



PRESS MATERIAL

EUPHORIA FILM PRESENTS

A FILM BY
VIRPI SUUTARI

AALTO

WHY SETTLE FOR ORDINARY
WHEN YOU CAN CREATE PARADISE

EUPHORIA FILM PRESENTS A VIRPI SUUTARI FILM "AALTO"
CINEMATOGRAPHY HEIKKI FÄRM & JANI KUMPULAINEN F.S.C. EDITOR JUSSI RAUTANIEMI F.C.E. SOUND DESIGN OLLI HUHTANEN MUSIC SANNA SALMENKALLO
CO-PRODUCERS ARTE G.E.I.E. YLE, AVROTROS PRODUCERS TIMO VIERIMAA, VIRPI SUUTARI, MARTTI SUOSALO WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY VIRPI SUUTARI



AALTOFILM

OUTLOOK

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title Of Film

Aalto

Country Of Production

Finland

Sound

5.1-Mix Ebur128

Director

Virpi Suutari

English Title

Aalto

Duration Of The Film

103 Min

Ratio **1:2,39**

Script

Virpi Suutari & Jussi Rautaniemi

Genre

**Feature Documentary
Film**

Screening Format

Dcp

Original Language

**English, Finnish, French,
German, Russian, Italian,
Swedish**

Cinematography

Heikki Färm & Jani Kumpulainen

Year Of Production

2020

Shooting Format

**4 K Prores Quicktime
Color And B&W**

Subtitled In

English

Sound

Olli Huhtanen



STORY

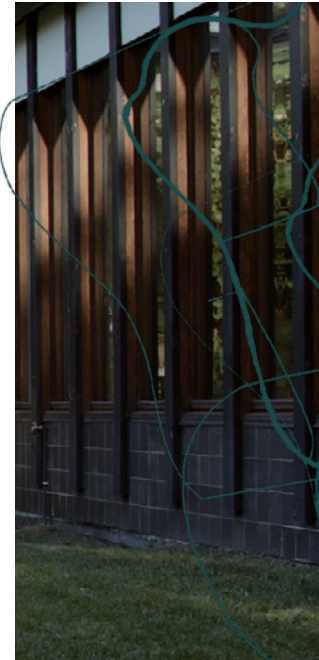
“The scale is always people, and they’re every bit as much part of nature as pine trees and birches. We have all the technical skills, but humanizing them is a very difficult task.”

– Alvar Aalto

Aalto is a documentary film journey into the life and work of one of the greatest modern architects, **Alvar Aalto**. The film shares for the first time the intimate love story of Alvar and his architect wife, **Aino Aalto**. It takes the viewer on a cinematic tour to their creative processes and iconic buildings all over the world. We visit their most beautiful buildings in Finland, a library in Russia, a student dormitory at MIT, an art collector’s private house near Paris – and many other unique places. We learn about the colourful history of modernism and meet along the way the **Rockefellers**, **Le Corbusier**, and **László Moholy-Nagy**.

Great tragedy struck Alvar with Aino’s premature death. He eventually got married again to another architect, **Elissa Aalto**, and had one his most significant professional periods in the 1950s.

This charming documentary organically combines entertainment and knowledge, contemporary film material and rare unforeseen footage. We hear the protagonists talking intimately in their love letters and see Alvar’s heartbreaking drawings of his wife on her deathbed. The film is based on profound research and narrated by the eyewitnesses and top researchers from all over the world.





A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR



A film about the Aaltos lingered in my mind for years. When I was a child, Alvar Aalto's library building that was completed in my home town of Rovaniemi in 1965 became an afternoon refuge for me. In the 1970s after my schooldays, I often trudged to the library in the snowfall and the freezing weather. I was drawn there by the books but also by the environment that seemed exciting to me. I can still recall the feeling of grabbing the curved brass door handle on the front door and moving towards the warm, inviting space. I remember how fun it was to run my fingers along the wall made out of ribbed ceramic tiles. And Aalto's leather chairs and brass lamps felt luxurious. I felt rich, even though I came from a modest home. The library belonged democratically to everyone, even me.

Already then, I subconsciously realised I was in touch with a special kind of unpretentious beauty. And you could say that Aalto was an architect of sensuality and emotions, even an erotic architect, whose buildings are not just looked at but also touched; and they touch you with their human-sized scale.

After detaching himself from pure functionalism and developing his more unrestricted, organic style, Aalto managed to create his most humane buildings such as Villa Mairea, a private home where he took the experience of a forest and brought it in the middle of the living room. He had a sort of "forest wisdom" that was not romantic pipe dreaming but rational understanding of the coexistence of nature and humans.

I wanted to make a film about the Aaltos because being in touch with Aalto's spaces as a child moulded my idea about what is aesthetically harmonious and good architecture. I also realised that no one had previously made a comprehensive film about the Aaltos.

I started to fantasise about a film that would have beauty but also broken humanity, playfulness, and

a charm. I wanted to get to know Alvar Aalto as a person and the characteristics of his architect wives Aino and Elissa Aalto. I wanted to know how they worked and what they achieved. How they loved and created together. How they established the Aalto grammar and the Artek furniture store that became an iconic success story.

The Aalto family let me read Aalto's correspondence, which, along with dozens of interviewees, helped me get to know the personal side of the Aaltos.

