

# METROPOLIS

The Metropolis Observed

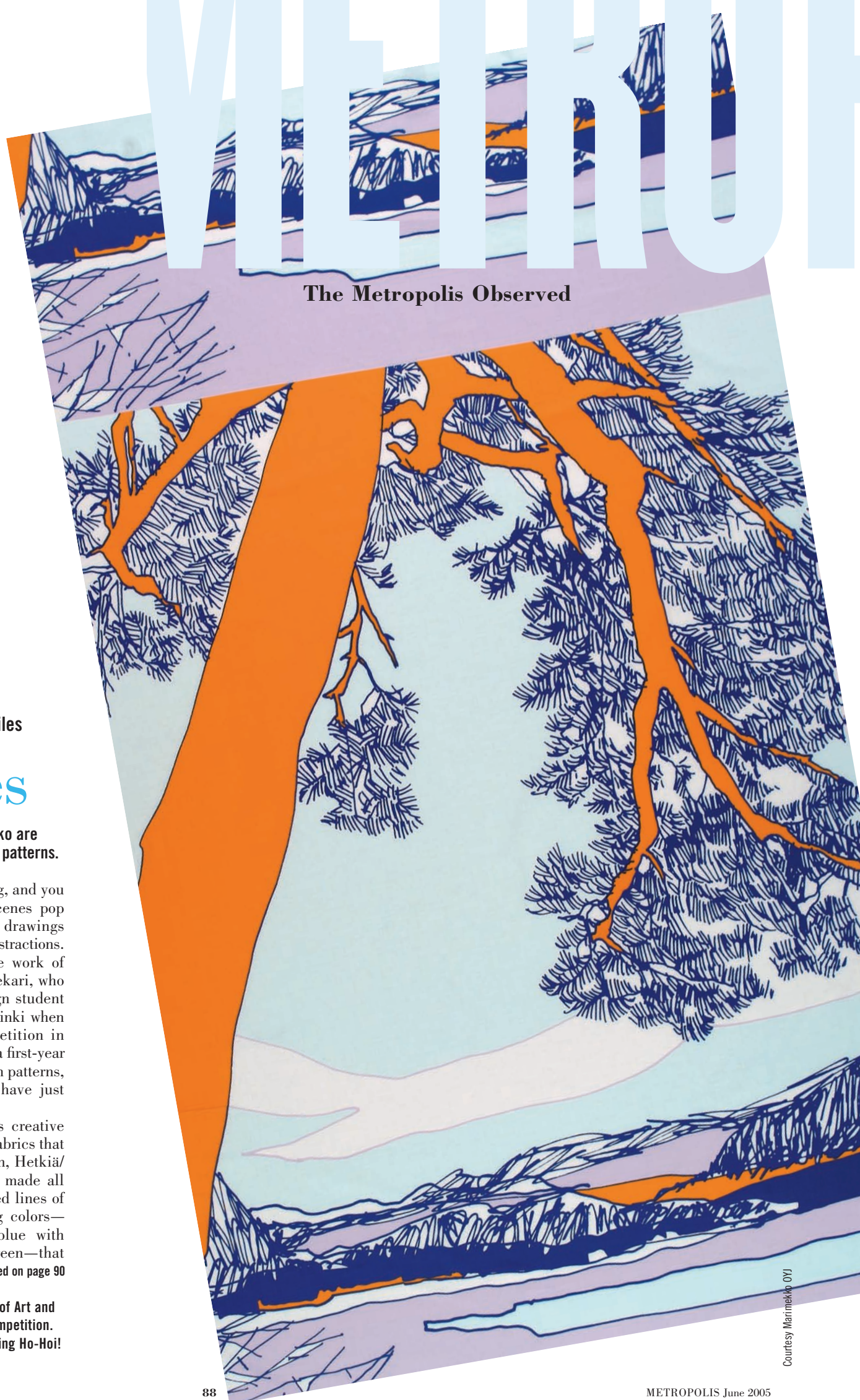
## Personal Landscapes textiles

**Maija Louekari's new designs for Marimekko are more intimate than the company's famous patterns.**

Open the spring 2005 Marimekko catalog, and you will see line-drawn urban and rural scenes pop amid sweetly rounded florals, childlike drawings of exotic animals, and conventional abstractions. Those standout textile patterns are the work of 23-year-old Finnish designer Maija Louekari, who was still an interior- and furniture-design student at the University of Art and Design Helsinki when she won a Marimekko-sponsored competition in 2002 for her distinctive cityscapes. Now a first-year graduate student, Louekari's fifth and sixth patterns, landscapes titled Ho-Hoi! and Kaiku, have just been released.

