

# AALTO ART LIVING ROOM

Idea Competition Proposal – Uusi Aalto Rises!

## 1. PROJECT SUMMARY

Aalto Art Living Room is a year-round cultural space at the Aalto Centre that combines local art sales, exhibitions, and a small café into one welcoming environment.

The concept transforms parts of the Aalto Centre into a place where people don't just pass through or observe culture, but spend time, meet others, and take art home with them.

Unlike traditional exhibition models, Aalto Art Living Room treats art as part of everyday life: something you can encounter casually, discuss over coffee, and support directly by purchasing works from local artists.

The goal is to make the Aalto Centre feel like Rovaniemi's shared living room — warm, welcoming, and alive throughout the year.

## 2. BACKGROUND & NEED

The Aalto Centre is architecturally iconic but often experienced as a sightseeing destination that people pass through rather than stay in. At the same time, local artists struggle to find visible, central, low-cost sales platforms; visitors/tourists often seek authentic local culture; Rovaniemi residents lack casual third places that combine culture and social life, especially in winter.

Aalto Art Living Room caters to these needs by merging three functions without altering historical buildings or requiring heavy infrastructure:

- Art exhibition
- Art sales
- Everyday social space



Figure 1 – Concept visualization



Figure 2 – Concept visualization

### 3. CONCEPT

#### 3.1 The Space

The Living Room is formed using light, modular, movable elements placed in selected public interiors of the Aalto Centre (foyers, corridors, transitional spaces).

Elements include:

- modular exhibition walls
- shelves and rails for small and medium artworks
- simple plinths
- warm, soft lighting
- communal tables and seating
- a small café counter

#### 3.2 Art & Artists

The Living Room places a strong emphasis on local artists from Lapland, including painters, designers, photographers, illustrators, and craftspeople. The selection of works rotates on a monthly or seasonal basis and features a mix of original pieces alongside more affordable items such as prints and small objects. All artworks on display are available for purchase, with clear pricing and transparent commission structures. Artists are paid directly from sales, which distinguishes the Living Room from purely exhibition-based cultural spaces and reflects its active commitment to supporting creative livelihoods.

#### 3.3 Café

The café is intentionally simple, affordable, welcoming to all ages and backgrounds, to both locals and visitors. Its purpose is to lower the threshold of entering an “art space”, encourage people to stay, and make the Centre feel lived-in. People may come for coffee and discover art — or come for art and stay for conversation.

