Textiles are mentioned in *Grove Art Online's* entry of "Finland, Republic of [Suomi; Swed. Finnland]. XI. Textiles" as including the products of "embroidery, lace, woven fabrics and *ryijys*" (Kopisto, 2006). Finnish textile traditions are traced back to the Brigittine nuns in Naantali, in 1438. At the end of this entry which discusses the role of textiles in the homes of aristocracy, and talks of the usage of particularly *ryijy* rugs in international competitions around the era of heightened national activism (mid-1800s to early 1900s — along with the founding of the Finnish Association for Applied Arts in 1875 and the Friends of Finnish Handicrafts in 1879 — Kopisto (2006, n.p.) mentions that among the main players of the Finnish textiles industry are Marimekko designers Maija Isola and Vuokko Nurmesniemi.

In the anthologies *Phenomenon Marimekko* (1986) and *Marimekko: fabrics, fashion and architecture* (2003), in addition to media articles, much emphasis has been

placed on the role of Marimekko as a textiles company. The deconstruction of particularities placed upon Marimekko such as a 'textiles company' in addition to being 'uniquely Finnish' and 'isolated in its approach to textile printing and design' has been undertaken in regards to all the texts used in this study. In recent years especially, the Marimekko Corporation itself has been describing its business as a "leading Finnish textile and clothing design company" (Annual Report, 2004, 3). This focus does not seem difficult to comprehend, but the link between the gender of the company's corporate head and the history of textiles production in Finland is significant. Historically, women entering the field of the visual arts from entrance to education onwards were directed towards the discipline of textiles (Wiberg, 1997, 32-33). Armi Ratia was one of those students (Aav, 2003, 27-29). Textiles, with a history of almost all women producers, have traditionally been assigned the role of handicrafts due to a considered lack of creative direction and emphasis placed on it as manual labour. Throughout the times of early Finnish industrial art women who produced textiles were constantly labelled as weavers and craftspeople, on the seldom occasions that men entered the domain they had been labelled as designers (Svinhufvud, 1998, 200). This sets up a hierarchy of terms and design disciplines. This means that the company's relationship to textiles history, its recognition as a textiles producer employing many women, including a woman director, and its success mainly on the basis of textiles, aligns the company, its structure and production with common gender discourses occurring in the Finnish design industry and certain design based national discourses.

Svinhufvud (1998), talks of how in the Finnish cultural context, gender "cannot take second place where Finnish textile art is concerned" (200). It might be read that there is no coincidence between the fact that Marimekko is a textiles and clothing company, and is as well as has been lead by women corporate figures. As Armi Ratia strove for Marimekko to be considered a domain of "total design" (including housing, buildings and furniture; Donner, 1986, 9; Saarikoski, 1986, 43; Nikula, 2003, 120-121; Ainamo, 2003, 180), the fact the that artistic production of the firm should be constantly tied with and limited to textiles and clothing tends to 'fit' with the tradition of the 'women's role' in Finnish cultural production (Wiberg, 1997, 23)[37].

Svinhufvud (1998) goes on to mention that women still dominate the Finnish professional field of textile art today. The first male to graduate as a textile artist from

[37] In fact, Marianne Aav (2003) can be quote as stating that "in the 1950s Armi Ratia would probably not have blazed her way to the top in any field of industrial design other than textile art" (29).

the Central School of Industrial Arts, did so in 1948, after him only four other men graduated in textile arts between 1948 and 1990. Only five men were working actively as textile *designers* for TEXO in 1996 (Svinhufvud, 1998, 200). This distinction is pertinent when considering the difference between 'designers' and 'textile workers', or 'designers' and 'creators' — design versus handicraft. As Svinhufvud highlights, the domain of design was for the male professionals, the domain of creating or producing the designs was for the female professionals. In other words, the men in the professional field and in language of publication, in the Finnish arena, are considered the inventors and the imaginers of the products, while women are the producers, or manual labourers (crafts people) of the men's ideas. This concept may be applied when considering both international and national referral to Marimekko as a textile company, particularly in relation to discussions of the female figure-heads. However, as it may be seen in the discussion of Marimekko as 'design', the labelling of Marimekko's nature has been flexible depending on the desired outcome and context, within both company and national rhetoric.

A matter which may be subject to further investigation is the cultural distribution of male designers at Marimekko. Many of the male designers including Pentti Rinta, Matti Seppänen and Mika Piirainen are of Finnish descent. Yet, some of the earliest male design practitioners to be employed by Marimekko were from Japan — injecting the company's designs with a sense of "Japanese aesthetic" (Ainamo, 2003, 183). The designers originating from Japan included Katsuji Wakisaka (employed alongside Pentti Rinta in 1968) to seemingly adjust Marimekko's products towards the global "social revolution" of the time, and Fujiwo Ishimoto (1974) who was also said by Ainamo, to have been hired in order to inject "new insights" into the company[38]. Ainamo's (2003, 183 & 187) writing of Marimekko emphasises a sense of "freshness" that importing "new" cultural "sensibilities" into the company had achieved. What may appear striking to some is the possibility of the Asian masculine equalling the European feminine[39]. Orientalism is a component of the imaginary colonial division between East (the areas classified as Asia and the Middle East) and West (namely England, France and the US). The East was formed into a dichotomy of the East and the Orient, whereby the more romantic notion of the Orient conjured myths of beautiful women wanting to

[38] Aav (2003) incidentally mentions Ilmari Tapiovaara's admiration for the "elegant economy of Japanese art" (25) locating Japanese aesthetic with 'spiritual' experience, this can similarly be read in terms of broader Scandinavia's treatment of Finnish design as mentioned by Kalha (1998).
[39] Refer to Said (1978)

be dominated, and feminine-like men who were weaker, with finer features, while still being dangerous (Dexheimer, 2002, n.p.). The key trait of Oriental men in the colonial paradigm was that they were assigned traditionally women's tasks such as laundry (Roy, 2005, 120). The link between hiring Japanese men in the domain of Finnish women's labour and their labelling within the exotic realm of the 'new' and 'different' makes the phenomenon more noteworthy.

In regards to the men (Finnish) working at the Marimekko Corporation, Svinhufvud (1998, 200) has stated that work produced by men in the mainly female domain of textiles is generally more highly valued than that of female counter-parts. This may be relevant in other areas of Finnish design however in relation to Marimekko the idea seems problematic. Reasoning for this being problematic is due to the apparent aim of creating an environment of unisex existence. Thus, the portrayal of Marimekko's textiles operations may be seen as one of either two alternatives — either all the designers working for the company are portrayed as 'feminine', or the 'gendered' portrayal of the administration renders all employees there under as 'unisex'. The concept of unisex is observed in the design strategies of men designers such as Pentti Rinta and his most renowned design *Kuskipuku* (the Driver's suit; 1969). *Kuskipuku* was the first complete Marimekko outfit designed for men, and soon after its release it was adapted for women.

3.2.2 Design

In the Finnish context, the concept of design carries with it the notions of planning products for cultural status inside the Western paradigm as well as generating economically viable industry[40]. The above discussion serves to illustrate the tendency to preconceive textiles manufacturing as industrial and craft-like. Mechanical attributes assigned to textiles production seem to separate it from the realm of design which carries connotations of innovation, imagination and cultural development. The realm of design was quite often limited, mainly by the larger Finnish design associations, as being the domain of men (Svinhufvud, 1998, 201). For Marimekko to have transcended into a realm of both textiles and design, at the same time as being publicly directed by a woman makes this case even more significant. Design was already specified in the introduction of this thesis as a key player in the nation building process (Hawkins, 1998,

[40] See: Hildi Hawkins' "Finding a Place in the New World Order – "Design in Scandinavia Exhibition" of 1954-57" in *Finnish Modern Design* (1998).

237; Wiberg, 1997, 51-54). Therefore, Marimekko's recognition as a part of the design industry embeds the company's profile within the discourses of Finnish nationalism.

The term 'design' according to the dictionary definition (AskOxford.com, 2007) is a plan or a drawing of something not yet built. It is also defined as the action of producing a plan in addition to being a word that describes a decorative pattern. The same dictionary describes the word 'design' as deriving from the Latin word 'designare', which means to designate or mark out. Sparke (2006, n.p.) mentions how the term 'design' refers to both the "aesthetic and functional characteristics of an object" in addition to the concept of product design for the purpose of mass production. In the instance of Finland, notions of design are quite often caught up in terms of 'modernist aesthetics' and functionalism through characters such as Alvar Aalto and Viljo Revell who represent mostly architectural movements. Design industry in Finland represented a means of redefining the nation's political and cultural identity (Hawkins, 1998, 237-241).

Therefore, the classification of the Marimekko Corporation as a representative body of Finnish (Modern) Design, as a female-lead textiles and clothing manufacturer, is not to be taken lightly. In fact, clothes in themselves were barely classified as industrial art due to their temporal and disposable character of being consumed then phased out (Aav, 2003, 20). From the 1950s to the 1970s Marimekko and its designs were said to have been impossible to ignore in the design field. This was namely in terms of its penetration into the Finnish and international market as a 'symbol' of industrial 'Finnishness' and "looking Finnish" (Ainamo, 2003, 179). As one of the strongest industrial exporters to come out of Finland, perhaps it may have been impossible to delegate the sole role of textile manufacturer to the company.

Authors such as Anne Stenros (1997) acknowledge contributions made by women to the Finnish design field by mentioning that:

> "Femininity is neither the first nor most important starting point for the artist, but it is something essential and inherent to the work itself. It is a way to relate one's own achievements to something larger and thereby introduce into one's work the aspects of understanding and acceptance while not compromising one's own views or goals." (7)

This point is troublesome when attempting to apply it to the treatment of design under the banner of Marimekko. While the company flaunts its 'gendered' management, as a flag of 'uniqueness' and equity within postwar Finland, the idea that designs created by

the female employees of the company display an inherent femininity, would be somewhat misguided. In fact, the designs of the corporation can be said to be completely constructed in terms of notions of gender (i.e. *Unikko*). The idea of 'feminine' or in fact the idea of the 'woman' can be seen as designed, or constructed through language — visual, oral and textual — and performance (de Lauretis, 1987, 3; Butler, 1990, 23) by the company itself, as will be discussed in the following chapter on analysing promotional texts.

Instead of dwelling on the concept of femininity in the design process, in the texts describing the corporation, particularly in later years, notions of 'woman' and 'design' (at least in diplomatic circumstances) seem to be kept reasonably separate as seen in the following quote:

> "I believe that it's Marimekko's duty to keep Finnish design strong and take it to the world. Finland's excellence must be seen in design. Nowhere else in the world are there natural surroundings like those in Finland and nowhere else can, for examples [sic], such printed patterns be created than here in Finland"
>
> (Paakkanen, cited in Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.)

Ignoring the concentrated title of Marimekko as a "leading Finnish textile and clothing design company" on the third page of the company's 2004 Annual Report, this statement made on the pages of a national information website (Finnfacts) clearly articulates the desire, and "duty" of the company, to be a part of the design sphere. Characteristics such as Finland's "natural surroundings" are emphasised as contributors to the designs which can be produced "(n)owhere else in the world". Design is then attached to a "natural" landscape[41] and the production example of this design is in the form of printed patterns (drawing on print technology). The cited statement presents Marimekko design as a fundamentally *Finnish* product, rather than emphasising the gender of the products' designers. To further reinforce the significance of the design status inside Finnish borders, Finnfacts goes on to mention that "Kirsti Paakkanen has made design the most important function at Marimekko, and the rest of the company supports and serves it." (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.)

[41] Anu Koivunen (2003) talks extensively about the construction of this landscape through the textual framing of rural scenery displayed in the *Niskavuori* films. The essentialism of Finnish people and their culture as being attached to the land is heightened through symbolic and literary reference to 1800s Finnish literature such as *The Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot (1835) and *The Seven Brothers* by Alexis Kivi (1870).

3.2.3 Persona

Marimekko's reputation is known for exceeding its production (Piri, 2006; Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.). Marimekko is even characterised by Kirsti Paakkanen as evoking such feelings that the company may be perceived as assuming a human identity (cited in Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.). The matter over whether it is the company's identity which is bigger than production, or whether it is the identities of the directing figure-heads of the company that overshadow production, remains to be seen. There has been much discussion throughout the anthology texts, and the media articles to suggest that Armi Ratia's and Kirsti Paakkanen's personas were and are the driving forces behind Marimekko's success, and ultimately the corporate image as a whole. Ainamo (2003, 188) mentions that after the death of Armi Ratia in 1979, sales figures plummeted, and that the 'persona' of the company was not to be restored until a new, and equally as extroverted female-figurehead took her place twelve years later.

Media examples such as the Varma's 2003 Annual Report attribute the company's strength to "Armi Ratia's entrepreneurial personality" (17), mentioning that it was Armi Ratia's willingness to take risks by employing new talents (resulting in the distinctive designs), in addition to her skilful networking abilities that gave Marimekko the advantage above other textiles and clothing companies. Viljo Ratia (1986, 24) mentions Armi Ratia's relishing of the public spotlight, actively giving interviews and frequently hosting national and international cultural figures at the company's manor house (Bökars). Viljo Ratia's linking of Marimekko's 'personality' to the Finnish cultural sphere (24) was further reinforced by Ainamo (2003, 187 &191) in his discussion of Armi Ratia's strategic placement of Marimekko in the realm of national institutions, through its (her) close associations with historic political figures such as former Finnish president Urho Kekkonen.

The creation of Marimekko's 'persona' does not seem to end there, instead, Aav (2003, 36) seeks to unravel the mystery behind the Marimekko image through carefully analysing Armi Ratia's managerial, promotional and publicity techniques (mainly in the form of interviews). Aav mentions Armi Ratia's idea of establishing a board of directors which would focus on developing marketing strategies, advertising and teaching techniques. In other words, Armi Ratia's early perception of a board of directors would be as the sole image building unit of the corporation. The plan did not materialise, however designers were assigned the roles of teaching retailers how to arrange and sell the designs (Aav, 2003, 36). Marimekko was incidentally founded as a means to

'educate' consumers in regards to how Printex printed textiles should be used (Ratia, 1986, 23; Ainamo, 2003, 175). There seems little written material in English to suggest that designers still go out to retail outlets themselves, but the tendency to maintain complete control over designs from conception to consumption is ever present in publications such as the 2004 Display Manual.

This educational approach to training the consumer to use the company's design products, or to portray the 'persona' of an institute designed to improve the public's living standards has been discussed by researchers such as Lindberg (2006) who has used the case study of IKEA to illustrate a simultaneous exploitation and reinforcement of Swedish "Folkhemmet" (Home for the People). It may be seen as no coincidence, in that also within the emerging Nordic welfare environments Armi Ratia, was inspired and motivated in a somewhat similar vein to Ingvar Kamprad (owner of IKEA). Aav (2003, 38) talks extensively of Armi Ratia's centricity of the "home" in response to the Finnish nationalistic orientation towards designing the home, even though she herself had not much time to spare for it. Aav also talks of the obsession with home which was present particularly towards the end of the 1800s to mid-1900s (Finland catching on later than the others in approximately 1910) throughout all Nordic countries, stemming partially from the writings of the Swedish author Ellen Key, a propagator for the Swedish "Folkhemmet" through the ideas that the home was important to "human well-being". Therefore, it is no accident that Armi Ratia should capitalise on the construction of the 'home', given that one of her major influences in design school was Arttu Brummer — a follower of Gregor Paulsson's idea of "*vackrare vardagsvara*" (more beautiful things for everyday life) (Aav, 2003, 38; Wiberg, 1997, 26). Ironically, Benjamin Thompson's description of the image of Marimekko as "the movement of colour in space" (Saarikoski, 1986, 43) could be seen as an image strategically bound to specific spaces within the consumers' daily lives.

Even though the practice of designers "teaching the retailers" may not be so much of an actuality today, the concept of education is brought forth through the writings of Marimekko's current figurehead, Kirsti Paakkanen. In fact, this educational corporate image is emphasised on the Finnfacts website (2003, n.p.) as the article "Kirsti Paakkanen Finnish to the core" explains:

> "Paakkanen teaches that Marimekko is an example and itself operates as it says. Paakkanen inspires, demands, develops, ensures, commits herself, seeks

> something new, identifies the truth and sees to it that everybody knows what is going on."

The term "Paakkanen teaches" is not isolated in its appearance or reference. In fact, as Ainamo (2003, 192) mentions, Kirsti Paakkanen is a regular lecturer at the Helsinki School of Economics and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Helsinki University of Art and Design (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.). Kirsti Paakkanen's description mirrors that of portrayals of Armi Ratia especially through descriptions which imply that she "inspires, demands, develops", also the persistence of identifying "truth" was a trait repeated in Armi Ratia rhetoric (Sarje, 1986, 52). The phrase regarding seeing "to it that everybody knows what is going on" echoes many connotations, reflected currently in forms of architecture (i.e. the glass and steel structures), and through Nokia's PR approach[42]. Quite precisely this form of 'customer as central concern' is re-validated in Kirsti Paakkanen's referral to the past, through drawing similarities between her approach and Armi Ratia's statements of wanting to "produce joy and light, good, high-quality products that will illuminate people's everyday lives." (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.)

With the irony of the locality of Marimekko's 'heart' of production lying in the domestic space — not so ironically a space traditionally occupied by women — other sources such as the Finnish website Finnfacts (2003, n.p.) go on to label Marimekko's key personality trait as "creativity" in the following sentence:

> "The fountainhead of the operations right from the outset has been creativity. Marimekko's founder, Armi Ratia, said that Marimekko's deepest being is not the products but the force of the creativity from which ideas are generated which, in turn, are expressed in the form of products."
>
> (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.)

In other words, a back flip of strategy is presented from one text to the next. As Aav (2003), carefully documents a detailed path between Marimekko strategy and embracement of key social areas, other authors, such as those actively contributing to the media sources find potency in repeating Armi Ratia's earlier expressions of spontaneous creativity.

Eira Maaniemi (1986) exclaimed how "[p]eople have a certain picture of what we are and what the real Marimekko is" (86). Maaniemi also acknowledges that this

[42] At a recent IPRN (International Photography Research Network) conference in Jyväskylä, 2006, a Nokia representative delivered a presentation, after which an audience member asked "So, what's next? Or aren't you allowed to discuss that?" the presenter was quick to respond somewhere along the lines of "You can ask what you want, I can tell you anything you want to know."

image, or persona, changes from country to country. However, the company's image was tied to the sale of printed textiles comprising 'special' colour combinations. Marimekko was also noted as being possibly ahead of its time — at least in the earlier days. This attitude presented by the author may have indicated the uncertainty felt amongst staff during the 1980s reign of the Amer Group ownership. Marimekko is presented as being internationally associated and blended with other Finnish design products such as Vuokko (owned and founded by former Marimekko designer Vuokko Nurmesniemi), glassware and furniture. Recently, during Kirsti Paakkanen's leadership, Marimekko has been cooperating with furniture companies, the engineering industry, in addition to glassware companies, most notably Iittala. The image that Maaniemi (1986, 86) portrays is one where "anything goes", or as she says is an "open sesame" style approach, even accepting people's assumptions that Marimekko is a Japanese brand. Incorporating the tone of the Armi Ratia style of speech in, particularly earlier interviews, this attitude is proven to be a fallacy. In the atmosphere of the educational approach, 'anything goes' does not seem to fit.

Aav (2003), again focusing on the particulars of Armi Ratia's strategies, analyses her "seemingly irrational business decisions" (38), as well as the ways in which she is presented, as the figure of the company. The commonly known original mission statement is emphasised as being the "marriage of past and present" which was said by Aav to be "the basis on which Marimekko's business ideology and marketing strategy was built" [43] (38). This ideology has been used as a strategy, starkly visible in the revival of the classics during the 2000s. Armi Ratia did not connect Marimekko to profit growth targets during the 1960s. Instead, is cited to have aimed at creating lines of "timeless" designs and that the mission of the company (referring to the Marimekko mission statement[44]) was to create a total environment (Aav, 2003, 38-41).

