



Tchoban Foundation
Museum for
Architectural Drawing

Press Release

Berlin, 3 August 2023

Alvar Aalto in Germany: Drawing Modernism

Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing
Christinenstraße 18a, 10119 Berlin

Exhibition opening: 22 September 2023, 7 pm

Press tour: 22 September 2023, 6 pm

Exhibition duration: 23 September 2023 - 14 January 2024

Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2 pm. - 7 pm, Sat-Sun: 1 pm. - 5 pm

Admission: 6 Euros, concessions: 4 Euros

The exhibition *Alvar Aalto in Germany: Drawing Modernism* at the Museum for Architectural Drawing, presented in collaboration with the Alvar Aalto Foundation in Finland, sets on display over 70 original drawings by the renowned Finnish architects Alvar Aalto (1898–1976) and Elissa Aalto (1922–1994) and their practice.

Spanning works from the 1950s, when Alvar Aalto was summoned to contribute to the vast (re)construction efforts that followed the Second World War, to the 1980s, when Elissa Aalto boldly brought to completion major projects that were left unfinished upon her husband's death in 1976, the exhibition features original drawings of the office's fourteen projects in Germany, both realised and unrealised. The six realised projects comprise three dyads: one pair each of churches, apartment blocks, and cultural buildings. The eight unrealised plans, in turn, encompass major public programmes – town halls, civic centres, master plans and commercial office buildings.

The drawings presented in this exhibition chronicle the relationship which Alvar Aalto fostered with Germany and German architectural culture from his youth to his death, and which was cultivated further by Elissa Aalto. From the late 1940s and early 1950s onward, Alvar Aalto Architects Ltd. was heralded in Germany as a “humane” exception to an otherwise more



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mechanised doctrinaire modernism. The promise of the studio's purportedly softer genre of modernism was particularly auspicious in light of the horrors associated with mechanisation after the Second World War.

The exhibition presents the drawings neither chronologically nor project by project, but thematically. The first two themes address city-building. "Natural and Civic Topographies" explores how members of the Aalto studio sought to ensure that their German civic buildings and master plans grew organically from, and resonated with, their existing geographical and cultural contexts. "Projecting Identity" interrogates how architectural form and urban space were employed as tools of communicating a sense of local character to the world beyond, especially via massing and elevation.

The second two themes focus on specific architectural programs, and the challenges inherent in their design. "Boundaries of the Sacred" charts the ways in which Studio Aalto's two churches in Wolfsburg negotiate the relationship between the sacred and the profane, a tension interpreted especially in the design of walls, whereas "Humanising Standardisation" documents an effort to subjugate paradigms of efficiency and optimisation to human comfort in the domestic context.

The drawings show that, for members of Studio Aalto, paper was the basic subsistence that kept alive the creative process. It was not art. The drawings are therefore beautiful but never self-consciously precious: their visual appeal is a by-product rather than end goal. The rambling, collaborative, spontaneous drawing process is best illustrated by early sketches for the various projects. As material traces of thinking, they are plainly and comprehensively honest, and dense. A calm counterpoint to the early untamed sketches is provided by carefully-drafted working drawings, which narrate the maturation of intuitive flurried ideas into delicate final designs.

This exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from the Arts and Humanities Impact Fund at the University of Cambridge. The Finnish Institute in Germany kindly serves as patron of the exhibition.

In addition to the full suite of drawings on display a catalogue of the exhibition will be published.

Curators of the exhibition

Dr Sofia Singler, Research Fellow, University of Cambridge

Timo Riekko, Chief Curator, Alvar Aalto Foundation

Nadejda Bartels, Director, Tchoban Foundation



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Designers of the exhibition

Anna Andrich, Architect, Anna Andrich Ltd., London (exhibition design)

Annika Paetsch, Graphic Designer, Tchoban Foundation (graphic design)

Alvar Aalto Foundation

The Alvar Aalto Foundation maintains the material and intellectual legacy of the world-famous architect and designer Alvar Aalto, and acts to make his work and thinking more widely known. The Alvar Aalto Foundation's sites in Helsinki and Jyväskylä are meeting points for friends of architecture and design from all over the world. The Alvar Aalto Museum, founded in 1966 in Jyväskylä, is a specialist museum of architecture and design, and a national and international centre for information about Alvar Aalto, with extensive collections that form the basis for its exhibitions and publications. The Alvar Aalto Foundation oversees the work of the Alvar Aalto Academy and the Foundation's Architectural Heritage Department. The Architectural Heritage Department provides expert assistance on repairs of buildings designed by Aalto. The Alvar Aalto Academy fosters training and research in modern architecture, and mounts architecture events in Finland and abroad.

Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing

The Tchoban Foundation Museum of Architectural Drawing was built in 2013 on the site of the former Pfefferberg brewery. The Foundation was established in 2009 by architect and collector Sergei Tchoban with the aim of promoting the art of architectural drawing. Three times a year, the Museum holds exhibitions with works from its own holdings and loans from both private collections and the collections of renowned museums such as Sir John Soane's Museum in London, the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the Albertina in Vienna, the Deutsches Architekturmuseum (DAM) in Frankfurt am Main.

