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The Finn

by *Benedikt Huber*

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As a means of introducing this issue on contemporary art in Finland, it seems to be indicated to give—as far as too brief a visit permits—not a historical account, interesting though this could be, but instead a sketch of "the Finn", whose national character and general experience are reflected in the truly vital and contemporary art of his country. The dominating feature is the country itself: its open spaces, its rugged coastline, its lakes and the delicacy of the colours. All these features seem to have given this people a sensitivity and a feeling for balance which bring to mind, taking into account differences of race and mentality, distant Japan. Nothing perhaps expresses the intimate contact the Finn has with nature better than the way architectural projects are conceived, and the manner in which the clearly defined rhythm of the seasons and the subdued power of the landscape have led in every field to the inhabitants of this country spontaneously feeling that the simplest thing is the most beautiful.

Tapiola and Helsinki Townplanning Problems

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The garden city of Tapiola, 9 km. from the centre of Helsinki, has already been the subject of some lively discussion, certain people reproaching it with being nothing more than a dormitory town. Taking into account the particular conditions obtaining in Finland and its capital (very low density of population and a taste for being housed in close contact with natural surroundings) and recognizing that to a certain extent a clear total concept is lacking, one is forced to admit that as a whole it is an extremely agreeable residential area on a genuinely human scale. Tapiola has been built by the *Asuntosäätiö* Foundation under the supervision of H. van Hertzen. Most of the residents are part owners of their town, thanks to their holding shares issued by the co-operative building societies and the society which controls the public utilities.

University City of Otaniemi

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Architects: *K. and M. Sirén, Helsinki*

Built according to a plan of A. Aalto, who designed the sports centre himself. There is a chapel for the two main beliefs.

Work in Alvar Aalto's Studio

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by *Walter Moser*

In the case of Alvar Aalto the central problem is that posed by man himself and Aalto's architecture is consequently both organic and human. This spirit of humanity is embodied principally in the studio of the architect, not only in the building itself and the furniture and lighting fixtures, but also in the way that the work is carried out there. The contact between the various collaborators is a truly living one, and in addition they eat, discuss and joke together. No bureaucratic restraint of any sort is to be found. This does not prevent them, in fact quite the contrary, from working intensively without any form of carelessness, even in details of clothing (slovenly dress would lower the tone of the studio). The teamwork here is not carried out along American lines, but is based on hierarchical principles—the hierarchy being naturally the only valid one: that of experience and talent. At the present time Alvar Aalto's studio is working on eight large projects both for Finland and abroad.

Assembly-hall, Helsinki

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1956, architect: *Prof. A. Aalto, Helsinki*

This building was constructed for a Finnish Party and contains a large hall, a vestibule, a foyer, and in addition an office section covered entirely with copper.

General Plan of Imatra, Finland

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1947-1953, Prof. *Alvar Aalto, Helsinki*

Legally speaking, within the Finnish system Imatra is neither a town nor a village, but belongs instead to the intermediate category of autonomous agglomerations: the boroughs. This fact, however, does not exclude a possible future population of 100,000. The Imatra of today has come about as a result of the merging of three separate villages and the plan was to form an organic whole; this has been attempted by the creation of a new main centre, a network of roads and highways where the crossings would be at different levels as far as possible, and also by the general planning of one-family houses and residential blocks (of not more than 3 or 4 storeys), and equally well by the rational integration of

industrial zones (generally in connection with the timber industry along Lake Samaa and its outlet, the Vuoksi) and what is called "the green belt networks", which are a combination of parks, meadows, fields and woods which serve both as recreation areas and site reserves for future buildings. It is interesting to note that 37% of the inhabitants occupy one-family houses and 63% the residential blocks, as well as the fact that Alvar Aalto has quite wittingly been guided by the industrial origin of the agglomeration and has not failed to contribute his share to the element of uncertainty resulting from this factor as regards its development in the future. It should be stressed that Imatra's site is a favoured one with respect to areas which are capable of forming protective belts against chaotic suburban growth, since the town is limited on nearly all sides either by stretches of water or by the frontier or by other independent townships.

Helsinki-Lautasaari Church

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Architects: *K. and M. Petäjä, Helsinki*

This Lutheran church with its striking bell tower is situated in the centre of the isle of Lautasaari; a secondary church is intended for Swedish-speaking parishioners.

Small Annex of the Helsinki National Theatre

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1954, architects: *K. and H. Sirén, Helsinki*

This is a building in the shape of a cube adjoining the rear of the old Helsinki national theatre with, in addition, a school of drama and a restaurant.

Finnish Applied Arts and their Creators

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by *Benedikt Huber*

In place of a general review the author has thought it more instructive to refer briefly to the people and groups whose efforts are responsible for the present flourishing state of the decorative arts and industrial design in Finland. Artek—originally founded by Alvar Aalto and his wife—specializes in interior fittings, the furniture is designed by Alvar Aalto himself. The group, now installed in the "Rautatalo" building (designed by A. Aalto) also includes a small art gallery. Printex and Marimekko: Printex, under the direction of Mrs. Armi Ratia, is engaged in the production of hand-printed fabrics and Marimekko in that of women's and children's clothes, the bright colours of which enliven the streets of Helsinki in the summer. Arabia is a porcelain factory; the main designer is Kaj Frank. Their activities range from mass production to "objets d'art". The designer Tapio Wirkkala has won numerous international awards and some of his creations are to be seen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Among the artists (nearly all abstract in tendency) who are making Finnish applied art the lively thing it is the article mentions Sarpaneva (glassware), Mrs. K. Salmenhaara (pottery), Schultz-Kölin (pottery and ceramic compositions), Mrs. V. Eskolin (ceramics) and Mrs. U. Simberg-Ehrström (tapestries).

The Finnish "Ryas"

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by *Willy Rotzler*

These knotted carpets are like those of Asia Minor, North Africa, the Balkans and Scandinavia in that the knots are less numerous than in Oriental carpets; they are at one and the same time the most vital and most modern example of an art which has a popular origin. Generally non-representational, some of these eminently poetic creations are now to be seen in a travelling exhibition.