

SNOWCRASH 1997–2003

The Untold Story



***Snowcrash*, one of the most talked about and obscured design events of the past two decades has finally been documented in a book, revealing an alternative image of “Scandinavian Design” and offering a trip to the very moment when the furniture industry took the plunge into a digital world.**

At the end of the 1990s, Finland and Sweden moved out of a deep recession to become the driving forces behind information technology, and Nokia (FI) and Ericsson (SE) were the first and third largest mobile phone manufacturers in the world.

In this climate, a group of likeminded Finnish architects and designers in 1997, decided to make an exhibition during the designweek in Milan, and they called it *Snowcrash*. Their designs were worlds apart from what people expected to come out of the north, and it was unanimously hailed in the press, prompting a journalist at Domus magazine to write “These refreshing, stormy alternatives are like acid snow on the calm commercial world of the official fair.”

The year after, *Snowcrash* was bought by the Swedish company Proventus Design that was based in Stockholm — which also owned the Finnish furniture company Artek and Swedish textile company Kinnasand. In a time when nobody knew where internet would take us, the international artists and designers that gradually were tied to *Snowcrash*, looked towards the future with great optimism.

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Experiments in electronic hard- and software, natural and synthetic fibers — resulted in objects that addressed new work- and lifestyles in a rapidly digitalised society. However, despite the immense success in the media, *Snowcrash* had to be put on ice after only four years. Without any coherent documentation, *Snowcrash* gradually turned into a folk tale within the international design community. What was made, who was involved, why did they not make it? These are questions that has lingered ever since.

A new book finally gives the answers, and in the process, broadens the Scandinavian Design narrative and offer a flashback to a time when the digital society that we now live in, was being founded.

The book *Snowcrash 1997–2003* is written by Gustaf Kjellin, edited by Ilkka Suppanen, and features an introduction by British curator and writer, Jane Withers. The book is published by Swedish publishing House Arvinus + Orfeus Publishing and is now available for purchase.



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An exhibition by Ilkka Suppanen and Gustaf Kjellin about Snowcrash will open at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm in the spring 2021.

“Today, these products may look naive. However, when I look back at the time in which they were made, it almost feels like the last moment historically, when the future still looked good. We had faith in that we could solve any problems that would arise. Therefore I believe that the Snowcrash story has something significant to communicate — to look at technology and the future with optimism.”
—Ilkka Suppanen

“I have been a huge fan of Snowcrash ever since 2001 when I tried out Pasi Kolhonen and Ilkka Suppanen’s Airbag at a nightclub in Tokyo. Considering how big impact they had in the media, it is fascinating to me that there has been no information on Snowcrash available, and so I am very glad we have made this book — their story really deserved it.”
—Gustaf Kjellin

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