

**Valvomo consist of eight designers / architects: Teppo Asikainen, Vesa Hinkola, Markus Nevalainen, Kari Sivonen, Ilkka Terho, Jan Tromp, Rane Vaskivuori and Timo Vierros. Here are some comments from three of them.**

### **Ilkka Terho**

A passion can take you far, but first it can take you to silly situations. "When we started there were often 'real' designers telling us to get off their circuit," tells Ilkka Terho (37), now laughing. But, back then for the purists a design collective founded by some architect students was too much to stomach.

For Ilkka, it all began with drawing, the original passion and pastime already encouraged at home from the early age on. That led to studying architecture, which led to – Valvomo. Amidst managerial duties drawing has remained. In fact, it is the very basis of his work of which four items are on display in Milan.

"It means endless hours of sitting and making a vast number of sketches. Eventually, after playing around with forms and materials, editing and simplifying, something interesting will come out – or not," Ilkka explains and is quick to distance himself from minimalism or other narrow categories.

"Following isms, trends or having a defined user group in mind produces only textbook design. Forms and shapes as such are not enough. Each object has to earn its existence. There must be that extra something."

### **Vesa Hinkola**

Born and bred in northern Karelia in eastern Finland, Vesa Hinkola (35) likes to think Big. Presumably, nature and its open skies have left a mark and sown the seeds for the choice of profession? "Don't know about that, but I do like fooling around with wider expanses and putting things in perspective."

Enough of architectural jargon, how does this show in his design? "Perhaps my approach is pretty straightforward and down-to-earth. I try to see the whole picture, not just the detail," explains one of the Globlow lamp designers.

Exhibitions, books, gazing at the world with eyes wide open – the sources of inspiration are many. Not least different and new materials, which could start the wheel spinning by opening up novel solutions.

Vesa says he has simultaneously a few dozen ideas vacating the board. "Most of the time I'm trying out new combinations. It is constant searching. Sometimes, and quite often, you are just stuck. But, if one out of twenty takes off, I consider that a good percentage. I tend to start with a fairly avant-garde fashion, but when realism steps in, it does not necessarily mean watering down the original idea. A compromise could be a beautiful thing."

But is there any time for those wide expanses? "Absolutely, letting your pen fly once in a while is therapeutic."

### **Markus Nevalainen**

Take an ordinary teenage boy and ask about the future. What you get is probably a few ice hockey players, an odd doctor or a lawyer, but mostly blank faces. Well, some boys are different. "I knew very early that I wanted to study architecture," claims Markus Nevalainen, now at the tender age of 35.

This pursuit resulted in a conscious effort to gather as much real life experience as possible. And not from the ivory tower, but from the nitty-gritty angle. "I moved from one job to another just to widen my horizons. Understanding the circumstances from the user's perspective is essential for an architect – and for a designer."

The key word is obvious: usability. "Design and architecture, both of these are service occupations, for the benefit of the public. I simply detest the heroic and personality driven image sometimes attached to these jobs," says Markus.

Markus has found his closest niche in lighting design. His latest work is a lamp in the shape of buoy. You touch it, it starts to glow. No desperate attempts to find a switch, no harsh light straight into your face.

"Light has an architectural function. It is a means to perceive space. But, I am also personally attached to light. As I spend a lot of time diving and fishing, buoys are an emblem of warmth and safety."

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