

“Will students see stars in room 306?” ponders Peter Hart in his University Times article about Mika Gröndahl's winning classroom design, *The Big Dipper*.



Based on an early Finnish smoke cottage and displaying the Big Dipper star-group on the ceiling, Mika Gröndahl's elegant design contains the essential elements for a show-piece of Finnish culture. A Finnish Nationality Classroom based on his design will be something we can all be proud of!

Mika Gröndahl is a Finnish expatriate living in New York with his wife and three children. He recently completed his Masters Degree in Architecture from the University of Oulu, Finland and has returned to work as a graphics editor at The New York Times. His thesis project was a 35-story Finland Center located in the heart of Times Square. Mika is looking forward to complete more design projects through the design company,

Lumi 4, Inc., which he runs with his wife.

In March 2006 Professor Anna-Maija Ylimaula (left) of the University of Oulu returned to Pittsburgh with three plans that were selected as winners of the design competition. In Pittsburgh Finnish Committee members together with Nationality Rooms Director E. Maxine Bruhns (middle) and University of Pittsburgh architect Park Rankin (right) selected Gröndahl's design for first prize.



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The Finnish Nationality Classroom



to be built in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh

Recognized far and wide, the beautiful Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh give the visitor a profound sense of the diverse ethnic background of Western Pennsylvania. The Rooms, 26 in number with eight more to be realized within the next few years, are a source of pride to each group represented.

The Finnish Nationality Classroom will be used as a classroom for thousands of students and will be seen by more than 100,000 visitors yearly through a vibrant tour program. It will reflect the culture and customs of Finland and will serve as a memorial where the relatives of early Finnish immigrants will learn about their heritage and remember the contributions of their ancestors.

Student Design Contest

A competition for the best potential design of the Finnish Nationality Classroom was sponsored by the Finnish Nationality Room Committee of the University of Pittsburgh. The design competition ended in March 2006 and was open to all Finnish students of architecture and interior design.

Architecture Professor Anna-Maija Ylimaula from the University of Oulu visited Pittsburgh to tour the available sites for a new Nationality Room and selected two potential rooms for the Finnish Classroom. Students could choose one of these rooms for the basis of their design.

Mika Gröndahl, architecture student from Oulu University, was awarded first place for his submission titled *The Big Dipper*. A view of his design which combines traditional decor and state of the art audio-visual technology is displayed to the right. Mika's proposal will be the basis of the new Finnish Nationality Classroom.



