

Helsinki, 25 July, 2006

Ms. Nancy Cline
Roy E. Larson Librarian of Harvard College
Widener Library, Room 110
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
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Dear Ms. Cline,

Having heard and read about the current plans of the Harvard University to renovate and alter the Woodberry Poetry Room designed by Alvar Aalto in 1948-49, we the undersigned participants of the Tenth International Alvar Aalto Symposium, wish to express our serious concern about the matter. Alvar Aalto is undoubtedly universally considered to be one of the central figures of twentieth century architecture. The interest in his architectural philosophy and design has kept widening since his death in 1976. The global interest in the work of this Finnish Master is underlined by the nearly four hundred participants in the Tenth International Alvar Aalto Symposium that takes place in Aalto's school town in central Finland on 28th through 30th of July, 2006. Aalto's formally complex, layered and sensuous buildings and design objects will certainly continue to inspire new generations of architects and designers.

Alvar Aalto worked in his home country with the exception of his short stays in the United States as Visiting Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1940 and 1945-48. Besides the Woodberry Poetry Room only four designs by Aalto were executed in America: the Finnish Pavilion at the New York World Fair (1939, demolished shortly after the Fair), The Baker House Senior Dormitory for MIT at Cambridge (1940-49), the interior of the Kaufman Rooms at the Institute of International Education in New York (1961-65) and the Library of the Mount Angel Abbey in Oregon (1964-70).

Aalto's works are complete works of art in which he usually designed every aspect from the architectural entity down to the last detail. The library interior at the Harvard University is an architectural treasure of exceptional value. Any alterations in the space, furnishings, or furniture have to be done with full understanding of Alvar Aalto's design thinking. Due to the intimacy of the library, every detail, piece of furniture or light fitting has to be considered with extreme care. The slightest misjudgement in the renovation/alteration of the piece will permanently damage a rare architectural miniature of which Harvard University should be proud.

Participants of the Tenth International Alvar Aalto Symposium

Jyväskylä, 27 July, 2006

Marlon Blackwell
Architect, Professor
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

Wendell Burnette
Architect, Professor
Phoenix, Arizona, USA

William J.R. Curtis
Dr., Architectural Historian
Cajarc, France

Kristian Gullichsen
Architect, Professor
Helsinki, Finland

Mikko Heikkinen
Architect, Artist Professor
Helsinki, Finland

Brian Healy
Architect
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Phillip Jacobson
Architect, Professor
Seattle, USA

Markku Komonen
Architect, Professor
Helsinki, Finland

Esa Laaksonen
Architect, Director of the Alvar Aalto Academy
Helsinki, Finland

Peter MacKeith
Architect, Professor
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Robert McCarter
Architect, Professor
Gainesville, Florida

Juhani Pallasmaa
Architect, Professor
Helsinki, Finland

Scott Poole
Architect, Professor
Blackburg, Virginia, USA

Pia Sarpaneva
Architect, Professor
Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

Brigitte Shim
Architect, Professor
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Colin St John Wilson
Architect, Professor
London, United Kingdom

Max Underwood
Architect, Professor
Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Ben Weese
Architect
Chicago, USA

Cynthia Weese
Architect, Professor
Chicago, USA

(The signatures are in alphabetical order.)