DESIGN & PEACE

ALVAR AALTO

ALVAR AALTO

DESIGN & PEACE

The International Aino and Alvar Aalto Design Colloquium 2019,
Säynätsalo, Finland.

www.alvaraalto.fi

Supporter:

JYVÄSKYLÄ

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C113148

Contents

Foreword

It has been a remarkable summer for the foundation and we've done some wonderful things in many different locations. The International Aino and Alvar Aalto Design Colloquium in June was a new kind of challenge for the events team. Design seminars have a history that started already in 1995 when the first design seminar Design for Architecture was held in Jyväskylä. Altogether we have had eight (1995–2016) well prepared international seminars on design practice and theory. Though they had all been obvious successes there was a lot of talk about whether this kind of large scale public events had come to a critical point? Certainly getting people to travel from all around the world, to come to Finland and participate in a seminar for three days, had become more and more difficult.

When we in the foundation started discussing the next seminar for 2019 we came up with an idea to gather a small preliminary steering group, to think about new ways to organise an event around design. This group consisted of Nina Heikkonen, Pentti Kareoja, Jukka Savolainen, Ilkka Suppanen and myself. One idea was for it to be invite only, with no audience present. Another idea was to make it a closed circuit colloquium with discussions instead of lectures and workshops. The third new idea was to make a book about it during the colloquium. Eventually the steering group was extended with Marko Ahtisaari, Paola Antonelli, Heli Leinonkoski and Suvi Saloniemi.

All that we dreamed of happened. Because the colloquium had no predecessors, we had to create a format as we went along. Marko Ahtisaari had a very important role in forming the theme of Design & Peace for the event and he also was very creative in on-site development of the colloquium. The theme Design & Peace challenged the participants of the colloquium to view 'peace through the lens of design'. The aim was to unpack the multi-faceted role of design in society, while also focussing on the legacy of Aino and Alvar Aalto, their contemporaries and ideas in today's design.

The book mentioned is the one you're reading right now. It was made possible by Gustaf Kjellin—who I want to thank for his enviable efficiency in interviewing, writing and editing this publication. Besides Marko and Gustaf I want to thank Nina Heikkonen for being a very flexible coordinator, without whom we wouldn't have been able to do the quick manoeuvres that were needed for the success of the colloquium. I also want to thank all members of the steering group for their generous way of using their time and effort to make the event as good as it was and the City of Jyväskylä for its major contribution.

Last but not least I want to thank the participants, without whom we wouldn't have had a colloquium. I wish the best of luck for the team that was created during the colloquium in their future efforts to advance peace through design.

Tommi Lindh
CEO / Alvar Aalto Foundation

The Alvar Aalto Foundation maintains the material and intellectual legacy of the world famous architect and designer Alvar Aalto, and acts to make his work and thinking more widely known. The foundation also oversees the work of the Alvar Aalto Academy and the Foundation's Architectural Heritage Department. The Architectural Heritage Department provides expert assistance on repairs of buildings designed by Aalto. The Alvar Aalto Academy fosters training and research in modern architecture, and mounts architecture events in Finland and abroad.

DAY

ONE

South elevation of Säynätsalo Town Hall

The colloquium took place in the summer of 2019 during a period of two days and was held at the town hall in Säynätsalo which lies in the very heart of Finland. This town hall (1949–1952) was designed by Alvar Aalto and is beautifully situated on an island in Lake Päijänne which is a part of the municipality of Jyväskylä. Alvar Aalto partly grew up in the city of Jyväskylä and it was here that he set up his first office after graduating from the Helsinki Institute of Technology in 1921. The architect Aino Marsio, who knew Alvar Aalto from when they were both students, moved to Jyväskylä the following year and not long after joining Alvar Aalto's office, they were married. Even though the couple moved from Jyväskylä in 1927, the work here continued. With 29 sites Jyväskylä holds more work by Alvar Aalto than any other city in the world and the town hall in Säynätsalo is considered by many, not only by the locals, to be the finest of these buildings.

East elevation

←
South elevation, shops on street level and library
on first floor

In the early 1940s Alvar Aalto received a commission to design a master plan for the community of Säynätsalo not far from the city of Jyväskylä, and in that process reserved a suitable place for a future town hall. Säynätsalo revolved around, and partly still does, the local plywood factory. Rebuilding Finland after the Second World War had made the factory run at full capacity and gave Säynätsalos 3000 residents a sense of optimism for the future. The prospering community had reached a point where they needed somewhere to focus all the different administration tasks, somwehere for new businesses to settle down, a library and more housing. Alvar Aalto was invited and won the competition to design this new town hall which needed to be a mixed development, in order to accommodate all of Säynätsalos needs. Even though building the town hall would create more jobs and well-being, this was an enormous undertaking for a community of this size. But having received praise from Finland's fifth president Risto Heikki Ryti in 1942 for producing more fire wood than any other town in Finland, it showed that Säynätsalo had sisu (spirit).

The town hall is set on a slope and built around one and two levels, surrounding a central courtyard. There is a clear hierarchy to the structure of the complex, where commercial functions are kept on the lower level and the most important function, the council chamber, is situated on the highest level so it easily can be spotted from afar. Pine wood, bricks and concrete were used for the facade and interior. Alvar Aalto had preferred to build the roof with copper but at a time when Finland was still paying war reparations to the Soviet Union there was no room for extravagances and so large parts of the roof had to be made with steel.

←
South elevation. The steps leading up to the main entrance and inner courtyard are made in black granite.

→
West elevation with grass covered steps leading up to the inner courtyard

Inner courtyard with fountain
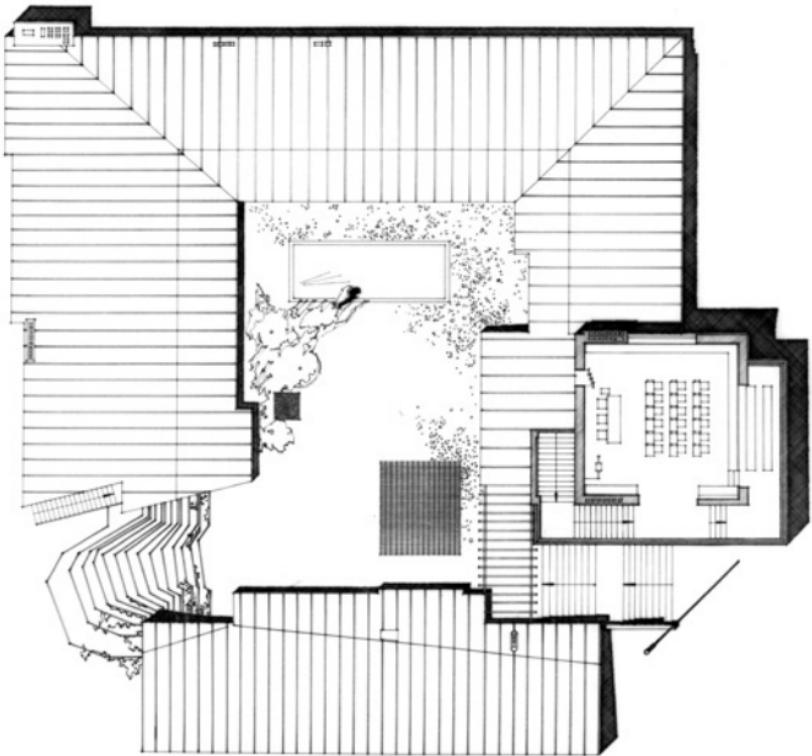
Overview

In a part of the world where temperatures can fall well below minus 10 degrees centigrade in the winter time, door handles on the outside as well as on the inside were clad with thick leather strips so visitors would not have to directly touch the cold steel, giving them a warmer welcome.

→
Door handle on main entrance door
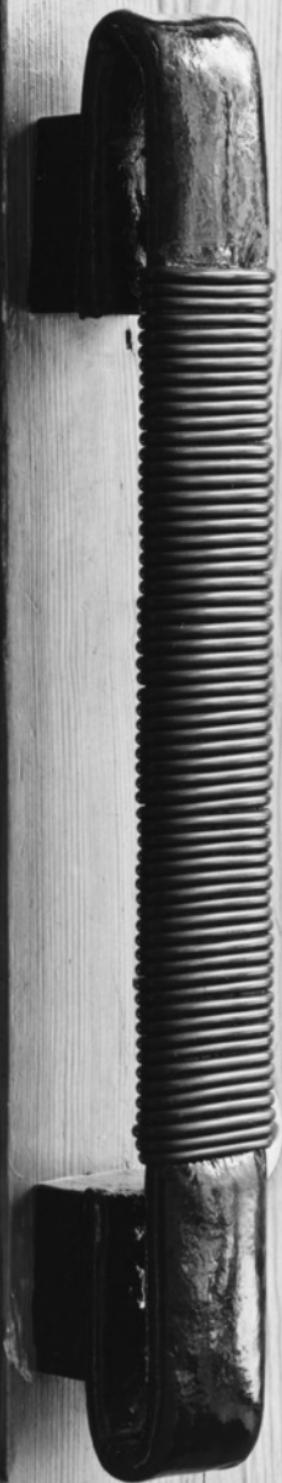
The red bricks were intentionally left uneven, to give the surface of the walls more texture. Mixed with the reddish tone of the exposed pine beams, it gives both the interior and the exterior a humanistic feel not commonly associated with administrative office buildings. Several styles of brick bonding were used throughout the building, and a more decorative pattern was applied in important spaces to further emphasis the hierarchy of the different functions in the town hall.