The key demographics of Marimekko have been noted extensively as being wealthy, fashion-conscious, professional, academic women (Maaniemi, 1986, 86; Hedqvist & Tarschys, 2003, 163; Gura, 2004, 38; Anttikoski, 2003, 99). Armi Ratia was said to label herself as Helsinki's "worst-dressed woman" (Aav, 2003, 38). The care with which Armi Ratia monitored the European fashions has also been documented

[43] The original mission statement is quoted by Donner (1986) as: "Marimekko is the forest path between the practical Venla and the ethereal Anna (characters from Aleksis Kivi's immortal story 'Seven Brothers') projected into the highways and byways, homes and whole living environment of this changing world."

[44] See Donner (1986)

(Aav, 2003, 37). It seems that in order to gain the respect of the intellectual clientele, Armi Ratia needed to present herself, the figure of the company, as an ethical individual, more concerned with creative freedom than material presentation.

Quite similarly Kirsti Paakkanen is noted in several sources through her loyalty to black and occasionally white, in dress and in furnishings (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.; Booth, 2005, n.p.). Both Kirsti Paakkanen and Armi Ratia have been noted as the personified figures of Marimekko and at the same time each of these leaders have removed themselves from the products of the company through not behaving like mascots. As discussed above, this seems to be a means of injecting integrity into Marimekko's image and product through not mass displaying its garments in public appearances — something that may seem cheap and cheesy in the eyes of the intelligentsia. On this note, it may seem also interesting to note the extent to which recent writings owe Marimekko's persona to Kirsti Paakkanen. Finnfacts (2003, n.p.) poses the question: "So was Marimekko made for Paakkanen or Paakkanen for Marimekko?"

3.2.4 Finance

Before going on, the reader should be aware that this analysis consists of samples from two contrasting writing styles and professions. It is important to mention that Donner (1986) and Ainamo (2003) are from different professional backgrounds, and the purposes for which they have written are just as varied. Donner is an author and playwright of fiction, who was writing about Marimekko from the position of a former board member. Donner's primary occupation was creative and he was said to have been recruited by Armi Ratia to liven things up in the board room (Ainamo, 1996, 176). Ainamo on the other hand is an economist and academic, who has produced material about Marimekko on the grounds of specifically measuring business performance. His interest does not lie in entertaining the reader regarding colourful characters. Instead, the tone and vocabulary used to recall business events are more matter of fact. This contrast, in my opinion, is what makes the two accounts all the more relevant to compare, as they are different means of recounting the same story, for vastly different ends. Ultimately this may impact the readers' opinions of the characters and events and notably the readers of each author generally originate from different fields, thus in most occurrences it may be assumed that the different texts will possibly not be read by the same people.

Ainamo (2003) writes:

> "Many scholars have studied and analyzed the company's contributions to design and its cultural history, but one aspect of Marimekko, its corporate history, has attracted less attention. There had been few systematic studies of the profitability of Marimekko, even though the company is firmly in the black more than a half century after its founding, a considerable accomplishment for a firm largely built on the charisma of its founder."
>
> (Ainamo, 2003, 173)

Ainamo (2003) illustrates a lack of attention paid by writers and scholars towards the corporate history of Marimekko. Ainamo having written extensively on the business operations of Marimekko for over a decade may be considered the 'official Marimekko corporate writer', as his works are even referred to through the Marimekko Corporation website. The types of topics he has dealt with in relation to the company have ranged from improving business performance to improve design, to social and environmental awareness through design practice and how this affects business[45]. The matter of whether or not Marimekko's corporate success has drawn marginal attention can be debated. Ainamo outlines that much has been written about Marimekko in terms of its "contributions to design" and indeed, the internal and external cultural history surrounding the business. However, following this paragraph the little attention dedicated towards analysing the company's financial successes remains a mystery. In my opinion it is curious that Ainamo opens the discussion by articulating the lack of corporate discussion around Marimekko, yet does not seem to offer any evidence or answers in regards to why this may be so.

It is quite clear when reading Ainamo (2003) that much of what is said up to the mid-1980s had been previously described by Donner (1986). Both authors include a basic description of the company's beginnings (similar to the examples analysed in "The same story every time?") and both explicitly state their concentration on the economic and financial side of the Marimekko story. The major difference, besides the time in which each is written, can be seen in the way that these economic histories are framed. Donner has titled his article "Dreams and Reality", opening his business description with:

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[45] Some noteworthy Ainamo titles include: *Industrial Design and Business Performance* (1996), *Ecological is Good Design Good Business? Good Design and Profit in Marimekko 1951 to 1991* (Licentiate Dissertation, 1993), and "Design and Competitive Advantage: The Case of Marimekko Oy, a Finnish Fashion Firm" in *Management of Design Alliances: Sustaining Design-based Competitive Advantage* (Bruce & Jevnaker Eds., 1998)

> "It is just about these that Marimekko's economic history is concerned: dreams and realities. Or real dreams.
>
> It is impossible to describe this history as a whole because 35 years for a company is more than with a person; it includes rises, stagnations, declines, rises and consolidation, whereas the lifespan of man is more easy to foretell."
>
> (Donner, 1986, 8)

In this quote, Donner has managed to frame the Marimekko Corporation as somewhat of a dream-maker. The business cycles of the corporation are spun almost like a narrative in a fairytale, rather than in light of the harsh corporate reality of an industrial corporation. Donner goes on to mention the necessity of attaching the economic conditions to key actors within the Marimekko story, while he additionally attempted to approach the topic chronologically. In other words, as the second sentence illustrates the "rises, stagnations, declines, rises and consolidation" are perceived by Donner as a type of soap opera, drama series, or a personal history, where the operations of the company are compared to a human relationship — "35 years for a company is more than with a person".

I would like to reflect on Ainamo's statement regarding the lesser attention paid towards the economic functions of the Marimekko Corporation. Donner's and Ainamo's texts seem to suggest an interconnectedness between 'persona' and 'corporate success'. Further, one may begin to devise that the reason for less overt concentration on economic functions, may be because of this 'persona' portrayed by the Corporation and its leaders. Putting these personae into perspective, as discussed above, the central focus of Marimekko's image, particularly during the 1950s and 60s was based around the home. Aav (2003, 38) and Sarje (1986, 54) speak specifically of Armi Ratia's domestic ideals in their reference to vackrare vargdagsvara (more beautiful everyday things), and even further in regards to Swedish artist Carl Larsson's depictions of the ideal home settings in the late 1800s, early 1900s[46]. It is documented that the 'Mari Girl' is an independent professional and mother (Sarje, 1986, 55), yet the ideas of corporate culture in the context of Marimekko's official public image, may seem too much like uncomfortable opposites to combine. Even though since the 1970s, the business operations of Marimekko have become more forthrightly profit-oriented (Donner, 1986, 18; Ainamo, 2003, 184), there is still a tendency to consider the

[46] Sarje (1986) words Armi Ratia's inspiration of Carl Larsson's home aesthetics as wanting to create the "modern Finnish "happyshere" (54).

consumer image of the company, in light of the artistic and 'free living' ideas of the 1960s (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.).

In fact, through focusing on both of the lead characters (Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen), who nostalgically and progressively idealised the product range (in addition to the 'Marimekko mentality' as depicted in Marimekko's core values at www.marimekko.fi), the notion of a financially geared corporation, ever expanding in light of competition, floating above international price wars, does not fit with the idea of creative freedom, and most importantly 'authenticity'[47]. Instead, in my opinion the act of concentrating corporate image on two personable female figures draws attention away from an alienating mass produced and corporate reality. Moreover, without these figures, particularly in the writings of Marimekko, the texts may seem lifeless, and comparable to other faceless international brands.

There are many examples to suggest that the corporate functions of Marimekko are not only represented by, but dependent on the personae of the woman figure-heads[48]. However, caution must also be aired in terms of the ways in which these businesswomen are portrayed in the Finnish national context. Koivunen (2003, 184-187) talks of businesswomen in specific regards to the *Niskavuori* films, where the image of one of the lead female characters Loviisa changes in her portrayal over the decades of Finnish cinema. In the texts about the 1980s *Niskavuori* film the "monumental-woman"[49] was framed as "wealthy, powerful and bitchy women". This was in light of models set forth by characters in American soap operas and the image of Margaret Thatcher which fuelled both "admiration" and "abjection" (184). Koivunen also talks of how the character Loviisa Niskavuori was framed as "sexless", "more a matron than a woman" (185). Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen[50] cannot be denied to have taken on mother roles as businesswomen, but in my opinion neither of

[47] Although, with this said, the high prices demonstrated by the company are explained in terms of high-quality resources being employed and factories still in operation in Finland, in addition to most importantly *ethical practice* in relation to the treatment of employees (see 'Personnel' on www.marimekko.fi).

[48] As witnessed during the reign of Amer Group in the 1980s (Ainamo, 2003).

[49] The "monument-woman" (or monumental) refer to the idealisations of particularly the "Finnish woman" in light of models set, by in Koivunen's (2003) case, the sets of characteristics defined by the women in the *Niskavuori* films. Koivunen quotes Andreas Huyssen's (1996) definition of the "desire for the monumental" as "the seduction of origins, the sense of eternity and permanence, and the experience of greatness" (114).

[50] Many articles such as regarding Kirsti Paakkanen's relationship to Marimekko as a 'mother' have been written in Finnish (see: "Kirsti Paakkanen, Marimekon uusi äiti" / Kirsti Paakkanen, Marimekko's new mother in Wikipedia – *Suomen Kuvalehti* 42/1991). This draws on the notion that in the narrative of Finnish national discourse, the role of 'mother' is particularly important, even when considering a woman's leadership role in a multinational corporation.

these women can be represented as 'sexless'. Meaning, that despite the fact that they are and were not in their twenties for most of their public career, both can be classified as attractive women, concerned about their feminine public appearances, operating in a vice versa order to some other particularly prominent official public women[51]. My thoughts are that for many authors to simply concentrate on documenting and analysing Marimekko's operations in terms of numbers, would exclude these vital corporate factors. As seen in Ainamo's own writings, he too cannot avoid re-capturing much of the well-documented 'people' histories of the company.

3.3 Identifying gender discourse in the texts

In this section gender discourse is identified and discussed in differing texts written mostly about the Marimekko Corporation during the Armi Ratia reign. What should be kept in mind is that the articles under examination were written from differing perspectives, such as from that of a creative writer and former board member (Donner, 1986), a former employee (Saves, 1986) and a biographer (Saarikoski, 1986). The section once again focuses on the textual representation of Armi Ratia in particular. Yet, where previously I have discussed the nature of the corporate image as a whole under the leadership of Armi Ratia, in this section I look more specifically at the mechanisms (adjectives and articulation) that construct the monumental (memorial) *image* of Armi Ratia and observe how gender impacts this construction.

3.3.1 Armi Ratia in the discourse of folklore

> To begin at the beginning would be most logical, but that is only interesting when the answers have been given by the passage of time. When the limited company Marimekko was registered on 25th May 1951, there were already two other companies in existence owned partly by the same people, Tex-matto and Printex. It would have needed a canny old witch to forecast why it was Marimekko out of all the companies registered on the same day – the others being Rymättylän Silli Oy (herrings), Savonlinnan Makkaratehdas Oy (sausages) and Superfilms Oy – that would rise to greatness.
>
> (Donner, 1986, 8)

The above quote taken from Donner (1986) may seem like another, yet slightly more colourful introduction to the beginnings of the Marimekko Corporation. Donner's

[51] Butler (1990) describes sexual dispositions from pages 60 to 72 whereby she investigates notions of "femininity" and "masculinity" in terms of what is dispositional and what is the result of personal identification. Butler argues that dispositions as expressed by Freud (1923) are "traces of a history of enforced sexual prohibitions which is untold and which the prohibitions seek to render untellable" (64).

first hand resources are drawn upon to state the exact businesses which were registered on the same day as Marimekko (i.e. herrings, sausages and films companies), and the exact date of Marimekko's business registration is mentioned. A descriptive addition to Donner's text however is the statement that it "would have needed a canny old witch to forecast" Marimekko's success. Donner may have been simply referring to an oracle-like woman, removed from the business, hiding in a distant cave, resting firmly in the folktales of Europe. He may have also been referring to the thirty-nine year old Armi Ratia as the "witch" herself. These interpretations cannot be said to accurately describe Donner's intention behind the word "witch", but a folkloristic form of expressing the chain of events, in conjunction with 'imagining' Armi Ratia, cannot be denied[52].

In the instance of describing Marimekko's success as a corporation, what appears to be happening in Donner's (1986) article, is the inability to eclipse[53] the role of Armi Ratia's female gender in the corporate narrative. Instead, Donner reverts to marginalising the narrative's protagonist by first referring to the initial success of the company as riding upon the merits of supernatural force (that of the witch), then by highlighting the witch's undoing through describing a near bankruptcy of the company at the mercy of an over ambitious conspiracy theorist (17). Donner mentions that Armi Ratia did possess fears of being ousted from her position as lead shareholder. But recognition of her commercial significance within the corporate structure was also acknowledged. However, Armi Ratia's business contributions are constantly limited by Donner to being that of only a "creative writer", an effective networker and intuitive as witnessed in the following quote:

> The bank had often pondered whether the operations should be rationalized, but personal relations between the bank and the company were always managed with the same intuitive skill which had such an incredible effect on foreign buyer who came in droves to Finland in the early sixties in search of something new.
>
> (Donner, 1986, 9)

Donner (1986) continues to equate phenomena surrounding Armi Ratia with the mysticisms of nature. He even referred to his own appointment on the board of

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[52] Koivunen describes folklorism as further embedding the cultural products into the narrative of nation through ascribing peoples to the origins of nature – as often seen in reference to national sagas such as *The Kalevala*. However, more writings regarding the depiction of 'woman' as 'witch' can be seen in Linda Hults's *The Witch as Muse – art, gender, and the power in early modern Europe* (2005), and Irene Silverblatt's *Moon, Sun and Witches: gender ideologies and class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (1987).

[53] See Dely (2006)

directors as a means to act as a "lightning conductor" (9), given that there had been tension amongst board members.

One may observe that Donner was friends amongst men. In fact, in regards to the rationalisation of business operations Donner focuses towards the "fraternity", or what Dely (2006, n.p.) highlights as the traditional "democratic ideal"[54]. This fraternity consisted of Jaakko Lassila and Aarno Esilä and himself — "the prime movers at management level" (Donner, 1986, 10). This was the said team that needed to meet in private to plan the "saving" of Marimekko, without Armi Ratia, as not to "be interrupted by her ideas" (Donner, 1986, 10). Donner describes further scenarios such as when Armi Ratia "marched" into Marski's during the "prime movers'" business meeting, in addition to silent protests whereby Armi took on ironic tones when describing the nature of Marimekko after the Swedish Consultants had proposed the structural changes. All in all, Armi seems to be presented as a mixture of a folktale witch, spinning magic with her intuition and networking, and an irrational "creative writer" out of touch with the realities of business. In other words, Donner's commentary can be related to Koivunen's (2003) observations of the development of Loviisa's character in the *Niskavuori* films. This meaning that, Koivunen (2003, 136-137) has recognised a pattern whereby interpretive frames of Loviisa represent her as the monument-Finnish woman, who begins as a quiet, simple country woman, and "human child" when young and then develops into a hardened, strong-willed matron when older. However, in Donner's narrative, possibly due to their personal friendship, he represents the middle-aged Armi Ratia as a mixture of the "human child" and the strong-willed matron.

Another striking account of Armi Ratia and the Marimekko Corporation, based on the observations of a male writer, comes from photographer Seppo Saves (1986). Saves, who had worked with Marimekko during the Armi Ratia reign, does not hold back from describing a seeming blend of the morbid and surreal in his description of the corporation's staff and headquarters. In his introduction to entering the company's premises, Saves tells as follows:

> "There must have been a slaughterhouse on the ground floor of the factory – at least it smelt like it. But upstairs there were other perfumes and all was gleaming white and flowers.

[54] "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity", used in France since the revolution (Dely, 2006).

> Here in Marimekko's virginal premises was a long white table with stacks of women around it. Somewhere in the background hovered slim, young male Marimekkoites in their pretty marimekko shirts. They opened doors, were terribly nice, and absolutely soundless. I seemed to recall they were addressed collectively, but I don't remember the noun."
>
> (Saves, 1986, 66)

In other words, Saves does not equate female leadership to equality. From the details described in the above citation, one might come to conclude that the only way men, or at least male staff, may survive under female leadership, is for them to renounce their 'manliness'. But before this, Saves talks of how the headquarters/factory must have had "a slaughterhouse on the ground floor of the factory — at least it smelt like it"[55]. Seemingly this combination between the slaughterhouse smell and the reception of perfumes and white flowers develops an atmosphere quite similar to a funeral home, perhaps the funeral home of male photographers.

The way that Saves words his account of Marimekko is almost like he is revealing a movie based on male nightmare fantasies, whereby all the ideals held by men of the meek female virgins are coming back to haunt him. The scenario of the "virginal premises" containing a "long white table", of judgement, and the feminine young men "in their pretty marimekko shirts", obedient and polite, creates a sense in the reader that Saves is the only man present who has not been lobotomised in the 'Marimekko spirit'. Saves even refers to the way the men were addressed collectively, as if recalling a scene from *Doctor Who* or one of the *Simpson's Halloween Specials*, where the group (of men) are depersonalised and neutralised, like zombie-like creatures seen in horror and science fiction movies. Or possibly similar to the way Saves himself refers to "the girls at Marimekko" who were responsible for imposing and lifting bans on his photographic work, when illogically ceasing connection with Saves, as if it were "severed by a knife" (65). Saves descriptions suddenly turn positive when he begins to recall the ultimate assistant to his Marimekko career, Liisa Sohlberg. Saves describes Sohlberg's talent as a "mannequin" (67), which to many English speakers would mean a lifeless shop display dummy. He also adds credit to her skills as a model through

[55] Nikula (2003) highlights in fact that the factory on Vanha Talvitie was located near the premises of the city's abattoir (126). While I focus my interpretation on a death-like and supernatural morbidity incurred when women begin to run corporations, other readings may focus on Saves' connotative reference to female genitalia ("virginal white") and the meat-like smell of a collective menstrual cycle. This again highlights male discomfort for a female corporate collective.

describing her as a "choreographer", not needing to be directed, "it was enough to press the button at the right moment" (67).

One last example of this segment is a citation taken from designer Pekka Talvensaari (1986) who states:

> "My collection for men is, in some respects, a comment on what Marimekko could have done years ago. Existing technology also takes it in the direction of "marimekkoism". But my next clothes are going to have a bolder emphasis, and it seems that the ideal of simplicity in our design will, at least at the beginning, be pushed aside. Marimekko's originality lies in its printed patterns, but this is no go for menswear in the world today. This is a women's house…" (86)

Here Talvensaari openly describes how Marimekko is stuck in a rut of adhering to familiar technologies, those to do with the basic textile printing processes (mentioned earlier in Talvensaari's text), and not venturing beyond the borders of Marimekko's established image – or "marimekkoism" as he terms it. Talvensaari forthrightly mentions that his collection "for men" is something that "Marimekko could have done years ago". In other words, the issue that seems to be at hand here is that due to the emphasis on the female market, possibly through the concentration of female decision makers, the market of men's fashion was under capitalised. The commentary does not stop with this, for with his associations of "existing technology" and the statement that this "is a women's house", I feel that Talvensaari is placing the contribution of women's industry outside the paradigm of technological development and innovation. It is as if printed patterns are as far as Marimekko can go originality-wise, without the expertise of his masculine viewpoint. Also in the concluding remark "this is no go for menswear in the world today", Talvensaari firmly cements the invalidity of the 1986 and prior version of Marimekko's global presence. But then Talvensaari seems to locate Marimekko back towards the domestic spaces in his resignation that it is a women's "house".

