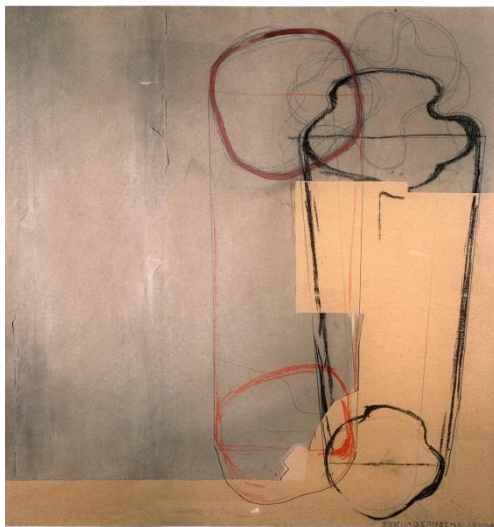


Alvar Aalto as Glass Designer

Through Alvar Aalto's innovative insights in furniture design, he is also celebrated in the history of industrial arts. His glass designs carry the same unique style that he created in his architectural projects.



Alvar Aalto, together with his wife Aino Aalto, made a unique contribution to the fields of architecture and design. Although Alvar Aalto's contribution to glass design was not so vast in numbers when compared to, for example, Tapio Wirkkala and Kaj Franck, his designs are an essential part of Finnish design heritage. Designing beautiful objects was however never a goal itself for the Aaltos. According to Alvar Aalto: "A standardised object is never a finished product: on the contrary, it is made to be completed by the individual human mind."

Alvar and Aino Aalto worked in very close collaboration. From their designs, it is difficult to distinguish who did what, because the creations were the result of collective planning.

Virtually all of Aino and Alvar Aalto's glass designs were entered into design competitions in Finland, which was a common way to search for new designs. Alvar Aalto entered a glass design competition in 1932. His wife Aino Aalto also took part that year and created a classic: her winning entry, known today as the Aino Aalto glass, is the oldest product in the Iittala portfolio.

In 1933, Riihimäki Glassworks was searching for designs for the Milan triennale. Alvar Aalto won second prize with a stackable

series of drinking glass, co-designed with Aino Aalto. His entry 244, known also as Riihimäki Flower, was also a success. The design of a geometrical plate and several bowls created a flower shape when stacked. The design embodied Aalto's idea of functional design being a synthesis of beautiful simplicity and practicality.

In 1937 Finland was exhibiting at the Paris World Fair, for which Alvar Aalto designed the Finnish pavilion. It received wide world-wide recognition and helped him break through internationally. The collection of glass objects that had won the Karhula-Iittala competition the previous year was introduced, and was an immediate success as inquiries started flooding in from Europe. The original collection, today known as the Alvar Aalto collection consisted of 11 items in five colours. The collection was introduced to a wider audience in restaurant Savoy in Helsinki, designed by the Aaltos.

Over the decades, many new colours have been added to the iconic vase which today is one of the best known Finnish design objects and one of the most celebrated design icons in the world. It is still produced every day in the Iittala glass factory by the most skilled glass blowers. It is also in the collections of international institutions, such as Museum of Modern Art in New York.

For the New York World's Fair in 1938 Alvar and Aino Aalto designed the Finnish pavilion and the Aalto flower, which is still in Iittala collection. The collection consists of four separate pieces that adapt the form of the Aalto vase, each piece repeating the same curving line. The same theme of organic lines and stackability can be seen in many of Aalto's glass designs from that era. Aalto's last glass objects date back to 1954. His last objects, plates and a tray all a very simplified and geometric in shape.

