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# From egosystem to ecosystem

It is time to move from an egosystem to an ecosystem; to start building communities and imagining new ways of caring for both the people and the world around us.

We champion a new mindset. We take a stand for progressive Nordic values which are built on care and respect for others. Perhaps progress isn't about being faster, but about being more conscious.

The third issue of the Iittala Journal is a toast to growth and the courage to question the things we take as a given.

In this issue, we travel to Greenland with photographer Tiina Itkonen to discover the changing face of its landscape and dive into Jane Withers' musings on a new water consciousness.

We stop to think about the concept of convenience and let sculptor Man Yau's hands turn waste glass into a one-of-a-kind sculpture. We pay tribute to Alfredo Häberli's glass innovations and visit Nathalie Du Pasquier in her Milanese studio to talk about the art of arranging things. We reflect on the anatomy of sustainable flowers and share tips on small deeds that can make the biggest difference.

The ethos of this edition is about optimism and change: a quietly hopeful wish for a new direction.





Curator and writer Jane Withers maps out the fluid forms of water and proposes that we reexamine water as an element.

Alfredo Häberli and Anniina Koivu discuss Alfredo's early work with Iittala and the fruits of this collaborative union.



Alento – p. 26



Alfredo Häberli Studio Visit – p. 6

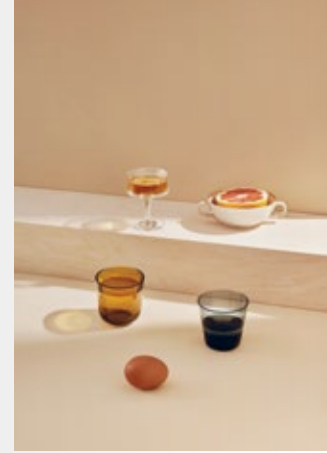


Sculptor and artist Man Yau dives into the role of aesthetics, ethics and tangibility through her collaborative sculpture with Iittala.

Photographer Matilde Viegas explores different ways of expressing care in the context of food and togetherness.

Under Glass – p. 88

Tangible Memories – p. 46



We trace the origins of the affection we feel towards objects that we have had and held for decades.

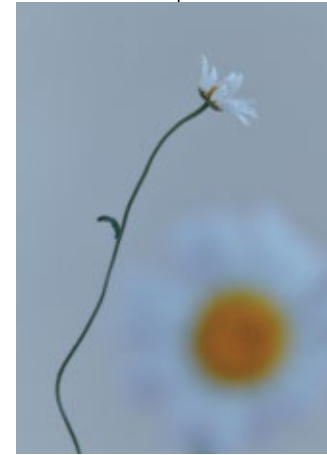
Hanna Piippo gathers her tips for choosing and building sustainable bouquets and caring for houseplants.

Changing Face – p. 34



Tiina Itkonen's photos from Greenland reveal a continent in motion both environmentally and demographically.

Sustainable Bouquets – p. 64



Siiri Mäkelä and Amanda Rejström, two climate movers and shakers, sit down to discuss change, positivity and small actions.

A New World – p. 96



# Alfredo Häberli Studio Visit

Argentinian-born Alfredo Häberli is a 55-year-old, Swiss contemporary industrial designer. Häberli manages to unite tradition and innovation in his design, much of which is influenced by his early childhood in Argentina as well as his curiosity about everyday life. We meet with Alfredo to discuss his ongoing collaboration with Iittala.





ANNIINA KOIVU Alfredo, let's talk about your long history with Iittala. Many of your projects have already become design classics; take 'Essence' (2001), 'Kids' Stuff' (2003) or your first joint project 'Origo' (1999).

ALFREDO HÄBERLI I was introduced to Iittala by a good friend—Stefan Ytterborn, of the Stockholm-based agency Ytterborn & Fuentes. He was setting up the international 'Relations' collaborations between Iittala and designers like Konstantin Grcic, Björn Dahlström, Marc Newson, Antonio Citterio and so forth. I hoped to become part of the series, but instead Stefan said there was another job for me—a far more challenging one. He wanted me to produce a new ceramic series for Rörstrand.

