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DESIGN HERO

Eero Aarnio

The Finnish designer whose Pop-tastic, plastic furniture summed up the swinging Sixties is still a creative force today...



Clockwise, from top left

Energetic and passionate, Eero is still a creative force at the age of 75; Eero's famous 'Bubble' chairs, designed in 1968, suspended in his home studio; his iconic 'Puppy' chair/toy, designed in 2003 for Magis's 'Me Too' kids' collection, graced the set of UK TV show *Big Brother*, although we're not sure if this is good, or bad ➡

Eero Aarnio's home is a tranquil white haven on the shores of a lake, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the water and wild Finnish countryside. But it's by no means a minimalist temple: this is a home with warmth and character, reflecting both the design philosophy and personality of one of Finland's best-known industrial designers.

A Sixties legend, Eero is the talent behind the curvaceous and cocooning 'Ball' chair (a space-age globe on a revolving base) and 'Bubble' seat (a hemispherical hanging lounger in transparent acrylic, right). Born in 1932, Eero studied at the Institute of Industrial Arts in Helsinki and started his own design studio in 1962. He pioneered working with plastic and fibreglass and his designs broke with convention, experimenting with shape and form to create classics redolent of the colourful and optimistic Pop Art era. His work is notable not only for its longevity (many of his Sixties pieces are still in production) but also for its sense of fun; this is serious design that doesn't take itself too seriously.

He and his wife Pirkko have lived in their current home, 35km west of Helsinki, for 19

years. 'We always wanted to live by the water and knew immediately when we found this plot by the lake edge that it was a place where we wanted to build. I designed the house and we part built it, too,' says Eero. Huge windows and six skylights flood the home and studio with natural light, while white stucco walls, tiled floors and sofas act as a neutral palette to set off the colourful prototypes of Eero's striking designs.

In the winter when the Finnish countryside is covered in a blanket of snow, the house blends beautifully into the landscape. 'I believe a house should always be designed in accordance with the natural environment that surrounds it, it should almost grow from its surroundings and I think I have succeeded in achieving that here,' says Eero. It's the perfect setting for this natural talent... www.eeroaarnio.com







'Deep down I feel I am an architect, but life took me in a different direction'



Top Eero's Finnish home, which he designed in accordance with the snowy landscape surrounding it

Above His sculptural 'Tomato' chair, designed in 1971

Right Eero's iconic 'Ball' chair, complete with handy telephone



5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT...

EERO AARNIO

- 1** Eero's latest chair, the bird-like 'Tipi' for Adelta, was released in 2002 and two new lights, the 'Swan' for Melaja and 'Innosol Origo' for Innojok, were designed last year.
- 2** His favourite room is his studio, a white space flooded with light (see previous page). 'There's no better place to work,' he says.
- 3** Eero's chairs are exhibited in the V&A in London, the MoMA in New York and the prestigious Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein.
- 4** His 1963 fibreglass 'Ball' chair has starred in films, countless advertisements and Eero has a model of his own, complete with telephone (left).
- 5** Eero originally wanted to become an architect: 'Deep down I feel I am an architect, but life took me in a different direction.'