



Aalto table

Alvar Aalto

Not on display

Title/Description: Aalto table

Artist/Maker: Alvar Aalto

Object Type: Furniture, Table

Materials: Wood

Measurements: h. 688 x w. 1209 x d. 820 mm

Accession Number: 31520

Production Place: Oy Huonekalu-ja Rakennustyötehdas Ab

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This table is designed by the architect and designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), comprising of a wooden tabletop in stained solid birch and four legs made of bent, laminated wood mounted directly to the underside of the tabletop 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 fibers 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 indicates that it could be used as a small dining table or as a desk and is 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. The system of standard components made it possible to create more than 50 versions based on the same basic idea.

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, a leg made of wooden strings. [3]

Therese Wiles, July 2022

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

[2] Göran Schildt “The decisive years” in Pallasmaa, Juhanni ed. Alvar Aalto: Furniture (Espoo; Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1984). P. 85

[3] Göran Schildt “The decisive years” in Pallasmaa, Juhanni ed. Alvar Aalto: Furniture (Espoo; Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1984). P. 85
