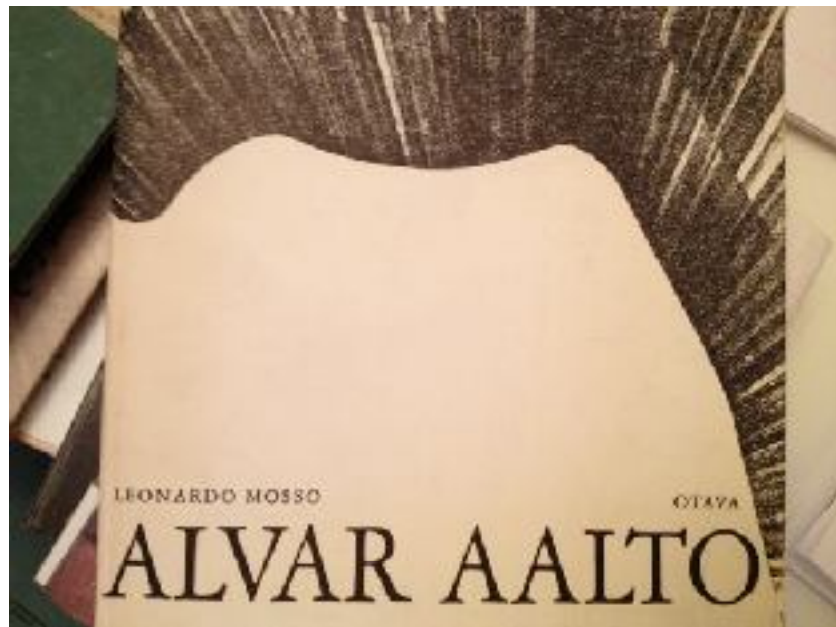


# **Alvar Aalto through the lens of Italian architectural critics - A hybrid architecture**



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—Auswertung des natürlichen Materials  
Kamuhorn in Holzstühle, Baum  
stühle

Utilization of the natural material  
bamboo horn in wooden chairs, wooden  
chairs, wooden chairs

To utilize the natural material in its natural  
state: barked, bleached, to support  
contemporary design



**Finnish Architecture  
and Alvar Aalto**  
Ed. & Cl. Neuschwander  
1954



Kirjppöytä ja ikkunaluukut, kotiteollisuus, Kivikko  
 Table and window casings, home industry, Kivikko  
 Wärdstuga och fönsterluckor, hemindustri, Kivikko

Kivikkon puu, kirkon sisäpuolelta nähtynä  
 Kivikko's wood, inside of the church  
 Kivikkon puu, kirkon sisäpuolelta nähtynä



Kivikkon puu, kirkon sisäpuolelta nähtynä (Kivikko)  
 Kivikko's wood, inside of the church (Kivikko)  
 Wärdstuga och fönsterluckor, kotiteollisuus, Kivikko

