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## **Alvar Aalto Medal 2024 goes to Belgian architect Marie-José Van Hee**

The fifteenth Alvar Aalto Medal has been awarded to Belgian architect **Marie-José Van Hee**. Her output covers a wide range of projects, from private houses to public spaces and cultural buildings. Van Hee's works beautifully emphasise respect for architecture, nature and handicraft, as well as an understanding of traditional and folk building methods.

*"[Marie-José Van Hee's work] shows a consistently sensitive, contextual, and finely crafted approach. Her architecture is rooted in its context and the surrounding landscape – not only reflecting but contributing to a Flemish local vernacular over the course of her career. Her work is characterised by a beautifully understated command of natural materials, light and proportions, producing quiet, intimate spaces, designed around daily life,"* the Medal jury said in its statement.

The Alvar Aalto Medal will be presented to Marie-José Van Hee at a ceremony in the University of Jyväskylä's main building on 22.8.2024, coinciding with the Alvar Aalto Symposium currently being held in the city. Van Hee is the first (individual) woman architect to receive the Alvar Aalto Medal.

### **Human-scale spaces that encapsulate human warmth**

To counteract today's torrent of media images, the Alvar Aalto Medal jury wanted its choice to highlight buildings and spaces that touch visitors both physically and emotionally. *"Van Hee's work is universal and highly personal. It is beautifully understated, relevant, rooted in place. Her ability to translate a sense of place is rare. [...] Her buildings contain sensitively choreographed spaces with carefully considered choices for movement. Her spatial intuition fuses with a forensic understanding of human needs. Central to her work is the constant recognition of the human scale [...] spaces where people feel good,"* says Jury Chair **Yvonne Farrell** in the jury statement.

*"I'm honoured and humbled to be awarded the 2024 Alvar Aalto Medal. I would like to thank the selection committee for their appreciation of the work and everyone who helped me achieve it. I was fortunate to experience several of Aalto's buildings in Finland and France about ten years ago. His architectural language remains close to my heart, a silent influence and source of inspiration,"* Van Hee says.

Marie-José Van Hee (b. 1950) graduated as an architect from Ghent's Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in 1974. In 1990, she established her own practice in Ghent – now Marie José Van Hee architecten.

Van Hee was Professor of Architectural Design at Sint-Lucas School of Architecture (1991–2015) and Visiting Professor at ETH Zurich (2016–2017). Until 2022, she was a guest critic and lecturer at universities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland.

Van Hee's best-known works include the Fashion Museum "Modenatie" (1999–2003) in Antwerp her own home, House Van Hee (1994–1998), House V-D (2007–2020), both in Ghent, and House HdF (2007–2011) in Zuidzande, the Netherlands.

Marie-José Van Hee has received several Belgian and international awards, including the Flanders Architecture Prize 2023 and 1997, RIBA International Fellowship 2017, and was selected for the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - the Mies Van der Rohe Awards in 2013 and 1999.

### **Alvar Aalto Medalist's exhibition at the Museum of Finnish Architecture and Design Museum in spring 2025**

An exhibition of Marie-José Van Hee's design work will open at the Museum of Finnish Architecture and Design Museum in Helsinki on 7.2.2025. The exhibition will be shown at the Aalto2 Museum Centre in Jyväskylä in the following autumn. (Further details: [ilona.hilden@mfa.fi](mailto:ilona.hilden@mfa.fi).)

The medal designed by Academician **Alvar Aalto** and bearing the name was founded in 1967 to honour creative architecture. It can be awarded to any living person who has significantly distinguished themselves creatively in the field of architecture. The Alvar Aalto Foundation, the Museum of Finnish Architecture and Design Museum, the Finnish Society of Architecture, the Association of Finnish Architects and the City of Helsinki award the internationally esteemed prize every three years.

The winner of the Alvar Aalto Medal 2024 was chosen by a distinguished jury: Professor of Architecture **Sharon Johnston** (Johnston Marklee & Associates, Los Angeles) from the USA; architect **Finn Williams** (Public Practice, Malmö) from Sweden; and architect and journalist **Tarja Nurmi** (Helsinki) and architect **Erkko Aarti** (AOR Architects, Helsinki) from Finland. The jury was chaired by architect **Yvonne Farrell** (Grafton Architects, Dublin) from Ireland.

Read about the [Alvar Aalto Medal](#) on the Alvar Aalto Foundation's website

Media photos and curriculum: [Alvar Aalto Medal 2024 – Marie-José Van Hee](#)

Jury statement: [Alvar Aalto Medal 2024](#)

Prizewinner's website [Marie-José Van Hee architecten](#)

**Further information:**

Tommi Lindh, Chair, Alvar Aalto Medal Committee

CEO, Alvar Aalto Foundation

+358 44 562 1625

[tommi.lindh@alvaraalto.fi](mailto:tommi.lindh@alvaraalto.fi)

Mirkka Vidgrén

Communications Manager, Alvar Aalto Foundation

+358 40 168 5142

[mirkka.vidgren@alvaraalto.fi](mailto:mirkka.vidgren@alvaraalto.fi)