



< A staircase leads from the entrance lobby via the book pit to the lending and reading rooms.

> The curved forms of the handrail and lending desk lead the visitors towards the latter.

√ A close-up of the curved handrail.

↘ During the restoration of the library, a waste-paper basket was reconstructed on the basis of the original drawings.



REGIONAL LIBRARY OF LAPLAND

Rovaniemi, Finland, 1961–1966¹

Alvar Aalto was actively involved in the post-World War Two reconstruction of Rovaniemi, a city that had been almost completely destroyed during the war. In the 1950s, along with the plan for the city's reconstruction, he also planned several residential areas and designed individual housing schemes. A city block south of the city centre was reserved in the master plan for public buildings for culture and local government, where the library, theatre and town hall designed by Aalto were located. A shared entrance square was created between the buildings.

The library was the first of the group of buildings to be completed in the mid-1960s. Lappia House, comprising a theatre, music institute, and originally also the premises of the Finnish Broadcasting Company, was built in several stages (1961, 1972, and 1975). The town hall, designed under the direction of Elissa Aalto, completed the block in 1988.

All three buildings around the square have their own distinct character. The polymorphic wings of the library and Lappia House extend out into the square, where their main spaces, that is, the library hall and theatre auditoriums are highlighted by unique roof forms. The town

hall's council chamber plays a similar role. In the overall design of the block, the square opens towards the north, that is, the city centre, while the southern edge is demarcated by the elongated building volume of the library.

The library is functionally and spatially divided into two parts, which is evident in its exterior form. In the low rectangular wing are club rooms, a newspaper reading room, offices, researcher rooms and an exhibition space. Flanking it is a taller fan-shaped volume, divided radially into five parts, which houses the lending hall. This space originally included a separate study space. The clerestory windows of the lending hall emphasize the hierarchical significance of the space, and especially during the dark time of the year, they form a strip that illuminates the public square. Most of the rooms are on the ground floor, while the book storage is located in the basement.

In front of the rectangular wing of the library is a canopy, supported by a row of columns that extends the length of the entire facade and ends in the fan-shaped section of the building, where the library's main entrance is located. The somewhat meandering street-like space of the entrance area leads to the lending desk, the function-



✓ The service point overlooks the fan-shaped library hall.

✓ The service point lies at the centre of the fan and the curved shapes, "sheltered" by the ceiling plane but at the same time lit by circular skylights.

> The library space is spread over three levels, with open shelves stepped in terraces.

