

EXPERTEASE
LAURA ITKONEN



WELL-ROUNDED

Ask Laura Itkonen what kind of artist she is, and the Finnish creative will be answering for a while: A designer of retail displays. A photographer and graphic artist. A jewelry maker. Tableware designer. Sculptor and ceramicist. It's the latter category, however, where Itkonen has received the most acclaim; this fall, she and three other talents will be recognized as Finland's most exciting young designers at Habitare, the annual interior design and furniture fair in Helsinki.

Itkonen's creativity has evolved since earning her master's in applied arts from the Aalto University School of Art in 2010. She started in visual design for a Finnish fashion retailer, and then began exploring ceramics with a series of wall tiles that can be hung as art – the first products to come from the studio she opened in 2016. Her latest works, the multimedia Sculptural Series, is a collection of lidded porcelain cups with handles made from rough earthenware, cylinders of marbled clay and tubes of metal with pearl-like clay accents. "The knobs are the result of my current inspiration. Sometimes it's a form in my head or sometimes it can be inspired by the material used," she notes, like the free-form earthenware: "It's a traditional Finnish wild clay, excavated straight from the ground of Somero, 100 kilometers from Helsinki. The contrast with the smooth porcelain is staggering."

Though Itkonen's work is functional, utilization isn't necessarily the goal, she says, adding, "I want to show that the value of an object is not only in its use but also in the form, material, colors and their combined beauty."

She makes her own clays and glazes using local raw materials. "The place between art and design feels very natural to me. Producing only functional tableware wouldn't be enough for me as a designer and artist. I want to express my own style in my products and stand out from the world of mass production. What fascinates me the most about clay is that it always has some shape or form. It's never a blank canvas."

And she loves mixing clay with other elements and methods. Next up is a project that involves 3-D printing, which she'll present at Habitare in September, and a collaboration with another artist that uses Finnish stones. Itkonen is currently in discussions with an (unnamed) American boutique to carry her wares, but for now, we'll have to fly to Helsinki to see them up close. vuelaboutique.com JENNIFER SERGENT

Candy-Coated Chic

NEW YORK CITY

The team at **Drake/Anderson** need no lesson in designing for the global glitterati. When approached for a project that would take its cues from high-end Madison Avenue boutiques – not to mention, include a candy-coated palette of beautiful, soft colors – they felt much obliged.

TEXT **BRETT WILLIAMS** PHOTOGRAPHY **BRITTANY AMBRIDGE**



MASTER BEDROOM: With a candy-coated palette of lavender and soft greens, the master bedroom features a wall of woven leather and sequined paneling.

Holding this sentiment as true north, and with a sagacious eye, the designers sourced ultra-luxurious materials with a soft-spoken elegance. A shimmering example is in the master bedroom where panels made of intricately woven leather and sequins by Charles Schaumburg play backdrop to the bed and bedside tables.



Elevated, hand-hewn finishes are seen throughout the 3,000-square-foot apartment, from the silver-leafed “wave” ceiling in the dining room – an inventive way to conceal unsightly beams and soffits of varying sizes – and a lavender metallic-leafed ceiling in the foyer, to a creamy, polished Venetian plaster on the living and dining room walls.

Observing the color story is a confectioner’s dream, conjuring images of saltwater taffy displays, if they were perfectly correlated. Soft greens, lavender, creams and white pervade while bolder tones are interjected sparingly, like a saturated peacock in the living room and deep amethyst in the foyer.

Drake is renowned for his bold use of color and although that remains a solid part of the firm’s repertoire, this slightly quieter palette is indicative of a new, more delicate voice; a voice that also embraces a restraint in furnishings and decoration, while letting stunning statement pieces sing.

The result is a new brand of minimalism, where big-gesture moments are balanced with low-slung furnishings simple in form.

As Anderson puts it, “Such a literal overlap with the fashion world allowed us to approach the design with a slightly different lens. It’s Upper East Side glamour and elegance with a breathability and ethereal quality.”



“The client loves clothes and had us study the hanging systems at Chanel as the functional model for her dressing rooms,” Drake adds. She also handed down design direction in a quippy one-liner that said it all: “I’m finished with Versace, I want Loro Piana.”

FOYER: Lavender metallic-leafed ceiling mirrors the circular shape of the amethyst-studded white marble floor. **DINING ROOM:** A sleek table for ten is topped off with a dripping and whimsical chandelier by Les Atelier Courbet. Sculptural chair by Sebastian Brajkovic. Bubble sculpture on credenza by Jeff Zimmerman. “Its motif is effervescent, like champagne, and the clients’ personalities,” Drake muses. **SEATING AREA:** Clean-lined upholstery and case pieces are anchored by a graphic and colorful area rug by Alpha Workshops for Edward Fields. **DRESSING ROOM:** The largest of the dressing rooms is sleek and a luxurious mix of materials including lacquer and glass panels, polished nickel details and leather-wrapped drawer fronts. The soft-green vanity sits pretty under a large-scale, custom mirror from Lorin Marsh. **BATHROOM:** The bath is enveloped in white marble, and the same lavender tone on the custom vanity is carried onto the ceiling.