→
The brick paved stairs that lead up to the council chamber. The bricks for the town hall came from the Lappila brickworks

There is some natural light fall in the council chamber but, even with additional lights turned on, the room is dimly-lit. With its high ceiling, the ambience in the room is solemn and almost sacred. The chairs can be moved around but the tables are fixed in rows to the floor. In this room the elected politicians would deal with the daily matters of the community; facing the chairman who was leading the meeting. Curious and concerned members of the public were welcome to view proceedings for themselves on wooden benches, placed along the wall.

←
The council chamber

Rows of tables in the council chamber are facing
the same direction, west

Window facing north in council chamber and
A110 pendants hanging from ceiling

This is where the colloquium convened on its first day. And with the first version of the pendant A110, nicknamed "The Hand Grenade" hovering above their heads, the participants started to discuss the theme of Design & Peace.

The following quotes are out-takes from a discussion by 20 participants of 10 different nationalities who had never met and talked about this theme before, and the material should be regarded in this light.

"Peace is a relative phenomena related to a site and situation."

"Values are never constant, so there's not a constant value in peace."

"There are different levels of conflicts and there's probably something that might be considered an acceptable level."

"In the setting of international humanitarian law the presumption is that war is a given in various forms and thus a fundamental question is how do you manage it."

"When war is discussed we often forget that it's people who decide if we should have war or not. It's not by nature, it's a choice. And it's important to understand the dual nature of peace because if there would not be a war, there would not be a concept of peace."

"What has contributed more to the world of design: war or peace?"

"War is the driver of technology and our infrastructure which in itself reduces domestic conflicts. Look at historical examples such as Pax Romana where the domestic peace was sustained by the infrastructure. Sewage systems and aqueducts made it possible to live in cities for hundreds of years but on the borders to that empire there was a constant war."

"It's a very scary thought to believe in the necessity of war for progress. The First World War started because there was a need for war, there was no actual conflict. Everybody thought that it was going to be a very short war and then it became something completely different. War is constantly going on in our world, almost to an extent that it feels normal. And accepting war as the 'normal' because the motto is that we cannot have peace without war leads towards dangerous territory."

"The European experience of war is very important, and how Europe designed its peace could be a model for other regions. The wars in Europe were so extreme so to imagine decades later that there could be something like the European union (EU), this is almost unimaginable for a region like the Arab region which shares a lot of cultural heritage and a language but is unable to make that move."

"Europe has been in peace for a long time but the miracle that created Europe, the industrial

machine, that machine is dying and we need to quickly reinvent that or it will reinvent itself."

"The whole foundation of meaningful work and common wealth is now changing dramatically. This is happening so much faster than when it happened during the first industrial revolutions and it raises the question of who controls and drives this change."

"Europe have managed to stay together because we've had very much in common, common goals and a common philosophy. But the cracks in the western society are starting to show and it originates from the fact that people don't have a common project or meaning anymore. How can we tackle this situation before it eventually leads to a new great war? We need to find answers to how we quickly can shift into the post-industrial era where people have a sense of togetherness again."

"There is a fundamental crisis with inequality and disinformation which makes people feel that they're not being heard and that the system have left them behind. Automation is also changing the structures of our society and robbing us of a lot of meaningful labour which means that people are becoming unemployed. Having a job means security, a sense of meaning and the most angry people right now are probably those who are loosing their jobs. We are also loosing a lot of diversity in our society and losing our homes, and all these things leads to insecurity and people loosing their faith."

"We should not enter the cliché of stating that things were better before, but one thing that we today seem to have lost is a shared optimism for a better future."

"If we want to change the way we are heading in we need to identify the failing structures and the spots where power is structuring our physical and virtual world, to see if and how the design profession can be a part of reshaping it."

"In one sense design has created, or helped create, social inequalities if we consider the digital world with social media etc. This has resulted in bubbles, where a few companies are controlling a lot of data which they are using for their own benefit and not to the benefit of the society in general. Basically we have no control of how these things work anymore and we need to take that control back."

"If Bauhaus in a way was a response to humanise the industrial revolution after the war, the question now is how we respond to the digital revolution, which we have to acknowledge, is causing destruction on many different levels. Local traders in countries are suffering from e-commerce sales because people who are financially constrained are buying cheap goods. Maybe even architects as a profession will be in jeopardy when somebody figures out a prefabricated efficient home that can be shipped worldwide."

"Most power today is exercised in digital networks and there is a central question of how

systems encourage empathy and presence versus conflict and detachment. So how can we design better objects, spaces, processes and potential services in such a way as to increase empathy and presence versus, detachment and distraction?"

"The freedom of the press can be seen as one of the big achievements of the west to promote peace and understanding. But in one generation in many societies, things moved directly from state controlled TV to the internet. And the digital technology that was seen by many as the promise that can bring enlightenment to everybody are today facing the fact that it's now a tool to create fake news and terrorist networks."

"The digital revolution was a node of hope for our generation that now is turning sour. But within it also lies a seed to a new globalism that doesn't need to be controlled by corporations."

"It's getting harder to understand what's real and what's not. If we buy a bottle of water there are different kinds of labels that can help us as consumers understand and trust the brand. This is impossible when talking about products and services generated by artificial intelligence (AI), so both fake news and products are very present in our lives today."

"Knowledge is another key in this discussion, how and what we learn and how and what we do with that knowledge. Everybody's right to a good education helps bring understanding and ultimately peace. One problem is that the future

that we are imagining and the way that we are teaching now, doesn't necessarily apply. How can we teach methods that are relevant in the future if the teachers of today are stuck in ways of thinking and working that originates from the industrial age of the past?"

"Educating about design and peace is preemptive work in a sense."

"The society is changing so fast so how do we keep up? One problem is the system that is largely in place today. If a teacher gets a fixed position the program might not change that much out of pure comfort. So maybe there needs to be another system in place that are more adaptable to change and updates."

"Related to education is also how the spaces where we interact and learn are designed, typologies that allows for different dynamics are needed and this leads to the question of spatial health and peace."

DAY

TWO

The foyer by the main entrance and the corridor
that leads to the conference room

With time, the need for a town hall in Säynätsalo faded and besides from being a place of pilgrimage for architects, spaces such as the council chamber are today mostly rented out to conferences and social functions. With time, the participants of the colloquium had also felt the constraints of the fixed interior in the council chamber and were in need of a room which enabled more flexibility. A decision was made to move one floor down in to the old administrative board conference room where the discussion could continue.

One side of the corridor that leads to the conference room is facing the courtyard and along this corridor, the light fittings in the ceiling are partly angled towards the windows. The intention is that the light from the lamps can reflect in the large windows and give people a sense of natural light, even during the dark time of the year.

Angled light fittings in the corridor that wraps
around the courtyard

The interior of the conference room features a long pine table which has received an extension later in its life, a long bench and chairs. The upholstered leather chairs are also in pine and made specifically for this room by interior architect Maija Heikinheimo—with Alvar Aalto's approval. The participants installed themselves in these sturdy chairs around the table and resumed the discussion.
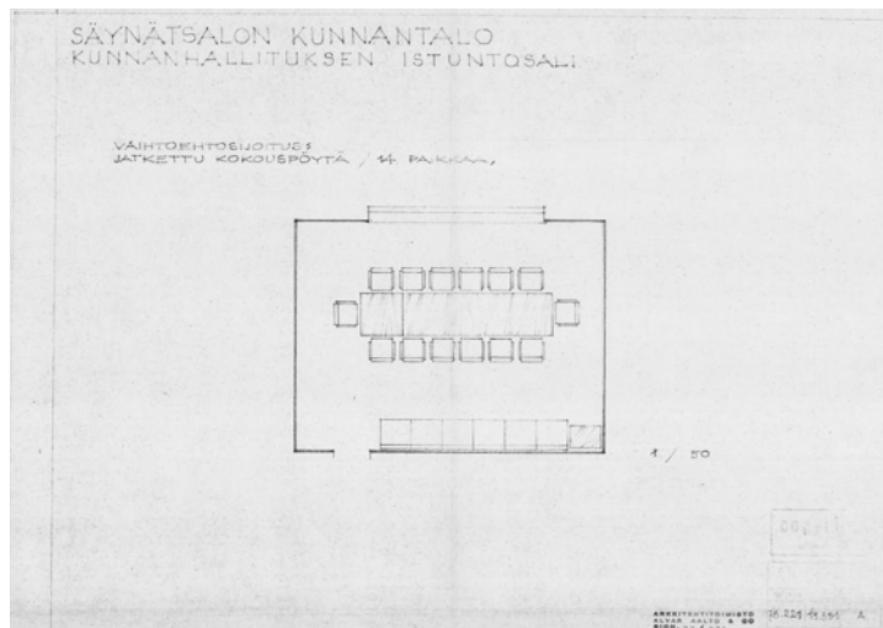
The chairs in the conference room were locally
made in Säynätsalo

←
The furnishing plan for the conference room,
dated 13.3.1951

"What has design to do with peace? Granted that you look at the designer as someone who wants to change a situation for the better, is it that design, at least in a traditional sense, can provide the tools to understand and also accommodate new situations?"

