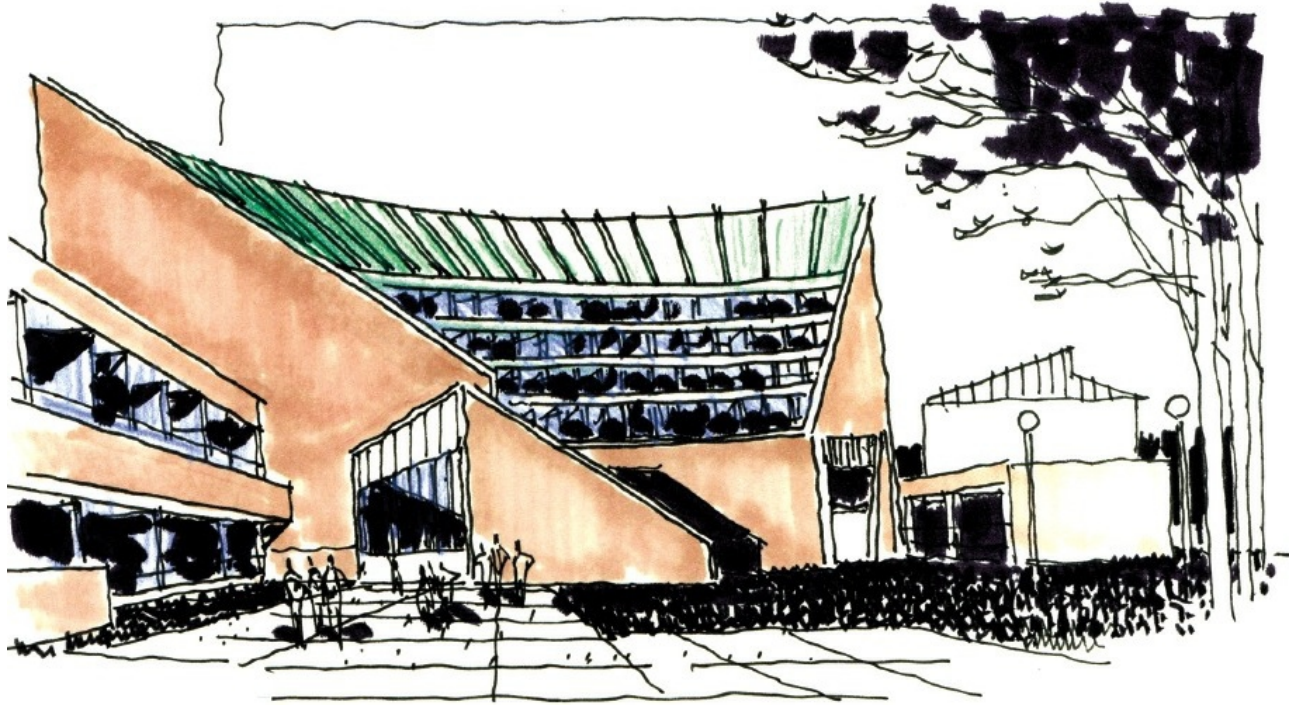


Ralph Rapson in Otaniemi, Paimio, & Myyrmäki

2013-05-15



[Otaniemi Technical University](#), in Otaniemi, Finland, designed by [Alvar Aalto](#), 1949 to 1964.

Sketch by [Ralph Rapson](#), from [Ralph Rapson Sketches and Drawings from Around the World](#), courtesy of the [Afton Press](#).

"The arts, including architecture, have always played a basic role in Finland's cultural history. The harsh Nordic climate demands special awareness of materials, energy, and light. Nature is central and buildings are placed into the landscape with great care."

"Unfortunately, my time in Finland, with its lush virgin countryside, endless lakes, and magical green forests, was somewhat limited. Even so, I was able to witness people's love and respect for their land and their love of beauty and quality – in both nature and human-crafted design. Helsinki, the nation's capital and largest city, is wonderfully modern. Everywhere, the architecture is uncluttered and functional, pure, and often beautifully understated."



