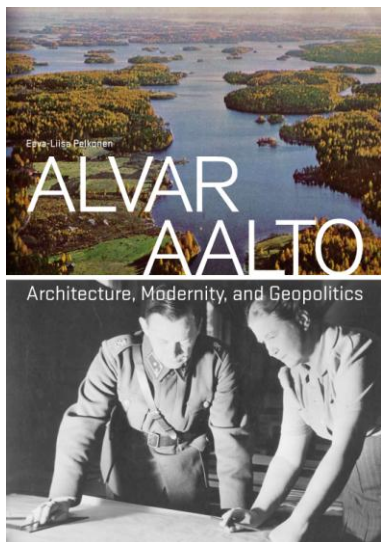


**Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics** / Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen. – New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, May 2009. –240 p.: ill.—ISBN 978-0-300-11428-7 (cl., alk. Paper): \$45.00.



Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen re-examines Aalto's writings, design and iconic role in the history of modern architecture through the lens of the tumultuous geopolitical terrain in which Aalto lived and practiced. By documenting Finland's and the larger geopolitical environment Pelkonen is able to draw correlations between the changing political and intellectual landscape and the corresponding responses found in Aalto's designs, writings and lectures.

Beginning with Finland's fledgling and uneasy independence from Russia in 1917, Pelkonen documents Aalto's struggle to define a distinctly Finnish architecture and to make connections to cosmopolitan European culture. Pelkonen references early published articles by Aalto in which he encourages Finnish cultural endeavors and struggles to connect the Finns culturally to Sweden and to Europe. By tracing his role as unofficial state architect during the Winter War, World War II and the Cold War, Pelkonen documents how these convulsive times influenced Aalto's design and his career.

Influenced by Finland's politically precarious position during this period, Aalto was also an active member of the modern movement. He was highly connected to, responsive to and inspired by contemporary scholarship and artistic innovation. By immersing Aalto's body of work in its contemporary intellectual context, Pelkonen shows that although Finnish nature does play an important role in Aalto's career he is far more inspired by the ever evolving modern movement. Inspiration for Aalto's early built projects can be traced through modernism and functionalism to the organic post-International Style forms with which Aalto is now indelibly linked.

Pelkonen, assistant professor at the School of Architecture at Yale, documents this progression in three parts; *Making of a Nation, New Geographies and Formal Registers*. Each of these parts is further subdivided into three chapters. Excellent visual documentation throughout adds to the reader's understanding, as do the extensive notes and index. This publication assumes readers have a basic knowledge both of Aalto and of modern design. It adds depth as well as a unique scholarly perspective to the numerous visual documentations of Aalto's work. This publication would be an excellent addition to an academic, undergraduate and graduate, or museum library collecting architecture resources.

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