3.3.2 Armi Ratia's Vision

Saarikoski (1986) appears to be the most prominent and outspoken writer in terms of locating the history and operations of Marimekko within the discourse of gender. Though she seems to hesitate in articulating occurrences as the result of female marginalisation, what is felt within her article of "The Vision", focused towards Armi Ratia's corporate plans and design image, was that if Armi Ratia had have been a man,

her corporate visions would not have been so heavily opposed. In fact, Saarikoski represents another perspective to the same narrative Donner (1986) describes in his article, regarding the saving of Marimekko as the result of his 'fraternity's' strategic thinking and the measures suggested by the team of Swedish consultants. Saarikoski's version is as follows:

> "Realization of the overall vision came to grief through the "shack thinking" of Swedish consultants. The vision was fragmented into product codes whose number was limited by red pencil. Material reality was narrowed down to fabrics and clothes." (44)

Within this citation Saarikoski illustrates the process of assessment and rationalisation as the result of employing the Swedish consultants. Saarikoski adopts the same term "shack thinking" as Viljo Ratia (1986, 28) had used to describe Armi Ratia's entrepreneurial flair, in labelling factory seconds as "first class" products. Instead of using this in a positive industrial light as Viljo Ratia had, Saarikoski has used it to describe ruthless economic rationalism — two quite different concepts. Saarikoski talks of the same impersonalisation of the company that Donner (1986, 17) describes in relation to the broadening of ownership in the 1970s, and mass-dismissals (1968-71) as the fragmentation "into product codes whose number was limited by red pencil". Also, the product rationalisation discussed by Donner in terms of discarding less profitable productlines (in other words streaming lining production towards textiles and clothing), is worded by Saarikoski as the "material reality" which was "narrowed down to fabrics and clothes".

Saarikoski (1986, 43-44) takes on a more critical, yet corporate-oriented focus than Donner's association with the mythical or ancient folklore. Saarikoski also focuses on constructing an innovative and forward thinking image of Armi Ratia and Marimekko. Saarikoski credits Armi Ratia as possessing "the vision", a forecast style of insight, which was expressed in Armi Ratia's interactions with artists and architects. This "vision" was characterised by Saarikoski as a "new direction, perhaps even a new era". In other words, Armi Ratia is attributed as an innovative thinker, ahead of her time (43). Saarikoski described the Mari Village as the outlet in which Armi Ratia's "vision" could become concrete reality — i.e. the industrial residential village, where not only the concentration of employees and production would be practical and accessible, but

the daily consumables would also be produced by the Marimekko factory[56]. Almost romantically Saarikoski illustrates:

> "Space began to assume material forms; a revolutionary small house, Marimekko sauna, furniture, toys, jewellery, shoes, boxes, glasses, plates, memo pads, sunglasses. All this in one phrase: "Marimekko is a way of life." (43).

Shining the light on Armi Ratia, as if all of her plans were being put into action, Saarikoski's description may be likened to any narrative attached to a revolutionary male figure. Aside from the fact that the narrative of high technology and heavy industrial machinery is missing from Saarikoski's inventory of Marimekko actualities, Saarikoski talked of how Armi Ratia's "outlook and fearlessness had an unseen power behind them, illusive yet real" (43). This may just as easily be a memorandum of the founder of Nokia telecommunications or NASA. Saarikoski uses the word "power" not in the metaphysical sense, but in the dynamically industrial sense. Yet, she also goes on to define why the "vision" was interrupted through her statement that it "was now time to define what it was to be a woman" referring to women as both practical and useful in regards to shaping everyday life. These descriptions can be seen as the extreme irrational depiction Donner offers in regards to the paranoid and defensive figure of Armi Ratia.

Particular attention should be paid towards the construction of the 'monument Finnish woman' in Saarikoski's article (Koivunen, 2003). She has described Armi Ratia as "direct and sincere, and yet still a woman, a mother, a human being with a sense of humour and genuine reactions" (1986, 44). These characteristics given to Armi Ratia seem quite close to those used through national discourses of representational constructions of Finnish women. In the 1930s Elsa Heporauta, the first president of the Kalevala Women's Association, gave instructions for the literal construction of the monument (sculpture) of the *Kalevala* character Louhi (Koivunen, 2003, 148). In Heporauta's view, the monument of Louhi, who was to represent a powerful Finnish woman, was to represent "an exemplary combination of motherhood, housewifery, leadership, and creativity" (Vakimo cited in Koivunen, 2003, 148). In this respect, Hella

[56] This would have not been such a radical concept, even in the 1960s and 70s, as Bourdieu (1993), Adorno & Horkheimer (1944), and Crouch (1999) describe, the 'modern' city housing developments are based around the principle of ensuring there is an abundance of workers living conveniently near industrial plants, and that these workers are also the consumers.

Wuolijoki's 1947 description of *Niskavuori's* Loviisa, is also cited by Koivunen (2003) where Loviisa is referred to many "interesting, educated, and dignified elderly women" who possessed "wisdom and dignity" and also "heartiness" (150). Thus, the ideals of Louhi (after 1920s), the character who fought Väinömöinen in *Kalevala*, Loviisa who was the matron of the Niskavuori estate (1940s) and Armi Ratia the owner-leader of Marimekko (1960s and 70s) were that they were combinations of the "warmth and persistence of the Finnish woman, settling for one's fate achieved through a struggle" (*Kinolehti* cited Koivunen, 2003, 144).

3.4 Charting a nation through the texts of Marimekko — Marimekko as *Finnish* design

> "The roots of Marimekko lie deep in Finland – it is Finnish as rye bread and the sauna. The innermost essence of the company and its history are, however, characterised by contrast: Finnish – international, traditional – modern, design – fashion."
>
> (Varma Annual Report, 2003)

This quote exists almost exactly word for word in Aav (2003). Instead of the second sentence articulated by Varma, Aav goes on to state: "…like it or not. But Marimekko's importance has not always been undisputed" (20). The associations and interconnections frequently made by authors regarding Marimekko's relationship with the Finnish nation, indicate the dependence Marimekko has on identifying itself as a Finnish company. To reiterate, Ainamo (2003, 191) described Marimekko's status as a "national institution" in terms of corporate protection. Thus, independent of the company's financial performance, it may never entirely disappear due to its symbolic value on the Finnish market. The reason for this status is claimed to be due to Armi Ratia's diplomatic behaviour through maintaining acquaintances with key political and cultural figures, and also hosting them in types of corporate theme celebrations. At these celebrations, which took part at the Marimekko 'embassy', Bökars, Marimekko design was implicated into every facet of the activities (Ainamo, 2003, 187; Aav, 2003, 38; Ratia, 1986, 24). Thanks to this careful and thorough networking in addition to these elaborate Marimekko 'design' public relations events, Marimekko design has been immortalised, if not in a specific material form, then through national rhetoric.

This concept of design is the key to understanding the significance of Marimekko's international image. As stated above, the world of design has been considered a male domain, a field of creativity and paving Finland's way into the Western economy (Svinhufvud, 1998, 201). Design was, and arguably, still is, the face of Finland, generating an international profile in the form of Nokia, KONE and Marimekko. Textiles, originating from the field of handicraft, and most notably being associated with female producers, took on a less significant and impersonalised meaning on international markets. Pre-engraved printing plates and roller-printed fabrics were sold in bulk for re-sell and used during the 1930s (Aav, 2003, 33; Jackson, 2003, 49). It can be said that possibly the two dimensional nature of textile prints were not seen as true design challenges. That was until Armi Ratia brought Marimekko to the fore with the idea of a total Marimekko home and living, and suddenly prints needed to be confronted, rather than just used. What is special in this circumstance is the repetition through media, Marimekko texts and other Finnish design publications, of Marimekko as a *design* corporation, and not just a textile design corporation, but a '*Finnish* textile design corporation'. This has placed the privately owned female-led textiles company in line with national heroes of Finnish design.

To first understand the nature of Finnish national design, one must begin by acknowledging that the construction of the Finnish nation is based on cultural images depicting opposites[57]. Practitioners associated with the Finnish modernist design movement, particularly architects are known for their dependence on juxtapositions. Alvar Aalto, Aarno Ruusuvuori and Viljo Revell to name a few, have constantly relied on the combination of urban and rural, man-made and natural, public versus private, national versus international, and traditional versus innovation. Finnish cultural bodies such as the online tourist and international industry websites of Finnfacts, Virtual Finland and e-Finland and the international cultural embassy-like chain of Finnish Institutes[58] essentialise Finnish culture through emphasising its connections to extremes found in objects and companies such as ryebread and Nokia[59]. It is important to note that

[57] These are opposites maintained through persistent fascination with and essentialism of agrarian culture from the perspective of urban dwellers – a sense of foundational *tourism* - (Koivunen, 2003, 112) and processes of modernisation against the background of agrarian romanticism (Koivunen, 2003, 55).

[58] The Finnish Institute is an organisation that focuses on promoting Finnish cultural products such as art, theatre and music abroad. Offices are located around the world in locations such as New York, Copenhagen and Tokyo.

[59] Several tourist books typify the Finnish culture in relation to Sibelius, Sauna and Sisu, always mentioning Nokia within the opening pages.

the online bodies are directly focused towards promoting Finnish nation as technologically advanced, and that the economy as thriving. In my opinion through drawing on so-called traditions such as sauna and ryebread, in conjunction with promotion of the technological industrial sector, these organisations are attempting to pin the Western ideals of industriousness and innovation to the founding principles of 'Finnish culture'. Each of these opposites has been monumentalised as a complimentary combination, inter-dependent on one to the other. Just like this, one may witness the texts of Marimekko following suit:

> "Marimekko has always been rich in contrasts. For more than 50 years it has managed to balance modern and traditional, Finnish and international, design and fashion."
>
> (Varma Annual Report, 2003, 17)

It may be seen that every nation wants to be seen as competitive in the age of information technology. When arriving at national information websites such as Virtual Finland, there are key indicators which want to tie the nation to both that which is modern and traditional. To be modern is a sign of being civilised[60], as a developing Western country Finland has striven for the title since before Independence (Hawkins, 1998, 236). Yet, the construct of tradition, particularly in Finland's case where the national mythological epic *The Kalevala* was not compiled and indeed 'written' until 1835, as Koivunen (2003, 147-150) highlights, serves to monumentalise specific figures, objects and scenes, as intrinsic historical elements and *typical* cultural features. Notions of tradition and historicity are strong no matter what context, but within Finland's freshly independent national context, the desire for things which are 'authentically Finnish' may be said to be even stronger. Therefore, the above description may be said to represent the rhetoric of all corporations wishing to identify themselves in and as a part of the national framework, not just Marimekko.

However, Marimekko went one step further with its implication into the stream of characteristic Finnish opposites. This step is offered in the writings about the

[60] David Macey (2000) tells of how "civil society" was explained by theorists such as Hobbes (1651) and Rousseau (1762) as being the equivalent to a European political state. Macey states how later authors such as Hegel (1821) equal civil society to "market society", Hegel's model was criticised by Marx (1843) who highlights how reference to "civil society" has been absorbed by the "rational state". In this text I equate the profile of a rational state (the modern Finnish state) to its international recognition as "civilised", however in this text I do not elaborate on the problematics implicated by such notions.

photography of Marimekko promotional campaigns. Suhonen's (1986, 57) observations of Marimekko photography, where he describes the establishment of its position in Finnish national discourses, is very much like Koivunen's (2003, 94-95) discussion regarding the role of Finnish film in the 1950s. Suhonen emphasises Marimekko photography as the forerunner in Finnish design photography and display, and how Marimekko's photography is "typified by its nature settings" (57). These nature settings, even above the use of urban scenery were utilised sometimes humorously and absurdly. Therefore, in addition to trying to fix the Marimekko image in the various narratives of Finnish culture, referring to its belonging alongside and in Finnish urbanisation and nature, Suhonen accentuates a conscious irony, in the sometimes superficial usage of such imagery.

Aav, Härkäpää and Viljanen (2003, 197) add to Suhonen's (1986) small text by articulating that right from the early stages in 1951, Marimekko has always paid particular attention to the way in which it is framed, not only in Finnish social discourses, but in photography. Aav et al. seem to elaborate that the study of Marimekko's photographic archives might also reveal concepts of "homeyness", lifestyle and significant examples of "artistic vision" from one period to the next. They also insinuate that it was the designers themselves who chose the settings for their garments (i.e. Annika Rimala choosing modern backdrops, while Liisa Suvanto preferred the Finnish landscape). This would explain Saves' (1986, 68-69) apparently harmonic tone when exclaiming that on the photo shoots, which were generally outside, there was nobody except him, the "mannequins" and the garments.

In regards to the nation's reception of the company, curiously, the 2003 Varma Annual Report article articulated that Marimekko's modernist idealised products had been "shunned" by many Finns, particularly in the early days. This suggests that the author is attempting to establish a parallel between Marimekko's narrative and Varma's (as the largest Finnish private employee pension fund). Possibly Varma, through serving the employees of the private sector — an area somewhat at odds with the strong Finnish socialist welfare mentality — was emphasising a comradeship, or support for this so-called traditional Finnish privately owned company (Aav, 2003, 36), in order to validate its own national significance. At any rate, the article goes on to mention Kirsti Paakkanen's rescue of a "loss-making company" and then quotes Kirsti Paakkanen as saying "The love of Finns for Marimekko always places a great responsibility on us". Thus, the dislike for the company's products is replaced by the "love" of the company

amongst the nation's people. Interestingly, almost forty years earlier the *Karjala* (Karelia) newspaper (January 6th, 1964) stated that the "attitude" towards "Marimekko clothes is seldom indifferent they are either liked or loathed" (Varma, 21). The quote even goes as far as to state that people had actually phoned Marimekko stores to complain that the hats were ruining the look of the streets (Aav, 2003, 20). This demonstrates strong feelings evoked by identification with or against the Marimekko 'code' during the 1960s. It might also indicate that between the 1960s and the 2000s the company has penetrated into the realm of cultural and social consciousness, moving away from a simple entity of respective commercial taste, to be liked or disliked, to being an entity engrained in the 'spirit' of members of a cultural community.

Anttikoski (2003) describes the process of how Marimekko entered the world of Finnish design discourse. Anttikoski highlights the attitudes of separation between design (industrial design) and what were perceived as the handicrafts/textiles industry. Anttikoski documents a sense of surprise through media representations in terms of acknowledging the products of Marimekko (clothes and textiles) as design items. The following quotes articulates:

> "Marimekko's fashion show in the spring of 1956 established Nurmesniemi's reputation as a fashion designer in Finland. A newspaper declared that her clothes were "in the same class as design," referring to industrial design objects." (91)

Further emphasis on the importance of Marimekko contribution as a design body was embedded through its intellectualisation, not only based on its consumption by intellectual and cultural practitioners — Eugenia Sheppard's dubbing of Marimekko as the "uniform for intellectuals" in the *New York Tribune* (November 13th, 1963; cited in Anttikoski, 2003, 99; Tarschys & Hedqvist, 2003, 162; Ainamo, 138) — but also as embodying academic and stylistic philosophies such as the below quote articulates:

> "[Annika] Rimala began the debate on fashion versus function, or ergonomic design in clothing, which intensified at the end of the decade". (97)

Further, Tarschys and Hedqvist (2003) accentuate the reception of Marimekko as a producer of art, through citing Eugenia Sheppard as stating that the "hand-screened prints aren't just prints. According to Ratia, they have the value of thinking. Some are like paintings, other are graphic art" (162-163). Sheppard then goes on to describe how

"Marimekko is design" (163). This title and philosophical outcome, not only cementing Marimekko within the league of Finnish design, but inside the circles of academia, in addition to its role as national symbol, can be seen as a strategic move by Armi Ratia to cover all bases. As Anttikoski (2003, 99) expresses, the decision to choose college students in the US promotions as models, was no mere accident. Neither was the promotion of Vuokko Nurmesniemi's 1950s *Jokapoika* shirt, during the student riots of the 1960s. Through being embedded as "the uniform of the intelligentsia", *Jokapoika* shirts were worn in Helsinki when students were sympathising with student riots taking place in other parts of Europe (Anttikoski, 2003, 99). This in addition to the then fashion of denim jeans, also led to the design of the *Tasaraita* shirt, which could be worn with jeans, as Anttikoski quotes: "You should design something that would sell in thousands," Armi Ratia exclaimed to Annika Rimala when she read the news about the riots (99). With this I see the irony of Marimekko's partnership with academia, as well as its allegiance with the tales of Finnish culture, for in order to appeal to the masses — masses including the students as well as the Finnish public — Marimekko needed to produce garments as "neutral", or "universal" as possible.

In fact, it was this refusal to adhere to the mass-produced look consumed by the Finnish public and academics, that is said to have contributed to the less popular reception of Liisa Suvanto's wool garments in the 1960s (Anttikoski, 2003, 102). Ironically, despite the rhetoric on Marimekko's contributions to the design field, and the importance that this placement had within Finnish national discourse, Suvanto's designs were expressed as being "more concerned with design than fashion" (Anttikoski, 2003, 102). This serves to gauge that in especially media texts, the arrangement and choice of the words plays a greater role than the products themselves. This indicates that if a product does not fit the mould of the international commercial market, it is neither considered "Finnish" or "fashionable". The very innovative ethos that Marimekko promotions are famous for is contradicted. Thus, the persistence of repetition and sameness in both designs and promotions led to greater profits.

Anttikoski (2003) remarks that Kirsti Paakkanen "chose to respect the legacy of Armi Ratia by continuing to search for a balance between tradition and innovation" (110). It may be said that innovation comes in the form of effective marketing and constant repetition, constructing a notion of tradition. The associations of the Marimekko Corporation with Finnish culture, and the notion of Finnish design in itself, runs closely to Koivunen's (2003, 67-70) observations of the framework which depicted

the *Niskavuori* films as Finnish national epics. Concentration towards the Finnish natural landscape in conjunction with contrasting depictions of Finnish lifestyle, and most importantly, the 'monument-Finnish woman', runs parallel to that which is observed in Marimekko texts and photography. Kirsti Paakkanen states: "Marimekko is a design house and the whole organization is in the service of design. Each product, utility item though it may be, must have a redeemable design value" (cited in Anttikoski, 2003, 110). Or, in other words that which is categorised as design and most particularly *Finnish* design must have a redeemable monetary value.

4. *Reading Marimekko advertisements*

— Depictions and placement of the female consumer

Leading on from the previous chapters which dealt with the way Marimekko and its corporate female figure-heads are perceived in anthology and press writings, this chapter focuses on gauging the way the promotional material of Marimekko depicts the role and societal placement of its female consumers. I have selected several examples of Marimekko catalogues to focus on due to their expression of themes such as 'the career woman', 'woman and architecture' (in other words 'culture'), and 'woman and nature'. These themes happen to correspond with observations and cases Koivunen (2003) has provided regarding the roles and *nature* of the 'Finnish woman'. Sample catalogues under specific examination are *The Traveler* and *Playtime* (1977) and selected fashion collection catalogues from 1998 to 2007. This chapter is dedicated towards analysing the ways that female models are framed, posed and placed in relation to their surroundings.

Reasoning behind the selected topics is two-fold. On the one hand, as described above, the themes are designed to correspond with traits expressed in national socio-political rhetoric describing 'Finnish women'. On the other hand the themes are also designed to illustrate the complexity in Marimekko's approach to advertising and image building. Juhani Pallasmaa described this complexity as a multiplicity of opposites[61], whereby urban (architecture) is complimented by country, and traditions (the folklore fable *Kalevala*) are contrasted to progress. Furthermore, the last topic regarding 'National Marimekko' is an observation of Marimekko's strategies to maintain its local/national identity while crossing international borders. In this last section Marimekko's reference to Finland is measured through the advertising materials' inclusions of recognisable national symbology such as well-known monuments and reference to rural lifestyle.