AK Sweden's traditional porcelain producer, Rörstrand had only just become part of the Iittala (and now Fiskars) Group. You come from a family whose traditions

lie in gastronomy—your parents ran a successful restaurant during your childhood years in Argentina.

AH That's true, I am sure my background helped. With Origo, we decided to take a straightforward, analytical approach and asked: how many items does a person really need at home? What's the alternative to a large service made up of specific, rarely-used items like a sauce boat, fish platter, tureen etc.? So, we found the starting point of 'in-between objects' and brought the group down to seven items.

AK So in the final iteration there are three different-sized plates and three vessels from cups to bowls. Working on both eating and serving ware, you created more universal items, which could be used for a variety of purposes.

AH Yes. Take the small cup for example: it can be an egg cup but also be



used for digestives, or even a vessel for your pills. The medium-sized cup can be for coffee, but it could also be a bowl to hold olives or other snacks. It has a handle, but the handle is short and flat—an abstraction that allows the cup to be seen as something more than just a coffee cup.

AK The other invention can be found on the underside of each item, where there is a ring and a little button in the centre.

AH Normally, a plate has a central dent to secure your cup. We did the opposite and added a bump.

AK Tapio Wirkkala used this kind of dent in his 'Captain' series, which was specially designed for use on a boat.

AH Yes. Whatever you stack—another plate, cup or bowl—can be fixed on top of this little extrusion.

AK Origo was revolutionary from the start, receiving prizes and entering design

museum collections. But tell me, what about the coloured stripes?

AH Everyone likes a bit of colour on their table. To get around flowers, which I am not so good with, I thought that a rainbow might add the ultimate decorative flair to the white series. Initially, we only coloured the egg cup. It went viral, and the entire first production run sold out in a few weeks. Finally, we coloured all the items and Origo became part of the Iittala collection.

AK Then came Essence two years later, the family of drinking glasses. Essence arrived at an important moment in Finnish food culture. Dining habits had started changing: outdoor dining became more elegant, the first Finnish restaurants were receiving stars, and people became wine lovers.





<sup>AH</sup> Iittala was catching up with this shift.

<sup>AK</sup> Until then, most of the wine glasses in the catalogue had all had sturdy stems. Take Wirkkala's 'Tavastia' or 'Tapio' series, or 'Kekkerit' and 'Jurmo' by Timo Sarpaneva.

<sup>AH</sup> Yes, before those—we are talking about 20 years ago—Finns tended to use beer glasses or water tumblers for wine drinking, if they drank wine at all. With this background in mind, we again asked the question: what is the minimum number of

items needed on a modern dinner table? The answer was seven, plus a carafe.

<sup>AK</sup> Essence is a very elegant collection of rather large, slightly masculine glasses created from a new and surprisingly durable glass material recipe.

<sup>AH</sup> Formally, I wanted a more masculine shape, so that Essence could differentiate itself from the wine glass' traditional female form. The connection between the goblet and the particularly long stem had to be very delicate, and I wanted a completely flat plate.

Alfredo Häberli

<sup>AK</sup> What was the engineer's first reaction?

<sup>AH</sup> They saw me as fairly young and naïve. They asked me, "Alfredo, is this the first time you've designed in glass? We can see..." but they took on the challenge. The only solution was to work with pressed glass and develop a new material, one that'd be particularly hard and durable...

<sup>AK</sup> ...or even unbreakable, as Swiss artist Roman Signer demonstrated in one of his experiments (see page 16).

<sup>AH</sup> (laughs) Yes. We produced 20 moulds that allowed for an elevated production of up to 25,000 pieces a day. All were composed of a pressed glass stem that could be attached to a different-sized goblet. Finally, everything came together. 20 years later, Essence is still part of many dinner tables, both in restaurants and in people's homes.

<sup>AK</sup> Two years later came 'Senta' (2003), another glass collection. Designed for everyday use, Senta was not as tall as Essence, but more feminine, and featured a very nice facette detailing that makes the glass seem to hover over the table.