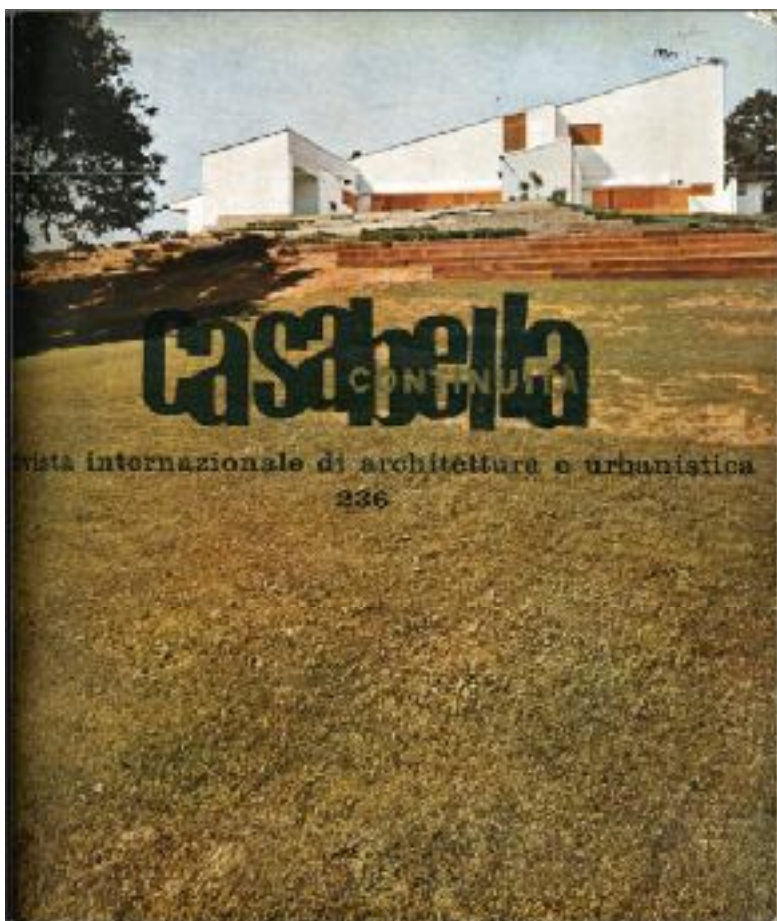
Kivikkon puu, kirkon sisäpuolelta nähtynä (Kivikko)  
 Kivikko's wood, inside of the church (Kivikko)  
 Kivikkon puu, kirkon sisäpuolelta nähtynä (Kivikko)