Source: Alvar Aalto – Designer, Alvar Aalto Foundation 2002

More on Alvar Aalto
http://www.alvaraalto.fi/aalto_architect_designer.htm

Hugo Alvar Henrik Aalto

1898 born at Kuortane on February 3rd
1916 matriculation from Jyväskylän Classical Lyceum
1921 diploma of architecture at the Institute of Technology, Helsinki
1923-27 private architectural office in Jyväskylä (from 1924 in collaboration with Aino Aalto)
1924 married to Aino Marsio (died in 1949)
1927-33 private architectural office in Turku
1933- private architectural office in Helsinki
1943-58 Chairman of the Association of Finnish Architects (Honorary Member since 1958)
1946-48 Professor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA
1952 married to Elissa Mäkinen (died in 1994)
1955- Member of the Finnish Academy (Emeritus Member since 1968)
1963-68 President of the Finnish Academy
1976 died in Helsinki on May 11th

Honorary member

1947 The Royal Society of Arts, London, Great Britain
1950 The Royal College of Arts, London, Great Britain
1950 Associazione per l'architettura organica, Rome, Italy
1954 Instituto de Arquitectos do Brasil, Brasil
1954 Zentralvereinigung der Architekten Österreichs, Austria
1956 Suomen Taideakatemia, Finland
1957 Södra Sveriges Byggnadstekniska Samfund, Sweden
1957 The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston, USA
1958 Accademia di belle arti di Venezia, Italy
1958 The American Institute of Architects, USA
1959 Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund, Norway
1961 Ornamo, Finland
1963 The World Academy of Art and Science, Israel
1965 Västmanlands-Dala Nation, Uppsala, Sweden
1965 Colegio de Arquitectos del Peru, Peru
1966 Insinööriliitto, Helsinki, Finland
1968 The American Academy of Arts and Letters, USA
1968 The National Institute of Arts and Letters, USA
1975 Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna, Austria

1975 The Royal Scottish Academy, Great Britain

Honorary correspondent

1939-44 Academic Institute of Architects in Denmark, Denmark
1937 The Royal Institute of British Architects, Great Britain
1966 Bund Deutscher Architekten, Federal Republic of Germany
 Correspondent member
1954 Académie d'Architecture, Paris, France
1955 Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Italy

Invited member

1928 Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie, Holland
1928 Les Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, France
1940 Kungliga Akademien för de Fria Konsterna, Sweden
1950 The Royal College of Arts, London
1958 Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany
1959 Teknillisten Tieteitten Akatemia, Helsinki, Finland
1961 Det Kongelige Akademi for de Skønne Kunster, Denmark

Honorary doctor

1947 University of Princeton, USA
1949 Helsingin Teknillinen Korkeakoulu, Finland
1960 Norges Tekniske Høyskole, Trondheim, Norway
1963 Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich, Switzerland
1964 Politecnici di Milano, Italy
1964 Columbia University, New York, USA
1965 Technische Hochschule, Vienna, Austria
1969 Jyväskylän yliopisto, Finland

Honours and awards

1939 Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, France
1948 SAFAn hopeaplaaketti, Finland
1949 Suomen Kulttuurirahaston suurpalkinto, Finland
1953 Akademisk Arkitektforenings Aeresmedaille, Denmark
1954 Prins Eugens medalj, Sweden
1957 The Royal Gold Medal of Architecture, Great Britain

1957 Kommendörskorset av Dannebrog, Denmark
1958 SAFAn kultaplaaketti, Finland
1962 Sonningprize, Denmark
1963 The Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects, USA
1963 Svenska Arkitekters Riksförbund, 'Gold Cube', Sweden
1963 Cordón del Calli de Oro, Sociedad de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Mexico
1965 Bronzeplakette, Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany
1965 Medaglia d'Oro della Città Firenze, Italy
1965 Suomen Leijonan suuristi, Finland
1965 Grande Ufficiale al Merito della Repubblica Italiana, Italy
1966 Diplome des Palmes d'Or du Mérite de l'Europe, Luxembourg
1966 Helsingin Yliopiston Ylioppilaskunnan puheenjohtajiston merkki, Finland
1967 The Thomas Jefferson Medal (University of Virginia), USA
1967 The Alvar Aalto Medal, Finland
1969 Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste, Federal Republic of Germany
1969 Litteris et Artibusmedal, Sweden
1972 Grand Croix de l'Ordre du Faucon, Iceland
1972 Grande Médaille d'Or d'Académie d'Architecture pour 1972, Paris, France
1974 Suomen rakennustaiteen museon hopeaplaaketti, Finland
1974 Das Österreichische Ehrenzeichen für Wissenschaft und Kunst, Austria
1975 National Arts Foundation, outstanding architect of western civilization, Liechtenstein