<sup>AH</sup> At the time, we feared that Essence was too elegant. But by the time Essence and Senta were sitting next to each other on the shop shelves, people had already fallen for Essence. Let me also give away a little trick that, in my opinion, might contribute to Essence's popularity, particularly—but not only—in places like Scandinavia. Because Essence is so big, a glass looks almost empty, but the amount of wine poured in the glass is actually a lot.

<sup>AK</sup> You expanded the catalogue even further, mixing materials and bringing in



a whole new clientele: children. Just a year later, in 2003, Kids' Stuff was released.

<sup>AH</sup> Around that time my son Luc was about two years old. The project came naturally. I understood many things, simply by observing him. For example, his hands were too small to hold a glass with one hand. But the solution was not to down-scale a regular glass by 20%. Rather, the problem was the vessel's shape. So, I created a curvy silhouette. Similarly, the cutlery has an elevated bow, which allows for a child to easily grab a fork, knife or spoon and hold it securely. The tilted end keeps it secure on the edge of the plate and prevents it from sliding into the food.

AK You wanted to treat children seriously.

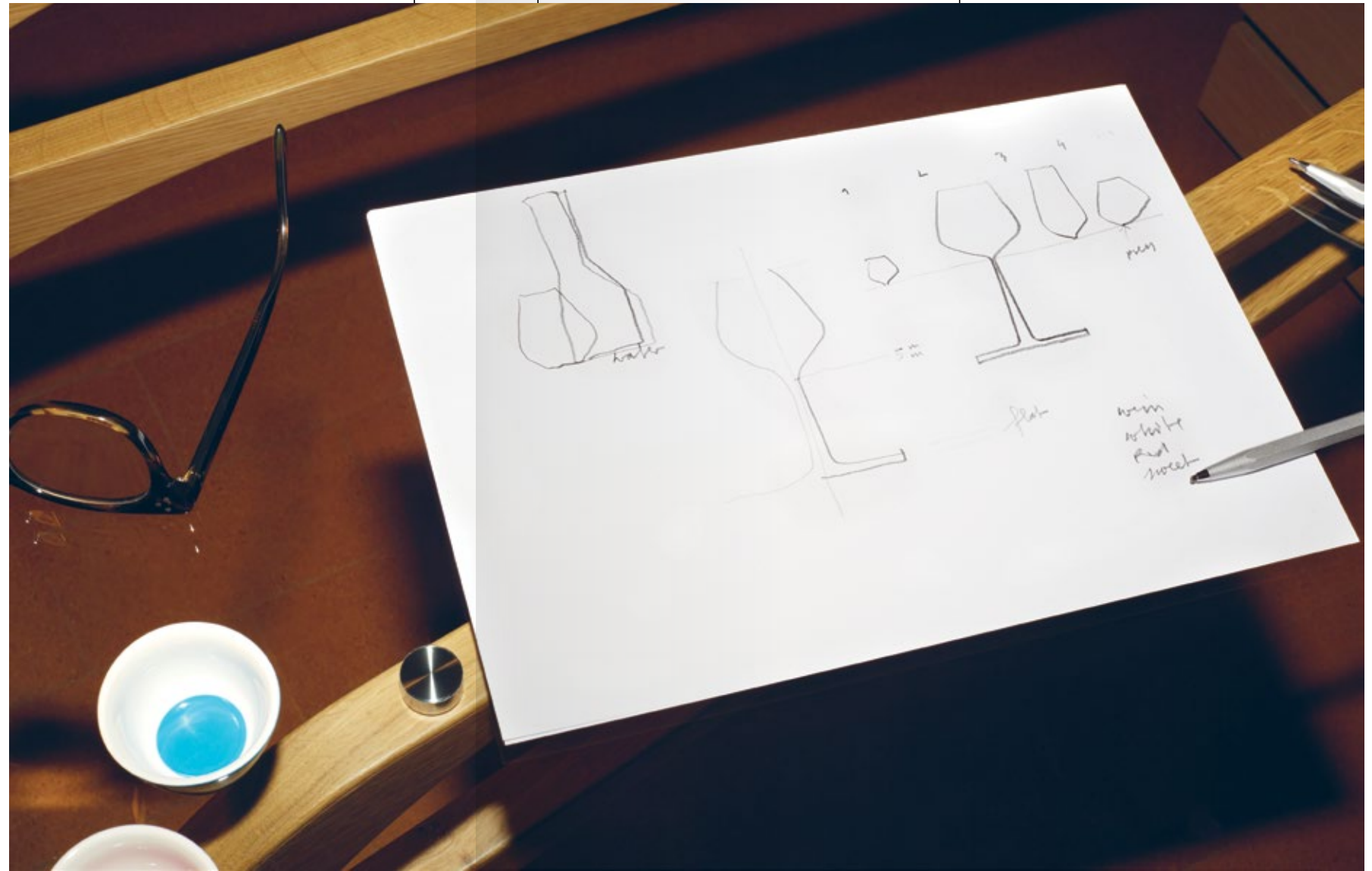
AH Just like you should talk with them normally, at eye level, I believe you should also give kids the possibility to handle things easily. They should not have to be frustrated by not being able to get any peas onto a spoon.

