

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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THE ARCHITECTURE OF ALVAR AALTO

- DATES** February 4 - May 6, 1998
- ORGANIZATION** Organized by Peter Reed, Associate Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art; with Kenneth Frampton, Ware Professor of Architecture, Columbia University, as curatorial consultant; assisted by Elina Standertskjöld, Museum of Finnish Architecture; with the cooperation of the Alvar Aalto Foundation and the Museum of Finnish Architecture.
- THE EXHIBITION** In celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the renowned Finnish architect, town planner, and designer, this exhibition will be the first large-scale retrospective in the United States of Alvar Aalto's architecture.
- Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), one of the most influential modern architects of the twentieth century, continues to have a profound influence both within his native Finland and internationally. During his fifty-four year career, Aalto completed a large number of diverse commissions, primarily in Finland and Scandinavia, but also in the United States and Europe. These range from factories, offices, and apartment buildings to churches, town halls, and such cultural institutions as auditoriums, museums, and libraries. Of the same generation as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Louis I. Kahn, Aalto's career followed a similar development in many ways. After a neo-classical beginning, followed by a lucid "functional style," Aalto's important later work was characterized by expressive and humanist aspirations which sought to balance regional with international influences, modern with ancient architecture, and nature with an increasingly standardized technology.
- CONTENTS** The Alvar Aalto Foundation has granted The Museum of Modern Art unprecedented access to its vast holdings which have rarely been loaned outside of Finland in the last twenty years. The exhibition will explore major institutional, residential, and commercial works, as well as lesser-known projects, including: Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Paimio, Finland (1929-33); Villa Mairea, Noormarkku, Finland

(1938-39); Town Hall, Säynätsalo, Finland (1950-52); Church of the Three Crosses, Vuoksenniska (Imatra), Finland (1955-58); "Neue Vahr" apartment building, Bremen, Germany (1958-62); and Mt. Angel Abbey Library, Oregon (1965-70); The exhibition will include approximately 120 original drawings and travel sketches -- many of which have never been exhibited in the United States -- twenty models, and fifty new and archival photographs of major works, as well as lesser known projects from all phases of Aalto's career. Several large-scale constructions of Aalto buildings will highlight the exhibition. In addition, the Museum is producing several video walk-throughs of Aalto's most important and well-known buildings. Shown on large screens throughout the exhibition, these videos will provide visitors with a rare opportunity to experience the light, spatial qualities, and setting of Aalto's work.

A full-scale construction of the brick-and-tile wall of the "Experimental House," Aalto's summer house built in Muuratsalo in 1953, will serve as an introduction to the exhibition. Epitomizing Aalto's interest in materials and aesthetics, it will provide visitors with a tangible "real" experience of his architecture. Several new large-scale models are being constructed for the exhibition, including a model of the Finnish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair (1938-39, demolished), one of Aalto's most highly acclaimed designs. The Museum also plans to include Aalto-designed chairs, which are still in production, for use by visitors in the galleries.

PUBLICATION The exhibition will be accompanied by a major illustrated publication, with new photography and critical essays by architects and historians that address significant themes in Aalto's work and place him in the context of twentieth-century architecture. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Hardbound, distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, and paperbound editions will be both available in The MoMA Book Store.

TRAVEL Following its show in New York, the exhibition will tour both nationally and internationally.

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For further information, contact the Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9750.