Notions of articulation discussed by Hall (1986) and Grossberg (1992) are used in this analysis. Whereby, visual symbology in photographs (i.e. national landmarks, objects, people) has been questioned in terms of its relationship to text, the actions of

[61] "Traditionalism – innovation; proximity to nature – urbanism; unique art – mass production; artistic – functional; everyday – festive; organic – geometric; rational – romantic; homeyness – exoticism, strangeness; ergonomics – pure form; asceticism – richness of form; Finnishness – internationalism" (Aav, 2004, 22).

models and context. Corresponding with the traditional nature of the word 'articulation' (Slack, 1996, 115), the catalogues themselves are seen as an extension of meaning. In other words, the catalogues are not just a demonstration and promotion of clothing items and products, but they are a development of image through linking Marimekko to the greater societal context. Marimekko's enthusiasm for keeping with the "spirit of the day" via appealing to and adjusting to the changes in Finnish and international trends, may serve as a tool when observing the company's promotional material. In this sense, the way that the women are placed and posed in the material, can indicate the relationship between women and national, social or economic discourse in any of the periods following World War Two.

4.1 Female as active professional versus professional look-alike

> **TRAVELER:** The professional. The competent. The equal. In the world. In her home. She knows her needs. Also on a trip. How to travel easy. With the essentials. Marking every individual piece work her way. In the airplane. On the office hours. By the pool. For a dinner. To be herself.
>
> (*Traveller*, Marimekko Catalogue, 1977)

A key theme of Marimekko promotional rhetoric, particularly in text and interviews with Armi Ratia, was the idea of the Marimekko woman as an independent thinking professional (Ainamo, 1996, 164). This notion of the autonomous working woman is demonstrated throughout Finnish cultural production, particularly during the 1900s when women across Finland needed to work to compensate for the labour power lost during times of war (Koivunen, 2003, 146). While women's acceptance and ability to work outside the home has been one of the key objectives for feminist debate since the 1800s, and particularly during the 1960s and 70s (the "Second Wave Feminism"[62]) in most Western societies, in the Finland of the 1950s, women already had a comparatively long history of working in industry (Kjelstad, 2001, 73). Therefore, instead of a struggle to allow women into the workforce, Finland saw a struggle for equal divisions of domestic responsibilities and state-supported childcare (Saarenmaa, 2005, n.p.). As seen in descriptions of the Mari Girl, Marimekko and Armi Ratia did not completely separate the ideal Marimekko women of the 1960s from the family and

[62] For more information about the women's labour movement during Second Wave Feminism in the Nordic countries please refer to Skrede & Tornes (1983) *Studier i kvinners livsløp*, Oslo: Universitets forlaget.

domestic duties, rather she was both a mother and career person, only the man of the family is not discussed.

The point of this section is to observe how professional Finnish women are represented in Marimekko promotional material. The elements which were considered during the analysis were regarding how women are portrayed in relation to their context — i.e. what are the photographic settings, and how do the models engage with them? What actions are the models portraying? How does the text, if any, relate to the images? The objective is to investigate the way that the Marimekko Corporation constructs an image of their gendered consumers. It is also to hypothesise how this commercialised image of the Mari Girl, or Marimekko consumer, expresses attitudes of women's contributions to the wider labour market. Due to the contrasting nature of the company through its nationalised persona which operates on an international level, it is difficult to specify whether notions of women expressed in Marimekko's promotions are strictly Finnish, or whether they attempt to capture elements of a more generic form of female professional within the global economy. Either way this would impact the portrayal of women in setting and action, and may explain the variations in the models' activities. These matters should be kept in mind.

This section, "Female as active professional versus professional look-alike", starts by looking at two specific catalogues from 1977, *The Traveler* and *Playtime*. This was a time when the first wave of the "New Marimekko" (after major restructuring) was in full-swing. The reason for choosing these were that they demonstrated an active narrative and inter-relationship between the women depicted, their involvement in work, leisure time, and their connection to the Marimekko Corporation as a whole (as shown in the credits on the back cover). They are designed in black and white format and the images are arranged in rectangular grids. The main 'narrative' (scenarios featuring the advertised outfits) of the catalogues appears in smaller, multiple scenes across double pages [fig. 5 i. & ii.]. At the same time a double page at the beginning of each catalogue is designated to one image typifying the activities specified for the clothing — i.e. *The Traveler* features a woman doing paper work in the back of a small aircraft, while *Playtime* features a woman on a bike holding onto her hat.

Fig. 5 i. *The Traveler* (1977)

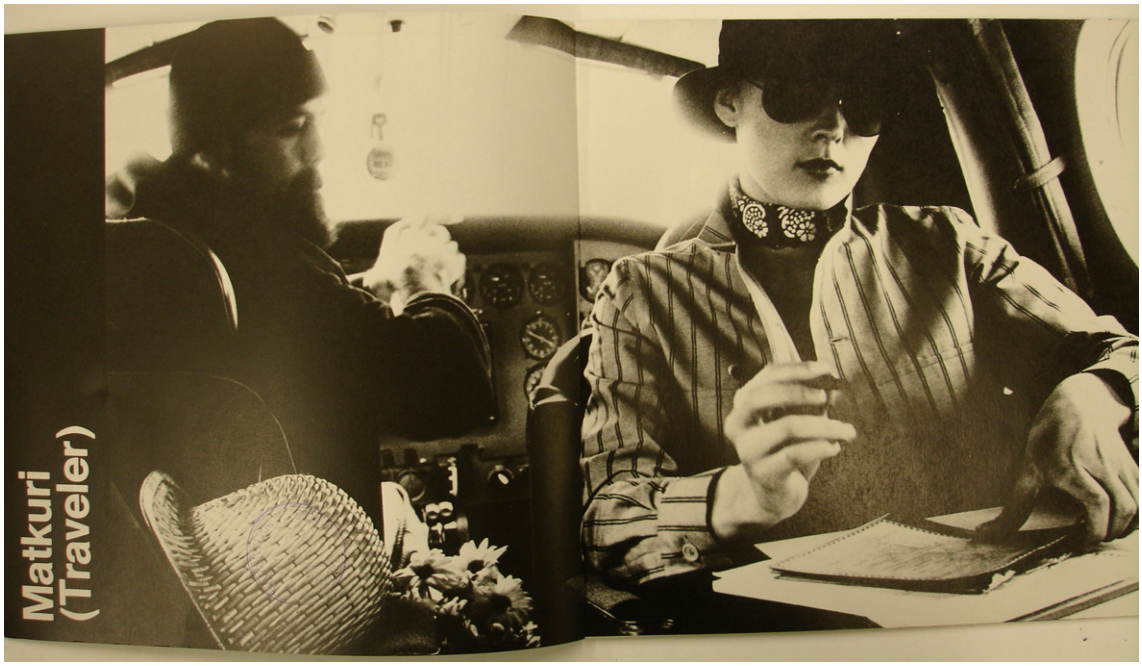

Fig. 5 ii. *The Traveler* (1977)

The text that opens this section of the thesis, *The Traveler*, is featured at the back of the catalogue, located above a grid of photographs featuring the Marimekko staff who had contributed to the catalogue. In certain framings of Marimekko advertising the notion of a traveller may indicate someone who travels for leisure. But in this 1977 case The Traveler is portrayed as a competent professional, who is equal in all areas of society, in the workplace and in the home. The 1970s version the female Marimekko consumer is aware of what she needs, not only in domestic spaces but in the professional domain of travel. After office hours she knows how to recreationally be glamorous "by the pool" or when she is out "for a dinner", all the time maintaining her professional identity. Images of Finnish women who share equal responsibility for earning a living (Booth, 2005, n.p.; Kjelstad, 2001, 85-89) are extended and glorified to present, possibly not working mothers, but free and autonomous high flying executives[63] — with the likelihood of resembling a lifestyle similar to Armi Ratia's. The phrase "the equal" in "her home" suggests that if children are involved they are either taken care of by their father, or by a nanny (as in Armi Ratia's case; Ratia, 2002, 12)[64].

In the construction of The Traveler, or at least, the 'Travelling Professional', notions of the Finnish business woman, are extended to an international Finnish business woman. The locally specific model of Finnish female professionals crosses national borders with their productivity. It is from this point onward, that the reader, who is confronted by the Nordic characteristics of the tall, white, blond-haired woman, and the bilingual (Finnish and English) names of the outfits, comes to understand that the Mari Girl is a representation of a globally disseminating image of the Finnish female figure[65]. This is where I draw once again on Lindberg (2006) in her study of IKEA. Whereby, Lindberg observed that IKEA can be seen to distribute Swedish social and political values, on the global corporate platform. Marimekko's promotion of the equal, independent Mari Girl and the seeming 'unisex' nature of Marimekko's design approach draws more on the symbolic presence of 'Finnishness' outside Finland, than on a globalised notion of equality.

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[63] This 1970s version of the Marimekko consumer refers more to Helen Gurley Brown's 'Single Girl' (Radner, 1999) than to the original notions of the Mari Girl whose vital feature was that of being everything in the domestic and professional spaces.

[64] This interpretation draws upon notions of the Nordic "gender reconstruction" approach to equality policies (Kjelstad, 2001).

[65] This relates to Saarenmaa's (2005) discussions of international Finnish mannequins/models that were received by those abroad as the ideal of 'Scandinavian' beauty. Linking her blond hair and blue eyes, combined with professional independence to Western movements of feminism.

Crucial characteristics in both these catalogues are the actions of the models. The female models are utilising the outfits through performing actions which reinforce the roles they have been designated. For instance, in *The Traveler* several images depict the blond[66] model reading and adjusting her glasses. In one image she seems to be checking a map, while in another image she is observing something unseen to the reader. The Traveler checks schedules and moves towards the camera as if to delegate responsibilities to employees holding the photographer's position. On the large double page spread The Traveler is working in the back of a small plane. On another double page spread, this time featuring a grid of smaller images, the pilot has changed positions and is sitting in the back peering out the window as The Traveler is now in pilot's seat. This presents an image of a woman in such control that no position exists without her occupying it. The on-location images are so heavily detailed that the following images featuring The Traveler without a background, seem not to render her placeless. Her purpose and her position has been so well defined that both the reader, and The Traveler know where she is and what she is doing even in the midst of no specific location.

In *Playtime* the Mari Girls (the models) are still professionals, they have the initiative and energy to seek activities to occupy their leisure time [fig. 6]. Many of the outfits such as a dress called *Vantti*[67] (The Shroud), featuring the model wearing reading glasses and a sunvisor, are presented in a way that could be used on a regular work day. In other words, as well as seeking active fun, such as the model wearing a shorts jumpsuit titled *Ruusi* (The Sailor), most of the outfits and the way in which they are presented may double as work clothes, maintaining a productive image of the way in which the female Marimekko consumers should be living their lives. In these 1970s versions of the professional woman, the models and photographic composition of the promotional material activates the women as 'doers' and 'go-getters'. The image of the woman portrayed is of one who contributes to society, not only as a cog in the wheel, but as a thinker. She is not so much the object of the camera's gaze, but she objectifies that which lies behind the camera[68].

Neither the clothes, nor the models are anonymous, but both are characterised by

[66] In this catalogue there is a blond and a brunette.
[67] The Finnish word 'vantti' translates directly to a mast supporting cable (Wikipedia, 2006). In English the same image is titled 'The Shroud' also the English word for ropes that support the masts of a ship, but also has the double meaning of being something (fabric) that covers or obscures (Askoxford.com, 2007).
[68] As seen in the implied interactions with someone behind the camera in addition to the model's gaze towards the camera with her not so subtle binoculars.

Fig. 6 *Playtime* (1977)

the labels of the outfits. 'Name-calling' establishes a place for the Mari Girl (or *Traveler*) within the structure of language (in this case Finnish and English). Even the ages of the models within these brochures are varied. These named figures represent women seemingly from their twenties to forties. In other words, she is a woman at the age when she can realistically have everything — corporate leadership, growing semi-dependent children etc. Wiikeri (1986) reiterates the mould of the Marimekko woman, only this time nearly ten years after *The Traveler* and *Playtime* publications. Wiikeri offers a description of the "Marimekko woman" in past tense, whereby she *was* "a career woman, normally with a degree and a profession that involved travelling extensively" (34), who through reading widely *was* "committed" to keeping updated. Perhaps, through positioning the professional construction of the female consumer in the past, Wiikeri was merely referring to the advertising of the previous decade. Or maybe, Wiikeri was in fact indicating that the heavily involved professional image of the Marimekko woman consumer was a thing of the past.

The latter observation, relating to the change in perception of notions of the Marimekko woman can be witnessed in the varied representations delivered by promotional campaigns particularly from the 1990s onwards. In fact, in contrast to the above discussion on contextualisation of The Traveler in her developed sense of place and multi-tasking, the later versions of publicity material, mostly from the 2000s, present a weaker sense of context and purpose. The models either have no background setting, or are not engaged with this setting. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that the models are active workers/professionals, for example they are not holding pens, planners or paper, and quite often they appear in an outdoor setting, to be merely captured in the moment of existing. Gradually the busy workaholic has been turned into a corporate clothes hanger, without place or purpose[69]. It has been said by authors such as Sarje (1986, 56) that the Mari Girl (and Karelian flavour) died with Armi Ratia in 1979. With no role model to aspire to during the 1980s, there is no wonder that her outgoing character dissolved.

From what I have observed, recently the Mari Girl has been re-introduced in the text relating to *Samu-Jussi Koski's Collection* Spring/Summer catalogue 2007. Further, this re-awakening of 1960s and 70s themes is not concentrated on the term 'Mari Girl' alone. The *Ritva Falla Collection* Spring/Summer catalogues 2007 features the themes

[69] Examples of this are demonstrated clearly within the Ritva Falla Collection catalogue (Autumn/Winter, 2000-2001).

of *The Traveler* and *Playtime* in display of the collections. I maintain that difference between the 1977 and the 2007 versions persist through the actions of the models and their positioning solely in a studio. The 2007 versions are deactivated and dislocated from any clear sense of context or purpose. Further, when looking closely at the original *Traveler* and *Playtime* [figures 5i and 6] in comparison to the 'traveller' of the *Ritva Falla Collection* [figure 7] and the "Mari Girl" of the *Samu-Jussi Koski Collection* [figure 8] one will notice a striking difference in features which defines the model's ability to fulfil the active role of the original Mari Girl — the shoes. *The Traveler* and *Playtime* Mari Girls in 1977 wore flat soled, or reasonably flat soled, practical looking shoes which would allow them to move quickly and stand for long periods of time. They could wear their outfits and shoes all-day, to work and to play. Whereas, some of the shoes presented in the 2007 catalogues demonstrate that the "Mari Girl" is unable to stand, let alone run.

Considering the reintroduction of another strong female persona in the role of corporate head, speculation arises by the still apparent passive roles Marimekko models adopt in recent catalogues. Rather than a master of all that she wears, and all that she does, the most recent versions of the Marimekko consumer can be read as clothes consuming ornaments, with the economic means to purchase quality designer clothes but not the occupation to support the budget. To refer to Marimekko's slogan of "keeping with the spirit of the day", the move from active professional to in-active professional (yet active consumer) suggests the current representative climate, or expectations of women in Western post-industrialist societies. In this day and age, women members of an average[70] income family in both Finland and internationally are encouraged, if not required to work. However, what is presented before us, is not necessarily a woman from an 'average' background of an 'average' income. In fact, with her ability to pick and choose in which city to flaunt her Marimekko garments, she may be seen as one who derives from the affluent few. This interpretation of the 'new' Marimekko woman coincides with Nalbone's (2004, n.p.) list of Marimekko consuming

[70] In using the term 'average', I mean not necessarily a "middle-income" bracket family, but the income bracket of a larger percentile of any given population at a time. 'Average' is an entirely loose and generalising term and in particular 'average' income varies drastically from one Western context to the next. Yet my usage of "average income family" refers mostly to the idea of the proletarian, or 'worker' population described by Adorno and Horkheimer (1944).

Fig. 7. *Ritva Falla Collection* (Spring/Summer 2007)

Figure 8. *Samu-Jussi Koski Collection* (Spring/Summer 2007)

profiles such as Sarah Jessica Parker and Chelsea Clinton[71]. In which case, it would not be necessary for the Marimekko woman to actually work per se. Depiction of the current Marimekko professional, with her seemingly disengaged approach to industry may indicate an atmosphere felt both within Marimekko advertising and in commercial culture in general. It is as if the advertising material has taken on an attitude of 'the era after feminism'. Or that being a productive, society shaping woman is out of fashion.

Ironically, the compositional choices between 2004-7 most notably correspond with the words of Ehrnrooth (1998) who states:

> "If all that was left of my culture was this assemblage of objects, detached from their context, how would it read? At their best, these objects neutralize the semiotic ambivalence between emptiness and density and are transformed back into nature; this can be equally devoid or full of meaning" (17)

Ehrnrooth was writing about a different subject (Finnish Design objects) in the context of the book *Finnish Modern Design* (Aav. et al., 1998). However, this statement resonates with the way that the models of Marimekko advertising have seemingly become disengaged from the world around them. There seems no need to ensure that work follows the new Marimekko consumer wherever she goes, in her briefcase or shoulder bag, and in her hands. Apparently it is enough to take business trips to Paris, to walk in amongst the architecture looking beautiful, or to stroll and be served upon in the heat of Cairo[72] (*Ritva Falla Collection*, Spring-Summer 2000) [fig. 9]. Further, the professional who is in no particular place (*Jaana Parkkila Collection*, Spring-Summer 2000) looks down as she walks, in some images she looks towards the camera in a timid kind of curiosity, and in her evening dress she stands like a balancing trophy. Significantly, returning back to Ehrnrooth's (1998) quote, the women depicted in Marimekko's most recent (late 1990s onwards) advertisements, seem neutralised. These women, whose senses of meaning and purpose have been stripped away through the disappearance of their own actions, and disengagement with their surroundings, no longer can be recognised as strong, independent Mari Girls of all shapes and sizes. She seems merely to represent another beautiful, well-dressed woman wearing expensive designer label clothes.

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[71] Although they may also be seen as continuing on from the role Jacqueline Kennedy established in the early days.

[72] This particular image demonstrates the unbalanced colonial style relationship the tall blond women holds with her short, de-masculinised 'oriental' servant. These types of relationships within the images are what I would like my future research to focus on.

Fig. 9. *Ritva Falla Collection* (Spring-Summer, 2000)

The clothes themselves, particularly those exhibited in the major collection catalogues of the late 1990s to 2006, appear conservative and held back, uncharacteristic for the Armi Ratia version of Marimekko. To observe further and in consideration for the necessity to adhere to market trends, the choices to tame down the clothes and the models (at least standardising them in relation to other designer label models) may reflect that in our current society, and particularly economy, there may not be room for independent thinking women. Possibly, a woman whose shape and size differs, in addition to one who has her own ideas in regards to the directions of professional life, may simply not fit into today's digital and industrial ideas of standardisation. *Liitto* magazine (1964) stated that "Marimekko is a waving pennant against convention and conformity" (cited in Sarje, 1986, 48), but this may pose as a problem in our current moments of dependency. 'Information Society' and product development rhetoric are constantly stressing increased personalisation of products[73]. However, diversity in itself (i.e. not conforming to mobile communication and ICT usage) and challenging dominant structures such as the high levels of male representation in the info-corporate structures (Corneliussen, 2003, n.p.), are possibly not desired in relation to the hegemonic discourse of post-industrialism.

