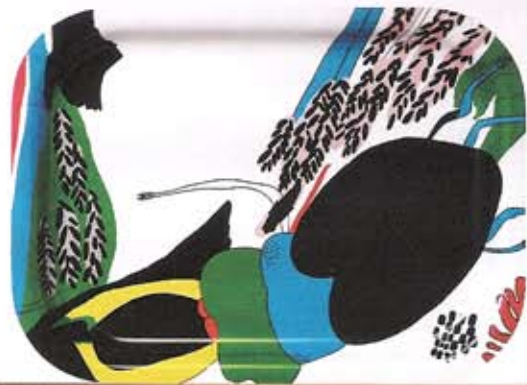


# THE RADAR FASHION

BY AMANDA ORR



*Clockwise: Marimekko's latest launches include the Ruohikossa tray, Kuva jacket, Guada textile, Latvassa Korkealla tray stand and Kuva dress.*

## NOT YOUR MOTHER'S MARIMEKKO *With the launch of its latest style stop, Silver Spring is starting to see a pattern*

While no one from NBC's hit mockumentary *The Office* toted home a statue on Golden Globe night, a handful of its cast members snagged enough swag from the Finnish company Marimekko to sate them nonetheless. The actresses who play Angela, Meredith and Jan—Angela Kinsey, Kate Flannery and Melora Hardin—were spotted at the Beverly Hilton Hotel's Celebrity Lounge, walking away with gobs of the brand's newly sophisticated stock.

Those giant poppies that made the company kitsch in the '60s and retro today are still blooming, but like so many mod monikers, Marimekko is all about the relaunch. Along with totally retooling the aesthetic, the Finnish design group expanded their enterprise this year and opened concept stores throughout the world, stocking everything from resort-ready empire waist dresses to graphic upholstery and tabletop textiles.

Just the third in the U.S., a Marimekko outpost is set to throw open its doors in downtown Silver Spring this month. Though it's hardly the first time that the Capitol City has had a love affair with this brand. The line first grabbed our attention when Jackie Kennedy, about to become First Lady, traded her Parisian togs with Marimekko's floral shift dresses. Once she was photographed wearing one starboard-side with JFK, a fashion stampede began.

This time around Marimekko is not about everything coming up flowers. "The new Marimekko is a good balance between our heritage—the designs everyone knows and loves—and the cutting edge of bold, new, graphic designs," says Yossie Bitton, director of Marimekko North America.

The fashion designers alone raise the company's cred substantially with solid skinny pants, chartreuse A-line jackets, graphic day dresses and

ankle-grazing gowns. On the home front, designers such as Maija Louekari have created award-winning textile designs such as Kassiopeia, which is a riot of color and modern graphics.

It's not entirely out with the old however. The company is honoring the best of classic Marimekko while launching new designs each year. The big, bold and abstract designs of the '60s rest side by side with this generation's botanicals, stripes and organic patterns. "The result is a fresh and timeless design collection," says Bitton. "We have 70-year-old designers working side by side with 23-year-olds."

When Marni Frankel, owner of the Silver Spring boutique Honfleur Home, heard about Marimekko's planned expansion, she approached the company about opening a concept store in her newly haute hood. Frankel traveled to Finland last year and selected 120 fabrics that will be available in the lifestyle destination store featuring home products, tony textiles, interior design services, specialty classes and a large slice of the clothing collection. Of the racks and stacks of chic ensembles, Frankel says it will be "a huge learning curve for folks. They'll never believe it's Marimekko."

She has plans to open future Marimekko boutiques in Chevy Chase and Penn Quarter. And if Hollywood's elite is any indication, those stores will be in hot demand: The ladies from *The Office* weren't the only starlets loving the newly lux-ed-up Marimekko during this latest awards season.

"They asked us to set up a gift booth at the Golden Globes," says Bitton, "And we ran out of everything." ■

*Marimekko, 8519 Georgia Ave., 800.656.3587.*