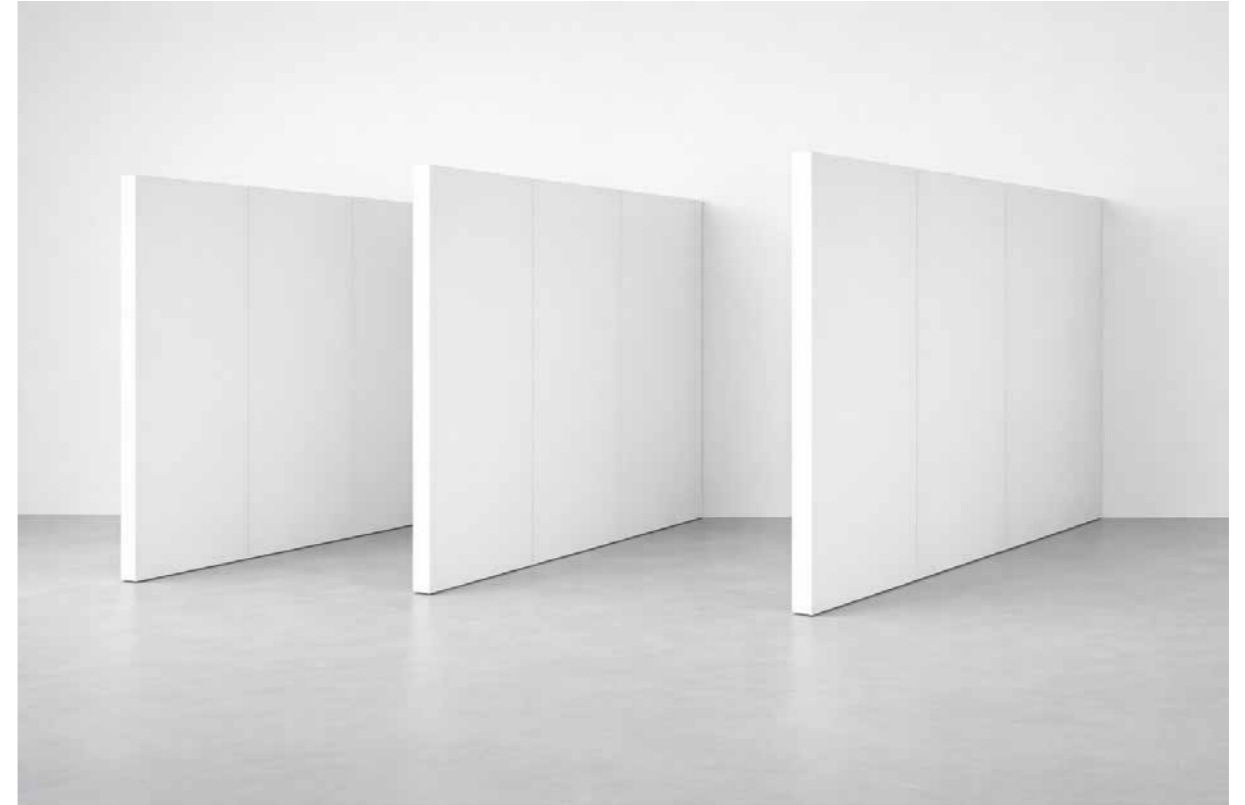


Figure 3 – Modular exhibition walls



Figure 4 – Plinths

#### **4. PROGRAMMING & USE**

Aalto Art Living Room is designed to be flexible and varied, with rotating artist selections changing on a monthly or seasonal basis. The space hosts artist workshops, sketch evenings, open drawing tables to engage the local community and visitors. During the winter months, the Living Room serves as a warm, light-filled refuge, while in summer its activities extend outdoors through spill-out events in nearby open areas.

#### **5. AALTO'S LEGACY AS A LIVING PRINCIPLE**

The Living Room continues Aalto's idea of public buildings as places for everyday civic life.

The project aligns deeply with Alvar Aalto's values:

##### **Human-Scale Design**

Spaces designed for rest, conversation, and presence.

##### **Democratic Culture**

Art is accessible, understandable, and part of daily life.

##### **Material Sensitivity**

Use of wood, textiles, soft lighting, and tactile surfaces.

##### **Flexibility**

Movable elements reflect Aalto's own adaptable interiors.

#### **6. IMPACT**

Aalto Art Living Room generates meaningful impact for residents, local artists, visitors, and the city of Rovaniemi as a whole. For residents, it offers a warm, free, and accessible everyday meeting place with year-round cultural activities that encourage connection and regular use. Local artists benefit from increased visibility in one of Rovaniemi's most iconic locations, along with opportunities for direct income through sales. For visitors, the Living Room provides an authentic encounter with local culture beyond typical tourism, offering an easy way to support local creativity and fostering memorable, human-scale interactions. At the city level, the project contributes to reimagined public interiors, increased foot traffic, and a strengthened identity of the Aalto Centre as a living civic heart.

#### **7. IMPLEMENTATION**

##### **Phase 1 – Setup**

- Design and build modular elements
- Artist call-out
- Staff recruitment

##### **Phase 2 – Pilot Season**

- First artist rotation
- Soft opening
- Feedback collection

##### **Phase 3 – Year-Round Operation**

- Seasonal routine
- Continuous artist rotation
- Gradual growth