4.2 The female and architecture

As seen in earlier chapters, the Marimekko corporate promoters have striven to align the company's profile with architecture of particularly the Finnish modernist movement. In fact, as noted within many of the anthology contributions, Armi Ratia's own relationships were closely tied to practicing architects such as Benjamin Thompson, Aarno Ruusuvuori and Juhani Pallasmaa. Donner (1986, 11) specifically expresses this in terms of the 1960s and the director's (Armi Ratia) ambitions to expand into a lifestyle encompassing everything from everyday accessories to industrialised architecture. The moves aimed at by the company were seen as Armi Ratia's materialisation of the theme "modern living". With the intricateness of Marimekko's relationship to the design of architecture, it seems important to observe the way that the Marimekko consumer is depicted as behaving in relation to, the concrete framework of the urban environment.

[73] For more information about digital personalisation please see Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2001).

Marimekko was not just a dressmaker for prominent Finnish architects (i.e. *Jokapoika* shirt and *Kuskipuku* were particularly popular; Suhonen, 1986, 78), but it had been, and still is, an intervenor in architectural spaces, developing interiors in styles ranging from Byzantine and wooden minimalism to chic black and white Italian interiors (Wiikeri, 1986, 35). Further, the decision to combine production of architectural fittings, with other elements of modern architecture in its own promotional campaigns can be read as Armi Ratia's attempts to 'architecturalise' garment advertising. According to Wiikeri (1986), the earlier fashion photos of the 1960s and 70s had "movement, action, life" (35). In other words, the garments were supposed to be moving architectural structures housing the women who were wearing them. Moreover, the women who wore this flexible architecture also affected and created elements of their own structural environment.

Referring to the Mari Girl, in the likeness of Armi Ratia, the ideal Marimekko consumer of the 1960s and 70s (as seen in *The Traveler*), would have utilised architecture, created architecture, and possibly would have destroyed architecture. This speculative image coincides with Armi Ratia's public plans of incorporating architecture into the company's production. But in contrast to this earth moving orientation of past production and representation, the 1990s (even 1980s) onwards Marimekko consumer is increasingly separated from these monuments of architectural progress. The recent versions of the Marimekko consumer seem to be becoming more and more distanced from the paradigm of culture, and most specifically techno-culture[74].

This is not to say that in the earlier days models were not photographed standing idly within interference of architectural structures, in fact, they were, through either sitting on the steps of a neo-gothic institutional building of some sort ("By Any Name – Still a Sack" cover to *Life* magazine). Some images even depicted models standing with arms outspread against the side of a wooden building to demonstrate a camouflage effect created by the texture and pattern of a Marimekko poncho. Still, within these examples the model exists in relation to the architecture, she is either a part of it — encompassing Benjamin Thompson's description of Marimekko as "the movement of colour in space" extending "this human image of people into their environment" (Saarikoski, 1986, 43) — or she utilises it, albeit for sitting purposes. Further, there

[74] This observation of the displacement of the woman's representative body may on some levels relate to Katherine Hayle's discussion in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999) whereby the tensions between the denaturalisation of "the body" and the erasure of embodiment are discussed (Foster, 2001).

seems to be an explicit link between the models and the space, whether that was the academic/institutional setting, or a traditional Finnish rural architectural setting.

The shift in approach seems to have distanced the models from the architectural structures, positioning them as either tourists walking through classic architectural surroundings, or through dislocating the model from the architectural environment altogether. In the *Niina and Kalervo Karlsson Collection* catalogue of winter 2003/2004 the model is noticeably placed in front of new Finnish architectural structures via imagery software (i.e. Photoshop) [fig. 10]. In fact, the female model is so detached from the structures that in several images she can be seen hovering in mid air, in front of the buildings. In other words, the steel framed glass monuments of progress which can be recognised as different angles of the Sanomatalo in Helsinki[75] serve as artificial backdrops, separate from the realities of the female Marimekko consumer. It seems that the Marimekko model is no longer a pilot or a pillar (literally) of Finnish infrastructure or ground breaker, but a studio floater, a decoration for contemporary consumerism and mascot for what 'man' has achieved.

In this same catalogue reference to Finland, and Finnish architectural design (and progress) is cemented by an image inside the back cover where the model has been placed in front of a corner of the Kiasma (museum of contemporary art) building. Behind the corner of this building is revealed a proudly glowing Finnish Parliament House off to the right. Thus, one wonders whether the catalogue was a campaign to advertise Finnish contemporary architecture in tandem with women's clothing, or whether it was a strategy to tie current Marimekko fashion to Finnish national produce. In any case, it remains ambiguous as to why the woman has been separated from modern Finnish progress, and whether or not the Marimekko consumer and the Mari Girl are supposed to be seen as two distinct 'gendered' phenomena.

4.3 The female and nature

Butler (1990, 37) highlights problems with Levi-Strauss's structuralist nature-culture distinction. She illustrates the way that many feminist writers have used Levi-Strauss's theory to reinforce a distinction between 'men' and 'women', whereby men

[75] Housing several of Finland's major newspapers including *Helsingin Sanomat*, Sanomatalo is the result of an award winning design by Antti-Matti Siikala and Jan Söderlund (completed 1999). Find out more from: http://www.steelconstruct.com/references/fiches/finland/

Fig. 10. *Niina and Kalervo Karlsson Collection* (Winter, 2003-2004)

are cultured and women are natural, giving rise to the idea that women are more pure and "un-cooked" than men (37). In other words, as corresponding with many of the classic paintings of the Renaissance and later, the gendered representation of females, as women, have often been depicted in nature, as forest and water nymphs. The 'woman' is de-based and placed in the hands of the cultural 'master' — man — and is removed from the discourse of rationalism and technological development. What Butler illustrated, was that many feminists have used this separation as an excuse to substantiate gender and cultural construction in general as "man's" creation. In this sense, a cross-cultural reading of the Marimekko catalogues which places the female models nature scenes may be a problem. This problem particularly arises if one is not familiar with the relationship between nature, 'strong Finnish women', and their essentialist connections to the establishment of a progressive modern nation (Koivunen, 2003, 146).

As an Anglo-Celtic Australian scholar, who has been trained to recognise the structural discourse articulated by those such as Strauss, viewing photographs which position female models in amongst natural surroundings draws associations of women's separation from social and cultural progress. Examples of this can be seen particularly in recent catalogues such as the *Mika Piirainen Collections* (Winter, 2003/2004 and Spring/Summer, 2004 [fig. 11]) and the *Marjaana Virta and Jaana Parkkila Collection* (Spring/Summer, 2006 [fig. 12]). Where Seppo Saves' 1960s and 70s photography displayed the model and the clothing as artificial additives to the surroundings (i.e. heavily sculpted, abstract objects that worked aesthetically with the environs but reminded of the mastery of the model and her clothing) the 2000 photographic samples place the models in harmony with nature. However, as theorists such as Clifford Geertz have asserted (cited in Butler, 1990, 37), this type of universalisation of the interpretation of gender's relationship to nature and culture dismisses the multiple ways in which "nature" has been configured in cultures. Assuming that nature is always connected to the subordinate and to the feminine, excludes the possibility of questioning how nature can be and has been considered in various differing cultural contexts and why (Butler, 1990, 37). For this reason this section starts with a Western European type of analysis and moves towards a more culturally specific analysis, considering the role of nature within Finnish national discourse.

What is of interest within the readings of Marimekko's 'nature' catalogues, is the construction of the woman consumer as 'Other'. Extending Butler's (1990, 37)

discussion on the binary positioning of culture and nature, and sex as an instrument of cultural signification, to one unfamiliar with Finnish mythology, the models within the catalogues could be interpreted as subjects of domination. The dominated subjects are ironically clad in garments produced by a female-run commercial entity, yet they are positioned in the context of nature — the binary opposite of culture (and the 'self'; Markley, 1999, n.p.). Sarje's (1986) discussion of *Joesuulainen*'s 1967 article describes the Mari Girl and her "deep love for nature" (56). In this instance, the Mari Girl is presented as Annika Piha (Rimala) and the way in which natural environmental details found in water, moss, stones, trees etc. informed her designs. Nature is presented as the leisure field for the female Marimekko designer, who is a "city-dweller" during work times, and an "enthusiastic sailor" when on vacation.

This mastery and usage of nature by the Mari Girl holds resonance in images seen of Suvanto's earlier collections demonstrating creations which have derived from natural structures, on a modernist abstract level. Positioned in quite surreal locations, surrounded by repetitive patterns, and in poses such as those amongst large granite rocks and in front of piles of stacked timber, the models appear more as performance art pieces than natural elements themselves. Ironically, almost twenty years after Sarje (1986), Tarschys & Hedqvist (2003, 165) point out Rimala's disdain for the Finnish nature stereotype, where she classified the translation of nature into innovative dress designs as a myth. Here lies a clear distinction between the opinions, processes and activities of the designers (the Mari Girls) to the image that is being conveyed through the models portraying consumers.

In the cases of Piirainen's and Virta and Parkkila's Collections[76] there are some notable differences. For example, many of Piirainen's garments are created using Maija Isola's print designs. In the catalogues of 2003 to 2005, Piirainen's dresses featuring Isola's *Appelsiini* (1950) (orange) and *Luonto* (nature; late 1950s) series have been positioned in such a way as to form the illusion that the female models are a part of nature. This is said in relation to the 2003/2004 winter catalogue images of a model wearing an Isola pattern fashioned like the black silhouette of a birch tree [fig. 11]. The model is photographed from a low angle looking up, creating the impression that the model is a part of the trees, or at least a nature spirit taking the form of the trees.

[76] Mika Piirainen's Collection (Winter, 2003/2004), Piirainen's Collection (Spring/Summer, 2004) and Marjaana Virta and Jaana Parkkila's Collection (Spring/Summer, 2006)

Fig. 11. *Mika Piirainen Collections* (Spring/Summer, 2004)

Fig. 12. *Marjaana Virta and Jaana Parkkila Collection* (Spring/Summer, 2006)

Similarly, in the Spring/Summer 2004 catalogue, a model of apparently African descent is positioned amongst jungle-like plants. The scene is set at night and the model is wearing clothes made from Isola's *Appelsiini* series. Thus, rather than blending into the nature as if one of the plants, or as a nature spirit, this model is isolated in the abstract patterns. The strong lighting of the photographic equipment beams on the model as she is semi-outstretched on the jungle floor, staring anxiously into the camera barrel. Another image has the same model standing defiantly on a wooden crate, like an animal that has been surrounded and encased yet is unwilling to give up [fig. 13].

In another example of Piirainen's collections (Spring/Summer, 2005), this time distinct from the previous two examples, the model is presented as a water nymph or mermaid, decoratively relaxing on the rocks and sand by the sea. She consumes the fruits of nature as she drinks directly from a pineapple, and apart from the man-made dress, she seems removed from the contaminants of culture. Here the positioning and presentation of the works and models associated with Piirainen have been observed. There seems to be a definite relationship between the representations of the male designed garments and the models who wear them to the nature/culture discourse. Marilyn Strathern and Carol MacCormack speak of this in regards to the construction of the female as a part of nature and her apparent need to be subordinated by culture (Butler, 1990, 37). Interestingly, Strathern and MacCormack cite culture — male — as being figured as active and abstract, traits which may easily be applied to the manipulated naturescape representations of earlier Suvanto garments. If reason and mind are associated with masculinity, and the body and nature are associated with femininity, what does this say about the culture-nature hybrid represented in the earlier Marimekko catalogues and for that matter the rest of the Finnish design discourse?

To take a step in a slightly different direction combining elements of Finnish foundational folklore mythologies with female-nature representations, one can view the Virta-Pirkkala (2006, Spring/Summer) catalogue as an attempt to essentialise the link between Marimekko design and nature, to the origins of Finnish culture[77]. In one image, which occupies an entire double page, a model wearing an off the shoulder, waify yellow and white dress stands almost camouflaged in a field of small yellow flowers [fig. 14]. The model appears to be leisurely enjoying nature, in a similar way to how

[77] Even though *The Kalevala* was compiled and "created" in 1835 by Lönnrot, it has been adopted into the mythical traditions of Finnish origins (Koivunen, 2003).

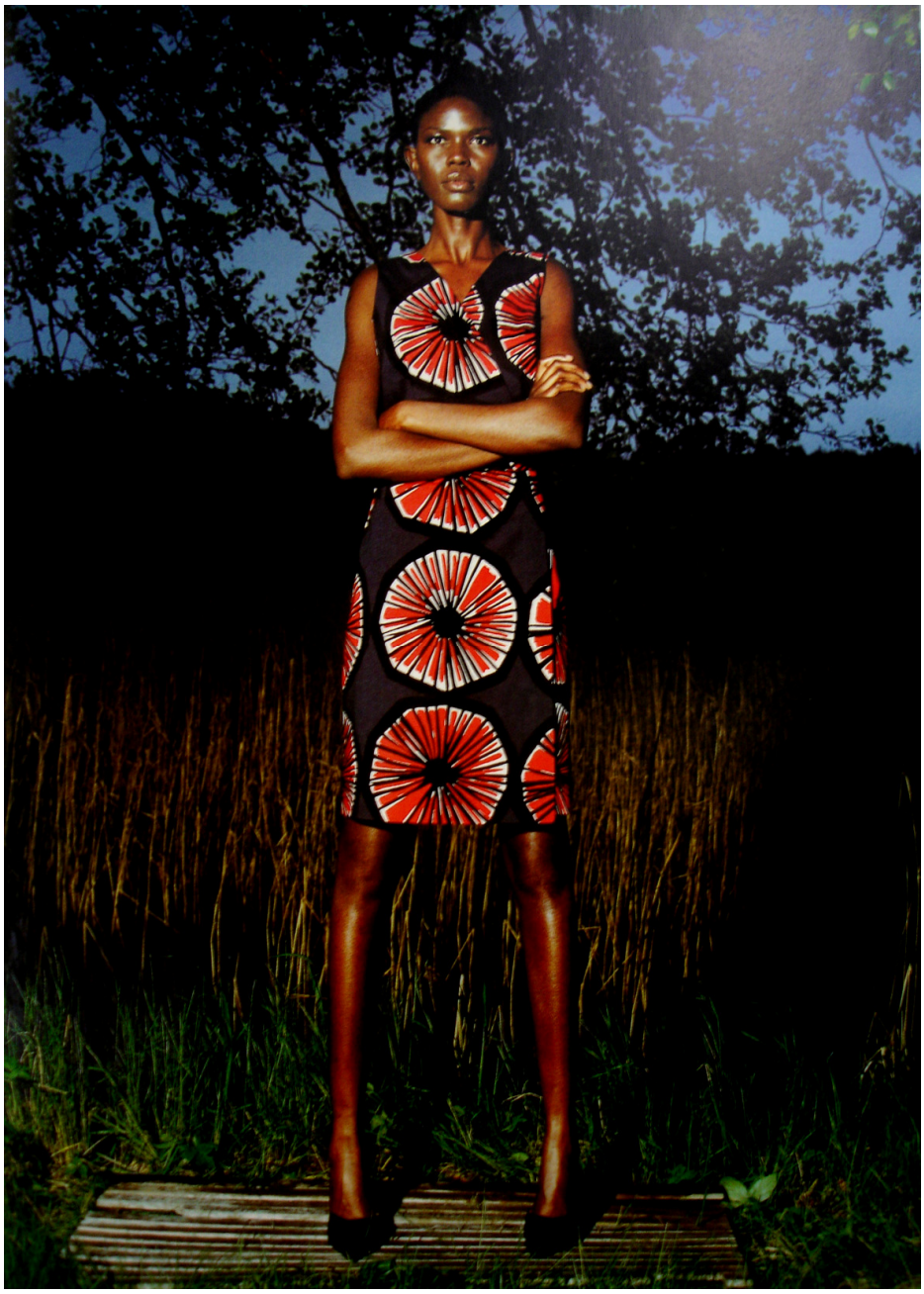

Fig. 13. *Mika Piirainen Collection* (Spring/Summer, 2005)

Annika Rimala was described earlier, she waves her dress as she stares straight towards the camera. Upon closer inspection, on the left page of the spread are two texts, one in Finnish and one in English. The text is from *The Kalevala*, 4 "The Drowned Maid". The passage goes as follows:

> *"Give, Moon-daughter, of your gold*
> *Sun-daughter, of your silver to this girl who*
> *has nothing but this child who begs!*
> *Moon-daughter gave of her gold Sun-daughter*
> *of her silver: I put the gold on my brows*
> *on my head the good silver and came home*
> *a flower to my father's yards a joy."*

This particular choice of passage seems to frame the 2006 spring-summer consumer as the naïve and hopeful young *Loviisa* that Koivunen (2003) describes, before time and trials have hardened her into a "monument Finnish woman". Dislocated from the full-length text, perhaps this passage in the context of the catalogue tells of how the young *maid* may adorn the "gold" and "silver" Marimekko offers, and perhaps the collections of Virta and Pirkkala should display a transforming and redeeming quality. The text also presents the *maid* or the Marimekko model consumer[78], as a helpless beggar, relying on clothing, and metals to make her mark in the cultural world. To come "home a flower to" her "father's yards a joy" suggests that it is still the patriarchal figure that the woman is trying to please. This is for whom she is adorning the gold and silver. In the present context of Finland, the *father's* yard can be interpreted as the patriarchal platform of transnational commerce, or the national 'Fatherland', and the ever changing techno-structure contemporary cultures are dependent on.

Another image in the catalogue displays a woman in a black swirled, white skirt, set amongst the trees similarly to how the image discussed earlier had positioned the "tree spirit" within Piirainen's winter 2003-04 catalogue [fig. 12]. The image is in black and white and all that is seen is the skirt, the model's bare back with a black wavy line, continuing on from the skirt pattern and the model's long blond (almost white) hair. The model is lying along the branch of a tree, as if she were an extension of it, and underneath the image is another passage from *The Kalevala*:

[78] I use the term 'model consumer' to signify an idealised demographic who is represented through the embodiment of the photographic model – I observe that often a great portion of the actual consumers (i.e. mid-aged professional women) are seldom, if ever, presented in the collection catalogues.

Fig. 14. *Virta and Parkkila Collection* (Spring/Summer, 2006)

"Let's strike hand to hand, fingers into finger-gaps that we may sing some good things set some of the best things."

This caption possesses an air of cooperation and action for those who the passage addresses. In line with the image Armi Ratia had developed, with the help of her influential marketing text based on the characters of Kivi's *Seven Brothers*[79], this text from *The Kalevala* may serve to extend the idea of a capable and willing female clientele, possessing open dialogue with the corporation. However, the image above it appears unrelated and even to contrast the activity of the phrase. Whereby, the model seems in perfect harmony with nature, lying still on the branch, detached from human activity, and for that matter, cultural cooperation.

Perhaps there may be two ways of interpreting the integration of the female model into nature, excluding the earlier model of Finnish national essentialism[80]. One of these two ways may include a segregation of the model female consumer (and citizen) from the processes of post-industrialisation. Perhaps, as with industrialisation, there is the assumption (and dominant media representation[81]) that men are the ones who decide and pave the way by building up the post-industrial infrastructure, after which a new wave of feminism will rise up to claim women's position within the post-industrial paradigm[82]. This idea has not been generated by scholars of the rise of a "creative class"[83], who base economic success on abilities to be innovative, while ignoring other determinants which prevent *everybody* from succeeding such as 'gender', socio-economic background, race etc.

The second way to read Marimekko's nature advertisements may lay closer to the idealism and rhetoric of the Finnish design industry itself. Here the women in the photographs are used merely as a way of demonstrating Marimekko's connection to nature, in the context and arena of Finnish design. In this reading the standardised

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[79] "Marimekko is the forest path between the practical Venla and the ethereal Anna […] projected onto the highways and byways, homes and whole living environment of this changing world." (Armi Ratia cited in Donner, 1986, 9)

[80] Such as what Koivunen (2003, 155) draws on as the myth of Finnish people's deep connection to nature.

[81] In a presentation "A note on why we believe that women are incompetent with computers", Hilde Corneliussen (2007) spoke of the coverage in Norwegian press regarding women's incompetence and reluctance to use ICTs. When in fact, it was discovered journalists were ignoring findings of studies which suggested females were using ICTs as much if not more than males.