[Paimio Sanatorium](#), in Paimio, Finland, designed by [Alvar Aalto](#). Image: Ralph Rapson

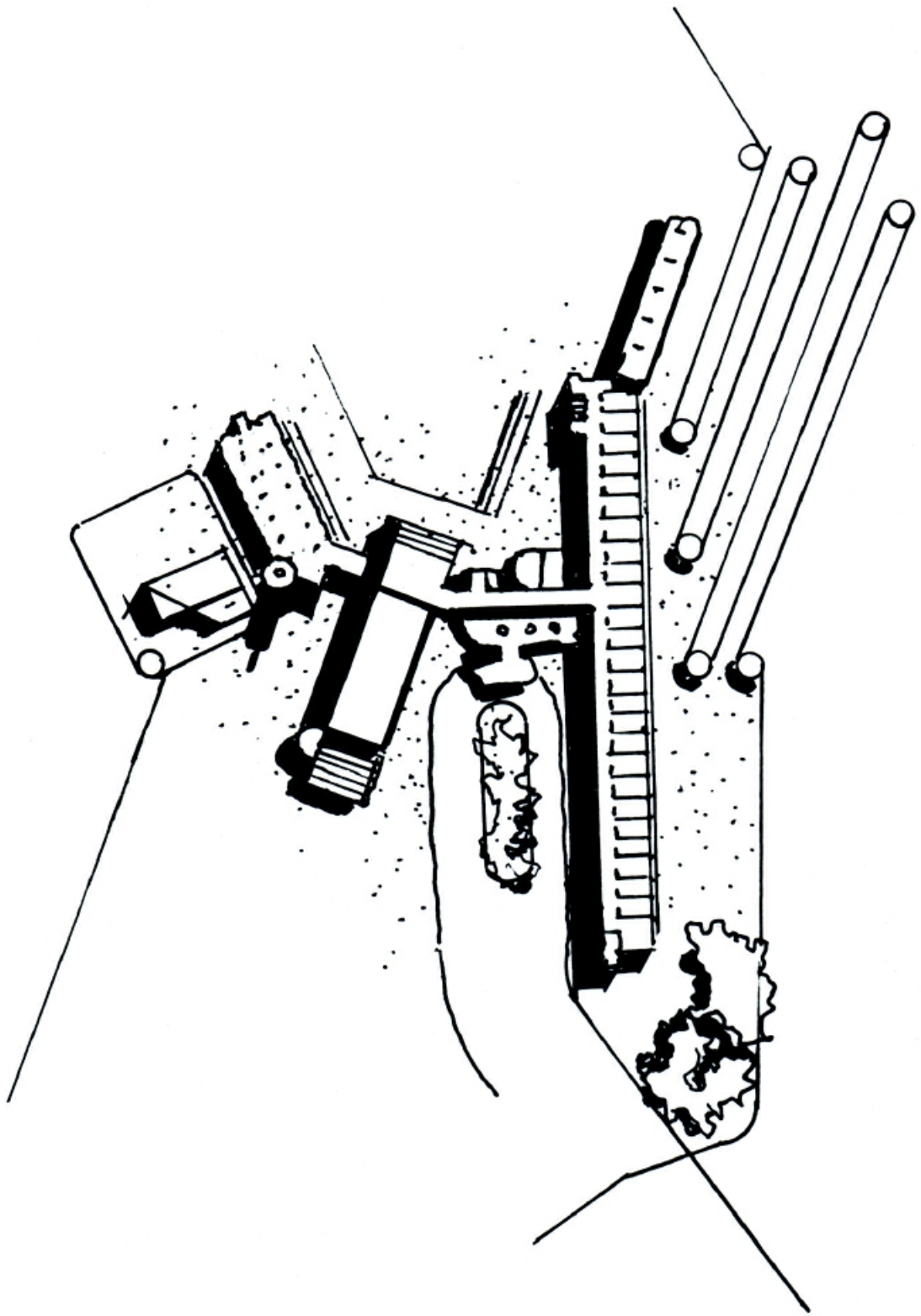
"Father-and-son architects Eliel and Eero Saarinen, of course, had roots in Finland. While at MIT I also had the good fortune to teach with another son of Finland, Alvar Aalto. Aalto had been invited to design Baker Hall, a new student dormitory. Normal methods were not Aalto's way of teaching: rather, he rounded up any and all willing students and herded them off to a coffeehouse or bar for a cup of joe or round of vodka. He could go on for hours, spinning stories – every one of them meaningful.

"Aalto's bentwood furniture also inspired me. He was, along with the Thonet Company, the first to utilize modern technology to produce laminated furniture.

"Recent generations of architects continue the long tradition of contemporary design. This is particularly true of religious and secular centers, such as the Myyrmäki Church-Parish Center in Helsinki." – Ralph Rapson



Myyrmäki Church and parish center, by Juha Leiviskä. Image: Ralph Rapson



Site plan of [Paimio Sanatorium](#). Image: Ralph Rapson

Source: Architecture Week People & Places Blog