Because the company gives designers creative carte blanche, Louekari is able to make fabrics that are wholly contemporary. Her first design, Hetkiä/Moments, depicts a bustling city street made all the more dynamic by seemingly scribbled lines of different weights layered in contrasting colors—robin's egg blue with scarlet, baby blue with chocolate brown, vivid pink with soft green—that give the scene depth. There's also **continued on page 90**

**As a furniture-design student at the University of Art and Design Helsinki, Louekari won a Marimekko competition. The company has put six of her designs, including Ho-Hoi! (right) into production.**







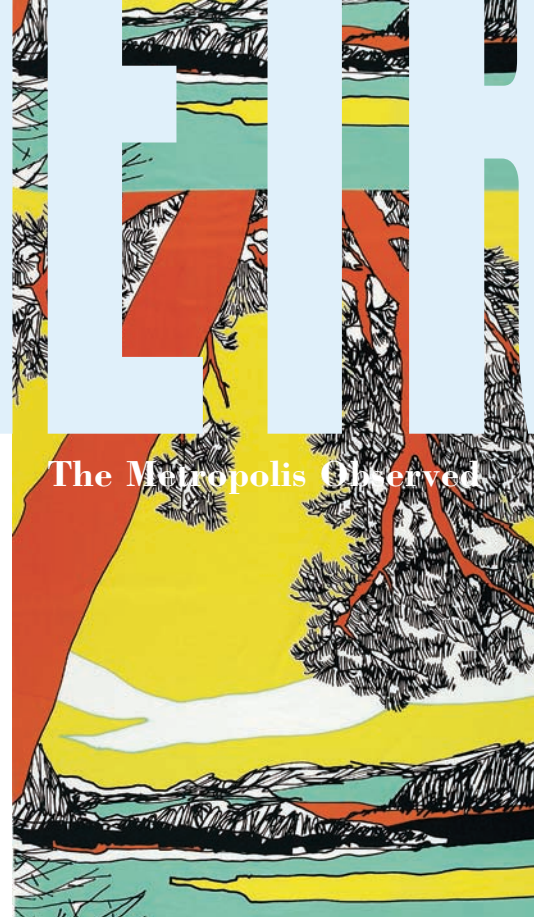
## Personal Landscapes

continued from page 88 the suggestion of a deeper narrative, something you can't quite put your finger on. Released in fall 2004, *Ystävät* frames an overhead perspective of people gathered at outdoor cafés (a common sight on the Helsinki esplanade during the summer) with the tables taken out of the scene, emphasizing the relationships between the people. Even in this spring's more traditional patterns—landscapes hemmed with birch and pine trees—Louekari's unusual choice of colors (lavender with blue-green or red, and comic-book style red on canary yellow) transform the banal into something remarkable. "Maija is different because her designs are like pictures loaded with different feelings," says Riika Finni, of Marimekko's interior textiles division. "She also mixes drawing and painting in a very interesting way."

The dimensions of Louekari's work are also distinctive, being at the larger end of the patterns Marimekko produces. "Many of Maija's designs represent very large-scale thinking," says Petri Juslin, the company's artwork studio manager. While smaller patterns are more flexible, Louekari's re-



peats occur at 98 inches—about as large as interior-fabric-design repeats get, because it is approximately the length of a standard residential curtain. The *Ystävät* pattern is especially challenging because it has multiple saturated colors and requires eight to ten large screens to be printed. "It took me quite a while to convince the printers that this could be done," Juslin says. "Maija's graphical thinking



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Clockwise from left: *Hetkiä/Moments* (2003), *Ho-Hoi!* (2005), and *Ystävät* (2004) were each released in several distinctive colorways.

pushes us to take a closer look into things that we usually consider technical limitations."

But Louekari sees herself as simply the latest example of the 54-year-old company's progressive efforts. "Marimekko is rich because they have many styles and points of view in their designs," she says. "I think they look for a personal view of life from designers and found something new in my works—thinking that is young and fresh, I hope!" —Shonquis Moreno