"In one way designers are always dealing with conflicts or opposite needs, they put together what doesn't go together. So at the very core of their expertise is the ability to manage conflicts on different levels."

"When we talk about peace, the question of obtaining social and economic equality is central and designers can play a role in that since they in a large sense are the prototypers of the future, it's a profession that is basically built on optimism. But we also have to be humble and recognise the limits of the profession and see how design can fit in a larger conversation with other actors in society, in order to bring about a change."

"To bring about a peaceful society and achieve togetherness, everybody needs to contribute and so designers have to find ways to engage people and give them the possibility to contribute to the design process."

"If designers are unable to touch people in their daily lives they will never feel the need for design. So a big challenge is how you can break into peoples daily routines and show that things are made for them on purpose and that the world is not created with a copy and paste mentality."

"Designers have to find the capacity to look at this urgent situation from the outside in order to find a new logic of doing things."

"We have to embrace the power of imagination to manifest different realities to the public, to inspire and push for a change. We need to start thinking about relationships in much wider terms in order to get out of old systems and loops such as economic models and our relationship with the environment in terms of utilisation, etc. This might enable new rituals that slowly can be implemented in our lives."

"Designing for peace may also mean that the role of the designer will have to change. So can designers say no to designing for war? To say 'I will not design a war machine and neither will any of my colleagues'. This leads one to think of designers taking an oath like doctors, maybe it's even needed in order to act in this urgent matter."

"Designers have to face a new reality where they have a responsibility when choosing clients and to look for new kind of work that help foster change."

"Maybe designers in general have been focusing too much on developing tools for personal liberation like the smartphone. It gives the individual more freedom and more possibilities but the consequences of a product like that are starting to show on a societal level because the individualisation comes at the cost of losing the collectiveness."

"Maybe changing our situation is a too big challenge for us and we should leave some of the work to AI. One way to go would be to think of how we can make AI more emphatic and to educate AI on how to build a better society."

"We need to acknowledge that change in a short period of time is also possible. All we talk about today is our frustration over sustainable travel and food production. We didn't have this widespread discussion five years ago which proves that we are not completely beyond hope to act."

"Empathy is the key in the conversation related to design and peace. If empathy is there from the beginning, then through design as a tool or mechanism we can in the end reach peace."

"It's interesting to look at design and peace from a multicultural perspective. In Europe, maybe

the conversation of how to design peace
comes closer to how we can connect with
nature and how we can have empathy, which
in contrast to the situation in regions at war
becomes almost a luxury."

"People need to be made aware of where they can
have some leverage on this issue. There are different
levels to finding or reaching peace, from grand to
small gestures and we have to act out of the possi-
bility that all levels can work. There are maybe acts
or even products, but how can you design a place
that promotes peace that is instantly accessible and
activates people without them having to decode or
invest too much in it?"

"It could be a manifest but in our scattered
society with different values this might not
be possible. Maybe the manifest isn't written
or oral, maybe it's a physical act, a common
gesture, a habit, a proclamation or a ritual that
allows for worldwide activisms in a preemptive
stage as well as in the midst of a war."

"But what then is the most potent symbol of peace?
The peace logo that we all know is an anti-war logo
and doesn't necessarily carry any more to it than
that. How can you create an action, gesture or a ritual
that can go global? This task is not like creating an
identity for a country or for something like the EU
because that is at the end of the day just a branding
exercise, all identities are. The people who made the
peace signs of the past have experienced war and the
majority of the world today haven't. Maybe that is why

peace is losing value because people who haven't experienced war don't really value peace since it's a given. Maybe we reach peace with a potent symbol or ritual but then again, can this happen only through hugs? Maybe it has to be bigger, today maybe we have to manufacture that mission to Mars for the humanity to come together."

"Designing for peace in a post-war situation is a different kind of challenge. It leads towards a discussion around creating safe spaces in terms of ground rules and how you feel. Like places where peace negotiations take place, these are often remote places that enable a bigger sense of humanity beyond the immediate conflict, the possibility to breath fresh air and sense the tranquility of the space. This can be zoomed in to how the very table around which the parties sit is shaped because it sets a power dynamic. In this situation, the design can to an extent, make or break the possibility of reaching peace. People come from different cultures but some factors that relates to us as humans could probably be found and used in a design process to create this space."

"These places needs to be designed in a way so they make you feel safe and secure, so you can trust the environment you are in and feel that you are respected there. These elements will ultimately give you inner peace and enable a good dialogue."

"Most likely all cultures do have this peaceful space already, but maybe it isn't necessarily architectural."

"On a larger scale, this should be applied to all public spaces so that everybody can have this sense of spatial peace."

In conclusion, three categories or exercises which loosely framed this discussion of Design & Peace were written down.

→   I HAVE A DREAM AND UTOPIA
We are in a global moment where everyone, from the individual to the collective masses, in both rural and urban areas are dealing with ecology, accessibility and mobility issues on many levels, and where economic inequality is the driver of conflicts. Here, designers can and should intervene to reduce friction. We have seen the positive use and the abuse of the current digital networks that are in place. Designers should help bring about a common digital space for a global conversation that is not commercial. In this way we challenge the design community with a dream, so that each and every designer becomes a peacemaker in their own practice; whether designing an identity, product or a system. Perhaps taking a voluntary oath to commit to working towards peace.

→   RITUALS AND SYMBOLS OF PEACE
Rituals, behaviours, symbols, relations and gestures. Maybe a lot of these systems that we use today have hit a wall or come as far as they can. Could we research and examine whether there is a need to upgrade them to engage people on a global level to actively contribute to peace? We can map out the everyday rituals of peace and place them in contrast to rituals of war and create design processes that alter our behaviour through, for example, PR, workshops or academia. Ultimately we have to start to challenge our own behaviours by embracing our imagination, placing ourselves in new situations where you are stripped of

your former understanding of your relationship with the world. This would lead to new rituals, behaviours, symbols, relations and gestures.

→   SPACES FOR PEACE AND PEACE MEDIATION
We need to understand where conflicts have taken place and where mediation took place. Through a number of case studies we could create a script with points of what a space needs to provide to give the ultimate conditions for peace mediation. You would need to look at these peace negotiation spaces both in terms of geographical location, the physical environment in which they take place and the architectural design. Two main questions, firstly where and why did they take place? And secondly, in what respect do these, let's say, designed elements enable or co-facilitate a peaceful settlement. Once this kind of script with points is established, these spaces could be created first as renderings, drawings and sketches to enable others to understand and imagine the possibilities of these spaces. Then they could be developed, proposed and used in real situations.

INTER-

VIEWS

The ceiling in the library is characterised by rows
of concrete beams

Participants of the colloquium were later interviewed in the library which today still serves the community of Säynätsalo. In contrast to the sparsely lit, red brick hallways and rooms that dominate the town hall building, the library is almost all covered in white and full of light. Careful attention was given to the light fittings and a special multi-purpose lamp was designed that consists of several light sources attached to a vertical metal rod, directing light downwards as well as onto the bookshelves. Besides custom made furniture such as a book trolley, the library interior consists mainly of the classics introduced to the world when Artek was founded in 1935 by Maire Gullichsen, Nils Gustav Hahl and Aino and Alvar Aalto.

←
The library looking towards east with large windows facing south

→
The following interviews have been lightly edited for clarity

Paola Antonelli

Senior Curator, Architecture and Design and Director, Research & Development at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Do you believe that peace in conflicts can be achieved through design?

I don't believe that any one discipline or field of study or type of action can single-handedly achieve peace. I think however that design should be part of the action. How, I don't know in detail, yet. I only know that designers are very good team players and leaders, and have an extraordinary ability to help teams get to a synthesis of means and goals. They are by training generous and interested in other people's opinions. Not to mention they tend to be optimistic and have a constructive attitude towards the future. On another note, an important contribution design could and has provided also in the past is the configuration of spaces for dialogue and safe exchange of ideas. If you think of different public forums, design can establish hierarchies or erase them. It can focus the attention and set the stage for either conflict or for conflict resolution.

Why are we talking about this theme in 2019?

Because we are exhausted by mindless conflict, especially in the face of a world that is collapsing, politically and environmentally. We see a lot of gratuitous bickering, posturing, grandstanding—often completely detached from reality—and some outright attempts to erase reality. Many world leaders are not at all representing the people and their interests. They are operating on a different plane, on

a power high, and thus endangering the real world. Design is about life, it is about reality checks.

