

Aalto2

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The Pool – The Origin of Pool Skateboarding

The Pool series of four exhibitions, to be opened at the Aalto2 Museum Centre on 18 May 2024, will bring together Alvar Aalto's architectural heritage, international skateboarding culture, and rap and hip hop culture.

The three exhibitions themed around skateboarding are linked by the design of the swimming pool at the Villa Mairea, by **Alvar Aalto**, and its impact on international skateboarding culture.

From the Surf to the Sidewalk – When Skateboarding Culture and Architecture Meet

18 May–15 September 2024

The exhibition From the Surf to the Sidewalk shows how the free-form design of the Villa Mairea swimming pool, by Alvar Aalto, found its way to the United States and how a new phenomenon of urban culture emerged in California. The kidney-shaped pool has, over decades and through meandering paths, become a symbol of pool skateboarding.

The exhibition delves deeper into the story of Villa Mairea's famous swimming pool. The idea of freeform pool design traveled from Finland to the United States with architect Thomas Church, who visited Aalto, and about ten years after the Villa Mairea pool, the Donnell Garden pool was created, from which the design language spread to other parts of California. When Californian pools were emptied due to drought in the 1970s, they became available for skateboarders to use, and the rest is history.

"Skateboarding is now perceived as an urban subculture. How it has historically evolved into what it is today is an interesting phenomenon." - **Juho Haavisto**

The exhibition is a crash course in skateboarding culture. It presents and explores the relationship between skateboarding and architecture from the time when skateboarding first emerged. The exhibition dives into the world of music, magazines, films, skateboard graphics, style, clothing, and skateboarding in the streets and skateparks.

The exhibition also offers audiences interested in architecture and the cityscape the opportunity to view our built environment in a different way.

The exhibition From the Surf to the Sidewalk is curated by Juho Haavisto and produced by the Alvar Aalto Foundation.



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Lizzie Armanto: Colors

18 May–15 September 2024

“Skateboarding is so much about personal expression. It allows you to be a part of a community while continuing to be yourself through the style and tricks you choose.” - **Lizzie Armanto**

The Colors exhibition showcases skateboarding culture through the eyes of the renowned American-Finnish professional skateboarder Lizzie Armanto. As its name suggests, Colors is all about the diversity, tolerance and colourfulness found in skateboarding. The exhibition explores its topic from the points of view of places, tricks, skateboards, and communities.

A skateboarder perceives their surroundings in terms of skateboarding opportunities. This is how the irregularly shaped pools that were inspired by the Alvar Aalto-designed Villa Mairea swimming pool ended up being used as skateboarding venues in California. The exhibition features, Lizzie, a fan of Aalto, showing her favourite places, and discussing her relationship with Aalto.

“When you start skateboarding, you suddenly see your surroundings in a new way, in a way you haven’t seen before.” - Lizzie Armanto

Although Lizzie is a top athlete who represented Finland at the Olympic Games, competing is not what skateboarding is about, but rather everyone is encouraged to try tricks that are right just for them. Skateboarding is very much about personal expression, and skateboards are an important part of this. The exhibition showcases Lizzie’s journey in the Olympics and some of her favourite skateboards.

“The skateboard is more than just a piece of sporting equipment.” - Lizzie Armanto

Through her own example, Lizzie aims to encourage others to push their boundaries, learn about themselves, and discover new things. Skateboarding is also a communal activity, and Finland and Finnish skate communities are particularly close to Lizzie’s heart. These perspectives are also explored in the exhibition.

“Skateboarding is so special because anyone from any background can be a part of it. I’m excited to share that with the Finnish people and hopefully inspire some more people to get on board.” - Lizzie Armanto

The other curator of the Colors exhibition is **Jarkko Lehtopelto**. The exhibition is produced by the Alvar Aalto Foundation.

Concrete Currents – Photographs by Arto Saari

18.5. - 27.10.2024

“It has been amazing to see how Alvar Aalto’s design has broken down barriers and created a new living organism. I don’t know what Alvar’s goals were when he designed the swimming pool at Villa Mairea, but ultimately it became much more than just a swimming pool.” - **Arto Saari**

Arto Saari started skateboarding in the early 1990s in the shade of buildings designed by Alvar Aalto in the centre of the city of Seinäjoki, Finland. After turning sixteen, he moved to Los Angeles, California, to pursue a career as a professional skateboarder. In the early 2000s, Saari became one of the most famous professionals in the sport. Saari was named Skater of the Year by Thrasher magazine in 2001. The title is recognised globally as one of the highest accolades that a skateboarder can achieve.



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"The emergence of modern skateboarding has been influenced by two key factors. It all started with surfing, but another – less known influence has been Alvar Aalto's freeform swimming pool at Villa Mairea, which resembles a kidney in its layout. Its influence led to the state of California in the United States becoming the Mecca of skateboarding. The Villa Mairea pool was built in 1938, and eight years later, the first kidney-shaped swimming pools were completed in California. When there were no waves at sea, surfers began to search for empty pools to skateboard in, because the curved edges of the pool resembled a wave." - Arto Saari

After leaving professional skateboarding, Arto Saari has focused on photography. His unique ability to capture raw emotion and energy in his photographs has quickly earned him international recognition. Arto's photographs do not solely focus on skateboarding but also on street culture, music, and the humanity of life. His photographs convey a sense of freedom, rebellion, and beauty found in unexpected places.

"These photographs at the Aalto2 Museum Centre represent my small personal glimpse into a subculture called skateboarding – a subculture that has evolved from backyard pools and city wastelands into an Olympic sport." – Arto Saari

Arto's passion for the sport drove him to photography. It is typical of skateboard culture that tricks are always photographed and recorded, so the transition behind the camera came naturally to Arto. Initially, the camera accompanied him on his own skate trips, and Arto photographed not only skateboarders but also the environment and street culture. Later, photography took precedence and took over. Arto never thought of skateboarding or photography as a career choice; rather, his passion for the sport took over.

Arto Saari lives on the island of Oahu in Hawaii, where he continuously gains experience and a better understanding of the sport that gave birth to skateboarding – surfing.

The Concrete Currents exhibition is produced by the Museum of Central Finland and curated by Senior Curator Ilja Koivisto.

The Aalto2 Museum Centre is a new meeting place for architecture, design and cultural heritage in Jyväskylä, Finland.

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

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