

Alvar
Aalto

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Research the Furniture Designer allocated to you. Give an account of this Designer's work history. Outline his timber preference, styles, influences, designs & books. Describe some of his more famous pieces or designs. Research the whereabouts of any items attributed to them currently on show or display.

Principles of
furniture and
design

Table of Contents

ALVAR AALTO HIISTORY	2
Aalto's Youth:.....	2
Aalto's Work:	2
Aalto's Buildings.....	3
Artek:.....	3
Artek's Alvar Aalto's Furniture:.....	4
Reflection:.....	6
Works Cited.....	6

ALVAR AALTO HISTORY

Alvar Aalto was born in 1898 in Kouranne in Finland, he subsequently died in 1976. His career as an architect and designer spread out for as long as at least 50 years. He is considered as Finland's greatest architects and is widely recognized and celebrated across the world as one of the 20th centuries landmark figures in the restoration of architecture and interior design.

Aalto's Youth:

Alvar Aalto was born in the small town of Kouranne. He grew up in a family of five and he was the eldest of the three children. His father worked as surveyor. However Aalto did not spend long in the town of his birth and when he turned five the family decided to move to Jvaskyla. Aalto spent the next 24 years there and became his home. The town is hugely associated with him and is remembered for so much of his work as an architect as this town boasts to have more buildings designed by him than any other place in the world. This town is also where he opened his first office. Aalto also spent time in Helsinki as he went to Helsinki University of Technology and completed his degree in architecture in 1921. In 1924 Aalto married Aino Marsio who also was an architect and they subsequently spent their honeymoon in Italy and is said to have been a big influence on Aalto's architecture and design. (Brooke)

Aalto's Work:

Alvar Aalto is considered as a modern architect however his work is described as "a carefully crafted balance of intricate and complex forms, spaces, and elements, and reveals a traditionalism rooted in the cultural heritage and physical environment of Finland." Alvar following the tradition of Finnish architects entered himself into architectural competitions. In 1927 he won the competition to design the southwestern cooperative agricultural building. This made him move to the former capital of Turku and this allowed him to broaden his horizons and allowed him to make connections with other architects and proved influential in attracting job opportunities. In the 6 years he spent in Turku his architectural style evolved and developed and received accreditation for being modern and led to the designing of a large number of buildings. In 1933 he moved to Helsinki in hope of big and better opportunities but this did not happen as easy as expected. Yet however his business was expanding. During this time Aalto received the patronage of Harry and Maire Gullichsen who were prominent industrialists. This led to Aalto getting work for many industrial buildings around Finland. This also led to the creation of Artek which Aalto used to design and sell his work. During the mid 1930's his work mellowed and became less machine like and exact and proper to more tactile, picturesque and romantic. This showed how his work was progressing and how he was able to move with the times. His work also became more personal.

During this period a significant change had been made where he previously used exterior courtyards in his designs but now began to use interior courtyards. He was beginning to use light to brighten the interior and develop his understanding of interior design. He was beginning to use more wood, bricks and many other materials which added to the aesthetics of his designs. Aalto helped hugely in the redeveloping of housing systems after the war and was hugely influential on how this would be achieved. In the 1950's Aalto was recognized for his use of brick, copper and wood in his designs which were unusual and memorable. However in the last 20 years of his career his work once again evolved and became more complex and expressive beginning with the Vuoksenniska Church (1956-1958).

(Biography)

Aalto's Buildings

- Regional Library of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland, 1965
- Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, Finland, 1962 - 1971
- Building for Westmannia-Dalecarlia Nation, Uppsala, Sweden, 1963 - 1965
- Central-Building of the Satellite-city "Neue Vahr", Bremen, Germany, 1962
- Mount Angel Abbey Library, Mount Angel, Oregon, 1970
- Turun Sanomat newspaper offices, Turku, Finland, 1928 - 1930
- Tuberculosis sanatorium and staff housing, Paimio, Finland, 1928 - 1929
- Central University Hospital, Zagreb, Croatia (former Yugoslavia), 1931
- Municipal library, Vyborg, Russia, 1933 - 1935
- Finnish Pavilion, 1939 World's Fair, 1939
- Baker House, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1947 - 1948
- Helsinki University of Technology, Espoo, Finland, 1949 - 1966
- House of Culture, Helsinki, Finland, 1952 – 1958

(Biography)

Artek:

Alvar Aalto began designing furniture and interior accessories as a natural and important extension of his career believing that this would benefit his architectural skills. His first modern piece of furniture was created in 1931-32 for the Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Paimio. This proved to be his international

breakthrough. This is how he thought of the Artek idea. It was set up in 1935 to market and sell Alvar and Aino Aalto's furniture, lamps and textiles. It was particularly aimed at international markets where Artek focused its operations from the initial stages. This all came about when Alvar designed a summer house for Harry and Maire Gullichsen who were prominent industrialists. This allowed Alvar access into the industrial area and began designing industrial buildings. In 1935, with the assistance of Maire Gullichsen and with Nils Gustav Hahl as director and Artek was formed. This then produced and marketed Alvar's furniture, fabric and glassware designs. Artek still exists today and is still designing and selling his designs. (artek)

Artek's Alvar Aalto's Furniture:



Artek Alvar Aalto three legged stool



Artek Alvar Aalto - Paimio Scroll Chair 41

Brian Delahunty



Artek Alvar Aalto - Armchair 45 - Quilted

Black Linen



Artek Alvar Aalto - Low Back Kitchen / Bar

Stool K65 - Birch Legs with Upholstered Seat

Reflection:

When I had finished researching and typing this word document I assessed what I had written and found that I was generally pleased with what I had produced. I found that I had absolutely no issues what so ever finding research on Alvar Aalto himself and his work as an architect. In fact it was actually hard to put all this available information into the word count. However even though all this information was valuable to the project and was needed to give an accurate and correct portrait on his career and life as a whole but I found in very difficult to find information on his furniture. As I am studying timber product technology this is the part which I would find of benefit to me. His career as an architect has no real relevance or interest to me in my opinion. I found it almost impossible to get any information on the history of his furniture design apart from where they can be bought and images. This is why I found this slightly frustrating as my interest was in the furniture side of his work and could not get sufficient information on it.

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