

Local Stories

70 years of Formica® IKI
high pressure laminate
in Finland



70 years of Formica® IKI HPL in Finland

Formica IKI Oy's HPL plant "IKI-Levytehdas" was first commissioned in 1952 – the year of the Helsinki Summer Olympics – in Kolho, Western Finland. The plant has a rich 70-year history, covering many events and ownership changes. Today it manufactures Formica® IKI high pressure laminate (HPL), with the majority of its production used in projects in Finland, other Nordic countries, and the Baltic states.

In Finland, Formica IKI laminate from Kolho remains the market leader, largely thanks to designers, customers and companies who value Finnish quality, combined with quick and punctual deliveries and a sustainable approach.

A hard-wearing and versatile choice

IKI manufactured high pressure laminate consists of layers of wood-based fibers and usually one decorative paper on the surface (this can be a solid colour, a wood or patterned decor). Impregnated with thermosetting resins, the papers are collated and compressed into a single, homogeneous sheet under high pressure and temperature. Etched steel plates emboss texture onto the surface of the laminates, this can range from smooth matte and gloss surfaces to geometric patterns and wood or stone finishes.

The resulting laminates provide a high-performance surface with excellent durability and scratch resistance but maintaining flexibility to allow the creation of curves and shaped surfaces. Furthermore, its non porous surface makes it a hygienic, easy-to-clean and low-maintenance material choice. An extensive range of diverse colours and patterns are available, to suit the majority of colour schemes, applications and environments.

Today, the Kolho IKI-Levytehdas HPL plant is part of Formica Group, the original inventor of high pressure laminate. In 1912, Daniel J. O'Connor and Herbert A. Faber, two engineers in Cincinnati, USA, developed a process for making laminated insulators, based on dipping paper into Bakelite® resins and baking it into tubes and sheets. This was the origin of laminate and as it was used primarily as a replacement 'for' the mineral 'mica', they named their new product 'Formica'. In 1913 they established The Formica Insulation Company and 'the rest' as they say, 'is history'.

While these early years were successful, it was during the 1930s that the product would change forever. With the development of new clear resins and lithographic printed décor papers, Formica laminates moved from their original industrial applications, into the studios of modern furniture designers as a decorative surface. Sales in the United States grew quickly as this new revolutionary, durable, easy-to-clean and colourful material became a must have product. Global expansion followed and Formica laminate production started in Europe, during the 1940s.

Production in Finland

In Finland, the Formica Group story and IKI plant is strongly connected with the forest industry and G. A. Serlachius. Mr. Serlachius ran various business operations around the region of the current village of Kolho, including a woodworking plant. In the early 1950s, the plant manager Mr. Snellman brought a sample of a thin, tough material back with him from a trip abroad, informing the plant's technical director Erik Wasastjerna and supervisor Reino Alanne that they would start to manufacture this type of material. The plant's first high pressure laminates were pressed in 1952 using a carpenters' Columbia press machine. Initially, all raw materials including papers impregnated with resin were bought in, and only the laminate pressing and finishing processes took place at the Kolho plant. The original sheets made at the plant were used for kitchen furniture, desks, and worktops.

The story behind IKI HPL

There are many plants around the world that make high pressure laminate but only one that makes IKI HPL. In the 1950s, the people at the Kolho plant thought that a great new product needed a fitting name to promote it. The story goes that the plant manager's secretary Maija Kuusiniemi came up with the winning suggestion: the Finnish name "IKI-Levy" which refers to "eternity", and the name has stood the test of time, just like the product itself.

Modern production and sustainability

While the method of producing HPL has stayed consistent over the years, the product continues to evolve. Safety and environmental considerations are high priority when sourcing raw materials and manufacturing finished laminates.

Formica Group takes a common-sense approach to sustainability. This requires the acknowledgment that, by definition, a product requires resources and energy in its creation and as a result, some level of environmental impact will occur. The goal is to reduce this impact, without losing sight of the product functionality customers require. Visit formica.com for more information.

Additionally, the Kolho plant can manufacture different products to meet the needs of a variety of sectors, applications, and environments, such as compliant products with M1 indoor air classification and IMO MED certified products, for the maritime sector. Visit formica.info for more information.



MDJ Kuu

Designed by world-renowned artist Matthew Day Jackson, who has been using Formica® Laminate in his work for over 15 years. Named MDJ Kuu ('kuu' is Finnish for moon) this one-of-a-kind laminate takes inspiration from the dark side of the moon.

These laminates can be used for furniture and other interior surfaces. The textured surface, at 80 microns in depth, is a scale representation of the surface of the far side of the moon. The texture was created, using images taken from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter in 2009.

Sheet laminates are available to purchase in a range of dramatic shades: ranging from moon whites and night sky nocturnal blues and deep black.