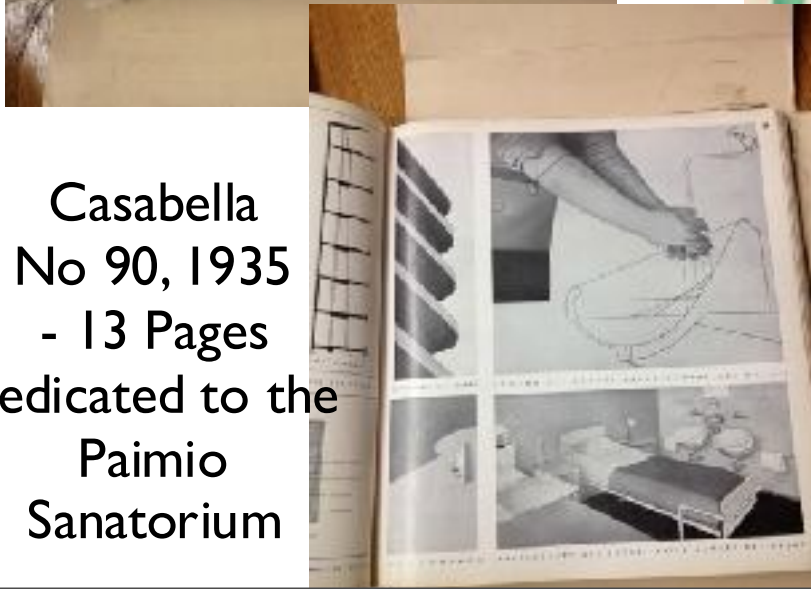
Casabella  
No 272,  
1963



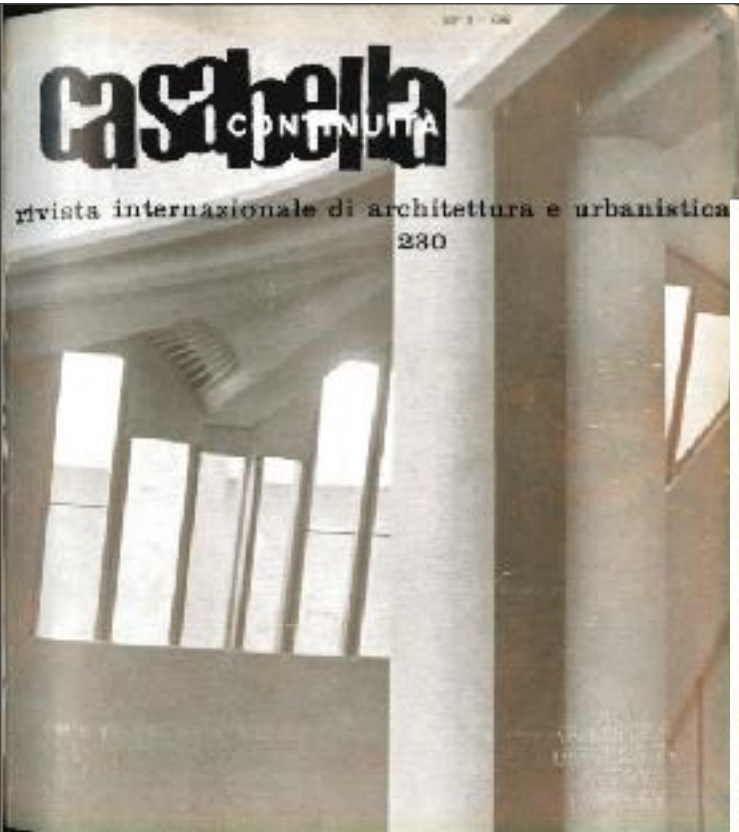
Casabella  
No 236,  
1960







Casabella  
No 90, 1935  
- 13 Pages  
dedicated to the  
Paimio  
Sanatorium



Casabella  
No 230,  
1959

Finnish wooden churches:  
Paltamo, 1778  
Kerimäki 1847  
Koski 1726  
Keuruu 1758

## Church of the Three Crosses, completed 1958



# Leonardo Benevolo, History of Modern Architecture, 1960



Progress in European  
Architecture 1930-1940,  
Geneva Bridge over Arve



Europe after WWII: Aalto Furniture,  
Plan for Rovaniemi,  
Säynätsalo Town Hall



416. Alvar Aalto, *ending of the lecture hall, Public Library, Viipuri, 1927-31*  
 417. Alvar Aalto, *French Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939*

public image, an oscillation between a quest for temporal significance and subtle psychological and sensual suggestions—these became the central aspects of Aalto's work.

Commitments to organic poetry, primarily connected by severe geometrical formal, were symptomatic in such works of his as the Villa Mairea, built in 1928-30 for the industrialist H. Gullihnen at Noormarkku, and the housing development connected with the Suuriluoma Factory near Kotka, partly built in 1931-39, the rest in 1951-56. In the plan for Savilla and in his "experimental city" of 1941, Aalto attempted to give an urbanistic significance to his system in a manner indirectly inherited from the organic approach of Hugo Hering. His most significant work in the present years was the Finnish pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939. There he broke up, compartmentalized the impersonal space he had to deal with by means of a gridless wooden wall that not only curved but leaned forward, thereby giving rise to numerous dynamic reactions and to varied dimensions for the viewer on four different levels, so that the whole achieved an *unintentional* system of hallucinatory multiplication of visual angles together with varying three-dimensional forms. A "surrealism" in the literal sense of the word was offered to the spectator, setting them up in an accessible and bewildering play of forms very different from the propagandistic effects of the Futurists of Norman Bel Geddes and from the Constructivists' technical dreams.

