



Pennti Vänskä



Ulla-Maija Lähdermäki

Fashion designer Ritva-Liisa Pohjalainen closes her eyes. There they are, in unseen images: childhood games, the massive reed beds of the Gulf of Bothnia coast, fox tracks like a string of pearls on crisp spring snow. The moon, the stars and the aurora borealis, which on winter nights lit the sky behind the black tops of the spruce trees. The glitter of wet asphalt on the highway, the sighing of the wind, the warmth of summer and birds' songs.

"When I was small, our clutch of kids used to play with the fish of the sea and the animals of the woods. Stones, pine cones and water were our friends. They are still the most beautiful things in the world for me," Ritva-Liisa Pohjalainen says. The delicate and rugged scenery of Scandinavia was the ground from which Pohjalainen grew. She still recognises its traces in herself, in her style and her personal ideals. The journey from a small seaside town to becoming an international fashion designer has been at once long and short.

"I've always wanted to make international fashion collections. At the same time, I want my work to show where it comes from. I rate style, quality and continuity more highly than rapidly changing superficial trends," Pohjalainen comments.

Ritva-Liisa Pohjalainen speaks of timelessness and harmony – in spite of the fact that she has been one of the leading designers in Finnish fashion for thirty years. Even in spite of the way, season after season, she surprises us with her forms and choice of materials. They stand out both in her large industrial collections and in her stunning one-off evening gowns.

Pohjalainen graduated as a fashion designer from the University of Art and Design in 1974. Since then she has worked as a designer for a number of Finland's leading fashion houses and she has designed fabrics in Italy. She has received prestigious prizes for her work in every decade of her career.

When you listen to Pohjalainen's plans, it seems somehow that the work is just beginning. Her latest venture, a collection of silver jewellery, has just hit the market. The *Rii's* range of women's clothing that bears her name is sold in a constantly growing number of countries.

Riitta Raatikainen

sense of style

FASHION DESIGNER RITVA-LIISA POHJALAINEN
HAS WON THE KAJ FRANCK DESIGN PRIZE.



Outfit in merino
wool for *Silo*, 1983
Sebastian Nurmi

Crescents, silver jewellery from the *Moon* series

Pennti Vänskä





Detail from evening dress Snail

Pentti Vänskä

Unique jewellery Spirale

Pentti Vänskä



Professionals in the business estimate Pohjalainen's success with total professionalism and long-termism as key terms. She is able to sense the spirit of the times and put it immediately into industrial production without compromising in the slightest on her personal vision and ambitions. She constantly thinks up new materials, new cuts, new accessories and new variations on classic clothing. Her one-off confections often spring from nature or history, and she gives no quarter in finding ways to make them a reality. She is prolific to an extreme degree.

Behind the haute couture shows, exhibitions and awards, in everyday life Ritva-Liisa Pohjalainen is a slender woman and the mother of two children. Creative work in amongst the hectic schedules of the clothing business demands the ability to regenerate oneself constantly, and it wells up out of Pohjalainen as from a spring.

In the early spring 2004, Pohjalainen's work was the focus of a major exhibition at Designmuseo in Helsinki. She designed dozens of one-off dresses for the exhibition, but she produced them in a totally new way: without sketches, she either made them first as scale models or produced them straight from the cloth onto natural-size dummies. The free fall into the world of materials and forms generated many innovations which will find industrial applications in the future.

"I work in the same way as old-time tailors. My grandmother was a seamstress and my mother was keen on knitting, so making things with your hands has always been close to me," Pohjalainen says with a laugh. "I want to create designer garments that anyone can buy and which will beautify their wearer. I hope that ordinary women will find well-fitting and high-quality clothing for work, special occasions and leisure in my collections.

"A good garment is a dependable companion. Its materials stay good-looking for a long time, from morning till night, even year after year. Its simply clean lines suit it to many situations, so with a little ornament a business garment can be made ready for a party or vice versa.

"The Ril's collection is predicated on making fashion for a woman who has found her own style and confidence. She doesn't have to make her choices according to superficial fashions spreading in all directions. The essence of classic appeal is in tiny, insightful details, not in overkill."

Ritva-Liisa Pohjalainen says that experimentation and the search for the new are the essence of her work. She constantly has to venture into the unknown, resiliently and unsparingly. She knows that if ye seek ye shall find, always.

"When I go travelling, I often visit art exhibitions and second-hand bookshops I know. An idea for something new can just as easily come out of a photo exhibition as a book of architecture or a rendered wall by the roadside. Suddenly I just see the wall as a fabric and I know what I have to do."

TRANSL. J.A.

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Erottojankatu 7, FI-00130 Helsinki*

Ril's collection, autumn 2004

Kira Glushkoff

