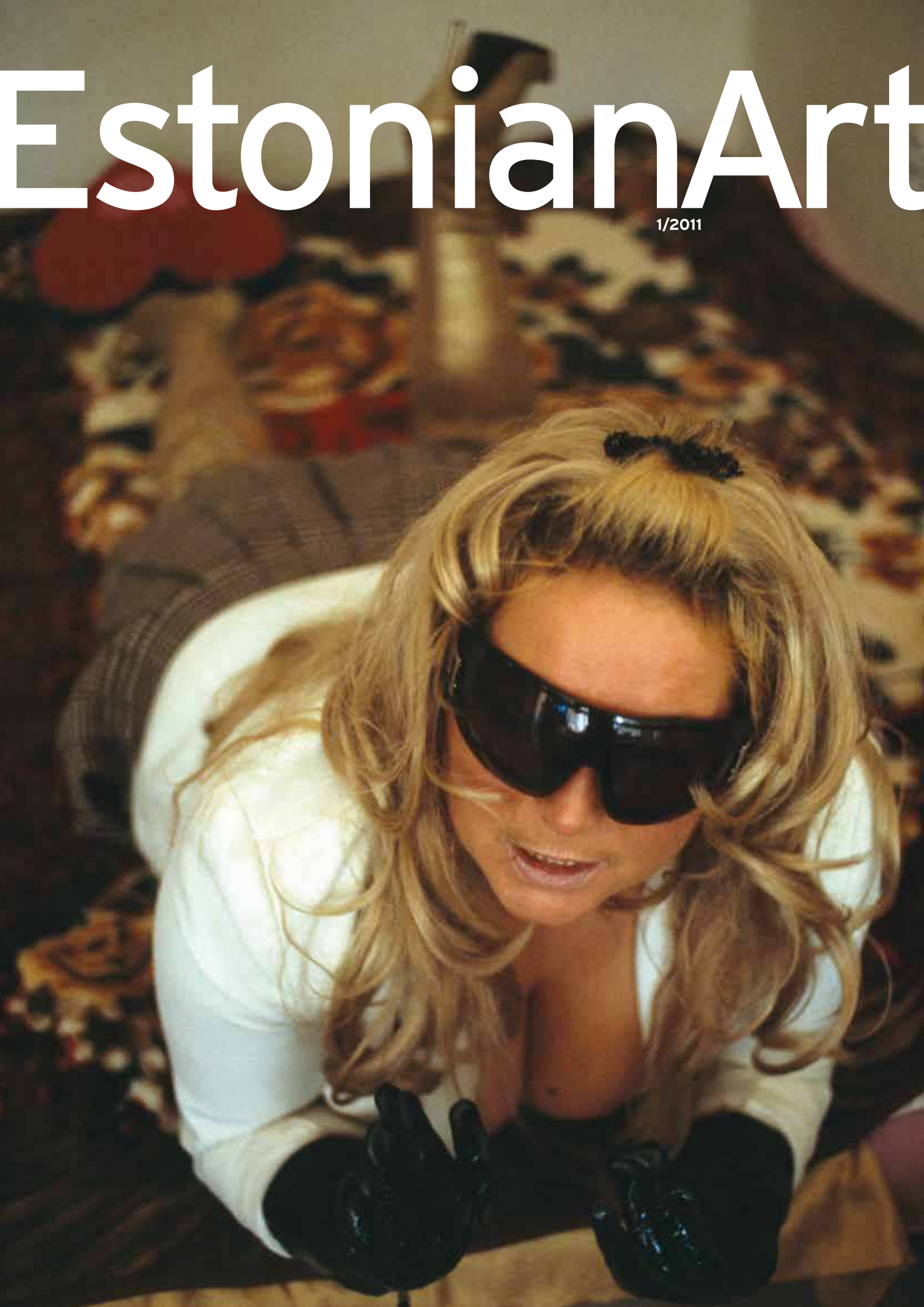


# Estonian Art

1/2011



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# One Question

**Anders Härm, curator, art historian and essayist, how has it come about that the dating-format Facebook has become an important platform of information and exchange of views for Estonian art criticism, and what does this say about our institution of criticism?**

I think that one of Facebook's advantages is its spontaneity. Available technology has directed flows of information on a larger scale, it is no longer a problem to make your own television or radio programmes and put them up, and all this is happening at the grass-roots level: there is no direct institutional guidance. The success of Facebook also, of course, reflects the decreasing art criticism in traditional media, and here the blame lies with the traditional media: the dailies do not have art critics on their payrolls, except for the weekly *Sirp*. I'm actually not sure whether I mourn their demise. I probably would not bother to storm into battle to get 3000-character exhibition "reviews" to published. If there is no more space – and there isn't and won't be – I'd prefer a brief comment by a professional instead of a text with pretensions of being analytical and critical. Facebook offers exactly such tips, and there you find people whose opinions you take seriously. All the best people in the art field I know are on Facebook. Without exception. What characterises the field of today's Estonian art? Total over-production in conditions of total under-financing. A great deal is being produced, but mostly relying on people's own means, using family contacts. The natural economy, just like during the Middle Ages. Father builds you an installation, and you help him to fix the roof in summer. And still there is so much art that nobody can consume it all and nobody keeps an eye on it consistently. This used to be the task of art criticism: to observe and select. Nobody fulfils this function any more. Nobody is able to get an overview, including myself; it is just impossible to be everywhere.

As for the view that Facebook means trivialising or withdrawing criticism, I certainly do not agree because, after all, we had nowhere to withdraw to anyway. In the 1990s, the reviews in papers tried to be more theoretical, aspired to the analysis of phenomena by means of some theoretical models, but this has totally disappeared today. Various discourses are afloat, whereas theorising has become rather problematic and the view prevails that readers are not interested – the end result is hopelessly vague. Who were the writers before? Professional art historians who knew the scene inside out. Now we have people loosely connected with art, not professionals with wider knowledge outside their narrow fields, and they don't write regularly, but quite occasionally. Criticism used to fulfil an apologetic function, emerging through certain groups and art movements. At some point, it became professional: being an art critic became a job in its own right. Neoliberal politics has caused the profession to vanish: art is being written about by people who are not connected with it on a daily basis. There is unsystematic emotionalising. I do not care if someone is clearly biased, but when I don't see him or her constantly writing, or publishing pieces about random things, this is of no help to anyone.

Criticism has several functions: communication with wider audiences and with colleagues, and providing feedback to artists. Ideally, a critic would fulfil all these functions. The professional criticism that lasted in Estonia until the 2000s did all this. After

that, the space allocated to criticism gradually diminished, and editors demanded increasingly brief, hard-hitting and understandable articles, which were hardly more than recommendations. Most professionals obviously wanted more. Papers, too, were not keen to have critics on regular salaries: the distancing was mutual. So far, only the media have been blamed, although what we lack here in Estonia is the skill to write about art comprehensibly, but at the same time cleverly – as, for example, Matthew Collings does. The central problem in today's Estonian art is how to get the average citizen to relate to art. We can have blockbuster-type exhibitions, packed with visual candies, which might be massive hits elsewhere (e.g. *Everything Is Going to Be Alright*), but in Estonia – nothing. Nothing. No excitement, no reverberations in the media. I am not only blaming my colleagues: we behave like other institutions in the cultural field, but the media are simply not interested. Not one bit. For several years we tried to get NU Performance on the Morning Television programme, but they feared that someone might crack eggs over their heads, and the interview never happened! We planned to organise this year's performance festival in a hotel. We started negotiations. Everything was quite *bueno*, until we used the word "performance". That was the end of it. Irrational fears of contemporary art are strongly rooted. If Facebook can change something in that sense, I am certainly all for it.

Having spent an intensive day at the conference, I expected to track down all the hottest art news on Facebook. No such luck - it is totally dominated by the Venice biennial. Hey, you out there, I don't want to know what's going to happen next week; I want to know what happened today! Where are you, what's up?

/Entry of Maria-Kristiina Soomre, at that time a curator of the Kumu Art Museum, on Facebook at 11.28 p.m. on 27 May. By 9:00 the next morning, she had received over 20 comments./

**Anders Härm**  
1977), curator and art critic





Liina Siib  
*A Woman Takes Little Space*  
 2008-2011  
 Digital pigment print  
 30 x 45 cm

## Dealing with Yourself Through Others

Interview with Liina Siib

**I recently saw Alexei Yurchak's book on your table, *Everything was forever, until it was no more: The last Soviet generation...***

The concept of 'the last Soviet generation' was used by Elo-Hanna Seljamäa when she described how I actually fit in in her article for the Venice project catalogue *A Woman Takes Little Space*.

**How did you develop into an artist?**

I think I will keep developing indefinitely. I certainly do not feel as if I have fully developed.

**Has this generational definition determined something in particular?**

It is difficult for me to say. My generation is usually described as nihilistic, a group who do not believe in anything, as we were used to hearing one thing at home and another officially. Double morals, hypocrisy, double standards, all lead to people believing nothing,

being emphatically apolitical, refusing to participate in elections etc.

**This surely does not relate to your work.**

It did. A great deal. At the beginning, twenty years ago.

**What happened then?**

Maybe I was beginning to feel trust in the Estonian society. Or not even 'trust', but responsibility. An understanding of myself and my responsibility to society. I would not want to stress Estonia in this context.

**Your connection with 'Estonia' is not important to you?**

Of course it is, but it is now somehow more normal and calmer. Since I am living here, I am here. Being away for a while and coming back, I can now look at things from a distance much better. Translate them any which way.



Liina Siib  
*A Room of One's Own*  
 2011  
 Photography and video  
 installation  
 Estonian pavilion at the  
 54th Venice Biennale,  
 Palazzo Malipiero



**You have not thought of moving somewhere else?**

There have been all sorts of thoughts. It was very interesting to live in Estonia in the 1990s, but now the situation is getting a bit weird; turning more inside than outside, a kind of provincialization is taking place. The surrounding world is becoming increasingly conservative, self-sufficient, and this is boring and tedious. Bad times for culture and especially bad times for contemporary art. We in Estonia are perhaps still less conventional than elsewhere – at least as far as working is concerned. It is much easier to work here than somewhere else.

**In what sense?**

It is still possible here to have access to people and places.

**How do people react to your ideas?**

Differently.

For example, when I want to photograph women at their workplaces, they often ask: “Why me? I am not young or pretty.” But this is not the aim of my work. I take photographs of people in their jobs and living situations. Many are dissatisfied with how they look or where they work. When I once wanted to take a picture of a woman in her restricted working place, she asked: “Is this a feminist project?” I

explained that, although the project *A Woman Takes Little Space* deals with women’s topics, I do not regard it as directly feminist. However, she did not want to show herself in that context. Quite understandable.

**You have never been too keen on feminist art yourself, have you?**

I am always keen on work that is interesting, although all definitions are indeed discriminating. I think feminists would prefer politically active standpoints. In that respect, my work does not qualify. It instead allows ambivalent understanding.

**Is this a conscious aim or has it just developed so?**

It is perhaps my nature not to hurl myself onto the barricades, but to stand by observing.

**Why these women in particular?**

What I am actually doing is dealing with myself through these women. When, for example, I take pictures of a woman with the Russian-speaking background, I try to put myself in her shoes or ask myself what I am feeling and thinking? How am I behaving at the moment? I try to understand what the ‘endless horror’ means when you go to work in the morning and carry on for 12 hours on your feet. I have never had to work like that. I

will never understand them fully. Of course, I sometimes work at my art for 24 hours running, but mostly on my own and sitting.

### **What do you feel?**

Total sympathy towards these people.

### **How do you choose people?**

If I see somebody who seems interesting and catches my eye for some reason, that is all I need. I then ask permission to take pictures. This does not mean that the photographs will be good. As Alfred Hitchcock taught: what matters in the end is what is in the shot.

### **Are there many failures?**

I work uneconomically: I use film (because it produces better quality than a digital camera), two or three rolls of film for each person, so on the average 72 shots, and then I choose only one, and sometimes I do not choose any.

### **How much do you stage your shots?**

Recently I have been trying not to stage anything at all. I want the person to continue working when I am there with my camera. Forget about me. In other situations, life itself is the best stage manager. You just have to wait.

### **For some reason this makes me think of Nan Goldin...**

I have been thinking about her too. In 2002 I saw her big exhibition in Whitechapel Gallery in London. My fellow students talked about it with great enthusiasm, but I did not take to it then: it was a bit pathetic and exhibitionistic. However, I think I am beginning to understand her now. Her relationship with life and death.

### **You are interested in ordinary people, not extravagance?**

That's true. This may perhaps be an East-European topic.

### **Why East-European?**

Because we still have in our blood the earlier rhetoric in which the 'ordinary person' was constantly displayed and heroised for ideological reasons. It was necessary for some people, à la series such as *Woman on a Combine*, *Woman with Cattle* etc. I am interested in the working woman, the conditions

in which a working woman has been placed. The environment where she works is not exactly extravagant, but the *mise-en-scène* cannot leave the viewer visually indifferent. Sometimes you have no choice but to photograph them. The ordinary working woman is hardly ever shown in the media, except for some scandal. I want to make such women more visible.

### **Have you thought about experimenting, e.g. exchanging places with your models?**

I have indeed. And soon I probably will.

### **Is the concept of 'humiliation' also significant?**

I would not call it humiliation, but meekness. These women fascinate me because they do not hate their jobs. There is no passion; they simply have no other choice, but they do their work with dignity – so that they still respect themselves. They still have a sense of humour; they stay in touch and look after one another.

### **Your photographs do not display a critical attitude.**

As one of my favourites, Virginia Woolf, wrote in her essay *A Room of One's Own*: when a woman starts writing something, she must not be angry, because anger often intrudes into writing. You really must have something to tell people, and not just be angry. This is what I am trying to achieve, although I occasionally feel that anger gets the better of me.

Besides, artists cannot make overly large generalisations with their works. Sociologists often precisely describe some phenomenon, for instance the bad aspects of living in a new residential district. However, when you talk with people, it appears that this is not necessarily true at all.

### **Is it pure chance that your 'models' are mainly Russian-speaking women?**

There are a few Estonians as well. I do not select my 'actors' according to their nationality, but according to what they denote. My aim is to reach the point where we communicate as one human being with another. Whether someone is Russian and I am Estonian no longer really matters. I can photograph those people who agree to be photographed.



