

Kaj Franck - *A Designer's Utopia*

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Photo: Ella Tommila/The Finnish Glass Museum

Kaj Franck (1911–1989) was a Finnish glass and ceramic designer whose creations are a perfect marriage of geometrical form, colour, multifunctionality and timeless elegance. His designs draw inspiration from nature and from Japanese arts and crafts.

Franck carved out a long career at the Arabia ceramics company (1945–1961) and the Nuutajärvi glassworks (1950–1976). His notable designs for the Arabia factory include the *Kilta* tableware collection (1953), which later evolved into the *Teema* tableware series (1981). His specialization at Nuutajärvi was pressed glassware. Franck took a special interest in exploring the optical properties of glass. He experimented with many techniques including bubble glass, ‘exploded’ cased glass, filigree and a self-invented ring technique he developed in the 1960s and 1970s. His ringed plates and bowls are among his most famous glass objects. While his functional glassware is thin and lightweight, he was equally skilled in the medium of heavier glass sculpture. On top of his extensive work as a designer, Franck was a teacher, head instructor and artistic director at the Helsinki Institute of Industrial Arts (1945–1969) and was later appointed professor of design (1973–1978).

Although Franck is acclaimed primarily as a designer of glass and ceramics, he graduated in furniture design. During his long and varied career, he also designed furniture, printed fabrics, plasticware and interiors. His work is characterized by open-minded experimentation and bold combinations of materials.