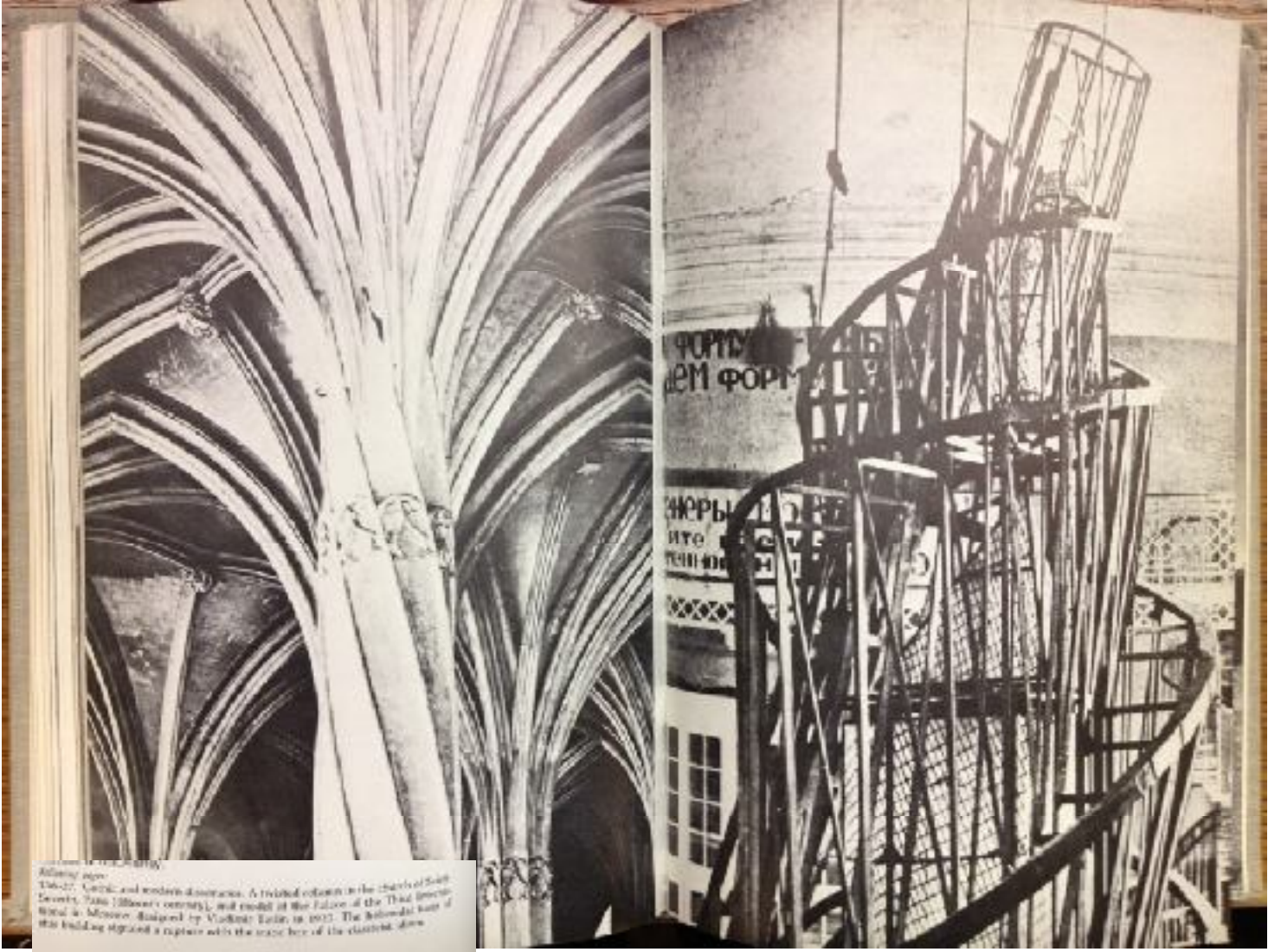
Thus, for the "crucity" of the neo-gothic Aalto substituted a "contingency" which was not without its own hermetic accents. It was only after World War II that the personalities implicit in his return to the human dimension could manifest themselves against the urban reality and so reveal their historical limits.