In cooperation with



ALVAR AALTO



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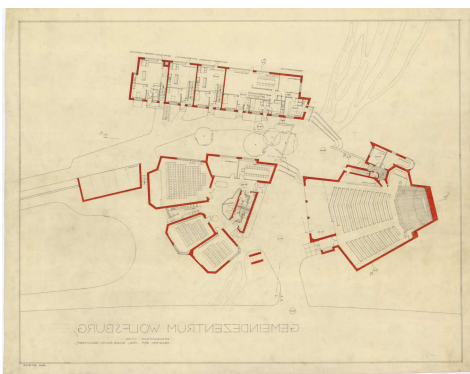
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If you publish material from the press release, please send us a copy.

Images

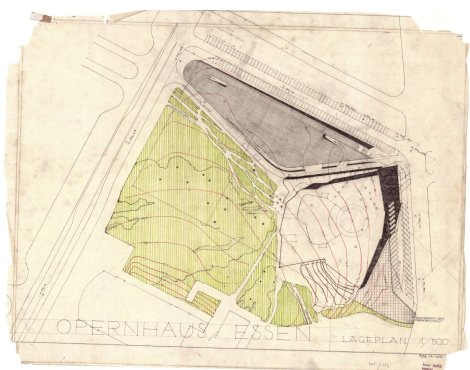


20-2163

Church and parish centre, Wolfsburg, 1960–1962

Pencil and Indian ink on tracing paper

76 × 96,3 cm



45-4093

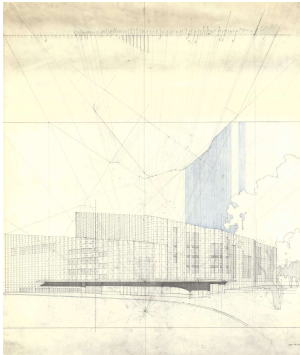
Opera and music theatre, Essen, 1959; 1961–1988



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Pencil and colour pencil on tracing paper

53 × 68 cm

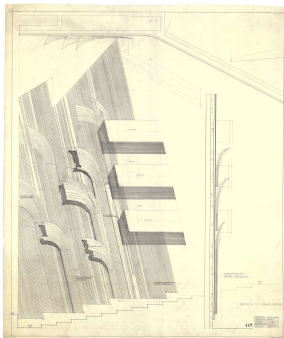


45-4424

Opera and music theatre, Essen, 1959; 1961–1988

Pencil and colour pencil on tracing paper

106,2 × 90,2 cm



45-4483

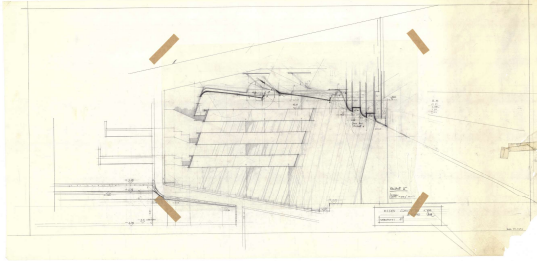
Opera and music theatre, Essen, 1959; 1961–1988

Pencil on tracing paper

104,6 × 89 cm



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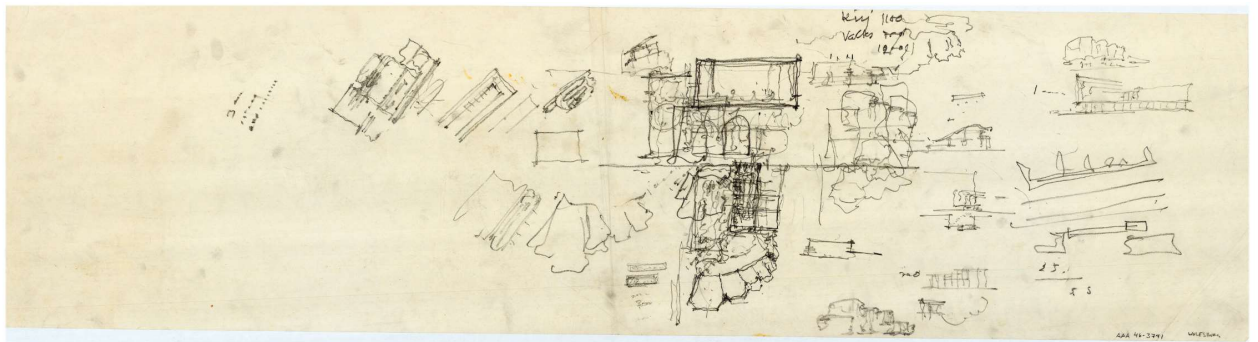


45-4792

Opera and music theatre, Essen, 1959; 1961–1988

Pencil on tracing paper

65,2 × 133 cm



46-374I

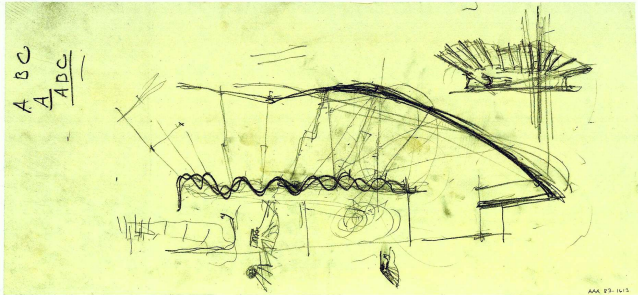
Cultural centre, Wolfsburg, 1958–1962

Pencil on tracing paper

30 × 114 cm



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83-1613

Apartment block, Bremen, 1958–1962

Pencil on tracing paper

30 × 65,7 cm