## Eat, Pray, Love ...

Anu Allas

This year's Estonian exhibition at the Venice Biennial, Liina Siib's *A Woman Takes Little Space*, occupies five small rooms (and the toilet) in the 18th century Palazzo Malipiero. This is the place where all Estonian exhibitions have been displayed in Venice during the last eight years. Unlike several earlier occasions, when the display tried to neutralise the space or transcend it, Siib's exhibition accepts the place, together with its somewhat frustrating likeness to an apartment, and emphasises the fact that it indeed was once a living area. This is not necessarily because it is the best possible display space, but because it was the one provided. In the same way, the women in Siib's photos and videos seem to adapt to their environments. They resist fighting the space and, with immense humility and pride, instal themselves just as the place requires, while still maintaining – perhaps because of this submission and flexibility – a certain superiority that characterises those who are predestined to lose.

All the works tackle the relationship between a woman and her space, based on Julia Kristeva's treatment of a woman's essential links with space, characterised by repetition and eternity – as opposed to the linearity of (masculine) time and teleology – and of the woman herself as a border area of a symbolic order, which is simultaneously inside and outside, or neither. On the one hand, the construction of the display marks the usual domestic spatial structure (a bedroom, living-room and bathroom) while, on the other hand, three works show women at their workplaces (or record them talking about it). Comparing these two spheres, i.e. personal and working life, and the attitudes, general mood and behavioural patterns in both environments, we are struck by their similarity. Workrooms seem to be 'domesticated' (or the rooms have 'domesticated' the women), and life at home proceeds largely through (domestic) chores (or the life model expressed in the structure of rooms and





created by it determines a woman's way of functioning). Irrespective of function, all these rooms appear alien to the women, or rather seem to belong to other people (homes are mainly built and designed with a focus on children and family, assuming the woman's presence everywhere; the structure might contain 'father's study', but hardly ever 'mother's room'). At the same time, they seem totally personal: adapting to an alien place is not formal and alienated, but instead means identifying with a place that belongs to someone else. Submitting to space and not ruling it seems to make the role of these women more passive, but their relationship to space also becomes more dynamic and direct.

The main work of the exhibition, the photographic series *A Woman Takes Little Space* (2007–2011), records women of different ages and with different levels of social status in their



Liina Siib  
*Unsocial Hours*  
2011  
Two-channel video  
10'

workplaces. The somewhat clumsy humour of the title and a strangely presented allegation reveal the uppermost and most topical level of the exhibition. The series was inspired by a claim which appeared a few years ago in articles in the Estonian press tackling gender equality that a woman needs less space (and a smaller salary) for her daily work than a man does. One major issue deals with mechanisms that allow such ideas – although in public debates they are mostly suppressed in the interests of political correctness – to persist quite unperturbed, as a result of a silent agreement that includes all concerned parties. This most evident layer, social inequality, does not of course stand alone. It grows out of numer-

ous much deeper and more complicated, often unnoticeable and intertwined patterns of thought and behavioural practices that concern a woman's 'essence' and roles (or, more widely, gender roles).

*A Woman Takes Little Space* formulates the explicit part of the problem in a rather poster-like way (although the photographs do not code, but do occasionally decode one another, making the picture rather multi-layered). Other works, however, seem to take a step backwards or sideways, and deal with on which levels and in which relations these 'natural' role models take shape and how their real conflicts make themselves visible. The installation *A Room of One's Own* (2011) shows photographs and a video of the domestic lives and chores of women living in new residential districts near Tallinn, and Russian-speaking women dancing among themselves at an open-air concert in a winter landscape; the work *Apartment* (2008) consists of photographs of a middle-aged woman who has put on clothes she thinks a man might fancy, thus creating an image of a kind of hypertrophied woman. The video installation *Averse Body* (2007) presents interviews with prostitutes against the background of nocturnal views of Tallinn filmed from a car window. The artist asks them what they think of their bodies, what their clients think of their bodies, what they would like to change about themselves, how much time they spend on appearance etc. Besides works focusing on the 'private sphere' and body, the video *Unsocial Hours* (2011) introduces a model of





Liina Siib  
*Averse Body*  
 2007  
 Video installation

working and social life, and a cycle through food, more precisely through cheap pastries, produced in night bakeries, sold in kiosks at a railway station, and eaten in Lasnamäe cafes or a Pelgulinna hospital during the lunch breaks of doctors and nurses. Besides observations of space, the most intensive element here is the dimension of time, its circulation and ritualism (which can also be seen in the domestic chores of housewives), repetition and 'never actually getting anywhere'. This kind of circulation is naturally not only typical of 'women's jobs' or a 'woman's life' but, at least in the context of the current exhibition, both the main perceptions and meanings of this cycle seem to be present in equal measure (maybe even inseparably). On the one hand, the repetition seems frustrating and mechanised (a vicious circle) while, on the other, it can be positively reproducing and stabilising (creating a circle of life), which indicates the failure to 'get on, succeed', but also the fact that it might be unnecessary.

The exhibition does not display many men, although they are present through their voices: singing (or humming) in the bathroom (*His Song*, 2011), in *Unsocial Hours* as a broadcaster, and more indirectly in *Averse Body*, which starts with Jerzy Grotowski's claim that prostitutes feel aversion to, and a lack of trust in, their bodies. The replies to the artist's questions could be from any kind of women; they are sometimes quite confident, sometimes hesitant, but on the whole do not seem to confirm the thesis of aversion at all. Chatting with housewives might perhaps yield

a rather similar, calming and nondescript result if we asked them whether they were satisfied with their lives (they would probably say 'on the whole, yes'). The same goes for the protagonists in the principal work at the exhibition if we asked them whether they were happy with their work (it could always be better, although they do not complain). All these works (all these women, their roles and lives) thus seem to refer to a problem, but the women are unable to express it directly; it appears rather complicated to formulate questions that would lead to clear expression. It is not that these women are insufficiently self-aware, that they accept the 'circumstances', or give up any form of fighting, but perhaps such conflicts of 'deeper layers' cannot actually be described according to 'male' logic, via specific questions and answers. Against this background, the protagonists of the installation *A Room of One's Own* present a telling comparison: women living in a new residential district spreading out into a wasteland, who have read Elizabeth Gilbert's best-seller *Eat, Pray, Love* (a book about a woman who abandons her well-ordered life and goes out into the world to find herself and 'everything'), as well as women dancing spontaneously, comically, in an 'embarrassing', complex-free manner, among a sparse concert audience. If the conflicts are ambivalent and always appear indirectly rather than directly, it is possible to understand and deal with them, and perhaps also solve them, only in practice – often also only ambivalently – in the course of living your life.

## Liina Siib

(1963), Estonian video and photography artist, whose works deal mostly with different aspects of femininity, social space, memory and desire. She graduated from the graphic art department of the Estonian Academy of Arts in 1989 and received her MA in photography in 2003. She has had solo exhibitions in Estonia, Germany, Finland, Belgium, France, and participated in numerous group exhibitions in Eurasia and the US.

**Liina Siib's** project *A Woman Takes Up Little Space* will represent Estonia at the 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. The venue for the Estonian exhibit in Venice in 2011 is the Palazzo Malipiero (1st floor), San Marco 3079, which is the same venue the Estonian exposition was shown at in 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009. The exposition at the Estonian Pavilion is commissioned by the Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia ([www.cca.ee](http://www.cca.ee)).

## Anu Allas

(1977), art historian, critic and curator. Her main research areas are visual and performance art of the 2nd half of 20th century, Estonian art of the Soviet period, play and performance theories.

# Post-colonialism and Estonia

Interview  
with  
Tiit Hennoste

**A few years ago, you wrote an influential article entitled Post-colonialism and Estonia. In that article, you point out several keywords related to post-colonialism and you place them in the context of Estonia, finding several points of contact: hybridity of culture, creolization, mimicry and many other concepts appropriately characterise Estonian culture in your analysis. Our first question is very direct, even banally commonplace: in your opinion, does contemporary Estonia (or, more narrowly, Estonian culture) behave like a typical postcolonial country (culture)?**

There is no such thing as a typical post-colonial culture. The cultures of colonies have been too different for a typical culture to emerge. Yet the question assumes that the Soviet regime was a colonial regime. That, however, is ambiguous.

The basis of a colonial relationship is the understanding that the colonised is by nature inferior to the coloniser. And both sides accept this understanding. This kind of relationship has not existed between Russians and Estonians. Yet a country, society or culture that, academically speaking, has not been colonised can interpret itself as having been colonised and liberated from colonisation. And in terms of this point, the answer is quite clear. It does behave like a postcolonial country. Nationalism, a black-and-white world-view in which the former upper class (=Russians) is the enemy that has to be suppressed. The destruction of the symbols of the colonial era and the constant belittling of the former coloniser. The stigmatisation of dissenters in their own society by former collaborators who have labelled themselves as liberals now. Attempts to destroy that part of the memory that is associated with the colonisers and by doing so, the constant prominence of that memory. And so on, and so on.

**Two of the most important concepts of Post-colonialism are *hybridity* and mimicry, and you emphasise that those concepts in**

**particular characterise Estonian culture very well. They also push the dream of many people regarding the “authentic” culture of Estonians back into the 13th century, at best, to the time before overt colonialism. *Mimicry* introduces certain insecurity in accordance with postcolonial theory: the coloniser is not capable of completely controlling the colonised. What in your opinion are the reasons why there were possibilities at all in the first place for the emergence of mimicry in Estonia – right through to the present? Why were these possibilities not cut off?**

**And if authentic Estonian culture does not exist, then could not that specific *hybridity* that emerged right here and only in this space and at a certain time also be considered *authentic*?**

I started thinking: is that nevertheless not the question of why copied culture is created in the first place, why the path to that kind of culture is not cut off? Why was the authentic direction not chosen? You see, the question of why the path to mimicry was not cut off seems strange to me. It seems to involve the question of why a people have not allowed itself to be controlled completely. Or what does it mean after all?

A hybrid means forms of culture on the boundary between colonial culture and a people's own culture. The result of mimicry is a 'blurred copy' of the coloniser, which does not mean an unwashed, but rather an unclear, imprecise copy that is similar and at the same time is not similar. Both mean something that is on the boundary and is not pure.

Mimicry occurs in nature for the purpose of concealing oneself, to protect oneself, and at the same time the concealer inwardly remains himself. A human being, however, can easily change so that external mimicry becomes inner mimicry. Mimicry as nature, as essence. There is nothing unusual in a person in an insane asylum who pretends to be insane eventually truly turning insane.

Yet indirectly, the question of authentic Estonian culture is discernible behind that ques-



tion. What is authenticity? According to one meaning, it is simply originality as opposed to its copy, borrowing, plagiarism. Yet even in this, two varieties can be found. According to the ideology of modernity, the only thing that is important is the originality of the elementary particle of one or another culture, even though nobody knows what that particle is. According to the ideology of post-modernity, there are similar and dissimilar parts in every culture, but their combination could be original. Thus every hybrid and mimicry could be authentic. And conversely, in this respect, all colonial cultures are also hybrids and copies of some other culture. Thus we do not in principle differ from those cultures. At the same time, we clearly feel that we are nevertheless not quite equals among equals...

Yet the uniqueness of a cultural or national experience is also interpreted as authenticity. This can be created consciously or sought after the fact. Estonians have, in my opinion, consistently presented as their unical experience things, which are common to many people. And we have declared adaptation to be the nucleus of our ideology, which is held to have ensured the continuation of our existence. Maybe. But this cannot be proven. Because nations have also survived following different ways of thinking. In short, we have desired originality and at the same time idealised adaptation. This is the ideology of someone who is always in pursuit but never takes the lead.

Yet authenticity is also the 'inner self' of a people or culture, something that is us ourselves. There are roles, masks, attributes that are learned and imposed around this essence. This kind of authenticity cannot be created. It is. And it must be found within oneself. There is an altogether different path for searching for that authenticity other than constant running. This path is intransigence in the face of pressure exerted by external power, ideology or money. At the same time, this kind of authenticity does not have to be unique at all. This kind of authenticity is not novelty; rather, it is something that exists and has to be found. And Modernism did not seek this kind of authenticity. Its idea was 'to make it new'.



But hybridity, the knowledge that everything-already-exists-in-this-world, leads to a longing for this kind of authenticity. And here I see our chance.

But this is not easy because culture also borrows from its own past. We can say that every culture is created in a contact zone between its past and future. It mimics the culture of the past, but it is never a simple reproduction of old forms. The history of culture is a process that constantly produces non-identity with itself. Along with this, it also produces inauthenticity. It is always the blurred copy of its own past.

Why was the way of thinking of modernisation not confronted in Estonian culture? It has always been confronted. Philologists and essayists August Annist, Oskar Loorits, Uku Masing, Jaan Kaplinski, the creators of the Taara faith, the followers of Buddhism (which have been influential in Estonian culture through the 20th century) etc. Yet the influence of a particular ideologist is qualitatively greater in a small society than in a large society. And the major ideologists and leaders of Estonian society chose the ideology of modernisation, putting the entire apparatus of power and intellectual spirit

Carl Timoleon von Neff. *Estonian woman with a Child*. 1850s. Oil on canvas. 47.9 x 38.7 cm. Art Museum of Estonia  
Von Neff was a Baltic-German artist and art collector. The picture depicts the typical colonial viewpoint in the middle of the 19th century which saw Estonians as exotic and romantic creatures. Teachers still value the painting highly, pointing out the colourful clothes of the woman.

to work for this purpose. The differences were only between the different models of modernisation and/or colonial models.

On the other hand, was there any other way at all a century ago? I remind you that Estonian nationality and culture were created at the high point of colonialism, when its values were not subject to doubt. And it was created at the high point of modernisation, when progress, the idea of development and Europocentrism were central ideas, as was the consideration of European culture and the European social model as being universal and the most advanced, without any particular criticism. A different kind of developmental path for Estonians at that time would have required some sort of very original thinking. Estonian culture, society and nationality are the products of the era of modernisation. The nucleus of the idea of modernisation is development, originality and universality. This way of thinking has one basis for those who lag behind: we want to catch up and become like others have already become. You cannot catch up by thinking otherwise. It was not possible to remain unaffected by this way of thinking. Even more so, both Germany and Russia were fascinated by the same kind of ideology of catching up in the 19th-20th centuries. The struggle between Russian Western sympathisers and Slavophiles can be analyzed quite simply in post-colonialist and self-colonisation terms. Germany constantly considered itself a country that lagged behind. Stalinism and Nazism were large-scale modern projects for catching up and overtaking their competitors.