# Manfredo Tafuri Modern Architecture 1976



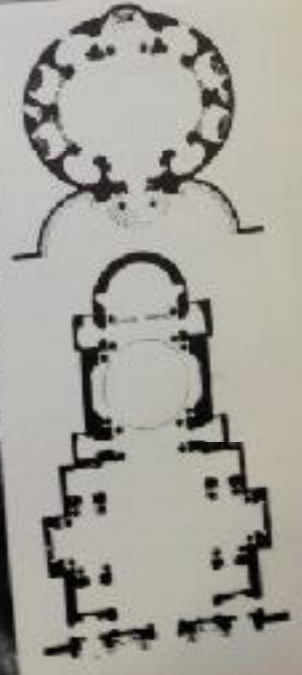
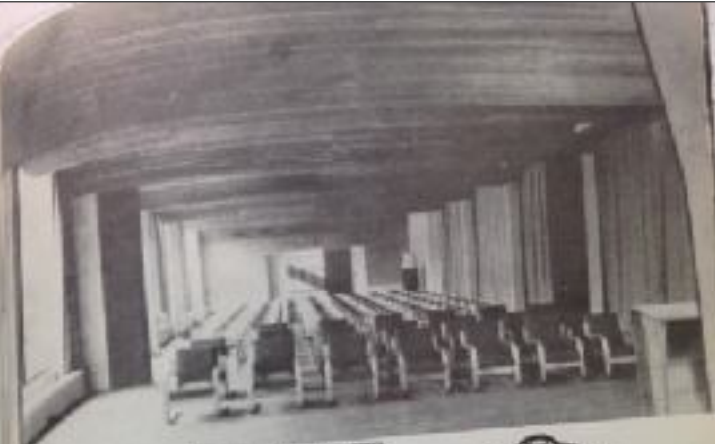
Bruno Zevi, The Modern Language of Architecture, 1978



we find the same decomposing process, in the mechanical sense, archivolts that define the barrel vaults of the nave and transept, and a drum resting on a ring. Yet, the differences are striking. The Baroque decoration blends the elements together, while in Prato the vaults, lunettes, and shining segments accentuate the separation. The ring in Prato is markedly detached from the side cornices, while the one in Gesù tends to become fused. More important, in Rome the diameter of the enormous cupola matches the width of the nave. Overwhelming in its magnitude, it is antagonistic to the eurythmic laws of the Renaissance since it ignores consonances and proportion.

As Vignola did in the Gesù, so Aalto boycotted decomposition in his library at Viipuri. A wooden ceiling undulates over the rectangular assembly room and extends down to the floor, covering its backdrop wall. Instead of dismembering the box into six slabs, Aalto achieved a unity of ceiling and wall. His approach is manneristic, it confutes rationalism from within through an organic device that would subsequently influence space concepts.

To return to the Baroque: an aversion to the static was the natural consequence of a determination to reintegrate. The elliptical plan, which even such a hesitant artist as Bernini used repeatedly, dissociates space into two focuses, giving each element a double reference. Since the eye is spontaneously drawn from one focus to the other, the vision becomes kinetic. In Santa Maria in Campitelli, Rome, Carlo Rainaldi took a more audacious risk by arranging two contiguous spaces along a longitudinal axis. Not content with this duality, he fused the two spaces together through a play of plasticism, intensified at the point where they join. This expedient, however, still failed to satisfy him. Therefore, since the far chamber provides a sort of proscenium for the first



177-81. *Assembly Conference room in the Viipuri Library, by Alvar Aalto (1933-35), with its undulating "Marmite" wood ceiling, which descends to cover the wall behind the speaker's area. *Center: Cupola and elliptical plan of Santa Maria in Campitelli, Rome, by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1656). *Below: view and plan of Santa Maria in Campitelli, Rome, by Carlo Rainaldi (1657), with its two chambers juxtaposed longitudinally. Here reintegration is achieved through the contrast between a large dark chamber and an adjoining one brilliantly illuminated from the cupola.***

