



# Cooper Hewitt

*Smithsonian Design Museum*

Marimekko collection, 1951-1979 (bulk 1957-1979)

2011

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## Collection Overview

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| <b>Repository:</b> | Smithsonian Libraries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Title:</b>      | Marimekko collection                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Identifier:</b> | SIL-CH.1997-123-1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Date:</b>       | 1951-1979<br>(bulk 1957-1979)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Creator:</b>    | Marimekko, Inc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Extent:</b>     | 8.5 Cubic feet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Language:</b>   | Undetermined .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Summary:</b>    | <p>This collection covers the period that Ratia was with Marimekko, 1951-1979. It includes scrapbook, press releases, correspondence, brochures, photographs, magazine articles, swatches, and trade catalogs. It contains extensive information about the company's affiliation with D/R and its operations in Finland. It includes a copy of "Phenomenon Marimekko," the catalog from a comprehensive exhibition that was held at the Museum of Applied Arts in Helsinki in 1986. The collection contains legal correspondence and contracts pertaining to D/R's representation of Marimekko in the United States, as well as numerous swatches, sample books, brochures for stockholders, and trade catalogs. Files pertaining to Marimekko's work in Finland is mostly in Finnish and consists of brochures, posters, articles, and sample books, as well as a copy of the publication, "Design in Finland 1983." Additional information on Marimekko's association with D/R can be found in the Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive's Design Research, Inc. Collection.</p> |

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The materials in this collection were donated to Cooper-Hewitt in 1975 by Benjamin and Jane Thompson.

### Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Textiles Department. 28 printed textiles designed by or for Marimekko.

### Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Wallcoverings Department. One samplebook.

### Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Marimekko Homepage. Additional information on the history of the company and its activities today can be found on Marimekko's homepage: <http://www.marimekko.fi/>.

## Other Finding Aids

No finding aid.

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## Biographical Note

Finnish fabric manufacturer and retail chain. The company's chief designer was Armi Ratia (1912-1979), who was known for her use of vibrant colors and large patterns. She first joined her husband's design firm, Printex, in 1949. In 1951, the company was renamed Marimekko, which means "a little dress for Mary" in Finnish. During the 1960s and '70s, the firm manufactured cotton, jersey, and wool fabrications, along with paper, laminated plastics, and table coverings. Ratia was known for designing free, easy fashions in bold painterly designs taking much of her inspiration from nature and handicraft.

Ben Thompson, the founder of the retail establishment Design Reseach, Inc. (D/R), discovered Ratia's designs at the Finnish Pavilion of the Brussels World Fair in 1957, and persuaded her to come to the United States. D/R became the exclusive representative of Marimekko products in the U.S. Today, through franchises worldwide, Marimekko stores sell simple clothing for women and children, as well as household accessories and furniture.

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## Arrangement

Unprocessed. This collection consists of six record groups: 1) Company history and background information; 2) Marimekko/Design Research, Inc. Correspondence; 3) Marimekko Finland; 4) Scrapbooks and press clippings; 5) Swatches and samples; and 6) Photographs.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

- Clothing trade -- United States
- Costume design -- Finland
- Fashion design
- House furnishings
- Interior decoration -- Finland
- Retail trade -- United States
- Stores, Retail -- United States
- Textile design -- Finland

### Types of Materials:

- Clippings
- Correspondence
- Fashion designers
- Home furnishings designers
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Swatch books
- Textile designersa
- Trade catalogs

Names:

Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive  
Design Research, Inc.  
Marimekko Oy  
Printex Corporation  
Ratia, Armi, 1912-1979  
Thompson, Benjamin, 1918-2002