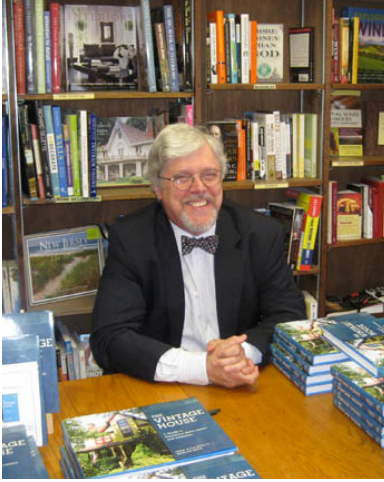


Thursday, August 22 | 2:30 PM

### Designing Like Alvar Aalto



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Though many early critics saw Alvar Aalto as an “intuitive” and “irrational” designer in comparison to his contemporaries, he was in fact very deliberate in his habits throughout his mature career. His biographer, Goran Schildt, pointed to early experiences under the “white table” in his father’s surveying office, as key to understanding these habits. This presentation will consider three essential components of that design practice:

1. The influence of landscape, nature, and especially contours in the way he conceived his buildings, both rural and urban;
2. The Beaux Arts technique of *esquisse-rendu*, learned at the Helsinki Institute of Technology under Herbert Blomstedt, as key to his basic drawing habits;
3. The counterpoint between plan and section in all of his mature buildings—a tendency to work simultaneously in both modes while sketching and developing a design.

Each of these conceptual modalities was critical to Aalto’s design methods, and he quickly instilled them in his key assistants, especially in the years following the Second World War, as his practice began to flourish. We will look at such seminal works as the Seinajoki Civic Center, Helsinki Kulturitalo, Church of the Three Crosses, and Saynatsalo Town Hall in our discussion. The lecture will conclude with a dialogue about student drawing experiences, and how they may correspond or diverge from those of Aalto.