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K O L H O
MATTHEW DAY JACKSON / MADE BY CHOICE / FORMICA



Matthew Day Jackson



choice



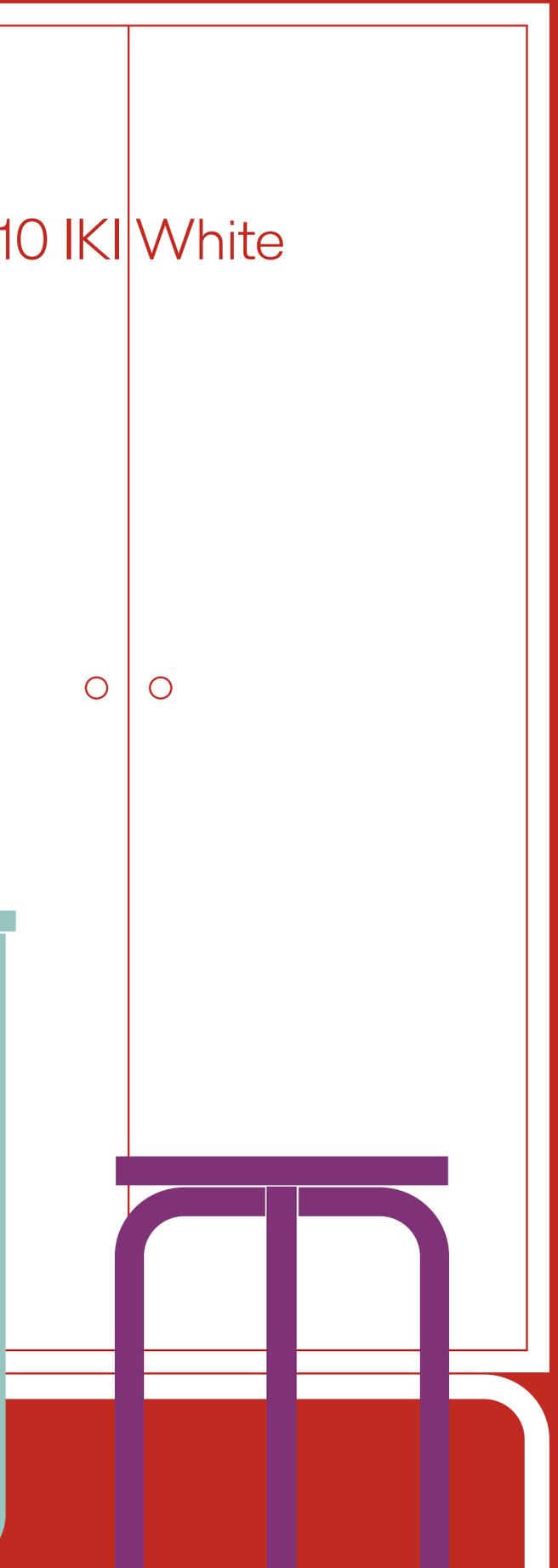
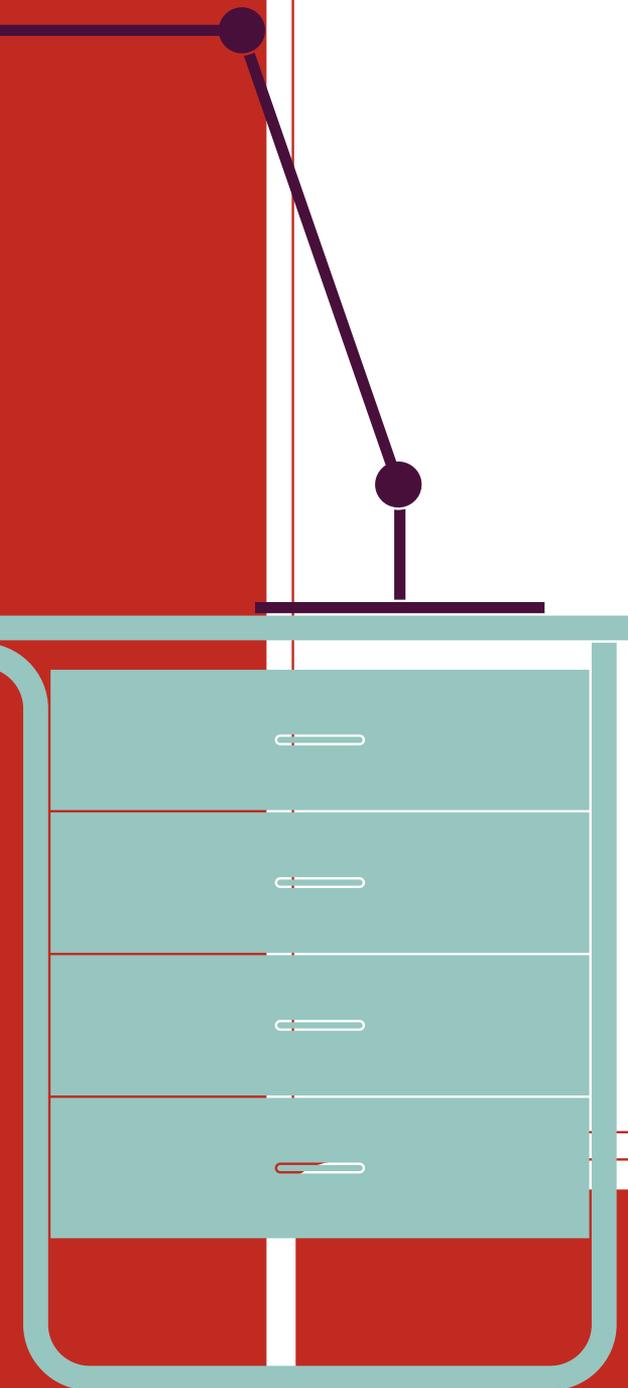
Reintroducing K10 into the IKI Collection by Formica Group

In celebration of the plant's anniversary, its classic K10 white is being reintroduced. This decor has continued to be manufactured and in demand since the 1960's, however it has not been formerly included in the IKI Collection for decades.

K10 has now been reintroduced as F1110 K10 IKI White. The decor is only available in its historical and premium Satin NDF finish.



● F1110 K10 IKI White



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