[82] This is a slight paradox as text from 1949 (Voipio-Juvas & Ruotula) depicts a rhetoric in which women and men were said to have worked side by side to establish the modern society of Finland (Koivunen, 2003, 146)

[83] See Florida (2002)

female models become less significant and the clothes become activated. The clothes develop into a symbol for what Ehrnrooth (1998) has classified as the once sought after "unattainable natural purity" which is now in a state of "sinking back into nature, as if to become a part of it" (23). Through observation of Marimekko's productlines it can be said that Marimekko never sought to attain natural purity, in fact, quite the opposite, the company has always been a means of making 'woman's' (Armi Ratia's) striking mark on the rationalist-functionalist cultural world of Finnish national economy. However, this constant commercial reference to nature can be seen as the company's way of attaching its production to national discourse, and its designs to the ideals of the design industry. As read in the marketing texts of Varma (2003), Marimekko is supposed to be as Finnish as sauna, ryebread and for that matter, the Finnish nature. Moreover, not only is the nature a national symbol, but as Ehrnrooth (1998) suggests, "it is the highest authority and source of spiritual creativity" (24).

There may also be a more practical explanation as to why nature has been widely featured in Marimekko advertising, and that is due to Marimekko's corporate commitments to environmental sustainability[84]. Thus, advertising is a way to promote Marimekko's environmental initiatives such as its adherence to the December 2005 permit, committing the Herttoniemi printing plant to following the regulations outlined in the Environmental Protection Act (86/2000) and the Environmental Protection Decree (169/2000) (Marimekko "Social Responsibilities, 2007). However, inside the Marimekko paradigm there seems to be a traditional distinction between culture and nature, which is not just restricted to marketing ideals of integrating rural life with urban living. Although I have criticised the relatively recent examples of the clothing and most particularly female models in nature, it should be noted that Marimekko have a contradictory and paradoxical history of framing *its* women as the tempting fruits of the forest — depending on appeal to specific media-types. Tarschys and Hedqvist (2003, 162) illustrate the prominence of "sultry women" wearing colourful, modern dresses in natural settings in relation to a clothing line that was produced especially for *Vogue* (1965). For this *Vogue*-exclusive "sexy Marimekko models" were featured wearing patterned bikinis with go-go boots, bell bottoms, or mini-skirts. Tarschys and Hedqvist note the coexistence of the revealing clothing lines, with the lines that Marimekko is so famous for — i.e. the shapeless pinafores promoting the acceptance of women of all

[84] See Marimekko 'Social Responsibility' at:
http://www.marimekko.com/ENG/marimekkocorporation/socialresponsibility/frontpage.htm

shapes and sizes. Yet, question marks still hang over the reasoning behind why those women models featured in the nature are all young, slim and beautiful, why the designs that are featured always accentuate the shape of the models, and why ages and sizes only seem to vary even in the earlier photographs amongst the women in the urban environment. As with the section on architecture, the phenomenon of combining the Marimekko model with nature, seems to further separate her, the model consumer, from the ideals of the strong, self-thinking Mari Girl.

4.4 National Marimekko: fabric, fashion, architecture

The recognition of Marimekko as a Finnish "national institution" as Ainamo (2003, 191) has stated lies deeper than in the diplomatic institutional qualities exhibited by the corporation's political connections and ambassadorial functions. The actions of striving to interweave Marimekko's corporate image into the fabric of Finnish national identity, can be viewed as permeating every move the company has made in connection to public relations. As introduced above, in the discussion of nature advertising, Marimekko has attempted to embed itself within the myth of nature as a primary source of inspiration for Finnish design (Tarschys & Hedqvist, 2003, 160-162). Overt and subtle symbols featured within its advertising campaigns have served as a cultural identifier, for those in Finland, and a postcard-like draw card for those outside Finland. Nothing has been left to chance in Marimekko's marketing strategies. Through establishing the illusion of a company so deeply immersed in national narrative, the company has been able to resist the threat of being absorbed into the masses of generic textiles and clothing companies (Ainamo, 1996, 191).

The image of a democratic nation, and a nation of the Western European paradigm for that matter, relies on a "phallocentric model of brother, native land" and nation (fatherland; Dely, 2006, n.p.). The only alternative left for women inside this model of nation is to take up the possibility of assimilation, meaning that the 'sister' may be seen as a product (imitation) of the 'brother'. This gives rise to connections observed above where it is seen that men have paved the way towards cultural enlightenment — economy (Butler, 1990, 13; Dely, 2006, n.p.). It is for this reason that the 2003 *"Tervetuloa, astukaa sisään", "Välkommen, stig in", "Please, step in"* catalogue, was of particular interest. Noticeably, right from the outset, the quotations on the front cover vary between languages. The two first quotations in Finnish and

Swedish, the two national languages of Finland, translate to exactly the same meaning "Welcome, step in". The English version on the other hand omits the word welcome, and possesses and air of polite insistence — "please". There seems to be an automatic stance that the international visitor, or international influence, is not simply freely *welcome* to "step in", rather they are obliged.

In addition, there seems to be one more element that is missing, right from the cover page which features a small red shoulder bag over the windscreen wiper of a green Helsinki tram — the woman. Moving from one page of the catalogue to the other, following and tourist-like navigation through the streets and sites of Helsinki, the most one sees of the woman consumer, or tourist in this instance, are her legs and side profile. There seems no place for her in this narrative apart from as an observer, follower, or as one who is featured in representations such as the statue of Havis Amanda (Ville Vallgren, 1908) or the memorial statue for Zacharias Topelius (Ville Vallgren, 1909) which consists of two women facing opposite directions. The Marimekko bags are displayed on each of the catalogue's pages as a prop resting on a larger material base (cultural signifier) which is notably 'man' designed. For example, in one of the images, the steps to Helsinki Cathedral at Senate Square are shown with six Marimekko shoulder bags making their way up to the entrance of the building [fig. 15]. The bags are accessories of the unseen woman tourist, who witnesses the permanence of 'man's' (or more precisely Carl Ludvig Engel's[85]) mark on the Finnish cultural landscape. The evidence of 'woman's' presence seems transitory and impermanent, Marimekko's role as a national institution serves as one who equips the woman for the times, when the design of the national infrastructure is firmly laid out by the male heroes who lay before her.

Several images though relating directly to Finnish summer traditions are both culturally specific yet literally less concrete (and bronze) such as an image of a Marimekko handbag resting on a pile of spring fresh potatoes at the Helsinki market square, and an image of handbag resting on a hamburger kiosk counter. These images compliment the other pictures presenting statues, landmarks and vehicles (the tram and a Silja Line ferry) in that they position the female handbag owner as a consumer. Marimekko products are placed in the hands of the 'regular' Finnish consumer public.

[85] Who was commissioned by Russian Tsar Alexander II to create a miniature St Petersburg.

Fig. 15. *“Tervetuloa, astukaa sisään”, “Välkommen, stig in”, “Please, step in”* (2003)

The products follow the consumers as they partake in activities afforded to all Finnish people such as the seasonal potato market frenzy, buying burgers from the ever abundant local kiosks. Thus, Marimekko is presented as not just a luxury for the rich, but as an item suitable for everyone enjoying the Finnish summer. Hierarchy is at play, however, in the pictures of the phallic-like tower of Olympic Stadion (Yrjö Lindegren and Toivo Jäntti 1938-1940; 1952) and the Parliament House of Finland (Johan Sigfrid Sirén, 1931). The bags and their owners are consuming the context of Finland's capital city's (Helsinki's) trail of monuments and permanent environmental documents of history. However, the women bag owners themselves have been removed from occupying the position of the Finnish 'monument'.

The rift between Marimekko as a commercial body and Marimekko as a national institution goes further than just the marketing campaigns of the last two decades. Viljo Ratia (1986, 24) described how the company had difficulties in explaining expenditure to the department of taxation due to the diplomatic-style activities the company held at Bökars on a frequent basis. Viljo Ratia told of how the boundaries between private and company visitors to the manor were blurred due to Marimekko's (Armi Ratia's) efforts to promote Finland. This effort in itself were said to have spurred criticism from the tax authorities who claimed that it was not up to the company to fund Finland's publicity. This might be part of the reason why although Marimekko's commitment to promoting the development of Finnish design[86] is still strong, the company has reverted to pictorial symbology to identify the corporate-national relationship.

Another important factor to consider when observing the implications of Finnish nation on Marimekko advertising is the move from earlier reliance on rural fields and the country house scenery, to the more specific stand-alone saunas, Silja Line ferries and monumental (landmark) landscapes. During particularly the 1960s and 70s, Bökars was used as the quintessential sign of Finnish domesticity (Aav, 2003, 40-41; Tarschys, 1986, 101-102). Although to a non-specialist the scenery may simply be referred to as Finnish (i.e. the yellow painted neo-classical wooden country house), those who have written about Marimekko, insist that the scenes were tied specifically to Karelianism. In other words, the rural *Finnish* lifestyle referred to in earlier Marimekko campaigns were once again directly linked to Armi Ratia and her roots in Karelia, further embedding

[86] "I believe that it's Marimekko's duty to keep Finnish design strong and take it to the world" (Paakkanen cited in Finnfacts, 2003). See also Marimekko's "Social Responsibility" statement at: http://www.marimekko.fi/ENG/marimekkocorporation/socialresponsibility/frontpage.htm

Marimekko's rhetoric within the origins of Finnish cultural traditions. The views insisting that Marimekko embodied the Karelian ideal were so entrenched[87] that business groups around the world attempted to create their own commercial versions of 'Karelia'. One such venture was by Jania and Helga Kravis in Canada who established a furniture and design boutique called *Karelia* (1959) which was designed to specifically sell Marimekko products. (Tarschys & Hedqvist, 2003, 169)

In sum, both the evolution of the company's national cultural association from specifically Karelia to Finland in general, in addition to the apparent separation of the Marimekko Corporation from those who are intended to consume it, highlight a change in attitude expressed by Marimekko promotional campaigns, towards the characteristics of female consumer markets from one period to the next. What happens within societies, amongst women's groups, in the labour force and particularly in the media[88] affects the perceived qualities of women at any given time. This can be viewed in films, literature, television and advertising even within the last fifty years. This has made the action of analysing Marimekko advertising particularly interesting in that throughout its published rhetoric the company has constantly targeted the same group(s) of women — students, academics, professionals, and young families. Although, as observed in each of the above mentioned sections, the physical characteristics of the advertised women have become more specific (i.e. young, slim, beautiful), and the composition and action has become more detached from the arena of cultural progress (the model no longer reads, flies planes or uses buildings). Thus, the Mari Girl still connected through journalistic and corporate texts to the profile of the female run Marimekko, has been separated in image from the model consumer.

[87] Most likely through the persona of Armi Ratia.
[88] Helen Radner (1999) specifically mentions the power of media as the driving force behind social and sexual revolution during the 1960s, rather than activism.

Chapter 5: *The Changing Character of Marimekko*

— Profiling the characters of leadership

The following chapter analyses the ways in which the respective corporate leaders of Marimekko have been represented in text at specific points of Marimekko's business history. In conjunction with analysing the representations, this chapter investigates the way each respective leadership party has been framed and connected to the (success) story of Marimekko, and how in turn their personas are implicated in the narrative and ideals of Finnish nationalism.

5.1 Marimekko as the post-war Karelia — Armi Ratia

There is only one obligation- Beauty
There is only one reality- Dream
There is only one power- Love

This passage was taken from the fourteen year-old Armi Airaksinen's (Ratia) diary, written in Koivisto, Karelia. The text reinforces Donner's description of Armi Ratia as a creative writer and in fact resembles something one might find on the side of a perfume box or movie trailer. The section on Armi Ratia is not designed to simply analyse what she herself has written, but how she has been described and written about. The idea behind this is to analyse the change in Marimekko's persona, based on the public profiles of the corporate figure-heads. This section covers the social context in which Armi Ratia's profile was nurtured. It also draws attention to Armi Ratia's origins and Marimekko's connections to the Finnish national identity. Here, the ideological framing of Armi Ratia's character and management traits are extracted from texts. The above components are combined to observe the survival of Armi Ratia's legacy in published material surrounding Marimekko, and the way that these continue to mould the company's profile.

Repeatedly in journal and newspaper articles focusing on Marimekko, gender is emphasised. Examples such as Booth (2005) and Finnfacts (2003) demonstrate a spectacularisation of Armi Ratia's corporate success in light of her being a woman.

Finnfacts (2003) particularly stresses that "the business world of the 50s and 60s was a male affair". The articulation of *was* seems rather interesting in relation to the underlying investigating of this thesis. However, the referral to the past as a time of gender inequality seems to be quite common in the Marimekko texts. Gender was and is quite noticeably the 'sales point' for the Marimekko profile. Finnfacts (2003), the website devoted to promoting Finland's industry uses Armi Ratia's success as a point of reference in accentuating Finland as a progressive nation. The same article also uses an example from an American magazine in the 1950s to emphasise Finland's democratic advances ahead of the "mother of Western Capitalism" (America) by noting how the American magazine described Armi Ratia as "an attractive blond".

Inside the world of the male 'norm', in my opinion, the concept of gender in relation to female attained success will always be a 'sales point'. The fact that Armi Ratia obtained respect from a predominantly male business world during the 1960s (Aav, 2003, 36) heightens the significance of gender relations. In fact, not only was, and I argue still is, the concept of a successful female corporate leader a sales point, but she is also an object of constant public speculation and amusement. Aav (2003, 25) explains that in an article on successful Finnish business woman during 1964, the journalist suggested Armi Ratia should be carted around the world from one fair and circus to the next, as testament to a woman who actually believed in herself. This phenomenon, or 'freak show'-effect, occurs in many instances where a member of a minority or oppressed group succeeds in the realm of the dominant majority. This is most familiar to me, as seen in the (post)colonial world of Australia when members of Indigenous communities become prominent in their profession[89]. However, there is complexity in the instance of Armi Ratia. While she was noted as being an exception, she was also described in light of a 'typical Finnish woman' stereotype related to the framings Koivunen (2003) highlights of the *Niskavuori* women. Therefore, a dual 'one in a million' and 'of course, because she is Finnish' type of effect was created. In other words, as some sources nationally and internationally claimed that Armi Ratia was the exception, other sources claimed that it was due to the advanced state of Finland's economic society that Finnish business women such as Armi Ratia were the to be expected (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.).

[89] A most prominent international example of this can be seen with Olympic runner Cathy Freeman.

In fact, social scientist Raija Julkunen (cited in Booth, 2005, n.p.) explains how 'stay at home mothers' were and are frowned upon in Finnish society, which essentially furthers Armi Ratia's position as a role model of the quintessential productive working woman. In other words, when on the one hand Armi Ratia was promoting a company which proposed economic gain for Finnish industry, the model of Armi Ratia also served a purpose in idealising and promoting the role of Finnish women in the Finnish economy. This observation is furthered by Julkunen's suggestion that earning a living is more highly valued in the Finnish society than caring, although women should be seen to do both. Repeatedly texts about Armi Ratia, present her firstly as an innovation-lead, head-strong corporate leader, and secondly as a mother. Curiously, the mother component only appears in regards to mothering the female Marimekko workers and designers (Tanttu, 1986, 95), Armi Ratia is seldom referred to as a mother in regards to her own family. In fact, Aav (2003, 38-41) emphasises that whilst Armi Ratia embraced the domestic ideals of Swedish artist Carl Larsson, she had very little time to spend in a domestic space of her own.

In saying this, other writers such as Saarikoski (1986, 43-44) idealised Armi Ratia in regards to Koivunen's (2003) 'monument-Finnish woman' framework by referring to Armi Ratia's policy of actions as laden with fearlessness and self-sufficiency[90]. Armi Ratia was said to be used to "…working and thinking in a way that had become an acquired skill in the preserve of men" (Saarikoski, 1986, 43). In other words, through drawing on the absence of men in Armi Ratia's life[91] and reinforcing the notion of the 'monument-Finnish woman' and the myth of her strength caused by men's absence during wartimes, Saarikoski's description of a sincere and direct being who is "still a woman" and "a mother" carefully accentuates Armi Ratia's preserved femininity. This highlights the importance of female gender, and the independent woman as a functional draw card in Finnish national rhetoric. The timing and the means by which Armi Ratia is described presents a conflict or area of complexity when compared with Koivunen's observations of the changing nature of women's representation in respective periods of *Niskavuori* productions. For example, Koivunen observes that interpretative framings presented during the 1930s of the *Niskavuori* films emphasised a masculine type of woman, an embodiment of "stability and

[90] See specifically Koivunen (2003, 122) for the 'natural' essentialist description of the monument Finnish woman on which she is described as possessing toughness, endurance and persistence as if given to her when she rose from the soil.

[91] Armi Ratia's brothers were killed in wars against the Russians (Aav, 2003).

tradition"[92] (168). Whereas, during the 1980s, when Saarikoski wrote about Armi Ratia, Koivunen noticed that the *Niskavuori* women were being represented as hardened business women and politicians. Koivunen suggests that this model embodies the complex compilation of Finnish traits which include greed for work, bitterness, envy and at the same time a love for the land. I feel however, that this is more of an indication of innovation, opportunism and change — the light in which Armi Ratia has been presented in all of the texts mentioned. Saarikoski's (1986, 43) account seems to attempt to protect Armi Ratia's femininity through family orientation and reference to humour, as others such as Tanttu (1986, 95) capitalise on a mafia-style 'Godmother'-like figure whose motherly appeal is designed to manipulate.

A prominent feature of Armi Ratia's representation is the connection between her and quintessential Karelian identity. Her background of being born and raised in Karelia, the heart of *Kalevala* mythology, and her lived experience through the wars of Independence and the Second World War, demonstrate her personal symbolic attachment and sacrifice for the Finnish nation state. Karelianism however, has a complex and uneasy relationship to Finnish national identity. While on the one hand Finnish national romantic artists, writers and musicians (such as Jean Sibelius, Eero Järnefelt, Luis Sparre, Pekka Halonen, and Juhani Aho etc) sought inspiration from Karelia, idealising traditions, language and artefacts as forms of essential foundations of Finnish culture (and also politically annexing the Karelian area to the Finnish mainland)[93], on the other hand Karelians who fled to Finland as a result of the Second World War were treated as 'others'. Their culture was mythological and romantic on the one hand, but the Karelian 'immigrants' themselves were to be treated with suspicion. With a pre-war history of East Karelians being known as "Rucksack Russians" (Storå, 1991, 74) due to their peddling (trading) of goods from Russia, there was supposedly partial mistrust in regards to the possibilities of exploitative intentions harboured by Karelian refugees[94]. Further, there was also a more actual concern expressed by Finns in relation to giving up sections of land in order to accommodate the refugees from Karelia[95].

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[92] Which was also seen as a threat to marriage as the woman was occupying the man's role (Koivunen, 2003, 168).

[93] See: http://www.pohjoiskarjalanmuseo.fi/english/land.html

[94] Symbolic reference to this may be seen in Juhani Aho's *Juha* (1911).

[95] For more information see sources such as *Virtual Finland's* "Many Karelia's" (2001) found at: http://virtual.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=25907

Interestingly, Sarje (1986, 53) quotes *Helsingin Sanomat* (25.4.1958) in its description of a Marimekko party, whereby the atmosphere was likened to a "romantic and carefree" Karelian summer of the 1920s and 30s. In my opinion this presents Marimekko's and Armi Ratia's substitution for what was lost during World War Two, and specifically positions Armi Ratia's Karelian identity to a notion of a lively, hospitable Karelian 'high-society'. Sarje draws connections between Armi Ratia and Finland in general, stating that while she was an "East coast" person, she also possessed a strong link to the inland. This may be seen as an attempt to associate Armi Ratia with both the myths of *The Kalevala* as well as the characters of *Niskavuori*, in which rural Häme is characterised as the epitome of Finnishness. However, a nostalgic melancholy of Armi Ratia's character is expressed when Sarje quotes her as saying "(t)he summers seem to have stayed in Karelia" (54), possibly meaning that Finnish Karelian summers and the innocence of the pre-World War Two era was lost through the Russian invasion. Armi Ratia's Marimekko may be seen to have the nearest thing to traditional Karelian summers.