But this ideology is not eternal. It was born and it died. Postmodernism came along and its essence was the idea of borrowing, circulation and assembly/ assemblage/ piecing together/ kokkupanemine?????. And along with it, the world came back again as a magical theatre that is guided by time, which eternally moves around in a circle, endless (partial) repetition, metamorphoses, and the use of immemorial social models, beliefs and traditions. This also means precisely the idea of hybridity instead of originality.

Estonian society tried to catch up with Europe at all cost. The paradox is that those who were in the lead arrived at the same place, where we had arrived at through our ideology of catching up as they were in the same place but in a new round. And now we are at the point where our hybridity fuses with the world's hybridity.

But the central point for me is that people who consider themselves to be colonised start looking up to the colonisers from below. And

they see the uncultivated nature, lowness and non-existence of their own culture compared to the colonising culture. They place themselves in the abyss. Borrowing between equals is not a colonial relationship.

**The emergence of “Estonians” and the “Estonian nationality” in the 19th century was surprising for many foreign researchers: they did not see any logical path of development extending back into previous centuries that would have indicated that those concepts could emerge at some moment. Can it be said in the light of Post-colonialism that these concepts did not actually emerge or, more precisely, that these concepts were not filled up by content?**

Who is an Estonian? In the case of nationality, a simple truth applies in its deeper core: I feel that I am a member of nationality x, therefore I exist. And if there are many people who feel that way, then that nationality exists. Thus, becoming a nationality is not a question of logic at all. I think that the logic of the emergence of the Estonian nationality was very difficult to see in the light of those ways of thinking that prevailed and prevail in the world and which are defined by scholars from large countries. There are a couple of simple, yet implicit, basic assumptions. Only large people are capable of creating something. Culture is a matter for the upper classes, peasants do not have culture. According to these assumptions, a small people consisting of peasants cannot create culture in the same sense.

The Estonian nationality as a concept definitely emerged. We use it every day. Are these concepts filled with content? They definitely are, in light of Post-colonialism. The question is what we mean by content. At this point, we arrive back at the question of authenticity.

**The concept of colonisation appears to imply something negative by default. Yet, could colonisation – paradoxically – be a positive project instead for Estonians as a small people? Would Estonian culture have been possible in the first place without the positive contribution of colonisers (for instance, Baltic German Estophiles) or also negative contributions (different foreign powers under which the evolution of identity was clearer and more intense)?**



Kaljo Põllu. *Where did we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?* 1978. Mezzotint, paper. 47.0 x 56.0 cm. Art Museum of Estonia Searching for 'authenticity' has characterised Estonian art from the early 20th century (Kristjan Raud and others). The 1970s saw a new wave of this searching. The most prominent representative of the wave was Kaljo Põllu, who had previously been active in pop art, op art, land art etc.

I do not have a reasonable answer to that question. We cannot play out history again. We can only draw some conclusions on the basis of analogies. For instance, the Finns and Latvians also had the same kind of helpers, and that suggests that it would not have been possible. But that is only an analogy.

In my opinion, what is important is, rather, the fact that the base of our nationality has been strong opposition to Baltic Germans and Russians. I believe that, without that opposition, the national identity would be much less intense. At the same time, however, such an identity is a negative identity that relies, to a very great extent, on others. Psychologists say that our picture of ourselves is strongly based on Russians: we are what Russians are not. And this in my opinion is a picture of ourselves for which the way of thinking of colonised people forms the basis and in which there is too little strength.

**Is the occupation of physical space, colonisation, a preceding negative act that is absolutely necessary for a colonialist cultural relationship to emerge? Or is it possible to treat present-day Estonia not as Post-colonialist but rather in terms of continuing colonialism?**

A century and a half ago, spiritual or intellectual presence was unthinkable without physical presence. But that changed in the 20th century with the telegraph, aeroplanes and the Internet, which made physical presence secondary. And it also made the question of colonialism an intellectual problem first and foremost. Who is a coloniser in this kind of world? Isn't almost the entire Internet culture one large act of spiritual colonisation and self-colonisation? As far as I can tell, the heart of the matter lies in the fact that colonial culture is based on something that existed before. Something that is completed. Something that is accepted as one's own, and declared to be universal and valuable. And then it is taken to the land of 'black people'. Nowadays, processes proceed everywhere in parallel. At least according to this point of view, Estonia's society is not a colonised country.

**Is it possible to view the Russian Diaspora here and the processes there in terms of Post-colonialism? Or to view colonialism in this way?**

If we interpret Soviet Estonia as a colonized country and ourselves as people who have been liberated from colonialism, then we inevitably have to view the Soviet Diaspora that remained





here as a remnant outpost of colonialism. And then we can also view processes here in terms of Post-colonialism or anticolonialism at the same time not forgetting that we are in the role of Africans then. But as I said, I am not certain that this is so. At the same time, we can see that a large proportion of Russians here interpret themselves as being analogous to white people who remained in Africa after the end of the colonial relationship.

**Olaf Mertelsmann has pointed out that the ESSR was not a case of classical colonialism since here the level of the coloniser's culture was not higher. He prefers the expression "cultural transfer", since "Post-colonialism" sounds negative. Why, in your opinion, is it**

**more proper to speak of colonialism in particular, which is clearly a more ideological concept than "cultural transfer"?**

I also think that it was not classical colonialism. But I definitely do not think that the necessary attribute of colonialism is the higher level of culture of the coloniser. Who measures whose cultural level and what gauges are used? Does India had a lower level of culture than England? I am not at all certain that the cultural level of the typical Englishman who went to live in Africa was particularly high. We automatically speak of the cultural level of the Russians who came here, not about the level of Russian culture or the cultural level of the Russian aristocracy. And we all the time mix up Russian and Soviet.



Jaan Elken. *Seagull*. 1982. Oil, canvas. 135.0 x 150.3 cm. Art Museum of Estonia. As is often the case, photorealism (or hyperrealism) was introduced into Estonian art with no original context, so hybridity and mimicry had to be used in a new context for the loaned style. Photorealism was also a tool for non-conformist avant-garde, for doing things 'differently', although its political and critical potential in opposing colonising power was limited by its aesthetic resistance and quite modest social irony. The white ship we see in the painting has many meanings, as the symbol of a 'white ship' was commonly used in the 1940s to describe the vague hope that the British or some other navy would come to Estonia and free us. The white ship we see in the picture was the ship which made regular trips to Finland, although only a very limited number of Estonians were allowed to go there.

And what is important is that entire ideology of measuring levels of culture is based on the idea of the universality of culture and society. Yet colonialism interpreted European cultural values as being universal.

Post-colonialism is a collection of theories that explicitly speaks about ideology and power relationships. The aim of cultural transfer, as far as I can tell, is to become free from ideologisation and the power relationships. It is 21st century comparative-historical positivism that wants to hide its head in the sand instead of facing ideology. In my opinion, this is fundamentally dangerous. Ideology that is concealed is something that always leads its users on a leash. And, on the other hand, the relationship between our people and strangers has always been important for Estonian culture, whether we like it or not. Transfer strives to obscure this relationship.

**Are colonialism and Post-colonialism merely national-cultural concepts, or can they be applied to socio-economic class differences? Can the working class be viewed as a colonised class that adopts certain customs, habits and lifestyles of the ruling class?**

This is a theoretical question of the limits of the concept. Colonialism is in any case a hierarchical relationship, a relationship of strata, a class relationship. Yet should all such relationships be referred to as colonial relationships? Do we refer to analogous phenomena domestically and abroad, so to speak, differently or similarly? If it is too broad, the concept begins to dismantle itself.

I have written about colonialism as the attitude of empire towards the periphery, the province, marginality and barbarism. I have said that there is a clear colonial relationship in medieval and early Renaissance Europe between nobles and peasants as "the other". Wild land extends around castles and that wild land has to be colonised, and the castles must be defended against it. As far as I can tell, those two were interpreted as different lands. But this relationship changed over time. And I would not consider present-day relationships in the terminology of colonialism. There is no longer a substantial difference here.

**Homi K. Bhabha says in an interview that the history of colonialism, as well as that of, for example, slavery, gender oppression and class differences, does not deal only with classes, people and regions, but also with**

**social differences that shape the everyday life of modernity. These different discourses help us to think about how hierarchies have run their affairs within modernity. Could this also apply to Estonia – can we find out anything about our modernity through Post-colonialism? What can we find out?**

Yes. In my opinion, it is precisely the post-colonialist approach that allows us to see our entire modernising process in a new way. I believe that there were some answers to this in the previous answers in my interview.

The coloniser does not feel that he is missing something. On the contrary, he represents the universal. Yet the idea is planted in the minds of colonised people that they are not part of the universal, that they are missing something. By this they are made uncertain so that they will start perceiving themselves as "the other", as people in front of whom the prefix non- or not- belongs. The most important impetus is when somebody perceives, to his surprise, that this gap is so large that it leads to cultural trauma; and due to this impetus, he begins to colonise himself.

Modernisation has, at the same time, been extrication from colonialism for Estonian society. This has been done, to a great extent, through self-colonisation, which has also been the liberation of oneself from colonialism. It is an attempt to take one's fate into one's own hands. On the other hand, modernisation has also been colonisation. Baltic Germans and Russians brought railways, the telegraph, and the technology that is the foundation for modernity, into Estonia. The Soviet regime built large factories. These were the attributes of colonialism and, at the same time, they were also the attributes of modernisation. Estonians consider Soviet industry to be an attribute of colonialism, but the railways and industry of tsarist rule are considered attributes of modernisation. By the way, Estonians did not particularly want to go to work in factories. The worker was, in some sense, a Russian for Estonians and, as such, part of the stratum of colonisers. From this point, we approach the relationship of class and the coloniser in an absolutely new way.

Tiit Hennoste  
(1953), language scientist,  
literary scholar, critic,  
media analyst. See also  
*Estonian Art* no 2/2010.

# The National Representation Beauty Contest

Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus

National exhibitions are what museums and galleries like. However, what we often get under the slogan 'national exhibition' is a simple 'ticking off'. Usually, it is the art of less known countries, regarded as provincial artistic-wise, that is shown, and sometimes such exhibitions are the result of a courteous diplomatic exchange. They always carry the danger of succumbing to the temptation

to show 'the best of', which usually means a hotchpotch of works that, while artistically sound, have little in common besides their country of origin. The curators of *The Art of Estonia*, shown first at the National Museum in Szczecin and then in Warsaw, try to avoid such conventional

thinking about presenting the art of their own country abroad. What makes their situation easier is the fact that Estonian art is not completely unknown in Poland.

The two countries have a long tradition of cultural contacts. In the 19th century, many Poles came to study at the University of Tartu (the city then being known as Dorpat). During the inter-war period, several exhibitions presenting the art of the two countries took place as part of a mutual exchange between Tallinn and Warsaw, the two largest of those in the 1930s. First, the newly opened Tallinn Art Hall held an exhibition of the works of some of Poland's most outstanding artists of the period, including the sculptors Xawery Dunikowski and Henryk Kuna, and the painters Bolesław Cybis, Antoni Michalak and Jan Gotard. Then, in 1939, President Ignacy Mościcki opened an exhibition of Estonian art at Warsaw's Art Propaganda Institute, featuring works by Kristjan Raud, Eerik Haamer, Eduard Wiiralt, Ants Laikmaa and Andrus Johani, among others. Unfortunately, avant-garde art was not featured in either of the shows. In recent years, the Polish-Estonian

cultural exchange became intense again. The Art Museum of Estonia, held several presentations of Polish art, while the work of Estonian artists was shown in Poland in smaller national exhibitions or large international group shows. The most important of those were *Personal Time. Art of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 1945–1996* (Zachęta Gallery, Warsaw 1996) and *Closing the distance: images of the body in contemporary art from Estonia* (Łańskie Centrum for Contemporary Art, Gdansk 2002).

*The Art of Estonia* has a characteristic time frame. The show's first part, *Adapting Modernity*, encompasses the first half of the 20th century, and the second part, *Provocations and Confrontations*, begins in 2000. Such a choice may stem from an unwillingness to show art created in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, a period that still needs to be thoroughly researched by art historians, its history yet to be rewritten. Another reason may be the fact that Estonian art of the 1990s has already been presented in Poland in several larger and smaller exhibitions, including, partly, the above-mentioned *Personal Time*.

*The Art of Estonia* can be treated as two separate shows that enter into an interesting dialogue with each other. Modernism and the present time and their two different approaches to art – adapting international trends to the national tradition versus using the contemporary artistic language to question reality – highlight the paradox of such provincial countries as Estonia and Poland, which succumb to cultural self-colonisation while trying to maintain their distinct identities. Eha Komissarov writes in the exhibition catalogue about the 'postcolonial' attitude of young artists who reject the invasion of Western ideas and values, trying to focus on themselves instead. However, it needs to be remembered that the artists she mentions do participate in the international art market after all, which means that, willingly or not, they have to play by its rules. They also use a system of signs and meanings developed in and by Western art.

*Adapting Modernity* has been arranged as a separate presentation enclosed in a kind of



Marko Mäetamm  
*Little Dramas*  
2008-2010  
Installation

frame. When entering and leaving the exhibition, the viewer is led through small rooms where archival photographs from Estonia are displayed. At the entrance are photographs from 1913-1915, showing very poor rural areas not yet reached by modernity. The selection provides the exhibition with an interesting context, presenting Estonia as a poor and backward country. Then the viewer is confronted with the work of artists living in such a reality and yet familiar with the most modern trends in art. Several photographs in a similar vein are presented in a small room at the end of the exhibition. Beside them hang photographs from the 1920s and 1930s, showing preparations for a party, a racing car, a popular singer performing, oil tanks, and the beach in Pärnu, with elegant sunbathers posing for the camera in the company of two young black men: the symbols of modernity, basically, defined those days through the rhythm of machines and jazz music. The exhibition's structure, the choice of the works and the title all make the viewer aware of Estonians' determination to absorb the most important European trends, if only in the sphere of aesthetics. Although avant-garde trends were adapted on a rather superficial level by artists, the result was still a kind of dialogue between modernity and tradition.