On this theme, are designers today doing too little too late?

No, I don't think designers are doing too little too late, or at least we cannot bundle them all. Some of them are doing everything they can and have been for quite a while. We can go back to the end of the 19th century, the beginning of the 20th, and all the decades in between, late 60s and 70s especially. Designers are not sitting pretty and waiting for things to happen.

In regards to your profession, how can you contribute to the development of this theme?

I can continue my mission of helping people sharpen their own critical tools. I've been trying to use exhibitions to highlight dilemmas, examples, and possible avenues for a better way to live together. I can cite three among the most explicit projects. In 2004, the exhibition *SAFE: Design Takes on Risk*, which presented a view of design's mission similar to a Hippocratic oath. Between 2013 and 2015, together with Jamer Hunt I ran an online platform to discuss the relationship between design and violence, having realized that not all designers actually take Hippocratic oaths… Recently, the *Broken Nature* exhibition at the XXII Triennale di Milano talked about ways to restore our bonds with nature, and therefore also with other human beings.

Walter Bettens

Independent journalist and curator based in Lisbon.

In your professional opinion, has peace been a topic at all in design journalism?

While editor at DAMN° magazine, across a period of some 15 years, I'm not sure if the word 'peace' ever really made it as part of a title or a subtitle, but of course there was this ongoing offer of stories and projects that dealt with 'peace' in a more generic way. Needless to say that over that period of time our worlds have changed. At first glimpse, the words 'design' and 'peace' sounds like a disturbing, almost cynical constellation. But the proposal for this rather courageous and challenging theme for the Aalto colloquium triggered my curiosity. Aside from the ambiguity, there's some sense to twinning these precious words; after all, isn't the main role of a designer to challenge a given situation through a positive and constructive process of problem-solving that ultimately leads to some satisfying, harmonic solutions, resulting in what could equally be translated as a more 'peaceful' situation in the end? Maybe just call it 'peace of mind'? Perhaps that's the concept, as everything is designed to some extent, why not designing peace? But if you consider that this could be possible then who should be involved, and how would they implement it? Those are maybe harder questions that needs to be answered. Just for the record, the Oxford Dictionary of English defines 'peace' as something free from disturbance,

tranquillity and being in a state of friendliness. So how can a designer be a peace bringer and contribute to that? Beyond the designer as the stereotypical 'object maker', he or she could participate in a thinking process on a much larger scale, in conjunction with other disciplines, to support politicians and other policy makers. These things already happen here and there, for instance on an urban scale. But we shouldn't be all too naive about the outcome: employing 'peace' requires goodness, positivity, and lots of empathy. So maybe the first task for the designer is to create an all-good powerful and peaceful president, bringing an entourage of policy makers with open minds and lots of good intentions for the planet and all of its creatures, before he or she can do the job. But with better intent than God creating man on the 6th day because if you consider mankind of the last century, it seems as if we were created on a blue Monday. And for this we need designers with the right ethical intentions. That's why during the colloquium I suggested a design oath, something similar to the Hippocratic Oath, where physicians have to swear to the healing gods a number of ethical principles on confidentiality and non-maleficence, before they can start their professional career. It was meant as a mild joke, but as a statement it could make sense.

But you have been following the development of the design industry closely for nearly two decades, have you not seen any change in the mindset of designers?
Yes, there are a lot of ideas around new materials and technology that are innovative and

ground-breaking, and some could be potential paths towards more 'peaceful' solutions in some meaning, especially concerning the environmental issues. The reality is that most projects stay in their embryonic or experimental stages, either conceived as one-offs as part of exhibitions or graduate projects. But things are moving on and schools have been stimulating new design research and thinking processes. For more than a decade design has become a popular destination and a lot of kids are triggered by resourcing, experimenting and implementing original and unexpected materials which have also helped bring about a more global awareness of the issues that we're talking about here. But the challenge is as always, how you bring these revolutionary ideas to the tables of entrepreneurs and policy makers, to convince them to turn it into an industrial process, so it finally creates a difference for all of us in our daily lives. Simultaneously, a breed of design writers started raising questions such as 'do we need another chair?', putting the finger on the pulse of environmental issues and over-consumerism. And the answer from the designers and manufacturers that boomeranged back was 'well this is our profession and we're in Milan during the furniture fair to show new prototypes'. But in general yes, there is a mentality shift, things have changed over the last years and there is a bigger awareness among designers and manufacturers nowadays. In all of this, the specialist design magazines and focused exhibitions have definitely played their role as catalysts to bring about these stories about the 'change' or mind-shift of the designer, but it would be even

more helpful if the international quality newspapers would give more attention to these kind of positive stories. 'Design' should preach beyond its own community, and get more onto the radars of the daily newspapers, be it just as an antidote to the many mantras about the many conflicts of the world they like to focus on.

matali crasset

Industrial designer based in Paris.

How do you relate to this theme?

I relate to it because it's clearly present in my work. One conflict I have to face in my profession right now, which I see is becoming increasingly important, is a conflict that is evolving between people who want to follow ecological rules and those who don't. In each project I do I try to be pragmatic and push for an ecological way because I believe that's for our common good and that it will bring us peace. So how do you deal with two different perceptions and how do you, little by little, find some common ground. I would like to find new tools that can bring me more consciousness about what steps I need to take in my design practice in order to work with these kind of conflicts that I deal with on a daily basis.

So you mean you can not use the tools that you have used in your design process, you need new tools to deal with this kind of conflict?

Yes, I think they are completely different. Before we were problem solvers but now we are not. I believe we have to think in a new way because things are becoming more political and people today are a little bit lost. We need new visions and directions, a common project maybe. Designers could perhaps show examples of what's already working on a small scale. The problem is then how we can scale this up and how to deal with it, because on a

bigger scale things get more complex. And it's hard to deal with contradictions on your own, so dealing with this in a group would also be for the better.

So you are not a problem solver anymore?
I was never a problem solver, generally speaking, people think we are problem solvers but I never had this way of designing.

Well another misconception then maybe? Could one say that design is not a democracy, that the process follows a strong vision from the designer.
Well that is true and I have a lot of concern about that. Usually when common decisions are made without any expertise in a field, the results become very flat and not sensible. I often face this situation as a designer and it's not that I want to preserve what I'm doing, I just want to explain that you can make people participate better if they know in which field they can contribute. I like to involve people but you have to give a vision, something clear that everybody gets, a mental representation of the direction.

What is your experience of dealing with the conflicts that you described earlier?
The important thing is to not get into big conflicts, to keep the conflict on a manageable level and I also think that some resistance and criticism is needed to spark imagination. But when the conflict becomes too big the situation often becomes locked and that's what I'm fearing now. This might sound a bit pretentious but I am thinking of how we as designers can make this process as smooth as

possible and make everybody use their best parts of themselves to find a common direction.

Garðar Eyjólfsson

Designer, Director of studies MA Design, Associate Professor at the Iceland University of the arts.

What was your first reaction to the theme?

To be brutally honest with you I was very sceptical about the theme. Peace is a word that is super clichéd and then when you pair it with design which is another word that I think is super clichéd, it basically becomes fluff.

So not relatable?

I just thought it was so far out there I didn't really see how it could work. But having said that, I then got a bit more optimistic about the whole thing and thought that it could be interesting to tackle clichés in general and see if we could find a different way to deal with the theme. It's such a complex issue and when you say peace, some people think of human to human conflicts or geographical fights. And then you have people from the Nordic countries who have a long history of peace that maybe are thinking about it more in relation to the environment, so basically different ways to think about the theme.

You used the word radical a lot during the discussions, is it a necessity when talking about this theme?

Actually I was thinking about that when I went to sleep last night and I think it's a bit of a provocation, to link radical with peace. But if you look at the word radical, it's not bad, it depends in what context you use it in. To be a radical fanatic is

obviously not very positive but in terms of imagination it's totally different. If you have radical imagination I don't think it's necessarily dangerous. We should maybe allow ourselves to imagine and manifest things, different realities different relations and behaviours just as a way to expand our points of views and not take everything for granted. By radical I also mean that we have to be much more radical in how we work as designers right now, we are still to fixed in old systems with capitalism, our basic notion of how we have relationships with nature, how we utilise and work with materials etc. I think we have to cut these links to a much larger extent.

You touched upon geography in terms of how you relate to the theme. Talking about Iceland then specifically, it's in the middle of the Atlantic ocean almost like a closed system.

I wouldn't use the word privileged but maybe we are… in a certain reality, Iceland doesn't have conflicts with neighbouring states so obviously I'm in a totally different mindset. I'm more focused on the conflictual relationship that we have with the environment because I believe that a lot of conflicts that's created by humans are actually the result of our fundamental relationship with the environment. And if you look at Iceland from a systematic point of view it's easy to kind of trace things like energy. Every Icelander knows where their energy comes from. We have dams, rivers and we use geothermal heat so when we turn our lamps on we understand where the electricity comes from. You quickly get a sense that nature is constantly changing, it's

not fixed, so that creates a different relation with nature, you have to respect it.

