

Release September 4, 2017

The “Jorma Vitkala Award of Merit”

Glass industry launched new international prize

By Håkan Nordqvist, Editor

For those familiar with the Glass Performance Days the recent Conference in June 2017 meant business as usual. But perhaps business was not quite so usual after all. The 25th Anniversary GPD cabled out lots of organizational innovations but also paid very special and certainly highly unusual tributes to its Founding Father, Chairman Emeritus and Dynamo *Jorma Vitkala* of Glaston, Tampere and Finland in the country's 100th Anniversary Year.

The “Jorma Vitkala Award of Merit” 2017

The “Jorma Vitkala Award of Merit” was established by the global glass industry in 2017 in honor of the founder and Chairman of the GPD Jorma Vitkala. He became the first recipient of the award in a handover ceremony at the Opening Ceremony where the international glass industry was represented by Jean-Paul Hauteker of Dow Corning and Jonathan Cohen of Kuraray.

In the future the award will recognize someone who has significantly contributed to the glass industry, the design, use and applications of glass. Nomination will be carried out through an advance survey within the industry network with relevant cooperation from the media. Plans also call for the establishment of funding of a worthy glass industry purpose attached to the award.

Honorable recognitions

Several additional tributes were paid to the GPDs long-time Chairman Jorma Vitkala at the opening of the 2017 Conference.

GANA, The Glass Association of North America, bestowed honorary membership on Jorma Vitkala confirmed in person by Stanley Yee, GANA Vice-President. In this capacity he became a European newcomer to the recipient list of GANA Honorary Membership since the year 2000. The total number of honorary memberships is now eight. Sammy Hui, Vice President of HKFA, Hong Kong Façade Association, handed over a special HKFA Award. Bruce Park, Board Member of the Korean Architect Façade Association, KAFA, brought a special tribute of international dimensions.

US Glass Magazine, a heavyweight of the press, awarded Jorma Vitkala and the GPD special recognition for successful promotion and support of the international flow of information.

A most personal and emotional tribute came in the form of a video greeting put together by some 20 key supporters and participants of the GPD. The video expressed heart-warming appreciation and inspired a standing ovation for GPD's longtime chairman at the opening ceremony on June 28, 2017.

Jorma Vitkala's

Formidable Quest ON BEHALF OF GLASS

Driving the GPD towards new heights as a Conference and initiating new openings is largely the work of Jorma Vitkala, Conference Chairman since the beginning.

- I admit that I must take on the task of pushing forward but I am absolutely not alone in doing this, Jorma Vitkala comments. Our organizing committee does a tremendous job and the initiatives that come from our speakers and session chairmen are gems in themselves. Company visits, workshops and plant tours add a lot of practical input to the conference program also. The encouragement and financial backing from our main supporter the Glaston Corporation has enabled my more than 25 years of work on behalf of the GPD. And then there is the requirement to follow the times. Some years ago it was felt that the clock-speed of change in the glass industry was too slow compared for instance with the IT-industry. Today we are a lot faster, perhaps partly thanks to the GPD. The industry has put its act together.

The key success criteria for the GPD deserve to be repeated and Jorma Vitkala is very clear about them:

- Without quality programs you cannot have a quality Conference and you cannot have quality programs without outstanding speakers. So we have to be very ambitious about that and not forget that our task is to inspire, educate, innovate and develop and to share information and experiences for the good of the entire industry. The objective is to expand the use and application of advanced glass products that succeed on the markets their producers choose and are second to none in quality and innovation. We want to bring forward the best that glass can do.
- The GPD is not a commercial event. It is rather a string of high level technical presentations that bring forward the latest new products, methods, design capabilities, practices and trends as from the business world. The GPD also features a high-level research module. Normal rules of proprietary information and competition apply. The GPD stands out as an excellent platform for the testing of forward-looking ideas and innovations in front of real experts who can provide very useful feedback.
- A special value of the GPD is that networking is so effective and free of normal commercial pressure that you find on trade fairs. Relationships are built for current and future use. With the world's foremost glass specialists in simultaneous attendance time-use is very effective.

Heavyweight appreciation across the board

Some of the heavyweight participants and long-time supporters of the GPD have gone on record with highly appreciative statements.

Jean-Paul Hautekeer, Global Marketing Director for High Performance Building at Dow Corning:

“What Jorma Vitkala has accomplished for the glass industry is unparalleled. GPD has become the reference for the industry in terms of knowledge management and networking. You can gain in three days at GPD what would traditionally take a year, whether it be for learning, contacting industry colleagues or looking for innovation and new business opportunities. That is exactly why people are accepting the invite every

two years to meet in Tampere. An in business, nothing would be possible without the human element that Jorma Vitkala is personalizing so much.”