In *Provocations and Confrontations*, a typically postmodern shift takes place towards pluralism and issues not dealt with before, such as feminism, nationalism, homosexuality and opposition to the Western monoculture. As Edward W. Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism*, postcolonial nations desperately



affirm their civilisational distinctness, which manifests itself as a rebellion against imperial cultures. Adorno discussed the attitude in the context of his negative dialectics. Examples can be found in the works of Kristina Norman, Mark Raidpere and Marge Monko, and in the project *The Gas Pipe*. Komissarov's words on artists' postcolonial attitude and her stressing, in both the exhibition and the catalogue, of Estonian art's authority-questioning role fit in the broader experience of Estonia's regaining her independence, achieving a status quo with the Russian minority, joining the EU and the euro-zone and, more recently, struggling with the effects of the global financial crisis. All of which has also brought about changes in the status of groups previously discriminated against, such as women and homosexuals. In this context, we find an interesting juxtaposition here of two manifestos of female independence, Monko's work, where women factory workers discuss feminism, and the performance by Jõgeva, who tattoos a space for lovers' names on her left breast,

and between them, its meaning enhanced as a result, Mäetamm's *Little Dramas*, where intimate household tragedies gain an extra sense of dramatic tension. This is because the experience of the victims of domestic violence, just like that of prisoners, presented by Toomik, is very seldom dealt with in







Kaido Ole  
*The Band*  
 2003-2005  
 Oil and acrylic on canvas  
 145 x 145 cm  
 Exhibition view

the art discourse. Such persons do not speak up for themselves either, which only increases their social exclusion.

But do the featured works really provoke? The sex- and violence-filled language of the contemporary media means that the viewer can hardly be shocked or thrown off balance any more. It also needs to be noted that provocation is not something confined to contemporary art. Though hardly identifiable as such today, it was also present in older art, including that presented in *Adapting Modernity*. Karin Luts's 1930s paintings of emancipated women or Konrad Mägi's *Portrait of a Lady* (certainly no self-respecting lady would have allowed herself to be portrayed in a state of undress) may have been perceived by contemporary viewers as far more provocative than contemporary works are for us.

What may appear provocative to the Polish viewer is the use of national colours in the design of the exhibition space, particularly evident in the *Adapting Modernity* part.

While the combination of black, white and blue is doubtless very attractive visually, it needlessly dazzles the audience with national symbolism, which in Poland evokes rather pejorative associations with the far right and ultra-conservatism. In the smallish space of *Provocations and Confrontations*, the viewer is exposed to a cacophony of overlapping multimedia pieces and to a crowd, which, paradoxically, benefits the paintings of Kaido Ole. In the cube specially constructed for him, the viewer finds an opportunity for a breather and, quite unexpectedly, silence and harmony.

The exhibition *The Art of Estonia – Adapting Modernity / Provocations and Confrontations* shows historical and contemporary Estonian art from the end of 19th century until the present day. The exhibition was organized by the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn. Works come from the collections of the Art Museum of Estonia and from the Tartu Art Museum. The exhibition is curated by Tiina Abel, Eha Komissarov, Katarzyna Nowakowska-Sito and Izabela Mościcka. The exhibition was exhibited in 2011 in the National Museum in Warsaw and in 2010–2011 National Museum in Szczecin.

**Karolina Łabowicz-Dymanus**  
 is art critic and historian.





THE  
CAC,  
VILNIUS  
Virginija  
Januskeviciute

Stalkers, Players and Taxies, Phone Calls and Laments  
Corridors and Witness Reports, Disappointment and Shame

## If it's Part Broke,

Contemporary Art Centre, Vokiečių 2, Vilnius  
28 January – 13 March 2011

Andrea Büttner (GER), Dalia Dūdenaitė (LT), Denes Farkas & Neeme Külm (EST), Carina Gunnars & Anna Kindgren (SWE), Sam de Groot (NL) & Paul Haworth (UK, NL), Johnson & Johnson (EST), Krõõt Juurak (EST, AT) & Mårten Spångberg (SWE), Flo Kasearu (EST), Epp Kubu (EST), Darius Mikšys (LT), Anu Pennanen (FIN), Taaniel Raudsepp & Sigrid Viir (EST), Rytis Saladžius (LT), Anna Škodenko (EST), Pilvi Takala (FIN), Triin Tamm (EST), Timo Toots (EST)

## Half Fix it.

Curated by Margit Sade Lehti — Supported by Nordic Culture Point, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Estonian Ministry of Culture and IASPIIS

Opening  
28 January at 6 p.m.

Live!  
28 January at 7 p.m.  
*The Pain*: Hip-hop  
by Sam de Groot  
and Paul Haworth

Performance  
12 February at 7 p.m.  
*Ride the Wave Dude*  
by Krõõt Juurak and  
Mårten Spångberg

Organised by  
Center for Contemporary  
Arts, Estonia and  
Contemporary Art  
Centre (CAC), Vilnius

[www.cac.lt](http://www.cac.lt)

When I think back, the exhibition felt quite similar to the Contemporary Art Centre's usual buzz. Several overlapping sound-tracks, uncovered equipment, black lettering, a few pale rectangles of unpainted wood, moderate traces of handicrafts and a few splashes of colour on a slightly worn modernist backdrop, finished in white wall paint and a light shade of epoxy for the floor. A list of artists, a booklet and an opening. A former Exhibition Palace with a couple of routes for visitors showing a few distinct takes on the world: two exhibitions on view at a time.

In the very centre of the room usually referred to as the North Hall, there was a telephone, a classic model from the Soviet times in blue plastic. Devoid of a dial, it was clearly meant only for incoming calls, if any. Once in a while, the telephone would ring. Arranged along the walls around it there was a group of other exhibits: very convenient if answering the call did not feel right. A flat screen ceaselessly poured out an adolescent voice and visuals that invoked some online virtual world, such as *Second Life*, or graveyard-slot overnight TV. On its right, there was a dark doorway that you could slip



Exhibition views



Johnson & Johnson. *Layers of Commodity*. Video



Carina Gunnars and Anna Kindgren. *The Coordinator*. 2011. Video

through to watch a cartoon mini-drama on a projection screen; it featured paper characters that were trapped in a permanent lazy hour of a grocery shop and thus failed to make a living. Apart from the soundtracks, the exhibits did not intrude on each other, so the visitors too could easily share the room without interfering. Someone with his/her back to you examined a small constellation of (photo)graphic images and texts that echoed the rap rhymes from the opening night, and that person was seemingly hesitant to lean down and pick up one of the posters off the floor. Someone was actually stealing a book from the stack behind the corner. You might as well answer the phone. Anu Vahtra's letter that was printed inside of the cover of the exhibition booklet – a note of the artist's declining an invitation to participate – spelled out what the whole exhibition seemed to be fuelled with: some deep doubts regarding the necessity of all this. In her introductory text, the curator, Margit Säde Lehni, described the exhibition's primary aim as "looking into different ways of and reasons for disappointments and shame," followed by an equally eager scrutiny of "speculation and chance," and compared her exhibition-making method to a dice game (nowhere does it say that it needs to correspond with the visitors' methods of unmaking the exhibition). Without clearing the passages between those sets of ideas, she chose to tie the whole project to the concept of something remaining in (or being paused at) an unpopular state of 'functioning half-way'.

The themes of abandonment and distancing prevailed in most artworks, by way of irony, the dissolution of common beliefs, a focus on boredom or uselessness, the alienated market economy (Johnson & Johnson, among others) and estranged art techniques (as in the works of Krõõt Juurak and Mårten Spångberg) and surveillance, a technology of seeing through walls. To be more precise regarding their attempts: the document files in the installation *Corridor* by Taaniel Raudsepp and Sigrid Viir were filled with reports from different authorities stating reasons for not being able to provide the footage from their security cameras, most often citing their absence. The works often touched on the topic of the ultimate escape: utopia. Utopia was referred to explicitly or latently on various levels; even if the visitor was never informed of the exhibition's working title, Grey New Paradise, it was written all over the urban Brazil in Carina Gunnars' and Anna Kindgren's *Coordinator*, the myth of a mighty homeland in Denes Farkas' and Neeme Kõlm's *Vytautas Didysis – Witold the Great*, the narrative of Anna Škodenko's series of paintings, and in the half-mentioned idea of a socially engaged exhibition in general. One way to try following the narrative of the exhibition was by following its

Dénes Farkas and Neeme Kõlm. Vytautas *Didysis – Witold the Great*. 2011. Installation





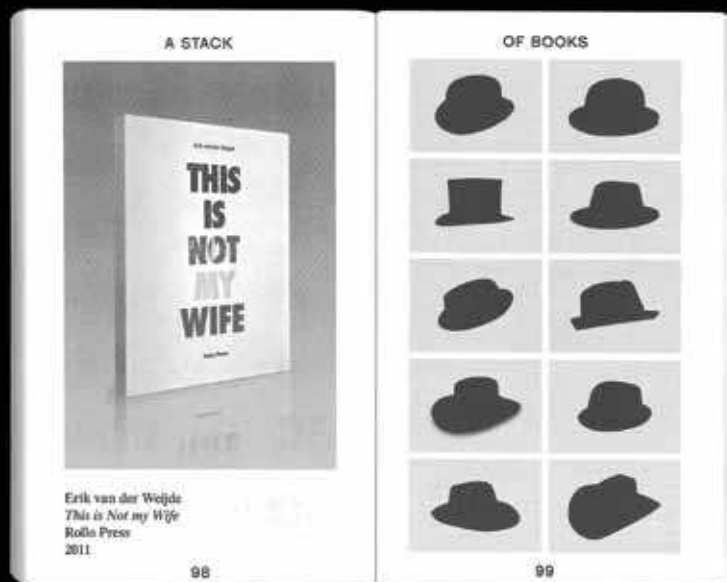


Anu Pennanen. *A Monument for the Invisible*. 2003. Video installation

characters, as if the exhibition had been put together like a Greek myth. At first glance, the most prominent roles seemed to be played by females. That is, assuming that couples and androids are genderless: the faces multiplied in the works of Anna Škodenko and Pilvi Takala don't count. (The gender of actual artists has very little to do with this.) One was the blind protagonist of Anu Pennanen's film *A Monument for the Invisible*. Watching a film that translates the experience of a blind person can be... unnerving. Blind fencing, an episode of which is shown in the film, can only be fair if both fencers are equally deprived of sight; however, the exhibition's insistence on 'half-ness' and speculation, and especially the video projector's beam suggested a game involving privileges. Another was a coordinator of housing projects for the homeless in Brazil (in *Coordinator*), who had worked towards providing other families with what she had just achieved on her own. A third was a ballerina spinning around a cardboard model of an automobile in Johnson & Johnson's *Layers of Commodity*, a personification of machine-like grace. And finally, most disturbing of them all in her persistence, there was a wicked clown in the darkest end of an alley – a woman who cried ceaselessly (*Weeping and Moaning* by Epp Kubu). But the exhibition seemed to suggest that, contrary to the prevailing logic of success, following one line would not lead anywhere, and turning half-way through might prove to be more productive – in some paradoxical way, reminiscent of Andrej Tarkovski's *Stalker*, a movie that could very well have been



Pilvi Takala. *Players*. 2010. Video



Triin Tamm. *Stack of Books as Well as Book of Stacks*. 2011. Artists' Book

part of the show. The chart of different hats, including Rene Magritte's signature one, printed in Triin Tamm's *A Book of Stacks* and dedicated to The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, could perhaps best illustrate such a half-way detour from the gender-informed reading of the exhibition suggested above. The Stalkers of the exhibition were re-occurring, quirky, often stylish, narcissistic gestures, emerging with a pinch of history and a twist, like the above-mentioned *A Book of Stacks* by Triin Tamm, displayed as part of her installation *A Stack of Books*, the oversized exhibition labels, the hobbyist taxi driver Rytis Saladžius (a professional actor's first appearance in contemporary art) or the text-performance by Darius Mikšys, *Where is Your Piece (Dude)?*. Mikšys was present at the exhibition opening and, in private conversations, introduced his piece as a ritualised answer to one of the most common questions at such events. In fact, his intention was to reconsider a list of participating artists as a medium with a potential for autonomy, as one could learn from the exhibition booklet, although the actual artists' list of the exhibition remained fairly true to the

customary format. Or yet another peculiar appearance: the bagels served at the exhibition opening by a group of writers who had never intended to work at a stove, but ended up settling for that job in search of a light-hearted way to deal with the legacy of Vilnius' Jewish community.

At best, the exhibition seemed to suggest that stopping half-way to somewhere might let you emerge in a place you never expected to be. It might well be seen as a commentary on the managerial rhetoric of the funding schemes for projects, including this exhibition: the over-defined notions of goals, continuity, audience and others. And as an exercise in exhibition making, and unmaking, it begged to be compared with walking through a maze in an open field: a luxurious amusement in a field so prone to dead-ends as is the field of art (a statuette of Vytautas the Great in a container filled with water from the Black Sea – really?).

*If It's Part Broke, Half Fix It* at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, 28 January until 13 March 2011. Curated by Margit Sade Lehn.

## Virginija Januskeviciute

(1979), is a curator at the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, and one of the founding editors of *The Baltic Notebooks* of Anthony Blunt ([www.blunt.cc](http://www.blunt.cc)).

Timo Toots. *Helpdesk*. 2010. Installation





# Soviet Midnight Paintings by Raul Rajangu Early 1980s



*White Night. Ambulance*  
1981  
Mixed media  
61 x 73 cm



*DDR*  
1981  
Mixed media  
81 x 86 cm



*Tribune*, 1982, Mixed media, 123 x 204 cm

*N. Burdenko Monument and Moskvich 401*, 1982, Mixed media, 126 x 160 cm



Monument  
1982  
Mixed media  
85 x 56 cm







*Moscow, Red Square*

1981  
Mixed media  
82 x 103 cm

## Raul Rajangu

(b 1960) is Estonian video and installation artist and a painter. Those paintings are from his series *Soviet Midnight* (created in 1981 and 1982). The series was exhibited for the first time in 2004. In the spring of 1980, Rajangu had finished secondary school and was practicing various ecstatic techniques (incl. fasting) to alter his state of consciousness. This was followed by an extremely intense creative period in 1981-82, which resulted in a large number of drawings made in heightened spiritual state. In addition to personal experience, he used as subject matter old family photographs and fragments of parading photo albums of the 1950s and 1960s, which he found in the attic of the Viljandi Culture Centre (he worked as a cleaner). Further inspiration was provided by children's drawings displayed in the Culture Centre and the deliberately amateurish images, borrowed from these drawings, found a way into his subsequent paintings. If the first period of being in heightened spiritual state helped to find the ideas, the experiences in the second period, 1981-82, provided technique and form. Firstly, a contrast between simple images from children's drawings and detailed, truly three-dimensional illusionist objects. Secondly, casein underpainting with its specific matte tone that calls to mind the coloured crayons of the Soviet period, and a collage technique seemingly originating from a school handicraft class. In the subsequent series of paintings, Rajangu used the specific green hue of the Soviet table paper as the background tone. As a result, in the series of paintings that could be seen in 2004 in the Draakon Gallery, vigorous expressiveness and images from children's drawings cancel each other out. The paintings show the festivities and paragons of the Soviet society of the time - tribunes full of ageing fathers of the nation, Stalin on a pedestal, New Year's tree no. 1 on the Red Square, and foreign cars as objects of ultimate desire.