Going back to what you said about cutting ties to old systems, can you elaborate on that?

Well, thinking about this theme in relation to a word like utopia. I think we need to be careful with that. For the past ten years we've had this idea of sustainability that have almost taken the form of a religion. I believe we need to stop and ask ourselves if we are taking these ideologies too far, we might have to question the intent a bit. The word sustainability has almost been destroyed. I mean if you would look at some design proposals from today in a hundred years time you would think that it was a cult, a secluded cult in a forest somewhere in Finland.

Kaarina Gould

Executive director of the Finnish Cultural Institute in New York.

What were your initial thoughts on the theme?

I welcomed it as I think that we are lacking movements within the design community today that are tackling the big issues. There are scattered initiatives and we have mostly seen them happen within environmental and urban issues, but the question of peace is yet to become a movement. Maybe because the task seems too big to grasp, as peace is a result of so many things, there are so many elements to achieving and maintaining peace. I also thought that warfare historically have played an immense role as impetus for design. The demand for hardware and software for mass destruction and world domination have been drivers for innovation, from weaponry to textiles, biomechanics and artificial intelligence. So how can we make peace as critical an impetus for powerful innovations today? How do we get the big wheels of investment behind the urgency we're facing for creating and sustaining peace?

So what could a potential new movement learn from history?

After World War One the Bauhaus movement emerged as a counter-reaction to the war and the rising nationalism in Europe, and they believed that design could change the world for the better, to bring peace. It was a European movement although the ripple effects of it could be felt across

the globe in one way or the other. Today a new movement such as that would have to take on a different form, something that resonates and get things moving globally. War—or the elements that threaten peace—today is not a single destructive force, it's a global weave of complex issues and challenges. To have the whole design community to follow one idea is not realistic, yet there needs to be common will and enough awareness within the industry in order to make the right choises. I do want to believe that the skills and sheer determination of the design community today as experts in simulating the unknown, and by using empathy as tool, could perhaps make such a movement unstoppable? A movement designed not to simply maintain peace, but create something greater, a challenge, an ideal that inspires us all to find more ways for better diplomacy and true sustainability.

What makes Finland a particularly good host for the conversation of Design & Peace?

Finland is recognised globally as a peace monger and facilitator in many complex crisis and Helsinki has been a host for many international peace negotiations. I see the legacy of Aino and Alvar Aalto, who based their design philosophy and practice on the idea of equality—a key building block in maintaining peace—as a relevant reference point in the question of how designers can contribute to making peace.

Ahmad Humeid

Designer and entrepreneur at design and innovation firm
Syntax in Amman.

How did you contemplate on this theme in relations to
where you are situated geographically, Jordan being a
kind of buffer zone in a critical part of the Arab region?

Well, thinking about peace and war is a part of
my identity in a way. It is part of the collective
identity of people in my country. Jordan is indeed a
peaceful island in a sea of conflict. We have been
shielded from direct warfare, but it's all around us.
It's a kind of spectacle we watch everyday. Israel-
Palestine conflict and refugees crisis are present
everyday and touch our daily and family reality.
We've had an extended period of peace in Jordan
while in front of our eyes, countries that were much
stronger and larger than us, namely Iraq and Syria,
have almost completely disintegrated. My daily
work is not connected to peacemaking but thinking
about questions of war and peace is inescapable
for me. But for me peace is not just about the lack
of war between nations or within nations. Societal
peace is also threatened by the failure of social and
economic development. And I do think design can
play an important role in that.

Please elaborate on that.

Not to inflate the role of design too much, but
design is political and I mean that quite literally.
On a national Jordanian level I'm talking about
things like designing proper school buildings and
furniture, designing to urban mobility and designing

media. The urban environment has real societal problems that should be tackled by design and architecture together with other disciplines. On the Arab regional level there is definitely a role to play for design, especially when you are talking about the future of creative industries. If Syria and Iraq return to calm, there is a post-war situation with a lot of rebuilding that needs to happen and it would be a pity to only look at it from a commercial point of view. This is very political because all the powers who have played a role in the wars want to have their piece of the reconstruction pie. How will the next 50 years be designed in the region? From political system, to education, to the economy. Will we be human-centered or repeat the mistakes of militarism and Arabo-fascism and religious fanaticism that we still suffer from today? Looking towards the future of the region I'm also thinking of the economic possibilities with the creative industries because the future is also a question of jobs. There is huge youth unemployment and it's a major driver of radicalisation. The economic model of the region is crucial for the future. Design is a part of the economy and design should have a role in manufacturing and how we shape our relationship with our local resources. And this brings me to another important point. Today, Jordan is an import oriented economy, we import most of the things that we consume and it's not sustainable. The region has to look beyond oil and produce more. Jordan has 300 days of sunlight, and from what I understand that's something like ten times as much as in Finland. Why doesn't the next solar energy revolution come from a place like Jordan?

What are you thinking when you look beyond your region?

> I'm afraid of the disintegration of the European project. It would be a total disaster for the world and also for the Arab region because the EU can serve as a model for a future corporation between the Arab countries. The role that designers can play in shaping communication in this global political climate is huge. My feeling in general is that design is not rising up to the challenge of the problems today. There is almost like a sense of resignation. I thought that this was only an Arab phenomenon but I am increasingly aware of that this is maybe a global phenomenon. I want to say this with a lot of humility because there is so much amazing work being done by people, but I think there is a need now to highlight the work that actually responds to the social, environmental and political problems and doesn't just poetically describes or comments on them.

Maybe designers are not made aware of the possibilities of what they can do with the tools that they are thought in school. It is stuck in a traditional sense.

> Yes, but what blows my mind is that it has happened before. The modern movement before the Second World War and then the whole rebuilding effort after it, with names like Aalto and Bauhaus and so on, it was all about design and peace.

Isn't it that it's natural to address the things closest to you, most people aren't in conflict zones which means that if you are unaware of the problem you don't seek it out and that's why the design community at large is addressing other issues?

Well are we discussing peace after war, or keeping the societal peace? There doesn't have to be an armed conflict for designers to wake up and work on solutions. There are real problems arising. The loss of jobs, identity politics and the climate crisis. And the theme for this colloquium, Design & Peace, at this time? I think we have to go back to the idea of trying to build a better world however dreamy that might sound, and tackle the problems. And this includes digital media which is every-ones shared space in the world, reshaping that is extremely important.

Itonde Kakoma

Programme Director, CMI Martti Ahtisaari Centre in Helsinki.

Given what you do, this theme must have been on your mind before?

Yes and I have also previously raised questions about how aesthetics relate to the making of peace in terms of how the physical environments in which we meet can enable, enhance or co-facilitate the peaceful settlements of violent conflicts. I have reflected on this question because I have also encountered physical environments that have been a hindrance to the making of peace and yet they have been the preferred location for the meeting. They have been a hindrance because of their very location or proximity to a more hectic world where you do not have the sense of freedom or sufficient space to reflect, something which might be found in venues closer to our natural environment. I have also thought of ways in which aesthetics trigger the imagination to think beyond the immediate, which is precisely what the nurturing of peace entails, how you nurture political will. Where and why we meet at a certain location are questions that regularly emerge in my work.

Would you say that there are some constants that are needed no matter where you are situated?

From my perspective yes, but these are not universals. One of course being safety, two if possible is beauty of some form so that light for example can be more appreciated. Basic things like air circu-

lation matters so it doesn't become a distraction. Symbolic expressions in the form of colours matter both as something to trigger the imagination but also to stifle the imagination because in certain contexts a colour has meaning. Also to have the space to move around either by your own or in groups, to not feel constrained and yet feel as if you're in a safe environment. These things matter and I think about them and plan accordingly.

So that nothing works against the purpose.
Precisely, even if we all know that peacemaking is about political will, we also know that from a design and architectural perspective, certain spaces and certain forms can be helpful and pleasurable but also harmful and distracting. So I see design as potentially helpful in peace mediation processes.

Pentti Kareoja

Architecture and partner at ARK-house Architects and
Professor at the Aalto University, School of Arts, Design,
based in Helsinki.

Do this topic have any relations to what you have
practised over the years?

> Well let's say that peace is a word I wouldn't use in
> a design process, it's too extreme, but maybe the
> word diplomacy. Diplomacy is a kind of method
> which we can use as a tool for better design solu-
> tions and maybe the extreme result of that is the
> peace. It's about balancing, listening and finding
> some kind of consensus. I think that celebrated
> objects or architecture can sometimes be very
> arrogant in their nature. Now, war and peace are
> very political words but maybe softer versions like
> arrogance on the one hand and empathy on the
> other, could sometime be used to describe the
> nature of design. And I would like to add that we
> also need optimism in our work. There is a huge
> risk of getting overwhelmed by all the negativity
> in the world today. If we are without hope for the
> future we will get paralysed and I believe that we
> need hope in order to enable creative thinking
> which is the key to innovation. Basically, you have
> to believe that what you do is meaningful and for
> that you need optimism.