In this respect, Marimekko festivities initiated by Armi Ratia may also have been seen as a memorial for what was lost of Finland in the war. In an unforgettable way, Armi Ratia is represented as fighting the feelings of the loss of over 400,000 Karelian homes, her three brothers who were killed by the Russians and the closure of her first weaving workshop in Viipuri, through defiance in the form of celebration and nostalgia (Aav, 2003, 33). This in some sense projects Armi Ratia's remembered character as one who is far beyond the mere representations of a female business woman or politician. Instead, Armi Ratia may be likened more to a monument herself (a statue of liberty) or to symbol such as that of Urho Kekkonen. Through resisting the death of Finnish Karelia by embodying it in Marimekko's persona, the representation of Armi Ratia can be likened that of a woman president of the 'New Karelia' (Marimekko).

Nikula (2003, 145) spins the description of Armi Ratia in another direction through identifying her vulnerabilities within the European context. In a sense, as an international extension to the Karelian alienation process, Nikula seeks to invoke an 'outsider' quality to Armi Ratia, not just as a woman in a man's world, but as a Finnish Karelian woman in the European fashion world. Moreover, the 'outsider' quality is characterised in part, as a 'fear of the same'. In other words, through extreme difference such as varying cultures, as presented in the United States (Chinese, Mexican, and

English etc.) one can expect difference and be comfortable in being different. However, amongst the homogenising forces of European fashion and consumption (no matter how unrealistic) one, even during the first half of the 1900s, was made to feel ashamed about being 'different'. Nikula (2003, 145) stresses that Armi Ratia was intimidated by Europe due to the assumption that to be a European in Europe one needs to know how to behave like one. This theory of Nikula's, suggests Armi Ratia's strive for internationalism and projection of Marimekko design as 'new' and 'different', was a means of not only differentiating Finnish culture from the generic label of 'European', but was also a means of establishing 'natural' (comfortable and acceptable) *difference* in the company's profile.

To further the representation of Armi Ratia's strive for difference, or to be the tasteful 'outsider', quite often in articles she and the company are framed in the vein of orientalism — Karelianism. In this sense, the 'otherness' of Karelians and particularly Armi Ratia's Karelian identity is drawn upon and exploited. Armi Ratia is connected to a passion for Finnish nature, but at the same time is disconnected from mainstream Finnishness via associations (and arguably European-style primitivisation) attaching her persona and fascinations to mythical lost worlds such as Karelia and Byzantium (Nikula, 2003, 145). In the tradition of Finnish design rhetoric, Armi Ratia's vision of modernism was said to be influenced by Finnish foundational mythologies and nature. Possibly because of her 'other' qualities of not just being a Finnish Karelian, but also of being a 'woman' meant that associations of Armi Ratia with a mystic-symbolic dimension were heightened. Suhonen (1986, 78) links these associations with that of the representation of the "oriental man" in relation to the development of Marimekko's profile. The idea behind Suhonen's statement appears to refer to Marimekko's capitalisation of the exotic and unknown. However in referring to Henri Broms, Suhonen mentions that the distanced persona of Marimekko's products to cultural and 'modern' reality — i.e. the design embodiment of the near surreal — "went with Armi Ratia" (Suhonen, 1986, 78).

5.2 Marimekko without a face – Amer Group

Through following Marimekko narrative it is soon noticed that the Amer Group is seldom mentioned in regards to Marimekko's business history, and is never mentioned in regards to its success. In fact, while authors concentrate on tying the company to Finnish national discourse, particularly in conjunction with descriptions of

Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen, the period of Amer Group ownership seems to embody a 'down time' of Marimekko public profile. Donner (1986, 1984) mentions the Amer Group purchase as the moment in which the founder-owner connection was cut. The company had become an entirely impersonalised corporate body. With this said, and with the curiosity invoked by the fact that it was the Amer Group lead Marimekko Corporation that commissioned *Phenomenon Marimekko* (1986) to be produced, the Amer Group organisation is an interesting component of Marimekko's history.

Amer Tobacco was founded in 1950 as a Finnish producer and distributor of American style tobacco. The business was founded by the Finnish Association of Graduate Engineers, the Finnish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business Administration, the Land and Water Technology Foundation, and the Student Union of Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration. All of these organisations are educationally-oriented. The main purpose of the company was to assist in the funding of research and educational programmes around the country. By the year 2000, the Amer Group was worth 1.09 billion Euros and had concentrated its interests on developing its sportswear company ownership. (Amer Group Plc, 2001, n.p.)

Amer Group's acquisition of Marimekko was not an isolated occurrence. Since its founding, the corporation had focused its operations on acquiring businesses from publishing to shipping, in countries around Europe, including several in the United States of America. The company was listed on the Helsinki Stock Exchange in 1977 and on the London Stock Exchange in 1984. During 1984, the year before Amer Group's acquisition of Marimekko, the company had successfully purchased Finland's largest automobile importer Korpivaara (Amer Group Plc, 2001, n.p.). So it may have come as a surprise that Amer Group's take-over of Marimekko's ownership coincided with a decline in the company's profits. In fact, Amer Group only briefly mentions this episode in its article promoting the sportswear component of their operations.

Reasons for the decline in profitability may be speculated as being due to the lack of focused (visionary) leadership, and in several articles (e.g. Booth, 2005, n.p.), has been attributed the absence of the strong female leadership exhibited by Armi Ratia. One might equate the wane of consumer interest to the disappearance of the company's flamboyant figurehead, or one might also look at the difference in public relations strategies Amer Group adopted in comparison to the Armi Ratia reign. In my opinion, a key clue lies behind what Armi Ratia embodied and represented in the national and international context. Not only was rhetoric surrounding Armi Ratia focused on

emphasising 'innovative', 'independent' and 'design of the everyday', but the presence of Armi Ratia herself represented a form of social progression and advanced corporate arrangements in which women were equal. Further, Armi Ratia targeted Marimekko's product lines towards an academic audience, in addition to publicly framing and aligning its products and corporate ethics to an academic and philosophical orientation (i.e. rationale behind high quality, mass-produced looking garments; reference to and criticism of concepts such as urban agrarianism etc). From what I have found in catalogues produced in the mid to late-1980s, the philosophical 'dialogue' between the company and its consumers appears to be missing. This seems paradoxical when considering that Amer Group was founded by educationally based organisations, to support educational activities. It also seems quite ill-formed when considering that the Helsinki University Student Union riots were a major marketing platform for *Tasaraita* and *Jokapoika* shirts during the 1960s.

Moreover, in an ironic twist, with the publication of *Phenomenon Marimekko* and the exhibition at the Designmuseo of the same name in 1986, rather than being presented as the cutting edge of Finnish Design, Marimekko symbolised a museum piece, out-dated and stagnant (Ainamo, 2003, 191). Contrary to the innovation-based image of forward thinking design solutions that Armi Ratia had built, Amer Group rode on the waves of design history, rather than embracing the original essential Marimekko business philosophy. In addition to the 'backwards' approach to Marimekko marketing, Amer Group's reputation as a multinational tobacco conglomerate, was not compatible ethically or philosophically with traditional Marimekko clientele. Ainamo (2003) suggests that the Amer Group intended to "exploit" Marimekko's profile to further its own (191). But given the 'typically' educated background of traditional Marimekko clientele, Amer Group's tobacco industry profile and corporate giant reputation, only served to tarnish Marimekko's.

As has already been told, the Marimekko realm of domestic fittings and female fashion was not gainful for Amer Group's profile. Most likely due to the absence of a leading female figure, in light of the company's past public prominence. A decade after Amer Group's relinquishment of Marimekko, the Group did succeed in franchising fashion through acquiring sportswear stores (Amer Group Plc, 2001, n.p.). Quite publicly, Amer Group's expansions in the fields of sportswear, recreational watches and outdoor equipment, taking hold in the 1990s, has seemed to have somewhat shifted its profile from that of a tobacco producer and distributor, to a sportswear giant. It seems to

me, that the success of the multiple sports stores over that of Marimekko lies in the multitude and impersonal nature of the pre-established sports products businesses — impersonalisation taking on the hegemonic assumption of the un-gendered (or unrelated, or unperformed)[96] masculine (Wittig, 1983, 64).

Another form of masculine comes in the form of appealing to a physically *active* public — an actively 'male' public — which has no need for the embodiment of an industrious 'monument-Finnish woman'. In fact, a female corporate-figurehead in the field of sportswear and equipment, based on above observations, would change the nature of public reception for the stores' products, quite likely limiting the clientele to a female population. Therefore, the demise of Marimekko during the Amer Group reign is little surprising, in light that they did not immediately capitalise on instating a public female figurehead to take the place of Armi Ratia. What is interesting to observe however, is the continued employment of Amer Group's financial officer, who served as Marimekko's chairman after Kirsti Paakkanen had taken over in 1991 (Ainamo, 2003, 195).

5.3 Marimekko with a mission — Kirsti Paakkanen

From Kirsti Paakkanen's corporate beginnings during the 1950s, with the establishment of her own advertising agency Womena, she has been known as an advocate for female equality in the workplace. Kirsti Paakkanen not only embodies the ideal of the corporate woman, but has promoted and defended 'the corporate woman' against a background of a male dominated and discriminatory labour force (Booth, 2005). In the context of English language versions of a traditional Finnish cultural reading, Kirsti Paakkanen's public persona and outspoken policies may be likened to the relentless Loviisa Niskavuori of the 1980s, the head-strong business woman, and unlike Armi Ratia's persona, an autonomous operator and "top management professional" rather than a mother figure (Koivunen, 2003, 184). Many, such as Anttikoski (2003, 110) cite Kirsti Paakkanen's label as the reincarnation of Armi Ratia, but when one analyses closely there are many major differences both within their publicised corporate strategies and the ways in which their public characters have been formed.

[96] Gender being a system of relations (de Lauretis, 1987, 4) or performance (Butler, 1990, 25).

Firstly, and most directed towards the concept of gender, where Armi Ratia capitalised on the traits of the independent, creative, professional, family-oriented Finnish woman, in paradigms of national rhetoric, Kirsti Paakkanen appears to have founded her business philosophy on criticism of this national and heterosexual paradigm (de Lauretis, 1987, 15-17; Butler, 1990, 18; Dely, 2006). In other words, where Armi Ratia's media personality promulgated Finnish femininity, Kirsti Paakkanen seems to have criticised the still discriminatory framework towards women in Finnish society. Therefore, gender is not simply a stigma, but an important public strategy for both leaders. However, the ways in which gender and femininity is used between each case varies. Secondly, the 'Karelian romanticism' that was accentuated by Armi Ratia's publicity campaigns and corporate functions has disappeared from the advertising publicity approach of Kirsti Paakkanen's Marimekko. As observed in the chapter on reading Marimekko advertisements (Chapter 4), the latest versions of Marimekko publicity are directed towards connecting the corporation with Finland in general. Suhonen (1986, 78) suggests that the Karelian essentialism of mythology, colour and the "oriental type" went with Armi Ratia. So it may have, but in light of the future oriented atmosphere of the Finnish post-industrial economy, and learning from the misguided choices of Amer Group's public strategies, Kirsti Paakkanen's tactics can be viewed as an attempt to remove Marimekko from the mythical past to the globally financial future.

Kirsti Paakkanen makes no attempt to hide the market-oriented direction of Marimekko. This exists in contrast to Armi Ratia's overtly expressed desire to run an ideas-based firm exempted from sales targets (Saarikoski, 1986, 43). Marimekko since the 1990s has been producing and releasing in line with the latest international trends (Anttikoski, 2003, 111). In the era of heightened post-modernity, the re-release of classic textiles and patterns has seen product harmony with current retro fashion, and has enforced Kirsti Paakkanen's own rhetoric of "keeping with the spirit of the day" (Marimekko Annual Report, 2004, 11). There is a change amongst sources referring to Marimekko character whereby Armi Ratia is told to have developed the concept of Marimekko lifestyle, and where Kirsti Paakkanen has built the brand. In the 2000s the Marimekko trademark lifestyle is its brand (Anttikoski, 2003, 111). I am not sure however, that I fully agree with Anttikoski when she suggests that the *brand* has *turned* Marimekko shopping into an exercise of delineating social distinction. *Lifestyle* too has been historically used in conjunction with taste as a means of exemplifying social

stratification (Bogenhold, 2001, n.p.). Thus, particularly in regards to the example of Jacqueline Kennedy, right from the early Armi Ratia days the Marimekko name as a 'lifestyle' was socially exclusive.

Booth (2005, n.p.) quotes Kirsti Paakkanen as stating that "(h)ome is the most important trend in the world at the moment", which may indicate a similarity between the timing of Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen's reigns with the consumer trends of the respective eras. Thus, attribution may be given partly to timing and calculation, rather than direct design innovation. However, attention also needs to be drawn towards the publicity strategies of each leader. Kirsti Paakkanen publicly expressed a process of stripping back the bureaucracy that Marimekko was constricted by at the time of her take-over in 1991 (Booth, 2005, n.p.). I feel that this is a publicised move to signify to the consumer public a sense of cleansing and re-personification of the Marimekko Corporation. In other words, through allowing the public to believe that the faceless corporate image established during the times of the Amer Group was being dismantled, a reception of Marimekko as a renewed and essentially communal style of organisation would emerge.

Further, Kirsti Paakkanen drew on a sensitive string left by the legacy of Armi Ratia — that of employment stability. Stemming from the massive staff cut-backs from 1968 to 1971, Armi Ratia's public dissatisfaction with the disturbing restructuring (Donner, 1986, 10), Kirsti Paakkanen has drawn a crucial draw card in Marimekko public relations, which is creating "secure jobs" (Finnfacts, 2003, n.p.). Particularly during times of increased economic uncertainty that even Kirsti Paakkanen has identified (Marimekko Annual Report 2004, 7), national employment stability hits a key note amongst all areas of the consumer population. In this sense, Kirsti Paakkanen can be viewed as possessing a stronger corporate character than even Armi Ratia, in her ability to assure job security, and through plainly stating the company's intentions of only maintaining designs which will sell (Marimekko Annual Report 2004, 7).

There seems to be a creativity-corporate juxtaposition, whereby Armi Ratia's Marimekko could be seen as a creative corporation, and Kirsti Paakkanen's Marimekko can be seen as corporate creativity. Kirsti Paakkanen cannot be speculated, as Armi Ratia was, as an Artistic Director and media personality. Kirsti Paakkanen has created and instigated plans for restructuring and down-scaling projects to meet marketing and production capacity. Kirsti Paakkanen also moved part of the production to cheaper territory (Estonia and the Far East), through implementing a plan already established by

the Amer Group (Ainamo, 2003, 192). Given the careful scrutiny and idealism placed upon Armi Ratia from the 1950s to 70s, in relation to her embodiment of an 'all-rounded' Finnish woman, who was both career oriented, yet warm in her relations to the family, I doubt whether Armi Ratia's profile would have survived such radical corporate moves. This may be viewed as evidence of the changing image of Finnish corporate women, for they may now make rational corporate strategies without being labelled a masculine-woman, or a she-devil. It may also provide an example of the changing social values of the Finnish nation, where the art and creativity that was the epitome of democracy during the 1960s to 70s, has moved over for national corporate ownership and increased economic viability. Either way, through reading Ainamo's (2003, 191-192) description, it seems that the saving of a national institution (Marimekko) as conservative as it sounds, was seen to be a high priority amongst the Finnish public, and has taken preference in regards to Kirsti Paakkanen's consumer reception.

During the past sixteen years Kirsti Paakkanen's reputation as a corporate figure has not remained unscathed however. From 2000 to 2004 Kirsti Paakkanen and the Marimekko trademark remained under a dark shadow for a rashly considered business move[97]. In August 2000, Marimekko acquired the leather and fur company Grünstein Product Oy. Valjakka (2005, n.p.) reported that the move angered animal rights activists and severely jeopardised the integrity of the company amongst its major intellectual clientele. In response to a public international boycott of Marimekko products, other sources state that Kirsti Paakkanen was quick to express regret for the decision to acquire the company (Rautiainen, 2001, n.p.). Regret or no regret, the company did not sell Grünstein when Kirsti Paakkanen was told to have said it would in 2000, and held on to Grünstein until December 17th, 2004. Activist reportage has represented triumph over successfully gate-storming events such as Marimekko's 50th anniversary. It has also noted the refusal of film director Aki Kaurismäki to accept an Honorary Doctorate from Helsinki University of Art and Design due to Kaurismäki not wanting to be associated with the "second-hand fur farmer" Kirsti Paakkanen, who was to received her honorary doctorate at the same time (Rautiainen, 2001, n.p.). But despite this

[97] A time when the company was known as Verimekko among animal activists.

damage, Kirsti Paakkanen's name and the Marimekko brand have seemingly been effectively cleaned since the sale of Grünstein[98].

In fact, publicity produced by Marimekko and written by those other than the animal rights activists, seem to have conveniently ignored the matter — erasing the Verimekko (Blood-dress) era from memory. Even the January 29th, 2001, article published by the international version of *Helsingin Sanomat*, "Marimekko admits mistake in acquiring fur company" (written during the height of the crisis) really only admits a mistake in regards to the failure of Grünstein to open up markets in France and Russia. The mismatch of Grünstein's production to ethical ideals[99] of the intellectual public is ignored. This matter is pertinent when considering Kirsti Paakkanen's construction and maintenance of her profile. In addition to the controversial Honorary Doctorate from the Helsinki University of Art and Design 2001[100], Kirsti Paakkanen continues to maintain Marimekko's associations with academia through not only selling to academics but by being one. The specific orientation towards young business professionals and students, rather than just to design students clearly shows the shift from design ideals to business ideals. Where Armi Ratia's philosophical, ethical and creative-based Marimekko might never have recovered from such a move (at such a time), Kirsti Paakkanen's strategic corporate-based profile has successfully withstood simply another wave in the commercial ocean.

[98] See also the online article "Marimekko karisti raskaan taakan" (Marimekko shakes off the heavy burden) by Marko Erola (2004) at: http://www.tietoviikko.fi/displayCommentList.do?threadId=841.
[99] Keeping in mind that Marimekko does not state in its ethics any responsibility to animals, see: http://www.marimekko.com/ENG/marimekkocorporation/corevalues/frontpage.htm
[100] This was gained before the un-controversial Honorary Doctorate from the Helsinki School of Economics in May 2006.

Conclusion

Summary

This thesis has taken a multi-dimensional approach to investigating the textual construction of the female leaders and female consumers of the Marimekko Corporation. I introduced the thesis through providing a brief description of my background as an Australian printmedia artist, and my interest in examining the functions of a success female run creative-based company. The introduction moved on towards describing the text-based nature of my analysis of the company, in addition to key concepts I would focus on when analysing and interpreting the texts. These concepts were gender, articulation, representation, performativity, interpretative framing, nation and narrative. Contextualisation was then given through briefly discussing Finland's post-war design industry in the international context. This section included a discussion of the societal value placed on design as compared to craft, and the way that this has affected the professional roles of women and men in the Finnish manufacturing industries. The discussion led towards positioning Marimekko as a textiles company (textiles being traditionally considered craft-based) in the arena of Finnish design (Aav, 2003, 20). In my opinion it was the mixture of leadership approach (hiring artists to be full-time designers) and the diplomatic role Marimekko had adopted from the 1960s that led to Marimekko's recognition as a design company, rather than simply based on the products themselves.

