

Topic Page: [Aalto, Alvar, 1898–1976](#)

Definition: **Aalto, Alvar** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Finnish architect and furniture designer, famous for his imaginative handling of floor levels and use of natural materials and irregular forms. Aalto's work includes the Sanatorium at Paimio (1931), the Finnish Pavilion at the New York International Exhibition (1939), Baker House at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1947–49), and Finlandia House, Helsinki (1967–71). See *also* modernism

Summary Article: **Aalto, Alvar**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(*õl'vär ältõ*), 1898–1976, Finnish architect and furniture designer. Aalto is considered one of the foremost architects of the 20th cent. Most of his designs were made in collaboration with his first wife, Aino Maria Marsio, 1894–1949, the celebrated furniture designer and architect. Aalto's work adapted Finnish building traditions to modern European techniques and to the specific function of the structure in boldly expressive style. His designs for the municipal library at Viipuri (1927–35; now in Vyborg, Russia) and the tuberculosis sanitarium at Paimio (1929–33) were outstanding functionalist works. He gained international fame for his remarkable designs for sleek molded and laminated birch wood furniture and for his plans for the Finnish pavilions at the expositions in Paris (1937) and New York (1939). Signature furniture pieces widely used in both institutional and residential settings include his three-legged stool, a classic of modern design, and the curvingly sculptural yet comfortable Paimio reclining bentwood armchair originally designed for the sanitarium. Also well known among his designs are fabrics and curvilinear glass vases. In 1940 he was appointed visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he designed the serpentine Baker House (1947–48). After World War II he was active in reconstruction in Finland. His major postwar works include a number of striking civic buildings in Helsinki, the Maison Carré in Paris (designed in collaboration with Elissa Makkinheimo, his second wife), and the Wolfsburg cultural center in Germany.

See his complete works, ed. by Fleig, K. (tr. of 3d ed., 2 vol., 1970–71); studies by F. A. Gutheim (1960) and P. D. Pearson (1978).

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Aalto, Alvar. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/aalto_alvar_1898_1976



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