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## The extension is now ready: Finlandia Hall will face the other way

As it celebrates its 40th birthday Finlandia Hall's largest ever extension project is now complete. The dimly lit vehicle collection area has been dismantled and been reborn as the luminous Veranda. Completion of the Veranda means that the main facade of Finlandia Hall now faces Töölönlahti bay, while the whole building is much more versatile and youthful.

After years of planning and a construction project that began in May 2010, the Finlandia Hall extension has now been completed. The new premises, recreated from what was originally a dimly-lit driving alley and covered parking area, will catapult Alvar Aalto's Finlandia Hall into a totally new size category in terms of the space available. The construction project was completed on schedule and stayed on budget, which is rare for a project of this size.

The Veranda will increase the congress and event capacity of Finlandia Hall by about 2200 square meters. The extension comprises one large space, which can be divided into many smaller space combinations. Thanks to the Veranda, Finlandia Hall, located in the heart of Finland's capital city, will now be able to offer international-level facilities for events attracting up to 5500 persons.

### Modern 40-year-old

Although the 40-year-old Finlandia Hall has been renewed and refurbished over the years – both within and without – no construction project of this size has ever been witnessed before. Since it is an architecturally valuable and protected building, Finland's National Board of Antiquities has been involved in the project right from the outset.

"Finlandia Hall is the very epitome of all that's excellent in Finnish culture and is our country's most well-known building. Therefore, it's very important that the extension blends seamlessly with the existing architecture," says Helena Survonon, Finlandia Hall's Communications and Marketing Manager.

The Veranda's chief architect, Jyrki Iso-Aho, created a design whose most conspicuous element is the approximately 100-metre glass wall facing Töölönlahti bay. In its general appearance the new space is modern, uniform in style and spacious.

"In a few years' time, Töölönlahti bay will be like a 'living room' for Helsinki citizens, complete with parks and pools. This new park will eventually extend through the ceiling-to-floor glass wall of the Veranda to the original clinker-clad facade of Finlandia Hall," says Iso-Aho.


Jaakko Puro from Helsinki has been responsible for the interior architecture of the Veranda. "My mission was to create an innovative, modern, timeless design that merges perfectly with Aalto. I wanted to highlight what is very best in the Hall," says Puro.

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Also occupying the extension is the new Cafe Veranda, which has been eagerly-received. The cafe is open to the public on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and offers a wide selection of self-baked products and organic coffee. Before and after concerts the cafe will act as a meeting place right up until midnight. The Cafe Veranda's interior is also Puro's handiwork.

#### Visitor numbers are growing

Finlandia Hall currently hosts about 300,000 visitors per year – a number that will increase significantly due to the Veranda and the Cafe Veranda.

The need for a high-quality corporate meeting place in the heart of Helsinki is self-evident. Most of Finlandia Hall's income derives from congress and conference guests, and plenty of reservations have already been received for the new Veranda and the whole of Finlandia Hall. "The demand for a sufficiently large exhibition and meeting space – not to mention a venue for music and festive events – in the heart of the capital was so great that it exceeded all our expectations. In fact, our capacity was booked so much, right from the very first day, that we had to postpone the opening ceremonies until a later date than planned," says Helena Survonon.

Finlandia Hall's more versatile facilities will now permit quite new types of events, and, due to the flexible space solutions, it will now be possible to organize car exhibitions, for example. It is clear that this inspiring building has already grabbed the attention of all kinds of event organizers. It will now literally live up to its reputation of being the venue for all Finns.

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