I intended Chapter Two to serve as an introduction to the company and to offer glimpses into various aspects of the company's representational profile. In this overview corporate history was combined with image building and the roles of key concepts such as gender and nation. The company was split into several 'new Marimekkos' in order to give the reader an idea of how the company image and ethos has changed through moments of major restructuring. In this chapter, Armi Ratia, Amer Group and Kirsti Paakkanen are described alongside one another for the first time in the context of this thesis. This was to demonstrate the difference in corporate personas represented by differing corporate leaders. In Chapter Three I analysed textual material based on variations of Marimekko's history as presented in various journalistic and corporate texts. I also discussed themes that have characterised the nature of Marimekko writings and analysed these in terms of historic significance and their relationships to

the characters presented in the textual narratives. I found that characterisations of gender have impacted the narrative of the corporation and that these characterisations alter from one author to the next, depending both of the gender of the author and their positioning in relation to the company. Particularly in regards to writings surrounding Armi Ratia and her female staff, mythological analogies were employed to create a type of surreal atmosphere surrounding the prospect of a female-run business. I also expressed my findings in relation to the difference in utilisation of national symbolism through juxtaposing Armi Ratia, who emphasised Karelianism, and Kirsti Paakkanen who emphasises a generic form of 'Finnishness' (flags, landmarks and objects).

In Chapter Four my analysis emphasised articulation employed in the company's publicity strategies, through interpreting advertising photographs and corresponding text. Elements that had been articulated in the previous chapters came into play when establishing a narrative through which the female Marimekko consumer had been representatively constructed. I found that the constructed image of the 'model Marimekko consumer', or the model posing as the Marimekko consumer, had changed particularly in the last thirty years. I discovered that she had become less active in her representations, from actively 'doing' (i.e. working) in photographic constructions, to simply posing. I also observed that she has become more de-contextualised and detached from cultural surroundings such as the Finnish cityscape. In Chapter Five I sought to partially explain the findings of Chapter Four. This was achieved through re-constructing and interpreting the factors which have impacted readings of Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen. I also discussed the Amer Group reign of Marimekko in greater detail in order to demonstrate how the lack of a female corporate persona such as Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen, left Marimekko on the brink of bankruptcy. Here the emphasis was placed more on the public representational personalities of the leaders themselves, rather than on the corporation in general (which had been done in Chapter 2).

Discussion – when a woman takes control

The Marimekko Corporation has undergone many changes during its lifespan from the 1950s until now, 2007. The changes include ownership, finance, corporate structure and technology. There has also been a shift in the way that the company represents its female leaders, staff and clients. It can be said that the development of the company's profile has corresponded with the development of the public profiles of its

corporate leaders throughout its history. The names of the female corporate heads, Armi Ratia and Kirsti Paakkanen are synonymous for their interconnectedness with the profile of the Marimekko Corporation. For that reason I have specifically focused on documenting my observations of media and other textual representations of these women throughout this thesis. It is also for this reason that I have devoted several sections to discussing the women to correspond with the multiple dimensions implicated in their representations and leadership styles — i.e. the types of 'new' Marimekkos, nationalism/internationalism, design focus/corporate focus. It would not have been enough to have simply outlined biographical details in one chapter and have left it as that. As I see it, through what arose in my observations of the research material, the perceived nature of the company — its ethos, operations and mission — have been strategically connected to the perceived personas of each respective female leader from the 1960s onwards. This theory becomes apparent when observing the financial and sales patterns soon after Armi Ratia's death (1979) and in the mid-1980s when Marimekko was sold from the Ratia family and no public female leader had replaced Armi Ratia (the Amer Group days) (Ainamo, 1996, 150-151).

From the beginning, due to Armi Ratia being a female corporate figure in a domain mainly dominated by males, Marimekko's profile can be seen to have become embedded in a sort of gendered identity. By stating gendered identity, I do not mean that the corporation itself took on a gender, but instead, the operations have been repeatedly connected in media articles and scholarly texts to the gender of the corporate figure heads. In this way, analysis of the anthology articles by company 'insiders' such as particularly Donner (1986) and Saves (1986) have revealed a presence of gender politics even within the firm. Ainamo's (1996) scholarly historical economic observations show right from the outset a friction between societal expectations of the female gender, and what Armi Ratia, as a person was capable of achieving. As Ainamo notes:

> "It never entered Viljo Ratia or his friends' mind that Armi Ratia would actually exercise rights of the ownership she had acquired, and meddle in "manly" affairs related to management. Yet Armi Ratia surprised her husband, the landlord and the bank representatives, when she invested in six sewing machines and a buttoning machine for Marimekko."
>
> (Ainamo, 1996, 164)

Thus, while through circumstance[101] Armi Ratia was the majority share holder of the corporation, the men who were concerned with the administrative side of its operations still did not expect that Armi Ratia would fill the traditionally 'male' role of corporate head. The specificity of Armi Ratia's gender seemed to be constant cause for concern in much of the text discussing and observing the business operations of the company. Further, through the texts it is apparent that there were more men represented on a decision-making and administrative operational capacity than women. Therefore, it may be seen that at the same time as external representations of the company focused on its significance as a symbol for social progression and equality (corresponding with the women's movements of the 1960s and 70s) internally at an administrative level there was still a struggle to prove validity in the decisions of a woman.

Many of the design staff were noted as women and particularly during the earlier period several of these were also outspoken in regards to the media. Nurmesniemi, Rimala (Piha) and Isola are all typified in multiple scholarly and media texts by their connections to the art scene, academia and social-political movements (Anttikoski, 2003, 97; Jackson, 2003, 61; Ainamo, 134, 169). Their publicised approaches to designing could be seen as intellectual, conceptual and experimental, thus generating interest from an academically elite clientele[102]. These 'model' designers, their co-workers and loyal female customers were referred to by Armi Ratia as Mari Girls (Sarje, 1986, 55-56). During the 1960s and 70s the Mari Girl concept permeated advertising materials and more extensively media coverage. Through analysing how this concept is articulated, connections have been made directly and indirectly between Marimekko staff and consumers at that time to women characters of Finnish foundational folklore of *Kalevala*. The discussion of the 'Finnish woman' type has been strengthened through observations made by Koivunen (2003) and her analysis of the *Niskavuori* women.

Equally as important as Marimekko's display of the 'Finnish woman' is also its connection to Finnish national narrative itself. From the company's beginnings to the

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[101] Ainamo (1996) notes that Viljo Ratia negotiated Riitta and Viljo Immonen's shares from them as he believed that the company was heading for a collapse, these shares were then placed under Armi Ratia's name, according to Ainamo due to Viljo Ratia's guilty conscience in having no faith in Armi Ratia's (his *wife's*) project.

[102] I observe that there is consistency in company demographics throughout the company's history even when fashions change. Ainamo notes the turn in intellectual fashion trend from individualism to collectivism (142-144) corresponding with the introduction of *Tasaraita* tricots, whereby Marimekko clothing was worn in media (namely *Hopeapeili*, 7) by e.g. radical leftist intellectuals such as Kaj Chydennius and Kaisa Korhonen in 1965. See also Anttikoski (2003, 85 & 102).

present day Marimekko has included patriotic terms within its textual and visual vocabulary such as "Finnish design", reference to national literature such as *The Seven Brothers*, flags, descriptions of Karelia and reference to sauna (and rye bread). In a strategic move during the 1970s Armi Ratia invested extensive time and energy in recruiting politicians and diplomatic figures onto the Marimekko band wagon (Ainamo, 1996, 148-149). There appears to be a direct connection between Armi Ratia and Urho Kekkonen's public relationship/friendship and the company winning the President's Exports Award in 1975, when the company had topped exports for that year. Ainamo (2003; 1996, 149) claims that this liaising with Finnish national figures — establishing Marimekko as a national cultural institution — served to 'save' the business from oblivion during the 1980s.

Marimekko is still connected to the Finnish national narrative in texts, images and through co-operation with other Finnish businesses (KONE ™, Sampo, Varma etc.) which span into all fields of commerce and production, from mechanical engineering to banking. The economic and international orientation of co-operational strategies exemplifies Marimekko's charge in "keeping with the spirit of the day". In Finland 2007, policies in all institutional fields are directed towards embracing the Information Society and competing in the global economy. Through analysis of the corporation's material the design products alone have never been the key to its corporate success. It has always relied on other key factors which include Armi Ratia (her personality and her gender) and the context of a prominent national narrative in which it can identify. Expanding on the international platform through diversified fields in collaboration with other nationally owned companies is a way of ensuring further longevity of the business.

Mari-Representations of women in the "spirit of the day"

The term "keeping with the spirit of the day" is one of the key slogans used during Kirsti Paakkanen's reign (appearing in Annual Reports and interviews). A little unlike the founding principles of "turning dreams into realities" (Donner, 1986, 8-9 & 17) which promises everything but says nothing, "keeping with the spirit of the day" says everything but states nothing. However, this latter motto can be said to have applied to the corporation during every moment of its history. This idea was reinforced

in 1986 by Wiikeri's claim that Marimekko always "expressed the spirit of the time"[103] (34). In all areas of design, production and representation Marimekko has mainly kept in tune with social, economic, political and technological developments. All of these combined during every era except the 1980s, have proven to forge Marimekko's reputation as an actively innovative design producer and corporate body. The representation of women is one such area that demonstrates the corporation's accountability for 'the moment'. A key strength to Marimekko's representational strategies has always laid in its persistence in incorporating the global with the national. Thus, when monitoring the types of terminology used to describe their demographics and staff it is noticed that international social models (or archetypes) are modified to include Finnish national narrative, moulded to fit corresponding economic and industrial conditions.

The concept of the Mari Girl was created during the 1960s and she can be seen as the Marimekko (and arguably Finnish specific) adaptation of the Single Girl concepts which were arising from women's movements mostly in the United States. The Single Girls and Mari Girl both appeared alongside the Second Wave Feminist movements and the sexual revolution. The Mari Girl was described as "a modern, liberally minded person with a sense of humor, commited [sic] both intellectually and artistically" (Sarje, 1986, 55). To cite another description, the ideal Marimekko consumer was a woman who did not have time to think about clothes due to being too busy thinking about families, careers and hobbies (Raikes, 2005, n.p.; Gura, 2004, 36). Mari Girl was an autonomous woman, whose life was at the mercy of sudden changes, and multiple roles. She was told to be simultaneously a warm mother, "an excellent 'home spirit' skilled at cooking" in addition to being "a good mixer, mood creator" and "a keen fisherman" (Sarje, 1986, 55-56).

Where Single Girls, such as Helen Gurley Brown's version (Radner, 1999, 3-6), were specifically focused on being single women who were economically independent and free to pursue sexual relationships outside of marriage, the Finnish Mari Girl was either married or single (but seemingly encouraged to be married). Sexuality and promiscuity are not features of the Mari Girl rhetoric, but the economic independence and role as a career woman were. The Mari Girl was a mother as well as professional

[103] In reference to the production of *Tasaraita* shorts during mass demonstrations of the late 1960s, Tarschys (1986) also states: "And the picture: men and women, boys and girls, in rows in their underwear and T-shirts, graphically anonymous, but without the slightest doubt as to who had interpreted the spirit of the time." (106)

decision-maker. The Mari Girl's role was not to fade into the shadow of her husband, contributing to his career success[104] but was to be "a waving pennant against convention and conformity" (*Liitto* 1964, cited in Gura, 2004, 28). Mari Girl could be read as not simply a product of the sexual revolution and introduction of the pill, but as a response to the European social movements and student activism of the times. Ainamo (1996, 144) discusses the introduction of *Tasaraita* tricots ("maoist" uniforms), dressing everybody the same, in correspondence with social activists' rejection of elitist notions of individuality, which subsequently connected Marimekko's design to the anonymity discourse occurring in the European arts field at the time. I see this in more direct relation to the Mari Girl than other versions of the Single Girl, particularly Gurley Brown's, in that Mari Girl still serves the heterosexual function of man-woman marriage, bearing children and raising a family even if within social and economic discourse she was to be seen (or not) amongst the mass of anonymous professionals.

Emphasis placed on 'monument Finnish women' is of particular relevance in Mari Girl's case as her characteristic descriptions are intrinsically linked to the ideals repeated throughout versions of Finnish national rhetoric, linking cultural representations of Finnish women during the mid-1900s onwards, to the 1800s foundational folklore *Kalevala* (Koivunen, 2003, 147-150). The *Kalevalaic*-framing (Koivunen, 2003, 50) established for Marimekko was tied to Armi Ratia's public persona as the woman from Karelia. Thus, even the public constructions of the Mari Girl and Armi Ratia, while being in tune with the times, were never quite examples of living, breathing organisms, they were more documents, or monuments to declare what it was to be a 'woman' in Finland. This may attest to why almost thirty years after her death, Armi Ratia is still a crucial component to Marimekko's journalistic profile, and Kirsti Paakkanen's corporate rhetoric.

Breaking away from Karelianism was said to be a deliberate strategy when Kirsti Paakkanen took over the company during the early 1990s (Anttikoski, 2003, 111). This may be due to the lack of consumer interest in older Marimekko styles that was expressed by poor business performance during the 1980s. Consumer tastes were told to have taken a turn for the international, mostly influenced by New York and Milan (Sarje, 1986, 56). Reviewing Marimekko's design approach today it is noticed that the 'classic' styles and the 'international' approach (influenced by undertaking in the

[104] To see an example of material US 1960s feminists were rejecting refer to Nina Fischer's *How to Help Your Husband Get Ahead* (1964).

1980s) have been combined in a move to broaden clientele. Further, rhetoric of the Mari Girl has been replaced with momentary loan phrases from the Armi Ratia era in Annual Reports and media coverage describing Kirsti Paakkanen's business career and corporate achievements. While much has been written about Kirsti Paakkanen's childhood in Saarijärvi in Finnish[105] there is very little biographical information about this available in English. Thus, reflecting on national poetry such as J. L. Runeberg's 1830 *Saarijärven Paavo* (Saarijärvi's Paavo), incidentally older than the published versions of the *Kalevala*, there seems to be a nationally oriented approach to attaching Kirsti Paakkanen's persona in some way to Finnish nationalist narrative. Whether it is the need for all prominent Finnish figures to be attached to national narrative in someway inside Finnish borders remains to be seen. However, possibly due to the lesser known nature of *Saarijärven Paavo* on an international scale, combined with the need to provide a strengthened overall 'Finnish' character on the global market, unification and homogenisation of the national culture have been seen as ideal — less confusing.

Throughout Kirsti Paakkanen's career there has also been an emphasis placed on gender. She founded the advertising agency Womena to combat discrimination against women professionals and publicly articulated the difference women's and men's approaches to leadership as opposed[106]. Yet, given this background as an advocate for gender equality in the corporate world, I still feel that there is a drift between representation of the strong, career-centred, target-oriented Kirsti Paakkanen and the women who are represented in Marimekko's current advertising. To start with, the women who seem to be concentrated on in the composition of recent collection catalogues are those who are in their early twenties, thin and classically beautiful. This may be due to the fact that Marimekko now employs professional models for advertising campaigns as compared to using their own factory staff. But, the women in Marimekko advertisements today seem to resemble those in campaigns of most other designer labels. Apart from deliberate national symbolic references used through displaying national landmarks, saunas and flags, the women, the clothes and their actions may be placed in any other Western context within the global economic sphere. The women are detached from their surroundings and do not refer any sense of

[105] For example, see the Finnish language documentary about Kirsti Paakkanen titled *Kirsti Paakkanen – Marimekon muutosjohtaja* (Leimu Dir., 1992) available at: http://www.yle.fi/elavaarkisto/?s=s&g=5&ag=33&t=&a=2436

[106] Kirsti Paakkanen stated that "[m]en in business start at the top, they create positions for themselves then work down. Women work from the bottom up, and value their workers" (Booth, 2005).

productivity. As the women during the 1960s to 70s had an economy, industries and society to run in the legacy of post-war reconstruction, the women in the 2000s seem to have lost their role of constructing. Their representations demonstrate the role of being seen, or in other words, as a consuming ornament in the midst of post-industrial capitalism. When she will be able to take up a daily planner, load the film in the camera or take control of the plane again, will be anybody's guess.

Final reflections and possible directions

In my writing and research I have tried to cover a large portion of textual and promotional samples. I realise that particularly in regards to the advertising material, there would be a lot more to analyse in terms of composition, intercultural representation and cross-textual referencing (i.e. locating dialogue the Marimekko advertising has with cultural movements and products such as movies). For this to be possible I would have to limit my selection of material to only a few key sources, such as using *The Traveler* (1977) as a basis for analysing the *Ritva Falla Collection* (Spring/Summer 2007). Further, as a result of comments given after a recent conference presentation I delivered[107], I realised that this research could have taken several directions in regards to close intertextual analysis of Marimekko advertising. For example, one of the commentators identified a pictorial example I had used from the *Matti Seppänen Collection* catalogue (Autumn/Winter 2003-2004) as relating to poses produced by Greta Garbo in promotional material for the movie *Queen Christina* (1933). This is a movie that has been heavily researched in the field of queer studies, relating to Garbo's transsexual role.

Through analysing Marimekko's textual material and publicity, it has become apparent that from the company's early inception, social movements and societal changes have played key roles in the adjustment of written and visual vocabulary. Current business philosophy seeks to include elements of the profiles during each of the eras of the corporation's existence. The company may not embrace Armi Ratia's 1967 concern for focusing its strategies on finding "solutions to people's problems," and representing "the endless struggle of an individual's soul and spirit" (cited in Nikula, 2003, 120-121), but its success does seem to lie in delivering products which can be identified as "a la Marimekko". Examples of this are *Unikko*, *Tasaraita*, *Jokapoika*,

[107] The 3rd Christina Conference on Women's Studies and the 4th European Gender and ICT Symposium (March 8th-10th, 2007)

Kivet and *Appelsiini* to name a few. Strong lines of business gift and clothing products suggest a continued focus on the professional consumer, even if the consumer's profile no longer fits with that of the Mari Girl. An old motto of Armi Ratia's regarded the fact that Marimekko did not ask customers what they wanted, the company taught them what they wanted (Nikula, 2003, 121), and that failure of customers to buy Marimekko products was simply a communication problem (Ainamo, 1996, 160). Judging from current product selection strategies based on profitability, this no longer seems to apply.

I am satisfied with the choice in discussing the textual material as it has provided a basis of understanding the general repetition of terms and phrases which have become embedded in the profile of the Marimekko Corporation. I am also satisfied that this thesis has revealed the change in discourses from design oriented to profit oriented, from specifically Karelian to generally Finnish and from equating customer to company staff and leader, to being autonomous, ambiguous consumers. No interviews were used, and the corporation was not contacted, which was a deliberate strategy to remain 'impartial' to interpretations and readings of the company's material. However, in the future I would like this research to take a more concentrated view in the picture towards cross-cultural referencing and international interpretation of the Marimekko products and the corporation. To do this I would need to intensively focus on the study of shop-layouts in key export countries such as the United States, Japan and Sweden and I would like to concentrate my understanding of the transnational process from an internal perspective. Thus, extensive interviews will be needed inside the corporation of key staff such as the director Kirsti Paakkanen, Päivi Lonka in exports and licensing, Riitta Koljonen in product information, Marja Korkeela in corporate communications, and various import representatives from respective export countries.

As Sarje (1986, 56) asked: "Is the story of Marimekko changing? Will it ne'er again tell of reconstruction, migration and the new influence?" I feel that the story is changing. In my opinion the analysis of Marimekko material in this research has demonstrated this, through its representations of women consumers (models) and descriptions of the female leaders. As with culture, in order to keep up with the pace of migration trends, developing technology, Marimekko and other corporations are constantly in states of change to survive. Marimekko's overall corporate direction for change has been mentioned in every Annual Report since 2004 as being the move towards a stronger international market (2004, 7; 2005, 7; 2006, 4). Reasoning for this is due to the Marimekko Corporation's leadership desire to continue expansion in light

of its awareness of Finland's small population. It is the construction of Finnishness, in Marimekko product display and international retail arrangements that I would like to continue investigating in the future.

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