

The Art of the Wirkkala Family in the Perho River Valley

Craftsmanship, Art and Cultural Heritage from Kaustinen to the Whole of Finland – A Village of Skilled Craftspeople

As early as the eighteenth century, Kaustinen was renowned for its skilled craftspeople. From this same tradition emerged both the Kuorikoski church builders and the master wheelwrights and craftsmen of the Wirkkala family. In the village of Virkkala, the farm owner Elias Wirkkala developed the manufacture of carts and wheels into a significant small-scale industry during the nineteenth century, employing dozens of people at its height.

From a Tailor's Son to an Artist

Juho Wirkkala (1855–1926) brought a Singer sewing machine back from America and established himself as a tailor in Kaustinen. His home, now the Tailor's Museum, became the birthplace of the artist Ilmari Wirkkala (1890–1973). Ilmari displayed exceptional talent from an early age: he wrote poetry, illustrated books and, at just eighteen years old, painted a large *Kalevala*-inspired work for the stage of the local youth association hall.

Ilmari Wirkkala – Artist and Designer

A graduate of the Helsinki School of Art, Ilmari Wirkkala was a sculptor, painter, designer and influential cultural figure. He was among the founders of Ornamo, served as Artistic Director of Granit Oy, and designed monuments, cemeteries and ecclesiastical buildings throughout Finland.

Wirkkala's Legacy Lives On

- The Coat of Arms of Kaustinen (1949)
- The *Kalevala* Triptych at the Folk Arts Centre
- Design for the Veteli Local Heritage Museum
- The Kuorikoski Church Builders' Memorial
- Statue of Kreetta Haapasalo

Art Continued in the Next Generation

Ilmari's children continued the family's artistic tradition. Tapio Wirkkala (1915–1985) became an internationally acclaimed designer and sculptor. He designed the *Pioneer* statue on Church Hill in Veteli and later the community's war memorial. Tauno Wirkkala, in turn, sculpted the statue of Kreetta Haapasalo in Kaustinen, based on his father's original design.

The Tradition Lives On

The work of the Wirkkala family united craftsmanship, art and local history. Originating from the village of Kaustinen, the family left a lasting mark on the cultural landscape of the Perho River Valley—in its buildings, monuments, sculptures and stories, all of which continue to shape the region today.

Caption:

Kraatari Museum, Kaustinen

The home of Juho Wirkkala and the birthplace of the artist Ilmari Wirkkala. The building was completed in 1868.

Ilmari Wirkkala created this bookplate (ex libris) for Algot Untola's novel *Harhama* in 1910. At the time, Untola was writing under the pen name Irmari Rantamala.

The Pioneer Statue in Veteli and the plaster model of the monument.

The monument, designed by Tapio Wirkkala, was unveiled on Church Hill in Veteli in 1939.

Tapio Wirkkala's *Trumpet* Candlesticks and the *Chanterelle* Vase.

Tapio Wirkkala.