Are we talking about the same optimism that maybe
the Aaltos were feeling in their days?

> I am positive of that, they of course faced difficul-
> ties of various kinds but they could still somehow
> find new strengths to focus on new projects. But

it's easy to understand what motivated them, from the Second World War it was a kind of tabula rasa, it could only get better, it was easy to be optimistic at that time. They probably felt that everything was possible, that the world was opening up and peace was eternal, which I guess is not the case now. But looking towards the future somehow already includes the past, it can be seen as a tree where the branches represents the future and the roots represents the past. It's an entity that needs both so we are inevitably dependent on the history when we are shaping the future.

So do we need another tabula rasa to move forward or are there other ways?

There are of course some examples of refugee camps and these kind of projects which do a lot of good but most of our tasks are normally not recognised on that level, they are just for business for the greed of people to maximise profits. Maybe it's architects and designers responsibility to try to translate, let's call it 'bad intentions', into good results. We have that possibility quite often even though it's not necessarily included in the task. You kind of have to add that level voluntarily even though it's not asked of you and certainly not paid for. But on the other hand it gives a certain kind of satisfaction if you feel that you have been able to do some good in a project. Maybe there is a level of selfishness in this way of thinking but I suppose this is how it is for most, you have to smuggle in good intentions wherever you can.

Miryon Ko

Executive Officer of 21_21 DESIGN SIGHT museum in Tokyo.

What role can institutions play when discussing this theme?

They can make platforms for discussion, raise questions, encourage people to think and discuss and it's also important that they are international and continuous in their format. At 21_21, we have organised several exhibitions and events which are directly and indirectly related to peace. The objective has been to make people think about our lives, society and culture, rather than showing them our own conclusions and opinions. I think peace has different meanings for each person and it's important that we continue to think about it and discuss with other people from different backgrounds.

The island of Japan holds many citizens in a very limited space. In regards to spatial peace, what are your thoughts?

It's true that Japan holds a huge population in relation to the land mass but it's very concentrated into mega-cities. Lack of population and tax income in rural areas and high percentage of elderly population are also very serious factors. With our information technologies which grow faster and faster, I hope there will be more flexibility and interest for people to live and work in remote areas and find peace and beauty in natural environments. This would also help to preserve and enhance local culture and economy. Nature and traditional culture

have always been some of the most important
sources of inspiration for new creation.

In your opinion, has suffering during Hiroshima and
Nagasaki affected the design community in a way that
helps tackle this theme?

I think the last war triggered lots of Japanese
designers to become more passionate for creating.
Ikko Tanaka wrote in his book about the most
beautiful and magical open-air Noh theatre that
he ever saw right after the war ended. It was in
a field that was completely burnt down and the
vividness of the colour of their costumes remained
in his mind forever. For him, in my opinion, colour-
fulness meant freedom, peace, joy and happiness,
something which they couldn't appreciate at all
during the war period. Shiro Kuramata said in an
interview that when he was a child during the war,
he found all the small glittering pieces that fell from
the sky so beautiful, this was in fact bombs falling
from planes. He transformed this tragic memory
into beautiful objects. A lot of designers from
this generation say that there were much more
talented friends who passed away during the war
who could have become great masters of design
and that they have an obligation to work on their
behalf too. In my opinion, these tragic experiences
triggered them to become more passionate. In
Japan, we talk a lot about the generation who
didn't experience the war and who take peace for
granted. People who experienced the war on the
other hand say that today's situation is very similar
to the period when Japan jumped into the last war.
It's when people stop thinking, lose interest and

stop caring, that war begins. So we, as a design peacemaker community should continue to work, raise questions and create platforms so we never forget how precious our lives are and how full of wonder and beauty the world is.

Matylda Krzykowski

Transdisciplinary practitioner based in Berlin and Chicago.

Do you think it is naive to put design next to peace?
 I thought it was pretentious in the beginning because they are two very powerful words that have a high level of complexity in its meaning on a sociological, philosophical, political, poetic and aesthetic level. So I was looking for specific questions to try to narrow it down: How can we live together? How can we make space for empathy? Peace is not a term that we often hear or are confronted with and it has a very loaded connotation, so one of the challenges is how you discuss, negotiate and process the theme. For example when I teach, I often set the excercises and assignments in the future because the right materials, resources and technology might not exist yet. I ask the students to think in exhibits and props instead of products because that's initially ideas. We all remember Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), in which a tablet is used as a future tool and today we all have one and we cannot imagine not interacting with it. So one way of discussing this theme is on a speculative basis.

That also leads to the actual setting in which the theme is discussed.
 The format is important. How is something arranged or set out? If you design a format which has an impact on the way we run our conversation we gradually build empathy for each other. How

can we make spaces for empathy and how can we live together? We need to explore the conditions and prospects of living together in terms of individual and also social dimensions. It became evident during this colloquium how important the format and the space is. It was necessary to change location frequently. Each time we had to negotiate our physical positions and roles. At some point all those who where participating became accomplices. We were stuck in some sort of isolation where we also developed a kind of patience and dependency on each other. When you think about the economic meetings, all the different summits that are taking place around the world, they are taking place at isolated locations, at a table for a good and bad reason. Is that the right format to discuss peacemaking?

Do you think we have reached a point where it is critical to talk about this theme?
Yes maybe. There has always been a lot of concentrated power in the world but even more so today. Let's say that five precent has all the power and the other 95 is dependent on what the five percent decides. The challenge is to make people aware that if they claim more space and propose alternatives, they can make a difference. But that's what's so good with these discussions because there is always the possibility of suggesting an alternative, which is more powerful as a group. It's not about the absolute truth but about exercising an alternative, making a suggestion or drafting a proposal that could lead to educated presents and futures.

Mika Lammi

Head of IoT Business Development at Kouvola Innovation Ltd
in Finland.

Does this theme correlate to your work at all?

Well, I had to think about it quite intensively for
a couple of days because the shared aspects
between my discipline and design are not that ap-
parent. So I had to try and reframe what I do in the
context of design, working towards peace, and I
think I have found a logical framework for that now.

Can you explain it?

A big part of my work is to design methods of
collecting data and restructuring it so that it makes
sense to humans. There is such a vast collection
of information that you really can't make any sense
out of it without the assistance of machines, be it a
program that you run your data through once and
hopefully get some insights, or if it's an artificial
intelligence analysis which keeps on repeating
the analysis until some correlations pop up. The
human mind is not capable of dealing with that
sort of search for meanings in this sea of data. It's
not simple lists any more, it has become much
more complex, data is now multidimensional and
fluid and a new kind of problem arises when you
structure and order this sort of mountains of data
with machine assistance. You run into a cultural
bias, different cultural spheres in broad terms. Take
for example Russia and EU, they have different
approaches on how to organize data, and classify
objects, so when it comes to customs classifi-

cations when you import and export goods, this becomes an issue. Take a water boiler that is manufactured in Belgium and you export it to Russia. In the EU customs it has been given a certain code and this code defines how much export tax and tariffs you have to pay for it. But Russia have a completely different system for that even though it serves the same purpose. The classifications and the concepts behind the classifications are different, they have maybe five categories that you can fit a water boiler into which in turn are dependent on the context. Is it sold for an office, an industrial environment or for private use? And they all have different tax and tariffs. So these biases creep up from the data that you have, and the more data you have, the more bias it contains from the cultural sphere that has generated that particular system of organizing and ordering data. This in my mind, is the logical framework through which I can translate my work into design because you have to take in to notion the reflections, the ideas, the concepts behind the data… you have to understand the culture and the people who generates these kinds of systems before you can efficiently transform EU classifications into Russian classifications in situations of border crossings and customs control because that has a huge impact on the trade. And in terms of design and peace, creating data which reflects people's ideas and hopes about future societies where peace is the prevailing condition, has a huge impact on how everyday life and systems works.

And more and more is getting digitalized.

Exactly, the more we go down that road where we digitalize our entire existence and our everyday experiences, the more influence this has. If it's not done properly these cultural biases leak into each other's spheres in wrong ways and we get misunderstandings, we get false meanings and misinformation. It's not necessarily derived from menace or bad intent, it can be derived from the very fact that someone made a mistake when interpreting data into another context. So that is what I have been thinking off in relation to the theme. The design discourse has a more holistic view on things where you question and doubt and take two steps forward, three steps back and maybe one to the side. In my discipline we set a goal and then we start working towards it until we reach it… we never take steps back to change our point of view and that's a huge drawback when you want to design things for humans, like information systems or classes of information, it's sort of the wrong way of doing the right job… it should involve much more design which is lacking very heavily at the moment in my field. This whole theme is still evolving in my mind and I do want to explore it further, but this is a good start.

Heini Lehtinen

Creative director, writer and founder of design and research office Raven & Wood Agency. Based in Helsinki.

How did you react to the theme in relation to what you are working on?

