



1980

Designed in Finland

ALL-ROUND SEATING

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Eero Aarnio, born and bred in Helsinki, is a designer on the move, resourceful and sensitive to winds of change. His work cannot be regarded from the standpoint usually adopted for Finnish design products. It does not carry on the traditions of Finnish woodcraft, it has no mysticism, no shapes or joints inspired by closeness to nature.

As a designer he is of quite another calibre, and here again his urban background, his cleverness, should be kept in mind. Victor Papanek in his book "Das Papanekkonzept" puts designers in two categories which he calls hunter-fisher-sailor and farmer. Aarnio is an example of the first.

A farmer builds on what already exists, developing and adapting traditions, whereas a hunter learns what is new. He learns from his environment, changes while he learns, and remoulds the environment itself. The farmer is a specialist, the hunter a jack of all trades. In the words of Papanek: "His brain gives him the social consciousness and control of random impulses which life in a hunting community demands."

Eero Aarnio, then, is an allrounder moulded in the city jungle. I have not the slightest doubt that he would also succeed in graphic design, advertising

or photography: these were the lines he followed in his first freelance years as a means of supporting his family.

Eero Aarnio is an allrounder in the further sense that he is one of our most international designers. This means not only that his designs are produced in many parts of the world – starting from



his firstborn, a rattan stool made in Hong Kong – but also that his form idiom is easily adopted.

As Aarnio once said of a plastic chair he had designed, a seat is merely something to fit the human posterior, which is much the same all over the world.

To quote Papanek once more, learning from life and surroundings is a joyous experience for an allrounder. Aarnio bears



this out in full measure. He is well worth hearing on the subject of how he started to design the prototype of his Globe chair in the early 1960s. The new GRP material attracted him with its flexibility, and Eero wanted to produce the most flexible of all forms, namely a ball. "I can spin a ball together any time," as he put it. But it claimed the whole of his summer holiday, stacks of newspaper as lining for the mould and, as a hardener, the entire stocks of water-glass held by the chemists of his local town.

The Globe was followed by the Pastille, a low structure like a piece of chewing gum flattened by a

thumb. This received the Award of Interior Design in the United States and is displayed by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Another work, the acrylic sphere, was manufactured by a small lighting appliance enterprise, as furniture factories did not grasp the idea of his creation. The transparent hanging sphere was blown like a soap bubble. A steel ring surrounding a mouthpiece held a plastic sheet in place,

and air was blown into the sphere from beneath!

Many of Eero Aarnio's products have originated from international competitions in which he is a keen participator. His plywood and leather seating series which won first prize in the Cantú competition of 1965 was later put into production by Cassina. A steel and leather chair which originally won a design competition arranged by Finland's Instrumentarium company is now manufactured by Möbelitalia.



Eero Aarnio's Avec – his "Take Along" chair – was introduced at the Copenhagen Furniture Fair in May 1979. Soon afterwards it was shown in a joint exhibition by Eero Aarnio and Esko Pajamies at Asko GmbH, Cologne.

Avec is a chair for modern people unwilling to spend much on furniture. For people mentally and physically on the move, changing country, town and dwelling at will and taking their furniture along. Even people of more sedentary habits may at some time need to do the same. So Avec is for Everyman, the T-shirt of furniture, one might say.

In principle the chair consists of four legs and a set of assembly components. The canvas seat is pulled over the wooden frame and fastened with boat fittings. Nothing more.

Anyone tired of complicated instructions for knock-down furniture need have no fear of Avec – the chair can be assembled in one way only. Eero has done the thinking for us. The bag in which the chair is supplied is also serviceable. It is a seaman's bag, neat and simple, with seams as hardwearing as those in the chair seat.

