

## History of Architecture and Culture – 5

### Lecture 29

#### Works of Alvar Aalto

Hugo Alvar Henrik Aalto was a Finnish architect, designer, as well as a sculptor and painter. His work includes architecture, furniture, textiles, glassware and pretty much everything that encompasses the gamut of design. Aalto's early career runs parallel with the rapid economic and industrial growth of Finland itself.

Although a lot of his early works is borrowed from neoclassical architectural movement. He eventually moved on and adopted the symbolism and functionality of modern architecture to generate plans and forms.

His mature works embody a unique functionality cum expressionist and human style, successfully applied to a variety of projects such as libraries, housing, civic centres, churches, etc.

A lot of his clients were industrialists which mean that he got a lot business when Finland was booming as an industrial country in the later part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. His design predominantly has a beautiful synthesis of rationality on one side with intuitive design philosophies on the other side. This synthesis made Aalto create a long series of functional yet non reductionist buildings.

Alvar Aalto generated a style of functionalism which avoided lot of romantic excess neoclassical monotony. Although he borrowed from the international style, he utilized texture, colour and structure in new creative ways. And in some manner peculiar to Finnish architecture too.

This is one of his famous projects take a look at the bold geometric forms take a look at how he responded to the setting also note the use of colour, the use of proportions of windows. What Aalto does in his architectural projects is he takes generic examples of modern architecture and he refines them in his own way. And he takes a purely recreated form of this generic architecture that he has taken and he seamlessly integrates and forms a new Finnish architecture.

His designs were very very important because of their response to site the use of materials and form.

This is an another Alvar aalto projects, here again you can see the way in modern architecture has evolved to this kind of architecture which is very very particular to Aalto's. Look at the choice of colours again here and the use of very minimal structural elements and you also note the openness in designed here, which is borrowed from modern architecture.

One of the most famous buildings of Alvar Aalto's is the House of Culture which he designed. Kulttuuritalo, Kulttuuritalo is Finnish for the house of culture which building in Alppila, Helsinki the capital of Finland. This was designed by Alvar Aalto and is considered by one of his very very important works. Because this building combines a concert hall, an office building, a lecture theatre blocks, connecting the office and the concert hall. Uniting the whole, along the street frontages a beautiful 60 meter long Canopy.

Look at the expression of form and colour in his building. The House of Culture was originally built for Finnish communist cultural organizations.

He designed the building pro bono and was given complete artistic freedom in this project; the construction work was done predominantly by volunteers and not regular construction workers.

The work began in 1955 and the building was ready by 1958.

This is one of the interiors views of the building, if you take a look at the building the free asymmetrical form of the building of the hall took to the development of new facing element. Which was the wedge shaped brick with its all the curves and irregulars could be beautifully realized in that wedge shaped brick that is his speciality.

This is the plan of the building; here you can see the office building which I was talking about on the right side of the screen and the auditorium on the left hand side and this is the lecture theatre block this connecting the two buildings.

The office building; the auditorium building and the lecture theatre block that connects both these two buildings. The office part has five stories of space here with about 110 offices, meeting rooms and even 2 flats in these buildings. In the lecture and conference room section here there are lecture halls, study rooms, discussion rooms, record rooms and also a library room over here.

The concert and the congress hall is the main feature element. The hall has the capacity of over fifteen hundred seats and a stage that has an area of 200 sq. M, is primarily intended for concerts, but is also used for lectures. Various parts of the buildings are linked together along the street by the 16 meter Canopy like I told you earlier. Under the canopy are located the main entrances to the whole building.

The next famous building that we gonna look that Alvar Aalto's library is Mount Angel Library. This library is located on top of a hill Mount Angel and it belongs to Benedictine Monestary.

The simple single story inner facade in pale brick continues the court yard edge, blending with the traditional buildings on either side.

Only after entering this facade and passing the circulation centre is the visitor struck with the spirit of the plunging, uplifting arc of the central space.

You should take a look at the pictures, Aalto works with light with the route with massing and modelling of the building form. These are classic architectural references.

His range is formidable in that he appears to be able to handle an extraordinarily wide spectrum of architectural problems. He handles the urban and the rural the large, the medium and the small buildings.

He is able to absorb virtually every building material be it concrete, stucco, glass, copper, marble, brick, ceramics or timber.

