

Via Helsinki

Finavia Magazine for Air Travellers • 3/2013

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ALL
WITHIN
200
STEPS


AND
AARNIO
HAS
THE BALL

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**“CREATIVITY MEANS
HAVING NO LIMITS,”
SAYS EERO AARNIO,
THE WORLD-FAMOUS
DESIGNER.**





Who's Got the Ball?

You may have seen it in a James Bond film or on the cover of an international interior-design magazine. Or perhaps you're one of the lucky folks who have had an opportunity to sit in one... The Ball Chair is a design classic, still much admired around the world at the grand old age of 50 years.

"Climb in and enjoy your own isolated world. Everything that moves and swings seems to interest people," ponders designer **Eero Aarnio** when asked why this chair, which he designed back in 1963, still holds an attraction for people, one decade after another.

The ball shape is pleasing to the eye, but aesthetics are not the only reason for choosing it: this shape allows maximum durability with less material. It goes without saying that the shape of this fibreglass chair has not changed over time. Nowadays, however, you can order a new one that comes with armrests and audio functions.

Today the design value of this chair seems obvious to most, but things were different at the beginning. Aarnio remembers a manager at the furniture factory being so certain of the product's failure that he made a big promise while watching the first Ball Chairs being packed for a furniture show in Cologne: 'I shall eat my hat if even one of these sells,' he said. Aarnio laughs when telling the story but does not let us know whether the manager actually did consume his hat. In any case, the chairs were sold for customers in as many as 27 countries within the first week alone!

Thousands more have been sold since then. The Ball Chair can be found in homes associated with many familiar names, among them **Elton John**, **Bing Crosby**, **Princess Grace of Monaco**, and Iran's former **Empress Farah**. Today the Ball Chair has sales representatives in 62 countries, with sales being the highest in Germany and Japan.



YOU CAN HELP IMPROVE THE LIFE OF DEPRIVED CHILDREN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BY DROPPING A COIN OR TWO IN PLAN'S PASTILLI BOXES, DESIGNED BY AARNIO AND FOUND AT HELSINKI AIRPORT.

An expert in the language of design innovation. Aarnio's groundbreaking design has been highly acclaimed around the globe and garnered remarkable recognition for him. An example brings this home: the *New York Times* crossword has given a certain word with four letters the clue 'innovative furniture designer Aarnio' a full seven times!

Aarnio's design language has deeply affected many admirers. Aarnio recalls a letter he received from the other side of the globe. "My father is an architect and my mother an interior designer. I am seven years old and my name is Eero," Aarnio says, quoting his young namesake from New Zealand.

He does not consider his work typically Finnish, but one's origins always play a significant role, even if only in the background. In France, people have commented that the Ball Chair could not have been born in their country. Aarnio does believe there is some truth in this. He explains: "France has an old and established culture, which can also become a burden when one is creating something new. In Finland, we are broadminded and down-to-earth; we can start designing new things without history slowing us down and limiting our imagination."

No limits. Aarnio has never had any limits when creating new ideas. Some time ago, he was asked to design a money-collection box for Plan, an organisation that helps children in developing countries. Before the first phone call was over, Aarnio had already come up with the idea of using his own Pastilli chair, which would make an excellent box for donations through only slight redesigning of the top portion.

"I had the box ready the following day. I am known as a pretty fast guy," laughs Aarnio. These boxes for collecting donations can now be seen at Helsinki Airport, where they gather money to improve deprived children's quality of life.

This is a good example of how Aarnio can come up with ideas from anywhere. His ideas extend from furniture to toothpicks, from cigarette cases to light fittings, watering cans, and countless other objects.

"Creativity means having no limits. For me, the process starts with a feeling, a sense of what kind of object I would like to create. After getting an idea, I will figure out the limits myself, whether I will be able to realise such an impos-

sible idea. And if the idea is good and I believe in it myself, this leads to enthusiasm," he explains.

A continuous stream of new products. Aarnio hasn't tucked his ideas away in a drawer to await discovery; he likes to be in direct contact with manufacturers. And even if something is not taken on in Finland, it might get a very warm welcome somewhere else. At this point in the conversation, Aarnio picks up one of his latest creations, which has just entered production: a kitchen timer that looks like a duck and bears the straightforward name 'Duck'.

"You can set the minutes and seconds with the timer. And when the time is up, the duck goes 'Quack, quack!'," says Aarnio, imitating the timer, manufactured by Italian design house Alessi. He then points at a watering can, which is leaning forward so eagerly that it seems about to start spurting water out right now.

"It's called EverGreen, and we send a lot of them to Japan," Aarnio says of the can, signed 'Design by Eero Aarnio'.

There seems to be no end to the objects of his ideas. For example, chairs have been designed and manufactured for ages, and one could be easily forgiven for thinking they have been done to death and that nothing new could emerge, but Aarnio just laughs at this: "Just think – the English alphabet has 26 letters, and how many different things can we create with them? The letters are building blocks that can be organised and reorganised in innumerable ways."

His pace shows no signs of slowing. Now 81 years old, he hesitates for a brief moment when considering whether he would dare to test out the most recent line of products he has designed for children. But because this project is not finished yet, it will have to remain a secret for now.

"And be sure not to write anything about this," he urges. I promise, and then, with twinkling eyes, he gets up and fetches a box, opens it, and shows me... ●