THE PHILOSOPHY AND WORK OF ALVAR AALTO: THE SAYNATSALO TOWN HALL

Architecture is a process of integration of many varying disciplines. This is both its draw and its limitation because this combination of skills enhances many aspects of life while restricting the depth of understanding of each part. Analysis and understanding of buildings and architects is an important step in the process of discovering what aspects of architecture are important in your own development and the development of a more functional environment for communities.

This type of in depth analysis was the focus of my research spring semester in the UROP program. It involved intensive research into the philosophy and work of Alvar Aalto, a famous Finish architect, focusing on his Saynatsalo Town Hall. My sponsor, Professor William C. Miller, is creating proposals for an addition to the complex designed by Aalto. This process involves thorough analysis of site and technical details of the existing building and analysis of Aalto's work and his approach to design. An understanding of these elements allows a better response to the existing environment, culture and function of the place.

My part in this process involved development of physical and digital representations of the existing area to simplify the process and focus in design to aid my understanding of the important details to represent and analyze. I used AutoCAD, a digital rendering program, to create a three dimensional replica of the Saynatsalo Town Hall from its plans and sectional drawings. This allowed for any view of the building in three dimensions that would be vital to the design proposals. The research portion of my study this semester not only allowed me to better understand the building being altered but also expanded my understanding of architecture and its elements. I had the opportunity to concentrate on a single perspective to inform my own development as a designer. The opportunity to see slides of Aalto's work while hearing an explanation of his concepts from an expert source like Professor Miller, and gaining exposure to writing by and about Aalto that related specifically to my interests extended my understanding beyond more unguided research.

This experience allowed me to expand my skills in modeling, digital rendering, writing, and research but, more importantly, it helped me gain insight into my major. I have a clearer idea of which important aspects of architecture are important to design and truly effect community, clarity and use. I feel this

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