These are the interiors of Alvar Aalto's Mount Angel Library.

If we take a look at the plan here, the back of the fan shaped library features large clerestory windows and, high above, the central space is ringed by skylights. These let in a soft, pleasing light which permeates the library completely; there is soft light that is coming from the central skylights and clerestory lights which percolates through every part of the library and bakes it with the basin light. Aalto uses the modern technologies and the international style, but at the same time he also has given the very very organic personal touch in his project which modern architecture does not usually provide.

Modern architecture and international style has this very difficult rigid formulations, but organic shape was its strict no in modern architecture, but Alver Aalto puts its unique thoughts and makes the technological advancement of modern architecture with his own personal touch the very organic form.

This is the section of the building, this is the central skylight that I was talking about and these are clerestory windows through which the whole library can be based with light. The interiors of the lobby once you enter lobby, if you take a look at the interiors, one will be instantly familiar to anyone who is being inside the modern building, but right next to that directly adjacent to that is a beautiful, sensual, wave-shaped within the auditorium that could hardly contrast with it anymore.

Next we are going to have a look at Aalto's summer house.

The most basic understanding of the house is its courtyard schemes which focuses inwards on the space while also direct careful views of the nearby lake. The walls of the courtyard reflect the very nature of the experimental home as more than fifty different types of bricks which are arranged in various patterns inside this house.

He could do a lot of experiments with this house because he only used to stay there for very very minimal period of time. This allowed Aalto to test the aesthetics of different arrangements while also monitoring how they reacted through rough climates. He also

tested concepts like foundation systems, free-form brick construction, passive solar heating. He was comfortable exploring all materiality and all the experiments with all colors and forms in this building. Because like it will he is gonna be therefore a few months in a year and he can also test how things work.

So this was his testing round and where his real projects he used all the things that were successful from this project. The interior of the house holds a light loft area which was to function as a painting studio. This is supported by a large wooden beam which holds the space intension. Like all of Aalto's works and architecture, the surrounding landscape it measures more than fifty-three thousands square meters and that place a very very critical role and the overall experiences of the architecture. Most of Aalto's projects are surrounded by vast expands of landscape which is very very special to finish architecture at the same time Aalto's architecture.

Here you can see the plan of the building and these are the cantos along which the whole building is placed. All the boulders and stones along the house on to the side portions of this house covered with moss, bilberry and bush that add a beautiful contrast to the brick and white colours of the whole building itself.

With Alver Aalto's work we come to an end of unit III. We saw how modern architecture developed and it got institutionalized into various parts of Europe and America even to the east to the India.

### **Post WWII Developments**

Now we are going to move on to the fourth unit. In the fourth unit we will be looking at how modern architecture and international architecture fit after the World War II because I have to rehydrate here again that after World War II there was massive massive destruction all around the Europe and there was huge demand for most of the public buildings, huge demand for housing, huge demand for other buildings like schools, collages because most of the buildings were destroyed during World War II. So this created a very huge gap in terms of construction materials, repairmen in terms of requirements in terms of architects in terms for speedy construction and we have lot of other things going on.

After the post-World War II there was a huge economic expansion also known as the postwar economic boom, long boom and the golden age of Capitalism. This is a period of complete economic prosperity in the mid twentieth century after the end of Second World War and it lasted for a period of about twenty-five years until the early 70s. During this time there was high worldwide economic growth; western European and East Asian countries particular experienced unusually high and sustained growth, together with full employment.

Contrary to predictions high growth also included many countries that had been devastated by the war, such as Greece, France, Japan and Italy. Even these countries prospered into this economic boom.

Here in the picture you can see a massive destruction that is happened and a massive reconstruction is going on to get the whole thing back in place and on the left hand side you can see a mass housing site where there are huge number of houses generating supply to the existing housing demand.

In academic literature, this period is frequently and narrowly referred to as post-World War II economic boom, though this term can refer to much shorter booms in particular markets here and there.

Here in the picture you can take a look at how World War II has devastated most buildings. So this huge economic growth increased the huge productivity growth in terms all industries. So manufacturing was aided by automation technologies' for fast developing electrical and electronic technologies such as feedback controllers, which appeared in the late 1930s were this was a fast-growing area of investment following the war.