Jonathan Cohen, Global Marketing Director at Kuraray:

“What is also good is that GPD continuously evolves with the industry and the modern world to propose something that matches the needs of the participants. An example is the use of new digital tools at the Conference. These contribute to the advance scheduling of meetings between participants and the organizing of additional ones during the conference. The program also includes an application to enable easy monitoring of the progress of the meeting and locate the venues for the most interesting topics. What was also new in 2017 was a direct connection between a dozen start-ups operating in the glass segment to drive more front-end innovation in this industry. The new venue enabled increased efficiency in transferring from one presentation to another and always convening in the central area. For sure we believe GPD has a bright future and will continue to meet the needs of the glass industry.”

Bruce Park, Board Member of the Korea Façade Association KAFA

“It was a truly touching moment to witness the thunderous applause for Jorma Vitkala from hundreds of industry experts at GPD 2017. This appreciation followed from his distinctive achievements and contribution to the glass and glazing industry overall. GPD’s rise to the leading global glass conference as a knowledge sharing and networking venue was only possible because of Jorma’s enthusiastic dedication, cooperation and leadership for the industry. Over the past 25 years .“

Michael Robinson, CEO & Design Director, ED Design srl. Keynote Speaker GPD 2017:

“One of Jorma Vitkala’s greatest impacts in the glass industry is in creating a most incredible networking context for the global glass industry. GPD is where people meet people. In fact, after my keynote speech, I received five requests to come to different glass manufacturers around the world to repeat my speech. The most powerful request came from the Glaston Chairman who complimented me for the enthusiasm and creativity he found in my presentation.”

Match-making for start-ups

A new feature of GPD 2017 was the inclusion of the Step Change module to promote contacts between innovative newcomers and seasoned industrialists.

Jouni Myllymäki, Coordinator, Business Tampere:

“One of the key tasks of Business Tampere is to open the doors for cooperation between companies spearheading new business initiatives and technology and for cooperation between start-up companies and research organizations. The Tampere region represents a strong start-up culture and as an example the Nokia-Microsoft shake-up has marked the birth of some 200 new companies.

GPD 2017 introduced the first start-up event of the glass business under the name Step Change. The idea was to secure benefits available for the whole industry when innovative start-ups meet

leading established companies. The glass industry faces the need to develop new value-added for its customers and at the same time improve competitiveness and profitability for its products. Step Change participants included companies focusing on i.e. intelligent glass, IoT, nano coatings, implants, automation or display technology. A total of 34 small international companies participated in the GPDs start-up module and 23 of them took part in a pitching bid with three minute elevator talks that enabled them to present their offering to all GPD participants. Business Tampere took part in the recruiting process for these companies and in their preparation for the event to ensure smooth presentations despite the limited time available. GPD Chairman Jorma Vitkala put his dynamic, solution-oriented and practical competence to full use for the purpose. For the start-up organizations the GPD proved to be formidable opportunity.”

GPD inspires MPD

The Glass Performance Days have a kindred soul in the Manufacturing Performance Days.

Harri Kulmala, DIMECC Ltd. CEO and MPD Coordinator:

“The Manufacturing Performance Conference, organized by DIMECC, the innovation platform for digitalizing industry, seeks to promote the industrial best practices, novel business concepts and operational excellence of manufacturing industry. GPD has been our role model for the conferences we have scheduled since our inception a decade ago. In 2017 we held our 6th Conference with the back-up of our 70 partner organizations. We have carried out intensive benchmarking in cooperation with GPD Chairman Jorma Vitkala who has been very cooperative and are very grateful for the support we have had from him. We have shared experiences and avoided re-invention of the wheel.”

Advanced networking

The GPD has served as a very advanced marketing tool for glass industry as a whole.

Tapio Nissinen, ex- Glastech founder and CEO

“My background in the glass industry (from 1975) provided broad based contacts with the international players both in the East and West. I learned how some wanted to protect their own interests by withholding information. When I met Jorma Vitkala I discovered that his ideas, too, were quite different. Information sharing is in the interest of all. Future customer demands will differ from current requirements and the understanding of upcoming needs underlines the needs for dedicated development of know-how. This way of thinking found brilliant acceptance in the Tamglass/Glaston organization and led to the birth of the GPD. In my own company my views of the importance of networking continued to grow. I discovered that the most effective channels were the GPD and the trade press. The contact base was international from the start, East and West. I was honored by being called “The father of the Russian IG-industry”. My first encounter with Jorma Vitkala was in an escalator at the Glasstec Fair in Düsseldorf in the early 1990s. I immediately discovered his impressive memory capacity and curiosity and the fact that he did not count his working hours. Attracting the number one glass industry players in the world to the GPD became his solid mission.”