Reet Mark



*New Year's Night*

1982  
Mixed media  
128 x 130 cm

# Salto and The Garden of Eden

Triin Ojari

If someone named a young Estonian architectural office who represented all the dash and verve, abundant forms and carefree spatial games usually associated with young successful architecture, a firm that ruled here and now, this would probably be *Salto*. Various competition victories and cultural awards keep coming, and the architecture created by *Salto* is photogenic and liked by all. The local press, which normally ignores architects, calls them '*the golden Salto*';<sup>1</sup> and a picture of a success story born in the boom period is complete.

The office was established eight years ago by three contemporaries, Ralf Lööke, Maarja Kask and Karli Luik, 'at the right time and place'. Firstly, this is valid regarding their generational timing: when they graduated from the Academy of Arts between 2004 and 2006, the myth of 'youth' and the reception of new architecture in Estonian society had already occurred. Secondly, their method was to bet entirely on competitions and thus collect a respectable number of public objects, of which a large number were actually completed thanks to the building boom.

Let us start with the latter: architectural competitions. Open competitions have been among the most constant strategies in Estonian architectural policy. Quite logically, they have constituted a chance for younger architects, since the 1990s, to 'get a foot in the door'. Most of the companies today whose staff is under 40 started on the basis of a winning entry at a competition. In the newly independent country, where the construction boom was gathering force thanks to borrowed money and there was an acute shortage of necessary rooms and houses, young architects would have found work anyway. They could easily have started their careers without competitions – as was and is true in many East-European countries. The real winners at competitions are the public sector and the state – this is a way to establish the best solution for a number of objects run by local governments or the state, e.g museums, sports buildings and schoolhouses. What matters is the symbolic capital of these buildings, the message that the physical image of the public sector does not have to be dismal and grey, but can offer the best possible versions. The

Sõmeru Community Centre  
2010 (completed)

Sõmeru Community Centre combines parish administration, library and a club with a hall. The new centre has to enhance a sense of identity in the quite scattered, mostly Soviet-time settlement. The community centre is single-storeyed, undulating roofline is a result of varying heights of the rooms. Its distinct character stems from using colourful straw-like wooden bars attached to the black-and-white concrete facade. The same aesthetics continues in the interior, only this time the slats are hanging freely from the ceiling.







town architect in Tartu, the second largest town in Estonia, is Tiit Sild, who graduated from the Academy of Arts a few years before the *Salto* people. He decided that all significant objects in the town centre had to succeed at competitions; so far, *Salto* has built three excellent structures in Tartu: a private residence in Aleksandri Street (2007), an addition to a central school building (2009) and the sports complex of the Estonian University of Life Sciences (2009). The overall result for the *Salto* architects is amazing: 38 awards in 46 competitions! The visible tip of the iceberg, i.e. the already completed objects, constitute seven buildings. In addition to the above-mentioned, there have also been such winning entries as the Sõmeru Centre and the surrounding area of the Estonian Road Museum (both competitions took place in 2004). Another winning entry was the *Gas Pipe*, which represented Estonia at the Venice Biennial of Architecture and attracted a great deal of international acclaim in 2008. Participating in competitions is a habit with the *Salto* architects, or in their own words: “If we did not take part in a competition, it would feel as if we had played truant from school.”<sup>2</sup>

The building boom and winning entries at competitions shaped the playing field for *Salto*, as well as for several other younger architectural offices in Estonia. This situation certainly causes envy among their West-European contemporaries: to be themselves,

choose work, always participate in a project, keep the office and staff fairly small, accept only projects with interesting programmes and social functions, usually commissioned by the public sector. “For us, the boom indeed offered us many exciting and inspiring projects, there was a lot of work, and we seemed to be full of electricity all the time.”<sup>3</sup> The rapid increase in building activities and influx of money also meant that, besides cardboard boxes in fields and massive commercial architecture, the choices at the other end of the architectural scale increased as well. *Salto* has its own niche there.

*Salto* won their first awards at competitions in 2003–2004, thus certainly arriving in the architecture arena at the right time. The ground had been prepared in more than one sense; after all, Estonian clients and the more progressive-minded part of society were already used to the youthful image of architecture, modern aesthetics and bold solutions. By that time, the Estonian republic and its built environment had been shaped for over 10 years, and several architectural offices were successfully operating with staff who had graduated from the Academy in the 1990s. Although they are all of the same generation, there are still perceptibly different trends and styles among the young architects. In contemporary younger Estonian architecture, much has been said about the ‘spatial change’, the transfer of focus from individual objects to

Exhibition Grounds of the Estonian Road Museum 2010

The concept of the exhibition grounds is based on a road – while passing by, one’s route will be surrounded by different landscapes. All space necessary for the museum is scooped into the hilly South-Estonian landscape, leaving rest of the environment as natural as possible: natural and artificial landscape is clearly separated, yet treated equally. A hollow ranging from 10 cm to 4 m deep forms more than 13 000 square meters of open-air exhibition space which is barely visible from the remote surrounding areas.

Gas Pipe (at the Venice Biennial of Architecture) 2008

Along one of the main pedestrian avenues in Giardini park, in between the pavilions of Russia and Germany, a 60m section of real scale elevated gas pipe was erected. The project is inspired by a controversial enterprise of Nord Stream, a Gazprom initiative to build a direct gas pipe from Russia to Germany. The initial project of Nord Stream to build the pipeline into the Baltic Sea has been widely contested from ecological as well as geopolitical positions.





a wider scale and to the urban environment; two architecture lecturers at the Academy, Veljo Kaasik and Andres Alver, are regarded as the engineers of this change. Opinions, however, vary: some claim that these lecturers simply instil in their students the architect-artist position of the lecturers' own generation, and neglect urban issues and technical aspects of building. Observing the increasingly commercialised urban environment, others conclude that the radical change in urban construction has remained a mere theoretical architectural discussion, and that the most successful modern architecture only consists of formally excellent individual designs, houses. What are missing are the environmental thinking, general planning culture and the wish of public authorities to actually protect the public interest in urban environments.<sup>4</sup> In that sense, *Salto* represents people of a pragmatic age. At the turn of the millennia, several clearly utopian urban planning competitions were organised by the Union of Estonian Architects. There was talk of designing the seaside area and the typical *flâneur*-like charm of Tallinn's wastelands. However, from that time onwards, both architectural competitions and urban development have clearly focused on houses. As mentioned before, the loan-race arrived, as did the period of European Union grants, and immediately vigorous activities started: sports and cultural

buildings, educational establishments, not to mention the main activity of the private sector: a senseless building mania in the fields around larger towns. Although *Salto* also participated in a few planning competitions, even the most promising of them – the design of the Skoone bastion area in Tallinn (2005) – is now lying dormant. *Salto* have always been keen on spatially uniting an architectural object and the surrounding environment, their forms are recognisably 'flowing', 'flexible' and 'folded', and they move masses and encourage people to use their houses, to make an event of their relationship with the house. *Salto*'s buildings have been characterised by the architectural historian Carl-Dag Lige as follows: "Dynamic spatial treatment, plasticity balancing on the boundary of icon-making, and an attempt to activate the user by (artificial) landscape." Lige regards them as bearers of 'thin aesthetics', with pragmatic, occasionally even jolly handwriting, who resemble the superhero of young Danish architecture, Bjarke Ingles (BIG).<sup>5</sup> "We cannot help here," quoting the architect Rem Koolhaas, who greatly influenced contemporary European young architecture, and who as early as the early 1990s, when the *Salto* people were still in school, established optimism as an essential position for an architect: "Architecture cannot be created in any other way; the architect simply must suppose that his work is useful for the world, has a positive effect. I do not consider myself to be too great an optimist, but I try to produce certain situations and conditions in my projects which almost artificially enforce some optimism. /---/ My work is knowingly non-utopian; it consciously tries to operate within the existing circumstances without suffering, without non-agreement and without all other types of narcissism that our architects have."<sup>6</sup> It is particularly this pragmatism in analysing architectural conditions, typical of the post-Koolhaas generation who grew up with MTV and Photoshop, an eagerness to mix a building's functions and display recognisable modernism in their aesthetics that is also a key to *Salto*'s works. It is the concept, the spatial idea, which interests them, whereas material and form merely support the idea, whether a wish to transform a school-yard into a collective amphitheatre, or install a snaking yellow gas pipe in the Venice Biennial Park, which resembles the Garden of Eden.

1 Tanel Veenre. Kuldne Salto: Ralf Lõoke, Maarja Kask ja Karli Luik. - *Eesti Päevaleht*, 24.04.2010, <http://www.epl.ee/artikkel/575587>

2 Triin Ojari. Interview: Salto. - *New European Architecture*. A10 Yearbook 2010-2011. Amsterdam, SUN Architecture, 2010, pp 35-37.

3 Ibid

4 See e.g: Role of the Architect and the Quality of Urban Space. Roundtable discussion. - *Boom/Room*. *New Estonian Architecture*. Ed. by Pille Epner. Tallinn, Eesti Arhitektide Liit, 2009, pp 65-73.

5 Carl-Dag Lige. Salto AB Experiential Architecture and the Sõmeru Community Centre. - *MAJA*, 2011, no 1.

6 Rem Koolhaas. *Conversations with Students*. Ed. By Stanford Kwinter. Princeton Architectural Press, Rice School of Architecture, 1996, p 65.

## Triin Ojari

(1974), architectural historian, editor in chief of magazine *MAJA*. Mostly writes about modern architecture and urban design.

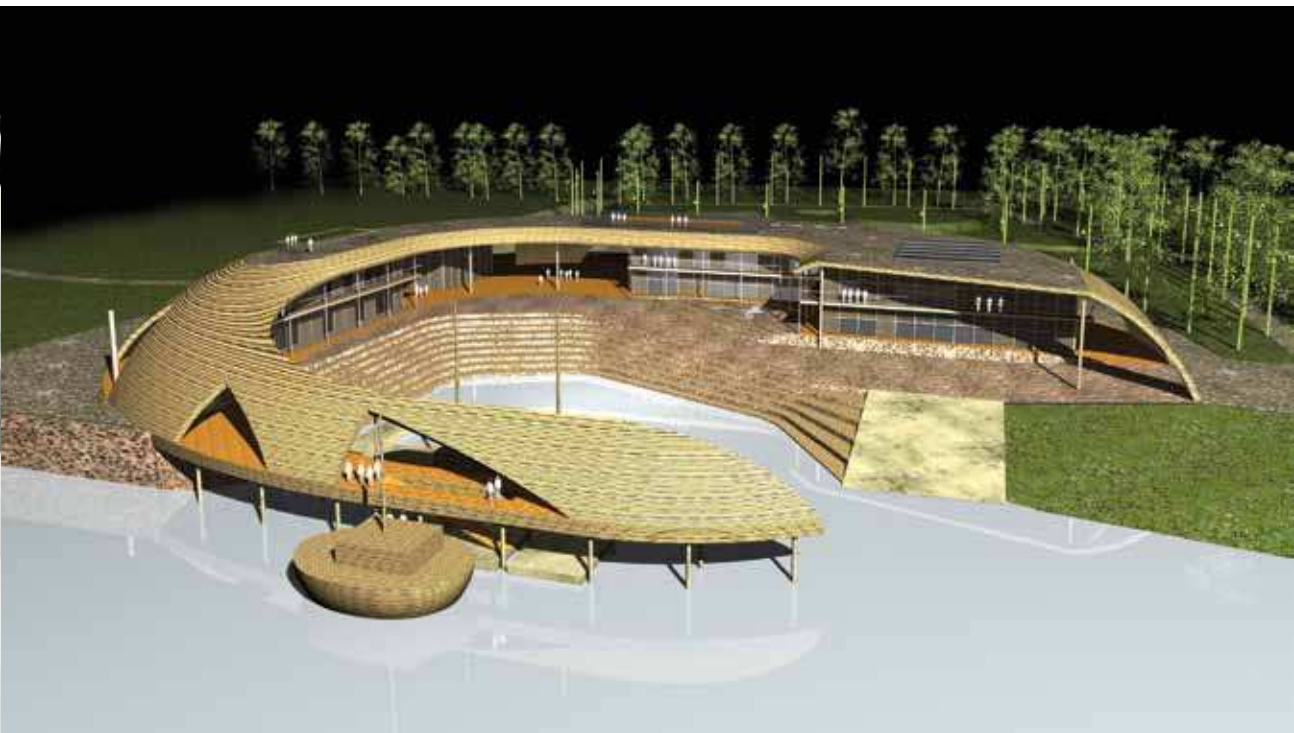
Business & Retail Complex  
in Tallinn Harbor  
Invited competition  
in 2007 (1st prize)



