

PRICE 10 EUR. SEK 89. NOK 85. DKK 80. ISK 880. GBP 5.90. USD 13. JPY 1100. NO. 1 005. SPRING. QUARTERLY REVIEW OF NORDIC ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN.

# FORUM

The Copenhagen oper



# Ilkka Suppanen

**THE DESIGNER** Ilkka Suppanen was one of the Finnish brains behind Snowcrash, the concept exhibition which went on to become a Scandinavian design firm whose rise and fall largely echoed that of the Swedish IT bubble.

Snowcrash's laid-back irony suited the wild young data nerds to perfection; they preferred to attend business meetings lying rather than sitting but they still demanded the presence of design. Suppanen insists on his permanent fidelity to the Snowcrash image and today the aesthetics that we associate with Snowcrash smile out at us from his new «slacker chair» *Lazy Lady*, manufactured by the Japanese company E&Y. Functional romanticism and strip cartoon aesthetics in full flow still bubble out from Finland.

«Intelligent humour always works. But I've never laughed at Snowcrash products,» claims Suppanen from his office in Helsinki. «But they do make me smile.»

On his merit list he can count *Airbag* for Snowcrash and *Flying Carpet* for Cappellini. Other projects include interiors, glass, crystal and lighting, but he prefers to call himself designer and not architect.

*Lazy Lady* is a play on «lazy boy». The point of the chair is to provide from the start the kind of relaxed postures that most backbones adopt in

ordinary chairs after a while. The shape is fixed and not negotiable; a reasonable degree of physical abandon is encouraged but no more. The commission: to make a chair which functions on both the Japanese and European markets, and the choice of materials proved to be wool and stainless steel.

In his speech Suppanen is a modernist and *Lazy Lady*'s appearance is characterised by the aesthetics launched rigidly almost a century ago. The difference however is essential: where Suppanen's piece of furniture speaks to a relaxed lifestyle, modernism stressed the importance of gymnastics and posture.

«This chair is a modern piece. Call it modernist if you want. I call myself modern, quite simply, but that's my own definition and it can't be applied to anything else. I don't think the designer matters, it's the object itself that does. The discussion about modern and post-modern died out 15 years ago and I certainly hope it's over,» says Suppanen.

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