This is actually a part of what I am working on. I work on spatial health, which means how spaces impact our health and well-being, especially emotional and psychological health. Finding peace in one way or another through a designed environment is one aspect of this. I started digging deeper into the crossovers of design and peace mediation a few years ago. This field is gaining more interest due to increased tensions in our societies. Firstly, there are inner conflicts, which are related to mental illness, depression, anxiety and so on and then there are tensions between people and groups and eventually nations and states. Some tensions have already escalated into smaller or bigger conflicts so there is definitely a need to discuss how designers can contribute to peace on their part. So far the research on built environments and peace has been more oriented around urban planning and projects on architecture and conflicts, and they are usually more focused on post-conflict situations whereas what we've discussed in the colloquium is also preemptive situations.

So how could a designer approach this theme?

I think first and foremost it's an attitude, an attitude of nourishment, how do we care about people and the environment. We can have this attitude in

everything that we do, also in design. The concept of peace is so vast that we can't really grasp it as such. It's hard to think of how to design for peace but if we start to define the elements of peace, then we can also turn those elements into design strategies and tools. It's imperative that there's also a dialogue with other sectors because without openness and dialogue we're all just staying within our own bubbles. Through dialogue we share skills and experiences and that will help to clarify how designers can contribute to peace. If the aim is to contribute to a more peaceful society by reducing conflicts, then it's crucial to listen to experts on peace mediation, for example, those who have research and experience on conflict resolution. Then we can find spots where we can contribute through spatial design or service design or other design expertise. This collaboration will, in turn, benefit the peace mediators.

So where do we start?

A good point of origin is to design for the experience of trust, the experience of respect or how you feel when you are cared for. That can then be applied to very different situations. What's happening in our body and brain is, for me, a way to understand how to design for trust, respect or care. It all begins from a personal experience, which can be scaled up to relationships between two people, groups and beyond. This is, of course, a simplification and no process is perfect, but it's a direction.

Fabio J. M. de Lima

Architect and Professor at Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Faculty of Architecture and urbanism in Brazil.

How did you react to this theme?

When I saw these two words together I was intrigued because they are such strong words with a lot of history. I immediately thought about our growing cities, the evident need for open spaces and my research about how we can change public spaces through design to be more inclusive and interactive, to give all people quality of life and a sense of peace.

Can you give such an example that exists already?

We have good examples in Brazil where I come from. There are public spaces where you feel a sense of peace, freedom and security. Lucio Costa the planner of the new capital Brasilia, planned a city with beautiful open spaces with paths for pedestrians that separates them from the traffic lanes. And also where I grew up in Belo Horizonte, we have Pampulha which was designed by Oscar Niemeyer. All the buildings are inserted in the land-scape around a lake without any walls integrated with nature, all the people can access the gardens which were created by the architect Roberto Burle Marx. So in our history we have good examples of these places that I believe are so important, but this is sadly something that we are losing today in many places. On the one hand, informatics have brought people closer together and on the other, we are more isolated, much due to the increased

use of cars which has redesigned our public spaces. It also brought me to think about the city of Venice which for me is perhaps the best example of a public space for peace if you consider it in relation to the human scale. In Venice, walking in Fondamente Nuove or navigate through the calle, implicates encounters without cars. The fact is that the same Venetian scale exists in the favelas in Rio de Janeiro but while Venice is a UNESCO world heritage site, the favelas are feared. This leads me to think that when we talk about designing spatial peace, we must include it in policies that change social inequality and to think of the possibility of design 'everywhere'.

I imagine this is also a security issue?
Yes, in Brazil today, to go to an extreme, people prefer shopping malls to public spaces such as parks because of the security issue and this is a big problem and it prevents the kind of cultural exchange which occurs in the cities. This factor sustains the inequality and poor people for example living in the favelas will for that reason remain poor. Design has a huge part to play in order to reverse this growing situation, where the goal of course is spatial peace, peace of mind. But the way forward is very difficult because we need to change the mentality of the politicians and regenerate the memories of inhabitants about public spaces. Urban design and planning must be included in public policies through the participation of the community and this is a question very much linked to democracy.

If we succeed with the politicians what would be the next challenge do you think?

To structure a strategy for public spaces in various forms which integrates architecture, design and arts among other things, through participation of the public. Another problem as I see it today is that designers and planners are using the same software in their work which carries the same tools and this leads to a homogeneity which is not good. When you see the same walls, doors and windows… it's like there's a McDonald's everywhere. In many cases, it seems that the designers and planners have forgotten about the people, it's so important to consider different cultures and embrace it in your work. And in order to do that you need the public to participate in the design process. To kind of adapt the software to the local way of life, its materiality, spatiality and mindset because each city reflects its own culture. This is something that I feel have been done in for example Brazil with Pampulha in Belo Horizonte with Oscar Niemeyer, with the new capital Brasilia with Lucio Costa and also here in Finland in Säynätsalo with Alvar Aalto.

Timo Ramu

Concept designer, writer and co-founder of creative studio
MUSUTA based in Helsinki and Tokyo.

What is your relation to this theme?

Well this theme is very personal to me and the
debate of what is good and evil has interested me
for a long time. I'm interested in what humans are
capable of because we make active decisions that
result in atrocities. True morality is a choice, you
have the option to do good and you ave the option
to do bad, so everybody is capable of good and
bad. And through my work I realised that I have the
choice to make some impact towards peace even
though it may be small.

So you believe that we can design peace?

Yes absolutely! I think design has one key aspect
related to peace and that is choice, which is always
present in the design process. Eventually some-
thing will come out of your work but that is the
result of many choices, you include and exclude
and that is the whole individual responsibility on
our planet. Of course a choice can have terrible
consequences but it's still a choice and I think
that's the very key to design and that's what I also
would like to emphasise, that peace has to become
an active choice. If people realise it's a choice it
starts to have so much more value. In the nordic
countries we are very happy that we have peace
but for us it has become a given, it doesn't have
any real value because we don't actively choose
peace. But when you realise that it can become a

choice between war and peace then it becomes very real and it starts to have a significant value to pretty much everything you do.

So this is an urgent matter?

It's about time. Methods that are very obvious to designers are not actively used in peace processes because in the political universe, where these people operate, design is not used. It's a lost opportunity because design has a huge impact on the way that people feel, how you can set up a certain environment or how you communicate your stories. It's a direct link to people's emotions and people who come to meetings to negotiate and choose between war and peace they need to be in the correct emotional state so that they can choose peace.

Can we talk about examples?

Yes, and I can think of a million examples. On a political level, United Nations for example, it was designed to uphold peace. And a good example of using design to find inner peace is the Japanese tea ceremony which is first and foremost an aesthetic and spiritual experience, without a religious context although it draws influence from Zen Buddhism. It's a designed experience and in the old days the samurai could not fit with his katana (sword) through the door so it would have to be left outside. Everything have been thought out from entering the room, the movements, objects and the act of having a cup of tea, and the aim is to create harmony and peace.

Jukka Savolainen

Director of Design Museum Helsinki.

As the director of an institution you are in a unique position to influence the general public with this theme.

If you look at museums and especially design museums, the mould for that kind of institution is the Victoria & Albert Museum in London founded in 1852. The idea was that the museum would be the spokesperson for the industrial era of good production, to show what the industry does for society. Today, design museums and applied art museums likewise are actually really struggling with how to communicate the impact and importance of design to the general public, to manifest what design can do. At the same time I think that design and the design profession is changing which means that the role of museums will become even more important. But yes, basically we are in a unique position because we can speak to both the designer, which is our content, and with the general public.

Has the theme of Design & Peace been on the agenda in your institution before?

Not as such, but when you deconstruct what peace means and look at the different components that build peace, then we touch upon things like stability and well-being. The Nordic welfare model is the perfect example of how you build a society that is secure, gives comfort and takes care of people. It's based on equality, good living environ-

ments and conditions for everybody and we are
very eager to talk about how design should repre-
sent those values now and also in the next century.

Would you say that Finland is a particularly good place
to have this discussion?
   Yes I think so because Finland is a democracy and
   the Finnish welfare society is built on key ideals
   and values such as good living conditions, health-
   care and quality education for everybody. After the
   Second World War the Finnish society needed to
   be rebuilt and design and architecture were at the
   core of this project and helped make this welfare
   society into a reality.

You mentioned the need to communicate the im-
portance of design to the public, where do you think
design can do the most impact today?
   I like to think about systems and consequences
   and how things happen, where one needs to be
   to make an impact, where you can influence the
   most. And I think design needs to be embedded in
   the background of our entire society, so this means
   that we need to get design in on a governmental
   level. I don't know how that will happen but it's
   very important to try to get design in to where the
   big decisions are being made. Designers have
   become very good at talking to CEOs and they
   understand business quite well, but they often get
   stuck in their own sort of bubble. We are still not
   quite grasping that the design profession actually
   have to change a bit in order to be able to talk to
   politicians because they think in a different way
   and use a different language which we don't know.

Arto Sivonen

Marketing designer and urban activist, founder of Måndag based in Helsinki.