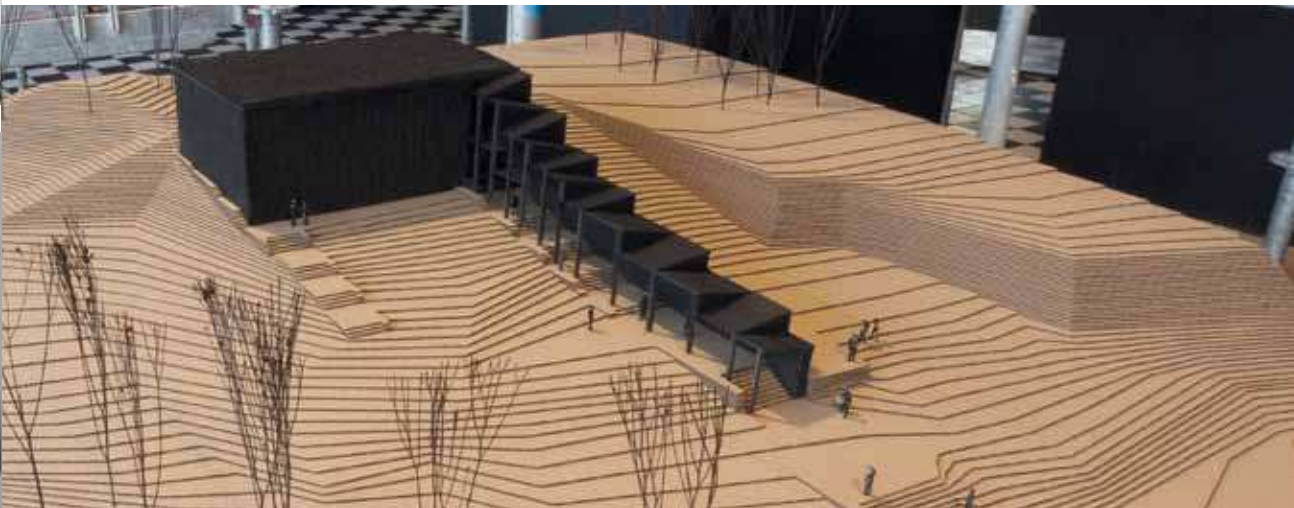
Baltic Film and Media School  
To be completed in 2012



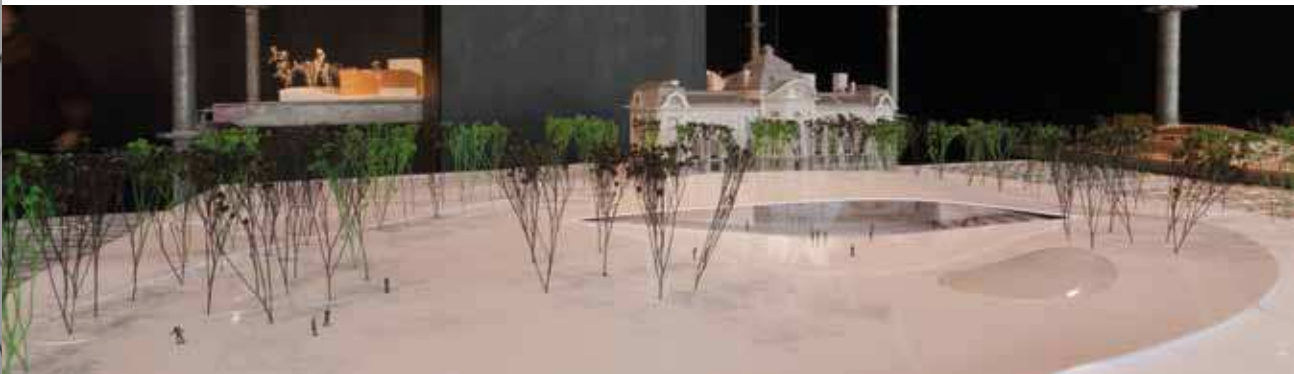




Historical Barge  
Society Building  
Invited  
competition in  
2009 (1st prize)



NO99 Straw  
Theatre  
2011



Renovation and  
Extension of  
Latvian National  
Museum of Art  
Competition in  
2010 (2nd prize)



G4S Office  
Building  
Invited  
competition in  
2011 (1st prize)

Sports Hall of  
the Estonian  
University of  
Life Sciences  
2009



# Interview with Karli Luik from SALTO

**Eero Epner (EE): You set up your architectural office in 2004 when various other new companies had already started: Kosmos and Kavakava in 2002, and KOKO Architects a few years earlier. It seems to me that you all have more or less similar ideas about architecture and space, and have introduced a new compact concept into Estonian architecture. If you agree with this, can you tell me what kind of conceptual principles the new architects mostly rely on? If you do not agree, then tell me why you don't.**

Karli Luik (KL): Well, there are certainly similarities, but also differences. The allegedly totally new concept is, of course, an exaggeration; it is difficult to make such major generalisations, especially if you are involved yourself. Maybe we can talk about a shift from an object-focused approach to an approach that values and creates architecture as an environment. However, this is not really a novel idea or tendency, just the establishing of new emphases.

**Is it an accident that you are mainly architects of public buildings (schools, museums, a county hall, sports buildings, a library, a theatre etc)? You have designed business and office buildings as well, but the emphasis is not there. And secondly, what does it actually mean to design a public building artistically and ideologically? Does it give you more liberty? And, to be honest, is it somehow a bigger success for the architect if his building is in public use?**

It is hardly accidental; after all, public buildings are the ones for which competitions are organised. The business and office buildings that have reached us have largely arrived via invited competitions. So, it is simply the inevitable result of the logic and profile of how our office operates. I am against such a classification of our work, where you could say that certain types of work are more important than others. Our attitude towards any work is rather similar and we try to find the intriguing aspects of the specific function or location we start with in creating the building or the environment. A public building is more intriguing in many ways, mainly

because it is so intensely used, and various functions can be unexpectedly mixed, which could also provide a spatial logic with fascinating nuances and exciting aspects. Estonian art, including architecture, constantly looked back into the past until the early 1990s, and tried to interpret it.

**What is your relationship with the history of Estonian architecture? Has it been an inspiration or does it create a kind of context to be reckoned with?**

We are inevitably part of Estonian culture and relate to it, at least unconsciously. The source of inspiration emerging for each object is individual, and earlier Estonian architecture has occasionally certainly had an impact. We are great fans of Valve Pormeister. This should be pretty obvious from looking at the Straw Theatre, although the form of the building was derived from the landscape and the existing staircase, which produced a formally similar architectural treatment.

**How important for you is what might be called 'your own handwriting'?**

It is not that important, and I actually try to avoid it. Our works are quite different, although there are many similarities as well. Maybe the common factor lies in value criteria and thought schemes that are visualised indirectly. I rather fear that if something called handwriting becomes too obvious the architectural emphasis has been misplaced.

**You have designed both in town and in the countryside. What has been the most demanding environment? Why?**

On the whole, we rather like complicated and demanding environments. If the environment is dense, and there are many aspects to consider, it is in fact easier to create architecture. It is much more difficult for us to come up with a pretty building in an empty field, which would be quite a challenge for us.

**It has often been noted how well your buildings fit into the surroundings: they could really be nowhere else. The transitions and borders are vague, and it is not clear where**

**the building starts and where the landscape ends. Is this something you vigorously pursue?**

We have not written a manifesto or compiled a list of things that good architecture must observe. Every time we start, we start from scratch; if we only have the location and the recommended typology, then the landscape and the existing environment are the primary foundations we rely on. On the whole, I think it is rather unfair to force architecture, landscape architecture and interior architecture, into the framework of different projects.

**In his essay *Conflict in Modern Culture*, Georg Simmel wrote a long time ago that no form can possibly express the constant flow of modern life. It seems to me that your buildings, although they are supposed to last for a very long time, somehow play with the topic of architecture's temporality and timelessness. They do not appear to be pretentious or forceful, the kind that would demand attention, but rather the other way round, and they often seem temporary or momentary buildings. Is this poetic wandering associated with your own ideas at all?**

I agree that it is quite silly to try and express an abstract idea with a form, and that this is generally destined to fail anyway. Besides, there is a danger of producing a weird stylish excess. Architecture should be a good friend with whom we flow along, and not a means to express something, not something that stands outside life, and is static and comatose. Our works occasionally operate as shortcuts, a new surprising space, or an intertwining additional layer, amplification of the existing. The basic truth lies in the location and logic of the building, and not in elaborate details and dashing form.

**You always rely on the peculiarities of landscape, and have designed buildings that reach into a river, or sit on a peninsula and join two shores, or are made of straw. Would you call this 'adapting a building to nature' or is it instead a kind of totality?**



Models of *Salto* buildings  
Exhibition in 2011  
Exhibition view  
Models made by  
Pelle-Sten Viiburg  
and Maarja Kask

Every building involves interfering with the original, with whatever is already there, and thus a conflict to a certain extent inevitably emerges. The question is how to interfere, what to relate to, what to emphasise, and you have no choice but to pay more attention to some aspects than others. The idea of how to do this can at best be clear-cut and sharp. Architecture should have a healing effect on a split environment that has suffered numerous conflicting interferences. Architecture should be a kind of prescription, although occasionally you need extensive surgical interference, but I would not call this totality.

**Whose work inspires you?**

Work that is able to surprise.

**Are you eager to expand as an office, participate more in competitions abroad and other such things?**

We do not have the ambition to expand: we are bigger or smaller according to the situation, and we clearly perceive that if we became really big, our office would have to start working on quite a different basis, and would resemble a factory rather than a creative group of people. We are not keen on this, at least not at the moment. Participating in competitions abroad is certainly on the agenda and we would like to produce interesting work in other parts of the world as well.

**How would you describe the state you are in at present? Are you totally confident, or tired, or waiting for some radical change, or would you prefer to maintain and confirm what you have already found?**

A bit tired, more self-confident than ever before, and looking forward to new challenges.

**SALTO**  
is architectural bureau  
situated in Tallinn. See more  
[www.salto.ee](http://www.salto.ee)



The Tamayo Take at the Museo Tamayo, Mexico City 2012, with works by Matias Faldbakken, Claire Barclay, Doug Ashford

# CONTEMPORARY ART ENCOMPASSES ALL THE REST

Interview  
with  
Maria Lind

**Eero Epner (EE):** In your essay *Selected Nodes in a Network of Thoughts on Curating* you define the task of the curator not just “choose randomly from the readymade dishes on offer”, because “recipes must be reformulated for every occasion”. At the same time one notices that in the field of art institutions more and more retrospective exhibitions and exhibitions based on star-artists and their fetish-art works are held in order to gain more audience. Do you yourself feel in your work this contradiction, and what seems more reasonable for you: to ‘fight’ against this tendency, or to use or at least to move toward some alternative art institution system?

Maria Lind (ML): My impulse is to try and be sensitive to the needs of art and artists, and to develop formats for how to make art go public according to that, in relation to the where and when of the project. One example of that is how we at the Kunstverein München did a retrospective with Christine Borland which lasted for one year during 2002–2003 because we only ever showed one work at a time. Another example is the retrospective we did there with Rirkrit Tiravanija in 2004, in the form of a one-week long workshop preceded by a weekend meeting. This retrospective was made as a collaboration between the artist, a number of his former students and curators, critics and fellow artists who have followed his work. The Munich retrospective acted as the spring board for his more discussed, at least in the media, subsequent retrospective exhibitions at ARC in Paris, Museum Boijmans van



# TEMPORARY ART ENCOMPASSES ALL THE REST

Beuningen in Rotterdam and the Serpentine Gallery in London. In both cases the format was closely developed in relation to the logic and the sensibility of the art itself. I am thinking a lot about the 'forking' which is going on in the world of contemporary art today. Of course there have always been different tendencies, groups and cliques but rarely before have we seen such a division between what we could call the mainstream and the sidestreams. Or rather the major and minor strands. The minors are the ones which are less visible in media terms and certainly less funded, whereas the majors occupy plenty of media space and attract money of different kinds, both public and private. However, the minors tend to be the site where new ideas are developed, where content is being provided to speak 'neoliberalish'. It seems to be that we are facing a serious issue with the majors becoming more and more empty and spectacular, promoting the easily-consumed and consensus-friendly. At the same time the minors are involved with extremely important and interesting activities which are fairly closed. So the majors become more and more empty and the minors preach to the already converted. How long can this go on before we have a serious crisis where both 'dry out' and stagnate? None can really survive without some aspects which the other harbors.

**How would you describe the task of an art institution, that is owned by state or municipality? How does it differ from the tasks private art gallery has? What does 'public space' mean in today's art field?**

This is an essential but difficult question. It depends on each case, and we should be careful in distinguishing what we mean by private art gallery. Is it a commercial gallery? Or

a private collection, with or without access by the general public? I believe that it is necessary to be highly context-sensitive in every situation, regardless of funding structure, scale of the institution, geographical location etc. This being said, a characteristic of the early 21st century is the blending of private and public with commercial galleries supporting their artists' projects in public institutions, sponsorship deals etc, but also a separation between the two. Private collectors set up their own institutions to a much higher degree than before and most of the time this means that they stop supporting public institutions with donations of work and money, which they did historically. At the end of the day the public institutions then have to deal with a double minus: budget cuts from the authorities plus the withdrawal of private support. As with any other kind of private property it is up to the owners what they do, they are not accountable to anyone else. It should also be remembered that there are private collectors who set up foundations to support certain kinds of art, in a less 'selfish' and/or business-minded way. Like the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Foundation, with headquarters in New York, which focuses on art from Latin America and which does not have museum or any other physical place other than offices and storage. Instead it gives grants to artists, critics and curators from that region, it purchases work for the collection which circulates in the form of exhibitions, it buys work which is then being donated to public collections, it publishes books on related topics etc. It is essentially a support structure rather than an endeavor which aims at boosting and promoting the collection and its owners. Something similar goes for 'public space', i.e it depends. It would require a separate essay to flesh it out.



**You have spoken about resistance on very many and different levels. When talking about Philippe Parreno for example, You mention that “the demonstration that was once an illegal form of collective protest has more recently become an ‘institution’, and one that is typically strictly regulated”. And when talking to Apolonija Šušteršič, you mention that her art has “certain similarities with the way Michael de Certeau describes the potential of the everyday to undermine the sensibility of the dominant culture”. How important for you when working with artists is the notion ‘resistance’? And what kind of resistance?**

This is a great observation that you are making. Resistance yes, but more than anything challenging status quo is important to me. To twist and turn the given preconceptions and conditions. I am as a human being committed to not automatically accept things which are handed down to us, the desires which are imposed on us, whether it is social norms, political systems or understandings of art. And art is a fantastic form in this regard. In art everything can be different, as it were. *Everything Can Be Different* was also the title of an exhibition which I curated for the Independent Curators International in the US in 2001, with works by for example Apolonija, Pierre Huyghe, Annika Eriksson and Superflex. Liam Gillick did the publication.

