



Linnut: Magis – Iittala - Oiva Toikka

“Looking into new materials for use in rotation moulding, we stumbled upon polycarbonate and quickly realised that hardly any manufacturers in Italy apply this combination – if any at all,” explains Enrico Perin, Magis’ head of development. This is surprising, given just how remarkable – and brilliantly coloured – polycarbonate materials are. In fact, polycarbonate is so versatile that a transparent sheet can be layered onto a second opaque sheet. Adding differently-coloured granulates, the glossy surface can be endowed with new patterns and shades – unique from object to object.

“With polycarbonate, you can create an effect very similar to the rich finish so typical of blown glass,” says Eugenio Perazza, founder of Magis. Perazza goes on to recount the moment when, three years ago, he first realised that this new method of handling a transparent plastic material could be the beginning of a new product: by replacing traditional glass with plastic, it could give new life to an existing collection of glass objects. Not just any glass objects, either – he was thinking of the famous Birds by Oiva Toikka for Iittala.

The Birds by Toikka collection of little glass sculptures is among the glass manufacturer Iittala’s most iconic works. It is also the best-known creation of the Finnish designer Oiva Toikka. Toikka has been prolific: over the last forty years, the designer has created over four hundred of these decorative figurines. Today, collecting Toikka birds has become an international pursuit – as glass bird collectors track down rarities and discuss sightings, their enthusiasm equals that of their counterparts in the ornithological world.

Often inspired by real-life animals, but sometimes drawn from his own imagination, Birds by Toikka includes specimens from around the world: there are glass pigeons, ducks, owls, pheasants, tits and finches. Each bird has its own strong character, and bears some traces of human nature. Individually mouth-blown, each bird is unique – and many people have developed personal relationships with the little glass creatures living in their homes.

The collection first took flight in 1972, when Oiva Toikka – who is among the most renowned glass artists in Finland – designed his small glass Flycatchers figurines. These first birds varied in colour from series to series, depending on what colour glass was available at the time. In fact, this suited the designer-artist just fine: he often likes to let his imagination be guided by whatever is happening on the ground at any given moment in Iittala’s traditional glass factory.

Or, as Oiva Toikka himself explains, “The work with the glass blower cannot be based on drawings or a precise brief. The object is as good as the conversation with the blower during the glass making process. I have never really liked to do technical drawings.”

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Toikka has taken a similar approach with his design work outside of the glass factory: "Our collaboration with Oiva has been a long and ongoing discussion," explains Perazza, who has been working with the Finnish designer ever since the early 2000s. Then they created their first designs for children's rooms: Paradise Tree (2009) and Dodo (2009) – a rocking stool in the form of a bird!

Eventually, Perazza started to wonder: "Why not reinterpret some of his glass masterpieces and create a small collection of birds that are also whimsical light objects?"

Oiva Toikka was excited about the idea. Iittala was also soon convinced of the plan's charm, and agreed that it was a good idea to illuminate the iconic glass sculptures. Altogether, they selected five of the collection's most iconic birds. Now, Sulo, Pallas, Siiri, Kirassi and Palturi are the first members of a new collaborative project, Magis - Iittala - Oiva Toikka.

Called Linnut (the Finnish word for birds) these five birds now light up our homes. Thanks to their state-of-the-art lighting technology, Linnut are cable-free, movable light objects. They can be carried out to the terrace to light up a late summer dinner, or placed in a child's room to give off a friendly glow during the night. Or, a Linnut might stand in the entryway, just inside the front door – a friendly night owl, to welcome you home.

Nordic living has come to define cozyness – embodying the art of slowing down and appreciating the moment, the feeling of being at home. "Finnish design is about materiality, too," adds Oiva Toikka, reminding us that design always starts with the material itself. "What you make out of it is a part of your own imagination." It might be a curious pigeon, a cheeky chick, an idle duck or a quirky owl. With the lit-up Linnut, a bit of Finnishness has landed in the renowned Italian design house of Magis.

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