The film has several narrators because Alvar Aalto's life work is so rich and multifaceted that for each aspect of his life, I needed to find different experts and research data that supported it. All the interpretations and claims spoken by individuals in the film can be verified by several different sources.

The research interview tapes recorded by **Göran Schildt** for Aalto's biography provided rare eyewitness testimonies from those who actually knew the Aaltos personally and were there when everything took place. In addition to the correspondence, the Aalto family let us use some rarely seen family photos of the Aaltos' trips to America, for example, and a few Alvar's drawings that hadn't been seen in public before, including drawings of Aino on her deathbed.

The Aaltos were remarkably international, which is why seven different languages are spoken in the film and it was shot in seven different countries. When doing the background research, we had to search through archives from all over the world: in addition to Finnish archives, we used archives of people and institutions such as the Rockefellers, MIT, the UN, British Pathé, and Moholy-Nagy.

Exceptionally, the editor **Jussi Rautaniemi** is credited as the second screenwriter in Aalto. The nature of documentary films is such that the final atmosphere of the film is often created on the editing table. In Aalto, the abundance of video and audio material also required a special dedication to the dramaturgical structure from the editor. When we are talking about historical characters and lifeless buildings, it was a huge challenge to make the film vibrant and alive.





The sound designer **Olli Huhtanen** and I worked hard in order to make the story of the Aaltos dynamic and touching. And sound design ended up playing an exceptionally large role in this film. The composer **Sanna Salmenkallio**'s music and improvisations with a few of the most renowned Finnish jazz musicians acted as a base for the sound designer to weave a modernist and organic tapestry of sound. The soundscape of this film was created in an atmosphere of playfulness, which is so natural to Aalto's philosophy. Raw sound material for the film was produced by means such as playing an Aalto Vase with a bow and striking together building materials such as brick, marble and copper.

Alvar and Aino's letters were read aloud by the Finnish top actors **Martti Suosalo** and **Pirkko Hämäläinen**.

They both were amazed by the pioneering spirit conveyed by the letters already since the 1920s, not just in architecture but also in personal relations: the equal and respectful collegial relationship, the free sexuality, and the networking with other famous international artists.

"The letters convey an image of Alvar Aalto who is playful, charming, and loving but who also feels guilty about overshadowing Aino, despite her talents. All the way until the end, Alvar fantasised about returning to a mutual creative space with Aino, similar to the one they had been in during the early days of their careers when they developed the fundamental Aalto language", Martti Suosalo says.

Virpi Suutari

BIOGRAPHY

VIRPI SUUTARI DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

- born 1967
- lives and works in Helsinki as a filmmaker and producer
- member of the European Film Academy
- professor of art (2012-2016)
- honorary doctor of arts, University of Lapland

Virpi Suutari is an awarded film maker known for her personal cinematic style and emotional narratives. Her films have been shown all over the world.

The *The Idle Ones* (2002) was nominated for the Best European Documentary (EFA) and she has got several Best Nordic Documentary awards. Her latest film, *Entrepreneur*, was in the Masters selection at IDFA 2018. Virpi has received the national Jussi Award (the Finnish Oscars) three times. She is working with the top film professionals, among them editor Jussi Rautaniemi,

who has edited internationally acclaimed films such as *The happiest day in the life of Olli Mäki* (Un certain regard -prize Cannes 2016)

Selected filmography

AALTO 102 min, 2020, documentary

ENTREPRENEUR 78 min, 2018, documentary (IDFA Mastersselection, Chicago International film festival, Sydney film festival)

ELEGANCE 26 min, 2016, documentary (premiere Oberhausen short film festival)

GARDEN LOVERS 85 min, documentary 2014 (premiere Visions du Réel)

HILTON! 73 min, 2013 (premiere Leipzig film festival)

AUF WIEDERSEHEN FINNLAND 72 min, 2010, documentary (premiere Locarno film festival Critics week)

THE IDLE ONES 75 min, 2001 (premiere IDFA, nominee for EFA award)

TIMO VIERIMAA PRODUCER

Selected filmography

MASTER CHENG

Mika Kaurismäki fiction/114 min

UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Aku Louhimies, fiction/179 min

BOILING POINT

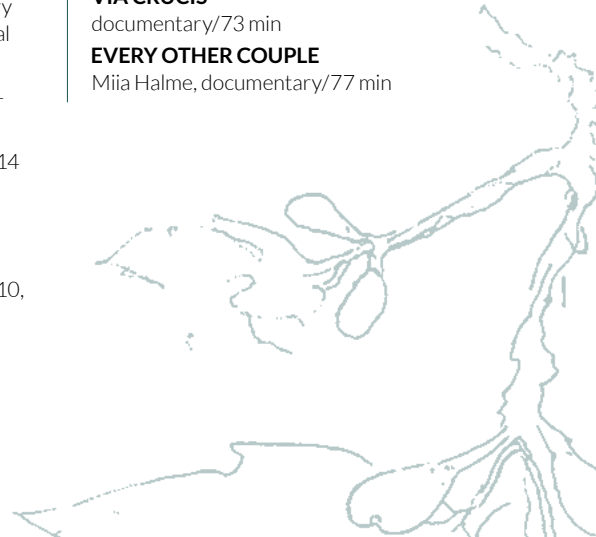
Elina Hirvonen documentary/90 min

VIA CRUCIS

documentary/73 min

EVERY OTHER COUPLE

Miia Halme, documentary/77 min



CONTACT DETAILS

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