

What happened to the propellers?

Is there a simply moulded ceiling light with propeller-shaped louvres attached to your ceiling? The glass shade itself is not uncommon, but, as far as is known, none of the light-diffusing louvres have survived, even though this model was widely used as a corridor light at the Paimio Sanatorium.

The light fitting was designed by Alvar Aalto and manufactured by Taito Oy under product number 2023/1933. It may also have been intended for use in the Turun Sanomat building, although there is not enough evidence to confirm this. For the sanatorium, however, a total of 135 fittings were ordered.



The photograph shows the propeller light fitting in its original form. Source: Alvar Aalto Museum.

This light fitting is particularly remarkable because it is an excellent example of the functionalist style of the 1930s and of Aalto's lighting design as a whole. A central principle of the sanatorium's lighting design was the use of light-diffusing surfaces and forms that reduced glare. In keeping with these functionalist principles, this fitting features louvres bent into the shape of propeller blades. Cleaning was made easier by the glass shade, inside which the light fitting and its propeller-shaped louvres were enclosed.

For one reason or another, these light-diffusing louvres were eventually removed from the fittings. Only the glass shades and lamps remained, and they are still used in the lighting of the sanatorium today.