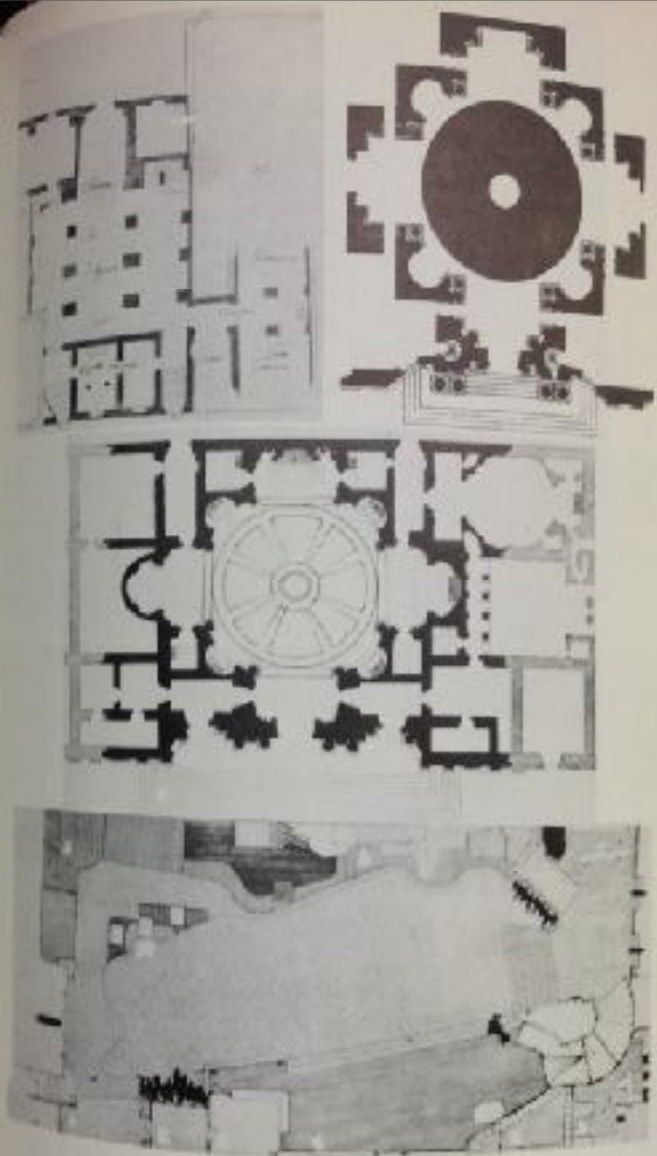
Arch  
Rome



—act three: the final plan, both dilated and contracted, uncontainable within a perspective image, an immense broken profile that temporizes the space. Let us examine the relationship between church and cupola. As we enter the building, the widest vertical visual angle includes the cornice below the drum. Measuring Borromini's section, we see that it is barely halfway up the astonishing height. This incredible "disproportion" does not allow us to view the whole from any one position. We must move about and take time to grasp its dramatic message. The Baroque brings the object closer to the observer so that he will not mistake it as something detached, something only to contemplate. The interior of Sant'Agnese draws him into its vortex, to appreciate it, he must "live" it actively.

Leaping over the centuries to modern architecture, we have seen how Aaplanti's "Mannerism" provoked the crisis of volumetric decomposition, and Aalto's postulated a reintegration in the rationalist prism in Viljuri. The Finnish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939 corresponded to Sant'Agnese. Instead of dividing its quadrangular volume into slabs, Aalto compressed the space with a cyclopean corrugated wall, in a gesture reminiscent of Michelangelo. He suppressed every horizontal perspective image, then divided the height into four sections. The lower one is bottomless, while the other three above it impend on the observer, catching him in rough, turgid, overflowing forms that replace the diaphanous surfaces and the precise contours of four-dimensional rationalism.

The saga of cupolas reached its conclusion with the prodigious church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, in Rome. It gave the coup de grâce to the Renaissance and Manneristic decomposition method,

