

Video Activity 8

EERO SAARINEN AT CRANBROOK MUSEUM, BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

The architecture of Finland has a prominent history spanning over 800 years and has contributed to several styles internationally, such as **Nordic modernism**, through the works of **Alvar Aalto**. Finnish architects have had a significant influence in American architecture. Eero Saarinen (1910–61), although born in Finland, was raised and educated mostly in the United States, and created remarkable pieces of architecture throughout the United States, from the TWA Flight Center at New York's Kennedy Airport to the Gateway Arch over St. Louis.

1 Answer the questions before watching the video.

1. Do you know any Italian famous contemporary architects? If so, who?
2. What are the most important works designed by Italian contemporary architects?
3. Would you like to become an architect? Give reasons.
4. What kind of buildings would you like to design?



Video Activity 8: "EERO SAARINEN AT CRANBROOK MUSEUM, BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN"

Reed Knoloff. Director of the Cranbrook Art Museum:

We are in the Cranbrook Art Museum at the Cranbrook Academy of Art and what's going on tonight is the opening of a new show: Eero Saarinen "Shaping the Future".

It's a retrospective, the first in fact retrospective on life and work of Eero Saarinen, one of the most important architects of the twentieth century.

Eero Saarinen is a Finnish-born but American-raised architect who had most of his practice right here in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Most of his professional career took place in just over a fifteen-year span and yet in that period of time created significant monuments such as the Jefferson Memorial Expansion Arch.

What's..... famous, famous pieces of furniture that we still sit on and buy every day.

He ranges from orthodox modernist architecture – very simple, elegant, rectilinear boxes, much as we have here at the GM Tech Center here in the Detroit area – to these super essential expressive kinds of things like the St. Louis Arch. He really helped define the twentieth century post-war career on architecture; and for the consumer many, many pieces of furniture like the famous Tulip Chair that only has one leg. ▶

What he said, “Why does a chair have to have all those legs? Why can’t it just have one?” And so [he] reinvented the chair. He was constantly reinventing and inventing. He invented the modern airport... it didn’t exist before him because we didn’t have air travel in that way. He helped the corporate world understand that when you have many, many people working together, you can’t simply toss them into a room and say, “Go”. That you have to create an environment that answers their lives, brings in daylight, promotes conviviality, gives opportunities for their actions, brings order in the environment; in other words, create a humane place to work and you will have a better working environment. But Eero, coming from Detroit, brought something altogether different; he brought something that would capture the public imagination in a way that hadn’t been captured before. His work is pretty much all over the United States; here in Detroit, we’ve got fantastic examples, particularly the General Motors Technology Center. Eero is part of Cranbrook. He is part of our tradition and in many ways he exemplifies what it is that makes Cranbrook such an extraordinary place. This coming together of... of different disciplines to creating new architecture and to creating new public furnishings a sense of the designs this notion of all parts coming together to create one beautiful thing. That’s what Cranbrook’s all about.

2 Watch the video and fill in the gaps.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.
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| 1. What’s going on tonight is | a. to these super central expressive kinds of things like the same St. Louis arch. |
| 2. Most of his professional career | b. it didn’t exist because we didn’t have air travel in that way. |
| 3. He ranges from orthodox modernist architecture | c. took place in just over a fifteen-year span. |
| 4. For the consumer, many pieces of furniture like | d. he brought something that had captured the public imagination. |
| 5. He invented the modern airport; | e. the opening of a new show: Eero Saarinen “Shaping the Future”. |
| 6. Eero coming from Detroit brought something different; | f. what it is that make Cranbrooks such an extraordinary place. |
| 7. He is part of our tradition and in many ways he exemplifies | g. the famous Tulip Chair |

3 *Answer the questions after watching the video again.*

1. What is the title of the exhibition?
2. What is it about?
3. How long did his professional career last?
4. Where did he mainly practice his work?
5. In the video, the Director of the Museum talks about two famous works of Saarinen. Which ones?
6. Saarinen was also a furniture designer. What piece of furniture is shown in the video? What's its name? What is its peculiar element?
7. What other large buildings did he design?
8. What was his idea about the "working environment"?