How does this theme correlate with what you are working on?

It correlates in so many ways. I think it's related to climate change and sustainability, everything is related to how we can help people change their consumer behaviour, to buy better and to buy less. I work with communication and marketing in a way that people can understand what is happening without feeling the frustration of having to change something in their lives. I also work with a project where we involve young people to talk about peace with people in their own age instead of having adults talking about peace which is normally the case. We want to help them handle this topic and understand what peace means and not only peace in the sense that it's the opposite of war but peace as in a peaceful everyday life. Our tools are mainly related to how you can present your ideas, to use words that people understand, write stories and how to take pictures that illustrate what you are talking about. It's about communication, which peace issues often are. Most conflicts are created through misunderstandings, a different attitude to-wards someone, wrong expectations or if we don't have enough knowledge. Our goal is to have them move forward as conscious people who can give lectures and presentations to others about peace and sustainability, how human right issues are related to climate change etc, the whole scale. Our

target group for this project are young people but we also want to reach adults, the decision makers, and help them understand that they should give more power to young people and trust them to take the stage.

You are working out of the belief that the next generation is where you can do the most good. That, when they are in power, they will have peace in their mind already.

We need to help them take the power as soon as possible. It's already happening, look at Greta Thunberg and the school strike for climate, but we need to work for that to get even more powerful. We also need to inform and involve young influencers and bloggers. There are some who have started to address climate change for example, they do it because they believe in it but they sometimes lack the knowledge and that can become a problem when the misinformation reaches their followers who believe in their words. But with that said, not only influencers and bloggers but really all young people, also those who don't have a voice.

Isn't this already being talked about in school?

Beside my work I'm also lecturing at the Aalto University about sustainable issues and I can clearly see the problem there. My biggest mission as a teacher is to help them to get out of that place as soon as possible because the schools just can't keep up with the pace in which the society is changing these days. How we use media and what we know about climate change is changing everyday and besides school, the best education

is really to be out there in the moment where everything happens, to follow media, meet people and to start actions. Design schools for example, they know how to teach about the methods but the ideas about who they should or could work with when they graduate are from the past. Often the new designers turn to NGOs if they have the urge to change the society, but they should also work with the big corporations. Whether we like it or not, we live in a capitalistic society and companies have a lot of power. So it's important for designers to have enough knowledge so they don't end up being a part of a green or white washing machine.

Are designers not using their knowledge where it counts?

I would like to see if we can help our fellow creatives to change their attitude. I am not saying that all designers should change the society, but most of them can and are not doing it. They are just serving the money and there are several reasons for that. Some do it because they want to but others just don't know how or where to begin. Agencies need to think about which clients they take on and realise that there is actually business to be made from clients that have the kind of agenda that we are talking about here. If you want to change something, you need to lead by example. I see so many big creatives fly here and there, eating meat, owning three cars and still lecturing about the importance of sustainability. It's bullshit. It's funny because people in general think that creatives are the forerunners and in some cases they are, but in most cases they are just followers.

Ilkka Suppanen

Designer based in Helsinki and Milan.

How do you relate to this theme as a designer?

From my point of view several things came to mind. Firstly that designers are good at dealing with complex tasks which not only includes technical but also economical and social aspects, so a designers mind could be useful when working on a difficult issue such as peace. When thinking of a scenario in which you want to create spatial peace or a place for peace mediation which probably is a very interactive process, a designer could have some input in how to shape this space or surrounding. I also thought about this theme on a more personal level. It originates from the idea that the opposite of peace is conflict and how we in a larger sense can come to terms with that, or better deal with it in our profession. Because design is glued to a very positive denotation, I realise that the work I present is my most successful work and that is the, let's say, reality of the profession. But the work is more linked to the reality of peace with its opposite, which means there are conflicts involved, and I was thinking why I, and the design world in general, are so driven by this positivism. We hide our failures, it's almost like we pretend that everything is good. The thing is that if something is not good, we don't know what to do with it. If we could better understand the 'other side' where design by default is not regarded as an optimistic and successful act, maybe that could be used. Everybody is expecting

a good result but can we still discuss and look at design even though there might not be a positive outcome from it?

Is it in the nature of the profession?
Well in one way I think it is, but with that said I think we all tend to go in that direction, we all want to move to where success is, regardless of the profession.

Do you think it would be realistic to take a position where you only work towards 'the greater good'?
I think it's a beautiful idea and the correct thought, but personally as a designer, how would I know that what I do is good? I worked together with an NGO in India involving design and casteless people and after ten years of involvement, I find it difficult to understand if anything that I did was doing any good for them. On a superficial level things can look good but I just don't have the tools in me to be able to evaluate if anything good is actually achieved by it. And if you draw it to an extreme, designers are on the wrong side of this discussion because we are on the production side, making unnecessary things. There is almost a conflict of interest if you will. In general, I don't know if what designers do, are for 'the greater good'.

So does the hope lie in a generation who have not yet entered the profession?
Well yes, and it's obvious to me that the world has to change and it's great that companies are talking about more ethical ways of doing business. In one way, I've been trained to suport the old

world which created the capitalistic system where designers create new things that are sold and we get paid. This loop works and the design business relies on it, but it of course needs to change.

Do you think about this, how you as a designer can do something good for the world?

I have, and sometimes you start to work on something in a kind of naive random way and then you realise that what you are working on isn't really helping anyone. But maybe you need to find a balance in your attitude because if you're sceptical about everything nothing will ever change.
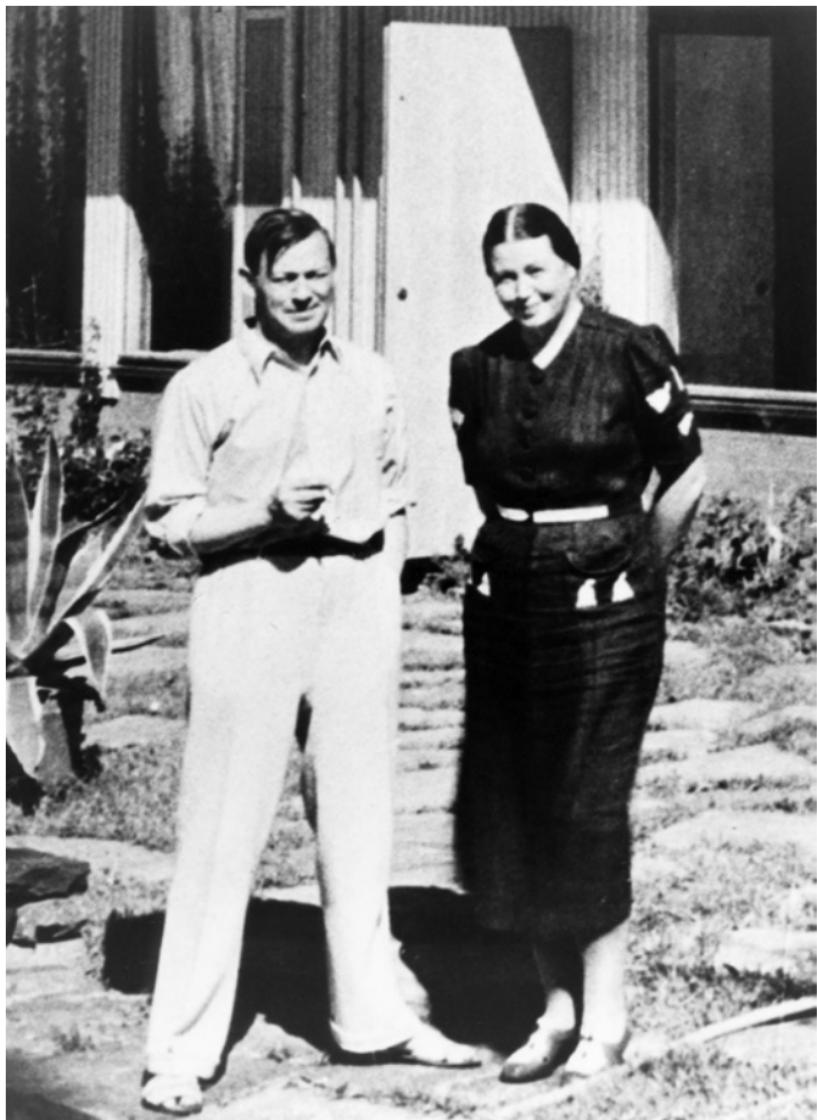
Alvar Aalto (1898–1976) and Aino Aalto (1894–1949) in the garden of the Aalto House in Helsinki, 1937.

What has contributed more to the world of design: war or peace? Which design elements would place decision makers in the appropriate mindset during peace mediation? How do we break away from existing systems to design potent new rituals and symbols of peace? Critical thoughts and ideas around the urgent theme of Design & Peace can be found in this book, which is a documentation of the International Aino and Alvar Aalto Design Colloquium of 2019, set in Alvar Aalto's masterpiece, Säynätsalo Town Hall in the heart of Finland.

ALVAR AALTO