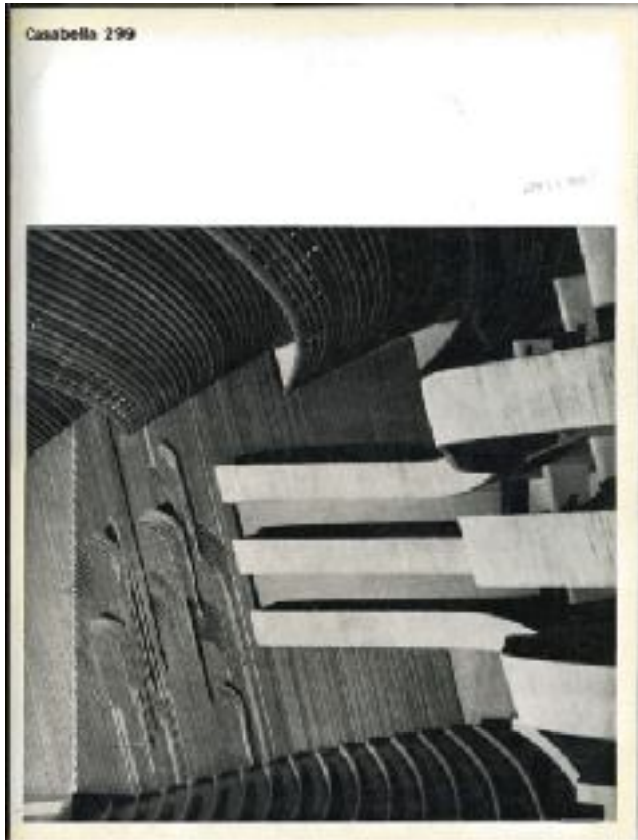


164-65. Plan of Sant'Agnese in the Piazza Navona, Rome, before the church was transformed; Borromini's initial project and its final form (1653-57).

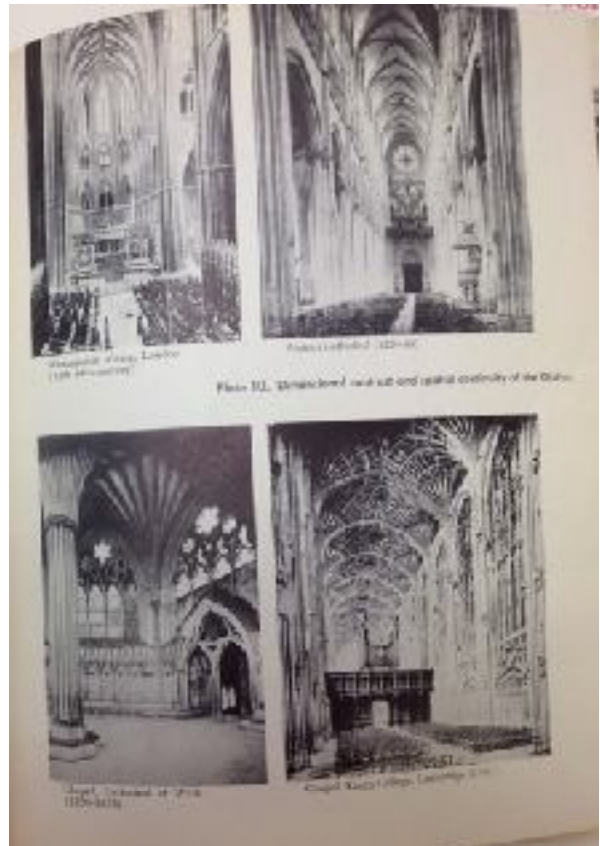
187. Plan of the Finnish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939, by Alvar Aalto: a diagonal, undulating composition.

Following page:

166-92. Interior view and cross section of Sant'Agnese in the Piazza Navona, and plan of the Palazzo della Sapienza, with the church of Sant'Ivo, by Borromini. Above: the Finnish Pavilion in New York (1939) and elements in wood, by Alvar Aalto.

