

Alvar Aalto

Sometimes referred to as the Father of Modernism, Alvar Aalto, born Hugo Alvar Henrik Aalto, was an architect and designer in Finland who made revolutionary contributions in building designs, furniture, textiles and glassware. He was an architecture student at the Helsinki University of Technology, and in 1923 in Jyväskylä, opened his first architectural office. In 1933, he settled in Helsinki. A honeymoon trip to Italy in 1924 stirred an ongoing fascination with that country and its culture and was reflected in his work.

Although he was regarded as an innovative architect who moved from Classicism to Modernism, he also circulated with other architects that influenced his work, most especially Gunnar Asplund and Sven Markelius.

Among Aalto's modern building designs which brought him prominence are the Viipuri, Finland Municipal Library, completed in 1935; the Turan Sanomat Building in Turku, Finland, 1930; the Paimio Sanatorium in Paimio, Finland 1933; Baker House at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and the Finnish Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair. One of his biggest architectural projects was the Helsinki City Centre. He was also designer of the Savoy Vase, Aalto Glassware, the Paimio Chair and three legged stacking stools. Unique to his furniture was his invention in 1932 of a new form of laminated bent-plywood

In 1957, he received the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture from the Royal Institute of British Architects and in 1963, the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects.

In a speech in London in 1957, Alvar Aalto said about design: "We should work for simple, good, undecorated things, but things which are in harmony with the human being and organically suited to the little man in the street."

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