AK That's not always an easy endeavour for adults either...

AH True. But kids get a second chance, with my plates: if it doesn't work at the first border, you get another go on the outer rim. Eating should not be difficult work, but enjoyable.

AK In general, the problem with children's dishware is that it is often poorly made, for fear that kids will outgrow the items or break them. Instead, Kids' Stuff uses a variety of high-quality materials. In addition to ceramic, glass and metal you also used wood and plastic.

AH The cutting board and butter spreader in juniper wood come from my own childhood. We used to have a morning and an afternoon break, when we ate bread and butter, with sugar on top. This 'Znüni' and 'Zvieri' (nine o'clock and four o'clock break) is still an everyday ritual in Swiss kindergartens. It was a way to bring my childhood and the Finnish tradition together. The idea behind the plastic tray was not a reference to fast food—goodness, no!—but was intended to make it easier for kids to take their dirty dishes to the kitchen. I know my son always ate fast and wanted to get back to playing—so the tray allowed him to lend a quick hand with clearing the table, then off he went. Unfortunately, the tray was expensive to produce and that seems



to be one of the reasons why Kids' Stuff eventually went out of production.

AK Origo's twenty-year anniversary is coming up this year and Essence's follows in 2021. You, meanwhile, are working on a new collection.

AH We are developing a new series in both ceramic and glass that will complement Essence. Next year, you'll see what we have come up with this time.



## De-Signer Roman Signer for Alfredo Häberli

In 2006 Alfredo Häberli was a guest of honour at the Kortrijk Biennale Interieur in Belgium, where he was invited to create a large personal exhibition. He decided to not only show his own work, but to showcase the long tradition of Swiss design, as well. Thus, he brought more than 380 exhibits from the design collection of the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich to Belgium for the exhibition. To commemorate the occasion, he also published the 'Design Live' book, which gave seven Swiss artists carte blanche to play with Alfredo's design pieces.

One of the artists was Roman Signer (1938), who is known for his witty sculptures and performative actions, which often include countdowns, explosions and objects flying through the air. For the artwork 'De-Signer', Signer took an Essence glass, filled it with red wine, and placed it on the 'Move It' (Thonet, 1996) table, with a tilting top. The table, in turn, was standing above an electrical ventilator, of the kind typically used in agriculture to blow dry air into the barn. A shot of air catapulted the tabletop up and the wineglass fell to the ground.

Alfredo recalls receiving a phone call from Signer with a single message: "Alfredo, you are right, the glass did not break."



Thanks

The Finnish Institute in New York  
Miyake Design Studios  
Jasper Morrison Studio  
Victoria and Albert Museum  
National Museum of Ethnology (Lisbon)  
Shared Institute  
Iittala Glass Factory  
Roman Signer

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