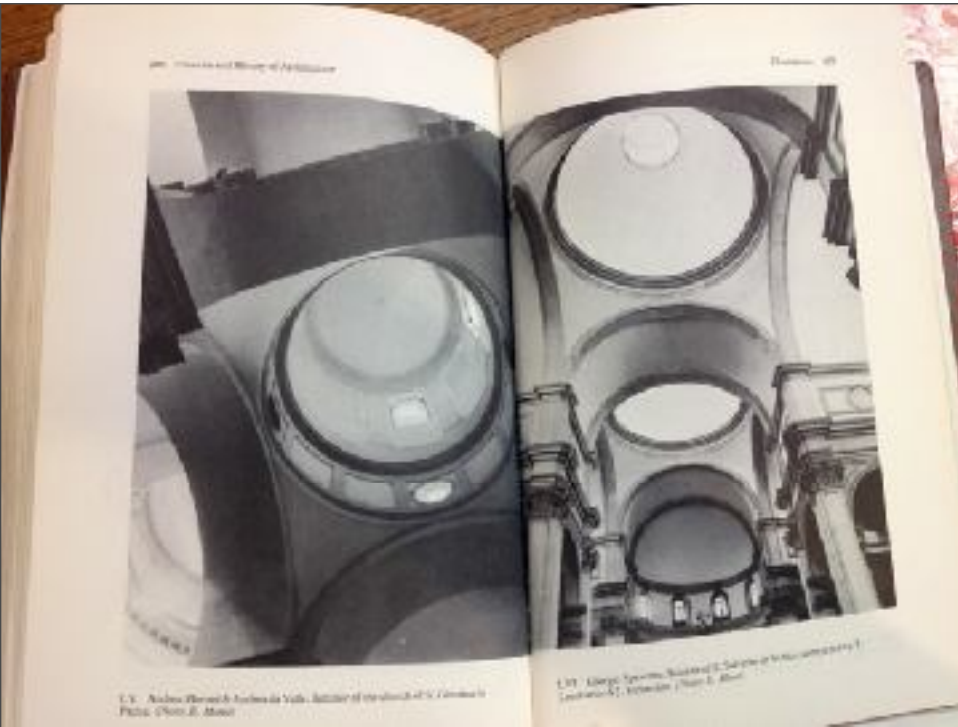


Casabella  
No 299 1965



Zevi,  
Architecture as Space  
page 145

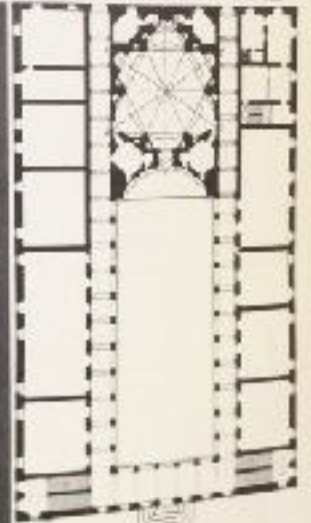




Tafari,  
Theories and History  
of Architecture  
1976:286-287



Friday, 15 November 2013



*Following pages:*  
186-92. Interior view and cross section of Sant'Agnese in the Piazza Navona, and plan of the Palazzo della Sapienza, with the church of Sant'Ivo, by Borromini.  
Bela: the Finnish Pavilion in New York (1939) and elements in wood, by Alvar Aalto.

Zevi,  
The Modern Language of Architecture 1978

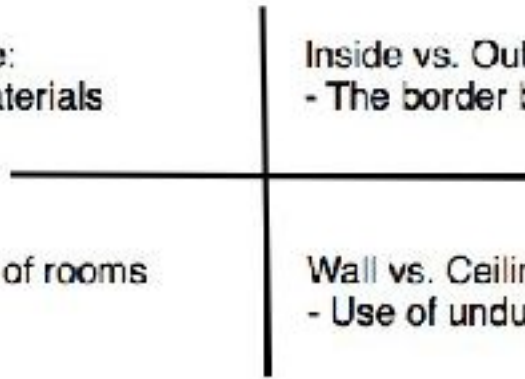
To push this even further, I suggest that these critics bring to surface Aalto's method being characteristically about the relationship between oppositional elements:

Furniture vs. Architecture:  
- Brought together by materials

Inside vs. Outside space:  
- The border between blurred

Open plan vs.  
varying size and heights of rooms

Wall vs. Ceiling:  
- Use of undulating line to resolve







**Readings:**

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