**The title of your book is *Selected Maria Lind Writing*. I myself find the notion ‘writing’ in the context of today’s art field very noteworthy, and I have the feeling that ‘writing on art’ does not mean the same thing as it did 20–30 years ago. What is your opinion, what role does ‘writing on art’ as such play in today’s art field, and what kind of function does it have?**

First of all art criticism has lost some of the influence it had in 20 years ago or more. Then it definitely shaped the agenda

of contemporary art. This is not the case anymore, for various reasons. One reason is that the arenas of written and published criticism have both shrunk and changed. Another is the rise of curating as a form of conscious and common form of articulation in the field of art. The forming of the agenda today is typically happening within curating. But whereas art criticism has lost some of its impetus, writing on art, or perhaps better writing along side art, has also become more interesting. Because it appears to be more diverse, forming hybrid kinds of texts which become public online, within exhibition contexts etc. So to my mind art criticism is weaker and less interesting today but writing in relation to art is not only productive but also exciting. And influential. I am thinking of everything from the *e-flux* journal and blogs like i heart photograph to artists who write fiction as part of their art, for example



The Tamayo Take at the Museo Tamayo, Mexico City 2012, with works by Mai-Thu Perret, Doug Ashford, Claire Barclay, Goldin+Senneby

The Tamayo Take at the Museo Tamayo, Mexico City 2012, with works by Gunilla Klingberg, Aade Guyton, Emily Roysdon, Liam Gillick, Goldin+Senneby

Works from the project Abstract Possible in Mexico City. See more [www.abstractpossible.org](http://www.abstractpossible.org)

Matias Faldbakken, and artists who write alongside their other work, like Hito Steyerl and Marion von Osten. In my case writing is crucial, even obsessive. I write all the time. It is a way of articulating and producing ideas. It is my mental metabolism. But it was not until we started to work on *Selected Maria Lind Writing* that I realized how much I have written since the late 1980s. For the first time ever it struck me that to some degree I am a writer. Instead of selecting my own text, or asking one other person I was able, thanks to the great support of Caroline Schneider at Sternberg Press, to invite five people who were sent a big pile of texts, most of what I have written in English since the mid 90s. They then made individual selections and wrote a brief introduction to their selections. In this way I was hoping that my own work would be subjected to a process of scrutiny and selection which I myself as a curator perform in relation to other people's work. I am delighted with the result.

**I might be mistaken, but I have the feeling that you often speak about the critical power the art has, but seldomly about the power art criticism has. In Estonia many claim that art criticism has become a tool, that it has totally institutionalised and is therefore not legitimate. (One interesting fact, that has happened, is that several art critics ignore daily newspapers and even cultural weeklies, they don't write there,**

## Maria Lind

(1966), a curator and critic. She has recently been appointed artistic director of IASPIS in Stockholm. Between 2001 and 2004 she was director of the München Kunstverein. Previous to that she was curator at Moderna Museet in Stockholm (from 1997-2001) and in 1998 was co-curator of Manifesta 2 Europe's nomadic biennale of contemporary art. Her book *Selected Maria Lind Writing* brings together twenty-two essays of hers. The collection of essays spanning from 1997 to 2010 forms a tapestry of Lind's own interweaving interests: essays on individual artists, monographic and group exhibitions, funding structures, new contexts and spatial paradigms.

**and the most powerful platform for speaking about contemporary art is... Facebook. The web site, which is being used elsewhere for finding dates and mates, is in Estonia a democratic tool for contemporary art criticism.) Well. What I want to ask is: is there a way out also for art criticism?**

To add to what I mentioned before: as the media landscape has gone through some very palpable structural changes over the last two decades, with big cuts of money and space at newspapers and magazines, so has art criticism. Particularly in newspapers. The phenomenon of the 'discursive turn' in art, in other words the desire to discuss and in other ways exchange in and around art, has taken on some of the functions of art criticism used to have to debate. I take this to be part of a larger development in culture towards direct engagement rather than influence through representation. You can see this in the increase in popular street protests from Seattle 1999 to North Africa, the Middle East and Spain this spring, as well as in demands for various forms of self-governance.

**When somebody interviews a today's art curator, he/she rarely asks about art, and prefers speaking about different art institutions. The same has happened here. So I would like to ask also about art, one plane and simple question: does art still has the power to save the world?**

Contemporary art remains, for me, the most exciting and fruitful form of understanding that I know, on par with philosophy, science, religion, politics etc. The difference between contemporary art and the rest, however, is that it engages with and encompasses all the rest. It is a huge sponge which can be squeezed and reshaped and new things will come out of it. Contemporary art helps us ask new questions, formulate different ideas, propose unknown visions and unheard ways of acting. It shapes the necessary stories and imaginaries, collective and individual, of our time. Which is crucial for the existence of any society. To ask from it to save the world seems to be an impossible, and even unfair, demand.





## Notes on Paul Kuimet

Pille Epner

Paul Kuimet is one of the new names in Estonian photography. His work has stood out in recent years for its critical and sensitive treatment of topical themes. The young photographer recently received his BA from the Photography Department of the Estonian Academy of Arts. In addition to the Academy, he has studied in London and Helsinki, and also studied film and video at the Baltic Film and Media School for one year. He has participated in at least eight group exhibitions and one personal exhibition at the Hobusepea Gallery in 2010. Kuimet's latest exhibition can be seen, outside Estonia, in Austria. Kuimet, still a student, is naturally greatly influenced by the Academy. The peculiarity of the Academy of Arts' Photography Department, compared with other local institutions with similar aims, is that it tries to prepare artists to feel at ease in the entire field of international contemporary art.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is on a camera-based approach, but includes other aspects. The broad approach naturally poses the threat of becoming too vague. However, a chance to enter the art world early on certainly encourages students to actively seek their own themes and handwriting. Exciting artists thus catch the public eye and get their first solo exhibitions even before they graduate. This has certainly been true of Paul Kuimet. Photos of houses, architectural details and landscapes on the outskirts of a city – the man-made urban environment seems to be the theme Paul Kuimet records. However, despite his cool documentary manner of depiction, he is by no means a traditional architectural photographer. His approach is based on research, i.e. the lens is pointed towards the physical environment, but his keen eye sees beyond it. We see the space for living, but we do not

see life. Kuimet is right in thinking that having no people in his pictures emphasises the traces of their activities in the environment. Paul Kuimet's first personal exhibition, *In Vicinity*, took place at the Hobusepea Gallery in Tallinn in 2010. It consisted of a series of photographs and two videos, and tackled the topics of (sub)urbanism and social space from his personal viewpoint. He recorded the area where he grew up near Tallinn, showing how it gradually mutated into yet another prairie on the outskirts. It is a melancholic illustration of the process which Estonian society experienced in the boom years of the early 21st century. Fresh plaster, new cars and a perfect tiny patch of lawn, with hay, thistles, brushwood, and heaps of building rubbish on the other side of the garden fence. Man's presence is only evident in the bluish glow of a television (although the ear recalls the distant purr of a lawn-mower and the dull creaking of a trampoline). A rising standard of living and favourable bank loans fulfilled the dream of many Estonians of escaping high-rise or slum areas and settling in small houses just outside the town amidst nature. An extremely liberal planning policy resulted in huge numbers of real estate villages spilling unchecked beyond the city borders. Unfortunately, these houses cannot offer any of the values the new inhabitants were looking for: privacy, security, originality or beautiful nature. Alienation from people's more extensive living space – the neighbourhood – is further intensified by the Soviet legacy, i.e. new inhabitants coming from urban apartment blocks identify only with their immediate living space, and ignore everything beyond it. Work and social communication occur in town and entertainment centres, so there is no motivation to create any



*In Vicinity*  
Exhibition view  
Hobusepea Gallery  
March 2010

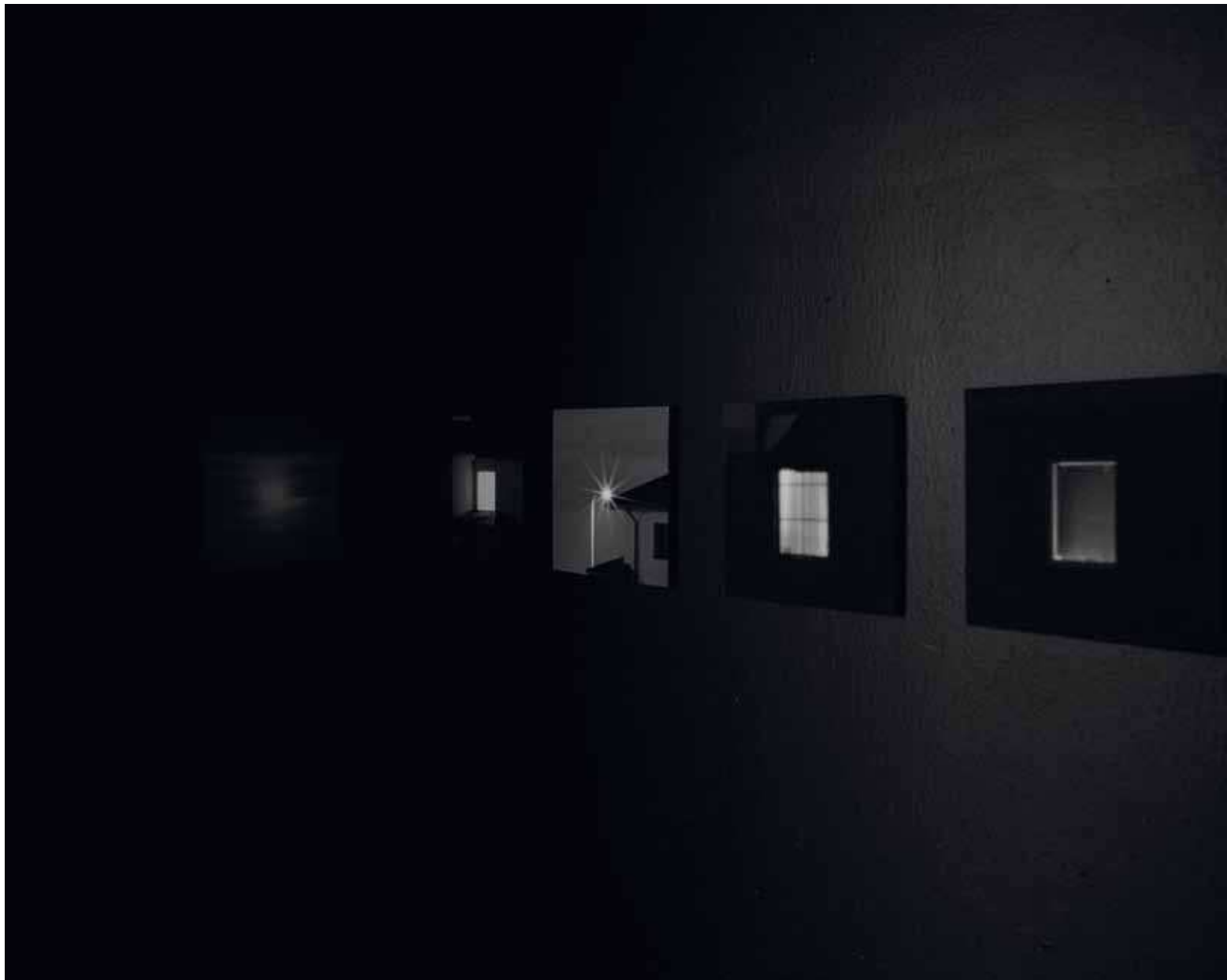
*Untitled 2*  
From the series In Vicinity  
2008-  
Pigment prints  
70x70 & 87.5x70 cm

*Untitled 3*  
From the series In Vicinity  
2008-  
Pigment prints  
70x70 & 87.5x70 cm



*Untitled 15 (Cigarette)*  
From the series In Vicinity  
2008-  
Pigment prints  
70x70 & 87.5x70 cm





*Relative Luminosity*  
2010  
Pigment prints on panels  
Various sizes  
Installation

public space in the vicinity of their homes. An easy parallel emerges with the massive building activities on the outskirts of American cities in the 1970s and the dismal results of this process, reflected by landscape and urban photographers.<sup>2</sup> The 'new-topographic movement'<sup>3</sup> united the fields of photography and art, a cool documentary style and a social-psychological message, and elevated the banal and mundane to an aesthetically acceptable state. The Estonian photographer Paul Kuimet follows the same tradition: his critical social-political commentary on the destruction of his childhood places has been captured in an aesthetic, occasionally even picturesque form, which sharply emphasises the dysfunctional essence of the recorded environment and the ghostly, almost irrational atmosphere. In several subsequent projects, Paul Kuimet developed the topics begun in *In Vicinity*, although

the manner of depiction is more ascetic and the content more concentrated. *Relative Luminosity* is a space-empirical installation which plays with the viewer's sense of sight. Most memorable from *In Vicinity* are perhaps the shots taken in early evening: the sky is still light, the clouds are dramatic, and the space between the houses is already vanishing into shadows. In vain, you try to see into rooms, behind the facades, where the inhabitants have withdrawn into their lives, passions and personalities. In *Relative Luminosity*, the viewer enters almost total darkness. When the eyes slowly adjust, dark and light details gradually emerge, which together form one view of a fragmented house on the outskirts. The artist's aim was to produce a direct experience which would make viewers aware of their unconscious wish to peep into lit windows, to participate in other people's lives.



This wish is more intense in anonymous new urban districts, where neighbours do not know one another and where the fragmented photographic image clearly belongs. Who knows what kind of world will be revealed in that mute introvert box of a house? In 2010 Paul Kuimet displayed two projects in Linz, Austria, within the framework of the EU project *Urban Installations*. Both tackle the relationship between personal and public space in the urban context. The place-specific installation *Untitled* (246x343), in the vicinity of the Lentos Art Museum, uses the entrance building of the underground car park as a light box. The photographic transparent, a window covered with Venetian blinds, is lit by lights inside the building, thus producing a new, partially illusory architectural element. This work relies on instincts similar to those of a photographic project in the darkroom: seeing the lit window, the human brain projects an imaginary room behind it, which only exists in the mind. The lit window exudes mystery and an urge immediately emerges to peep in and solve the mystery – to adapt the imaginary room to the real one. The exhibition *Not Necessarily So* was compiled by Kuimet together with another Estonian photographer, Laura Toots. The central concept is *unheimlich*, a German word meaning ‘uncanny’, ‘eerie’, literally ‘non-homey’. The home videos of Toots’s and Kuimet’s photo-wallpaper depict the inner

and outer form of expression of ‘home’, but from a strangely shifted perspective, producing in viewers certain perceptual disorders and a feeling that they are seeing something that is usually hidden from the eye. This phenomenon, in fact, constitutes the main charm of Paul Kuimet’s photographs. They show the surrounding world, the mundane everyday environment, from a slightly different angle, in a new light, and thus patterns may emerge which would otherwise remain concealed behind the veil of familiarity. Becoming aware of one’s surroundings, however, is a huge step towards improving it.

