

Connecting: A Conference on the Multivocality of Design History and Design Studies
University of Art and Design Helsinki - Estonian Academy of Arts

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"Connecting" was the fifth in a series of conferences focusing on design history and design studies, following the meetings in Barcelona (1999), Havana (2000), Istanbul (2002) and Guadalajara (2004). The driving force behind these events is the working group under the name of International Committee of Design History and Studies (ICDHS). This time the event took place in two locations, the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn across the Bay of Finland and the respective institutions of design education and research, the University of Art and Design Helsinki and the Estonian Academy of Arts. The conference also incorporated the biannual symposium of the Nordic Forum of Design History, a working group with representatives from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Social events were well organized and offered much food for thought to design and cultural historians. The kick-off meeting was a sauna evening in Suomenlinna, the fortress island off Helsinki port. Events in Tallinn included a visit to the impressive KUMU art museum and a party at the Estonian Museum of Design, in the Old Town. A post-conference tour brought delegates to the Hvitträsk house, a monument of the Finnish National Romantic style of the early 20th century, as well as to Fiskars village, a lively hub of artists and designers, both in the Helsinki area. "Connecting" concluded with a post-conference workshop on "Design Policy as Civil Action", which approached design's role within a wider political agenda.

"Connecting" brought together delegates from 22 countries from all over the world, a clear indication of the increasing internationalization of the field of design history. They all contributed to a rich and pluralistic debate, generating unexpected and previously undiscovered connections between different and often distant countries and perspectives. The warm welcome and the hospitality of the organizers in both Helsinki and Tallinn further enhanced the quality of the gathering and contributed to a very memorable experience. All those present in "Connecting" would agree that the conference achieved the homonymous goal.

Material related to "Connecting" may be accessed from the conference website <http://tm.uiah.fi/connecting/>. The series of ICDHS conferences will continue in Osaka, Japan, in 2008, whereas the next Nordic Forum will take place in Stockholm, also in 2008.



*Image: Urban
 landscape view from
 University of Art and
 Design Helsinki.*