



Aalto style table

Not on display

Title/Description: Aalto style table

Object Type: Furniture

Measurements: h. 570 x w. 594 x d. 392 mm

Accession Number: 31509

Designed by architect and designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), this table is composed of four legs made of bent, laminated wood mounted directly to the underside of the stained solid birch wooden table top, without the need for complicated connecting elements.

The legs of the table represent what Aalto himself viewed as the most important discovery in his furniture design, the L-shaped leg. The innovation was the idea of the “bent knee” which meant that a piece of solid birch wood was sawn open at the end in the direction of the fibres just below the level of the planned bend and thin pieces of wood veneer strips were then inserted and glued into the grooves. Afterwards the wood was bent to the desired angle, in this case 90 degrees. The

production method meant a simplified bending process and gave the component an increased stability - an invention that Aalto patented it in 1933. [1]

With this technique Aalto could create furniture that was stable, hardwearing, and suitable for standardization but keep the warm and organic qualities of wood which he preferred to the cold tubular steel. The principle was added to chairs, stools and tables of various heights, lengths, and widths. The dimensions of the table indicate that it was produced as a side table and an example that this method of standardization could not only easily be mass produced, but from the same basic principle be adapted to create furniture for many purposes and dimensions.

Aalto viewed the laminated L-shaped leg as a base to his designs, often referring to the L-leg as “the column's little sister”. Through the creation of the new leg construction, he had transformed the style of his furniture just as “clearly as the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns each resulted in a special order or style of architecture.” [2] Aalto's simple L-leg was followed by the Y-leg in 1947, the fan-shaped X-leg in 1954 and a fourth “order”, the H-leg, made of wooden strings. [3]

Therese Wiles, February 2022

[1] Göran Schildt “The decisive years” in Pallasmaa, Juhanni ed. Alvar Aalto: Furniture (Espoo; Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1984). p.77

[2] Schildt, p.8.

[3] Ibid.