Wholesale and retail trade got benefited from the new highway systems, distribution warehouse and material handling equipment such as forklifts, trucks and lifting, moving equipment. Oil will started displacing coal in lot of applications, particularly in locomotives and ships. People no longer use coal will be start using oil from petroleum and even in agriculture they were lot of widespread innovation like Chemical fertilizers, the use of automated tractors, harvesters combine high yield crop varieties which came results as a result of green revolution, the use of pesticides these were something which happened after World War II.

Leading architects who are by the end of World War II, what happened was they had been completely fully captured by the growing modernism architectures trend in planning and urban design. So what happened was some of the clients started intervening inside the architects work and lot of clients also criticized architects? They have been criticized before but never before by someone who cerements had, so much impact to the public it was the prince. The architects to their disgruntlement were portrayed as people who were arrogant and unresponsive to what the client wanted, what the ordinary people wanted indifferent to their interests providing only what the architect seemed that was right. That was the picture of architects that was portrayed after World War II.

So when this kind of portrait is pictured, in architect someone who imposes his well on the client on the people and not considered what the people want, what the client wants. So a lot of architects were taken badly in this light. So what happened was some architect sought to this and then they empathized with the clients and with the people and they started producing architecture which speed away from the modern architecture and they started using personalized touch giving their own personal touch not just taking elements from

international style and they started doing their own improvisation on to architecture, which generated buildings such as these.

As they continued to pursue their own vision as to what was appropriate, and suitably, contemporary to the client or advanced in terms of designing structure.

An ordinary people they like the princess idea because they taught that they should be a some kind of traditional feature and major public buildings and some more traditional layout in terms of towns and cities, because they didn't like the mechanized way of doing modern thing because they were not able relate to it. Even though some of the cities in some of the ideas which modern architecture gave could be more relevant to the problem even though that could be better solution, but people were not able to empathise in take it because they were not able to connect to it. So they wanted a little more traditional approach towards the sign and architects slowly started moving away from thus craze of modernism. It took until 1970's to come out of modernism completely and start designing buildings so that truly embrace people and people architecture or something like this.

So on one side there was increasing dissatisfaction with the building designs there was going on, from there was a mixture of decorative feature from the different architectural periods which resulted in a little boring elements in design or rather designs that had no relation to function of the building. So the need to build a large number of commercial and civic buildings that server rapidly industrializing society was on the other side, on one side there was mixture of styles and the other side was so much need.

So people started experimenting with buildings and sometimes they had to let go of what modernism or international style says and sometimes they have to take up what the people or client wanted. That period also saw the successful development of new construction techniques involving the latest use of steel, reinforced concrete, glass materials.

There was a strong desire to create modern style of architecture for modern man. They wanted a style that is neutral without any decorative features from a new classic Romanesque, gothic, or Renaissance architecture which are all old fashion, if not absolute. So this was the strong desire to do this, but the same time the public outcry was, another side which is pulling them outwards.

So here will looking at architecture which says that publicly calls to forget the past and when people could do buildings that are according to their time, modernism had its time, it's time to move on from modernism to the future.

International style still got, propagated and until 1960's if not early 1970's there was lot of people who propagated the ideas of the international style in different places. Walter Gropius did it in Germany, J.J.P. Oud did it in Holland, Le Corbusier did it in France, and other places wherever he built, Richard Neutra, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson did it in the United States and lot of other lesser known architects promoted at the

other sides by the 1970's by the early 1970's or late 1960's. The style was so dominant that innovation became dead.

Architects started producing building that were copies of building that we already existed at which acmes were copies of building that where already existing. So for some 30 or 40 years we have been built in the same kind of buildings and the whole places was infested with this kind of buildings that they taught innovation was dead.

Mies van der Rohe continued to design beautiful buildings but it was copied everywhere those who said that went to get of an airplane in the 1970's but you don't. Where you are because every where looks the same to get down in London it's the same, you get down in Paris it's the same, to get down in loss angles it's the same, you go to New York it's the same. So in the 1970s you get off on the airplane in 1970s every cities looks the same then to you as a results a lot of architects were highly dissatisfied with the limitation and formulaic methodology which the architectural of the international style imposed on the architects. So they wanted to design buildings with a little more individual character, so that they can also take the public opinion or public outcry into consideration with so what did modernism says, modernism said rigid forms no decorations, so they just went little deviant from that, so they didn't care about rigid form anymore they started walking organic form and they started doing decoration which was against the modernistic principles.