Olavi Uusitalo, ex-professor of Marketing, Universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere, consultant

“As a professor of marketing I have studied how companies have attempted to attract attention and market space at various types of traditional exhibitions. Somehow the commercial picture has lacked depth and I have found nothing close to what the GPD came to represent. One can see that there was open demand for something like the GPD particularly in its networking capability. The concept of building international contacts in the spirit of there is nothing to be lost is both bold and convincing. The rise of the Tampere region to become the focus of attention of the glass world is a remarkable achievement. I would see a lot of the reason being individual visions combined with perseverance. The ability to sense the right tune of the times is also important. The GPD also has to be credited for the building of active media relations.”

Putting the City of Tampere on the Map of the Glass World

One of the GPD achievements not much talked about lies the fact that the Conference has brought the City of Tampere in Central Finland into the limelight of the glass world.

Erika Eischer, City of Tampere, Head of International Affairs

“When thousands of glass specialists come to Tampere for some effective Conference day and evening programs in the summer season every other year they leave a visible footprint in the community, in the media, at restaurants, service providers and with the companies, factories and hosts they visit. During its 25 years the GPD has brought some 15,000 congress visitors to Tampere. In the world’s glass community Tampere is therefore a well-known city. The financial implications of GPD have also been massive. We have calculated that the GPD Conferences have brought Tampere travelling revenues to the value of more than 20 million euro over 25 years. GPD has also affected the internationalization of learning institutions in the Tampere region and been a model concept for other congresses as well. For these professional achievements GPD Chairman Jorma Vitkala was awarded the Tampere Congress Award in 2001.”

Immediate advantages

For some early participants and sponsors the GPD brought immediate benefits.

Tahvo Sutela, ex-Pilkington, glass industry consultant:

“When Jorma Vitkala contacted me in the early 1990s about the GPD concept I worked for Pilkington. Pilkington had recently launched a Low-E coated glass product for tempering purposes and Tamglass/Glaston had introduced a tempering line based on forced convection for high-quality tempering of Low-E glass. When Jorma Vitkala asked us to participate as speakers at an educational seminar Pilkington’s top management expressed strong interest and sent their representatives. From the first time on the GPD proved a fruitful environment for participants but also for the informal exchange of thoughts, ideas and contacts for experts within the own Group. Personal contacts with the organizers also deepened. Pilkington was the first world-class GPD supporter outside the sphere of tempering technology. The key success factor for the GPD over the years has, however, clearly been Jorma Vitkala’s visionary capability and his ability to generate enthusiasm. The combination of the professional and social elements in the program made participants enjoy both the conference and the company of one another. We worked very closely

together developing the first 3-4 Conferences and were so pleased when we had achieved the critical mass for continued success.”

Architectural recognition

Attracting the world’s top architects and structural designers has been a central ambition of the GPD since its beginnings.

Matti Rautiola, Director General of the Finnish Building Information Foundation RTS, architect

“The GPD is without doubt the most important and largest glass conference. The reasons why the GPD has managed to attract architects and building designers is its down-to-earth format and also the fact that its Chairman Jorma Vitkala has been so easy to approach. GPDs programs go deeply into the substance of glass technology and the publishing of the proceedings makes it a unique knowledge base of glass industry that is at the same time both innovative and challenging. Architects are not known to be prose writers, they think in visual terms. When they see how pictures fit together they communicate in terms familiar to them. I would characterize Jorma Vitkala as being of the same kind. In itself it is a unique situation to see how the GPD of the City of Tampere has been able to become a hub at the reins of the world’s glass industry. For his efforts to promote glass in construction Jorma Vitkala quite deservedly received the Finnish Flat Glass Association’s Award as Glass Builder of the Year 2013.

GPDs impressive record

The GPD can certainly look back on an impressive record of collecting and sharing glass essentials. Recording 14,600 delegates, 1,100 speakers, 3,200 presentations and 10,000 pages of technical documentation from the beginning to date marks a long way.

GPD 2017 registered a total of 657 participants in Tampere and on top of that 160 specialists at the high-rise seminar I Helsinki. A total of 16 focused workshops with all together 402 specialists attending were organized preceding the GPD.

(Caption)

Jorma Vitkala became the first recipient of the international glass industry’s newly established Jorma Vitkala Award of Merit. Jean-Paul Hauteker of Dow Corning and Jonathan Cohen of Kururay represented the industry at the handover ceremony held at the GPD Opening Ceremony June 28, 2017.