1 The work and aims of today’s Photography Department are directed by Marco Laimre, an artist-professor with anarchist views.

2 Associations with the phenomenon are also referred to in Liina Siib’s article about Kuimet’s personal exhibition: Liina Siib, In Vicinity, or this is what we bought, Kunst.ee 2010/1-2

3 New-topographic photography got its name from the 1975 exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (curator William Jenkins) in New York, which is regarded as one of the most influential exhibitions of photography in the last quarter of the 20th century.



*Relative Luminosity*  
2010  
Pigment prints on panels  
Various sizes  
Installation

## Paul Kuimet

(1984), is a visual artist working with photography and installation. See also [www.paulkuimet.com](http://www.paulkuimet.com).

## Pille Epner,

art critic, currently working at the Union of Estonian Architects.



*Untitled* (246x343)  
2010  
Transparency mounted  
behind glass  
246x343 cm  
Installation in public  
space, Linz, Austria





# WHAT IS ESTONIAN SOUND ART?

Maria Juur

In spring 2010, I chose sound art and, more specifically, Estonian sound art as the topic of my Bachelor's thesis at the Institute of Art History of the Estonian Academy of Arts. Immediately, I had to ask myself how to define this very loose set of practices and whether it made any sense to try to talk about them in the local art world context. My research revealed just how under-theorised sound art is – in Estonia and in general. The aim of my thesis was to introduce this phenomenon and focus on Estonian artists whose work can be seen as being positioned between art and experimental music. Instead of clearly defining what sound art is, I gave an overview of what it could be – the use of sound in a piece of art is crucial (in a sound installation, for example), but there are genres of sound art that do not have much to do with our common understanding of a 'work of art' – these genres are radio art, acoustic ecology, soundscape research, different forms of experimental music etc. The term 'sound art' was coined in the States in the early 1980s; in Estonia, young artists (e.g. Kiwa and Andres Lõo) began to use it around the millennium, and it still remains a rather new-sounding term not often found in reviews or writings on art. The difference between sound art and experimental music is vague: in his book *Fear of Music*, the critic David Stubbs asks why the Tate Modern has become so popular while avant-garde music will never appeal to the masses. Reading this, I realised that in Estonia the situation is actually the opposite: it is instead classical con-

temporary/avant-garde music that holds a privileged place in Estonian culture, being funded by the state and respected by the people. Contemporary art, often described in the public as a waste of the taxpayer's money, is seen as a pastime for a small circle of practitioners. Alan Licht draws on Stubbs's polemic and suggests that, as music and film are usually tied to commercial interests, 'sound art' becomes the 'saviour' umbrella-term. Encompassing complex, interdisciplinary pieces of art/music, sound art creates a place under the sun for them. The problem with sound art is that it is not very gallery-friendly; in larger exhibitions, works of art centred around/including sound start to interfere with each other and uncommunicative noise emerges. Sound art, like video art, is 'temporal' in nature and, when dealing with sound art qua experimental music, the best format for 'exhibiting' it is actually a concert and not a gallery space. This raises the issue of collective listening or collective consumption art – the kind of collectivity that rarely forms in a gallery environment and, we could say, ties sound art with art's 'sacred origins'. Sound installation, 'kinetic sculpture', is the most traditional form of sound art and my genealogy of Estonian sound art begins with the 1970s kinetic sculpture pioneer Kaarel Kurismaa (b 1939). In the 1990s, it was the composer Rauno Remme (1969–2002) whose work, often described as new media art, can also be seen as sound art: Remme used computers to create chance-based composition

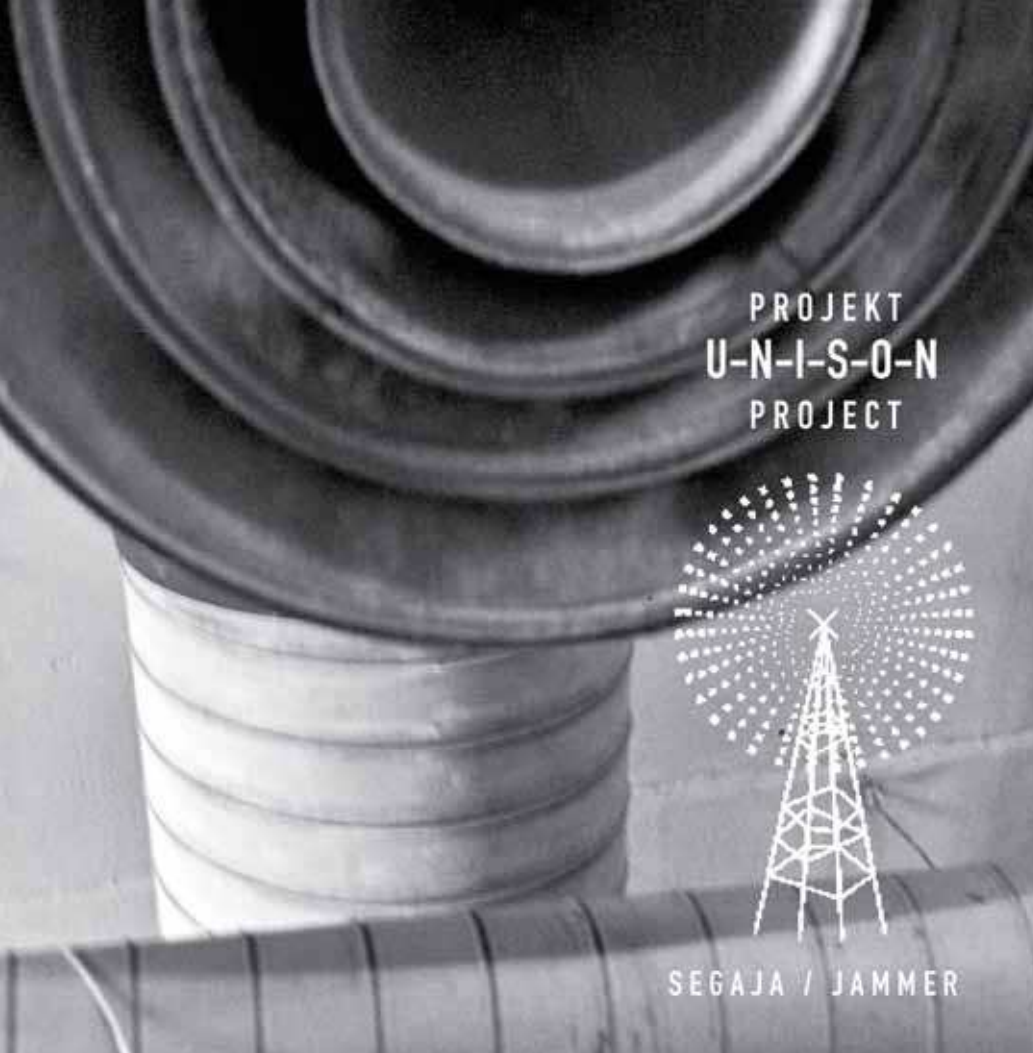


Project Unison.  
Circles of Grass  
*Circles of Grass* was recorded in Tallinn and Vormsi island, Estonia in 2003. At April 28, an improvised session was held at the former rubber factory 'Polümeer'. Piano strings were used to wire the ventilation tubes, thereby resulting in 'tubochords' - instruments to be played with a bow, fingers or various other objects. The floor of the room was covered with turf, with a sward of 100 square metres consisting of more than 2 tons of sod. At June 28, an improvisation took place in open nature where the sources of sound included natural objects, the sounds made by participants moving around and the natural sonic background.



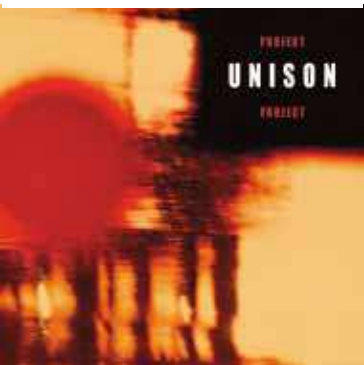
Raul Keller (on the right) and Heikki Tikas (on the left)





Project Unison. Trainpulse

techniques. Highly original at the time, he received little recognition for his work. As mentioned above, Kiwa (b 1975) and Andres Lõo (b 1978) were the first to consciously position themselves as working in the field of 'sound art'. Both Kiwa and Lõo are well-known recording and performing artists; Kiwa's interdisciplinary work is centred around the notions of noise, silence and error/glitch, while Lõo is mainly interested in exploring the question of the artist's ego through sound (e.g Meeting with the I and Mimic Partiture). Both Kiwa and Lõo seem to be obsessed with pop culture and music video aesthetics: this fascination is echoed in their work as a whole, but finds its best expression in the event series Metabor (2001–2004), curated by them and their friends. The idea behind Metabor was to create a temporary event as a total work of art, to bring together pop and avant-garde, sound, vision and architecture (the location was different every time). Of course, it is an open question whether the intentions of the organisers could ever be fully realised: for the people who attended it might have been just another party night and, especially in retrospect, it was hard for them to see Metabor as original (which it was, at least in the local context), as the promise of a 'synaesthetic experience' is a common PR promise found in party flyers today. After Metabor, there was the Audio Gallery event series. With a lesser focus on the party-element, it can be seen as a more mature attempt to get people to exclusively concentrate on sound. And learning to listen is actually harder than we think. Whereas Kiwa and Lõo have received a decent amount of attention from the media, the work of one of their peers, Raul Keller's (b 1973) Project Unison (2000–2007), remains one of the most under-rated sound art projects in Estonia. The aim of Project Unison was to bring together people from different backgrounds, those trained in music and those



without any skills, and  
improvise with found objects in  
different industrial and natural environments.

The improvisation sessions can be seen as private performances in which the participants became both the authors and the audience. CDs with the material were later released for wider distribution. On CDs, the performative aspect is eliminated, and the music becomes merely acoustic and thus indecipherable, i.e. pure sound. Keller is also one of the few practitioners of radio art in Estonia (e.g. his and Katrin Essenson's LokaalRaadio [Local Radio]). Interestingly enough, there are hardly any Estonian female artists working with sound, and this supports the cliché of sound art being a niche item for geeky male artists with an inclination for technology. In talking about the 'sociology' of Estonian sound art, it is important to mention John Grzinich (b 1970), an American sound artist residing in Põlva County, Estonia. Grzinich's international connections and enthusiasm have made the Mooste Artist Centre (run by him and his wife) one of the hot-beds of musical experimentation in the country. Sound is elusive and artists working with sound are often seen as merely exploring its formal qualities. This is not necessarily true: we can say that the social dimension of sound, or the nature and meaning of sounds that surround us, is becoming material for both artistic and scholarly research everywhere in the world, including Estonia. Writing about all this in 2010, I was excited to discover that in 2011 an important step will be taken towards the popularisation of sound art: the Tallinn – European Capital of Culture 2011 programme contains various projects and events focused on sound, and I am convinced that the more interesting developments in Estonian sound art are yet to come.

## Maria Juur

(1988), an artist, musician and critic. Currently, she is a Masters student at the Goldsmiths College, the University of London.



1 M. Juur, *The Definition and Specifics of Sound Art. Different Approaches to Sound in Contemporary Estonian Art* (supervisor: Katrin Kivimaa). Bachelor's thesis. Estonian Academy of Arts, Institute of Art History. Tallinn: 2010.

2 D. Stubbs, *Fear of Music: Why People Get Rothko but Don't get Stockhausen*. Winchester; Washington: O Books, 2009, p. 9.

3 A. Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music. Between Categories*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2007, p. 14.

Covers of different CDs by Project Unison and pictures from the project "Jammer"

## **As for music....**

Andres Lõo (excerpt from one of his letters)

... As for music,

I consider my album *Skeletons on Rock*

(Laton, 2009) to be a quintessential work of music.

Special attention should be paid to the texts on the

album's poster. The album has quite a few layers

and thus is especially a treat for the art crowd.

For me it also means extensive research on rhythms.

The album is also a comment on the perversity

called 'sound experimentation', which produced

a style known as 'experimental', amongst others.

What's left today of the late 1990s and early 2000s

heyday of experiments is the rather generalising

term 'noise', which does not say that much...



# Interview with Raul Keller

**Eero Epner (EE): Raul Keller, you have been active in the Estonian music scene for years and it seems that one topic that keeps cropping up for you is the mutual reflection of (urban) space and sounds. Are you inspired by seeking a different experience of space and sound, or is it something else entirely?**

Raul Keller (RK): I have mostly worked in place-specific situations and this requires a careful consideration of how to use the material at my disposal. Before the work process gets going, I establish what is already there and how it relates to my experience of space. Only after that do I start thinking about what should be added or augmented. With sound, we can talk about both the temporal and spatial dimensions, and their linguistic and social character. Sound is usually a rejected and not consciously perceived background in an environment, focusing via various signs, such as a police siren or music. If we bring the background to the fore, actually listen to it, human perception typically starts to create linguistic structures and sign systems, and tries to establish repetitions, recognisable sounds etc. We could call it personal composing in real time, approaching what we know as musical practice. I have always been fascinated by the phenomenological border where the phenomena change, as does our thinking about it. All these processes can be made to operate in place-specific practice, improvisation etc. I prefer the principle in which I do not create a new composition, but produce preconditions for activating cognisant listeners, who are able to form an experience themselves. These, of course, are maxims which require a cognisant public.

**At what point does experimental music become music proper? Does the difference matter to you at all?**

In certain practices, the border does not exist and I have no desire to draw it; it is a question of aesthetic preferences, spatial specifics and listening habits. For me, the transition point is the place-specific group

improvisation, where the existing material is not included. The emphasis in contemporary music is on the author, and performers personify it. Even in 'experimental' electronic music the focus is still on the author. I am more interested in collective work and activating the creativity of the public. In reality, as I mentioned above, such ideal situations occur only rarely, but fortunately they do occur sometimes and it is occasionally possible even to document them.

Radio created artistically can be interpreted in several ideological contexts. It can be a means to spread 'experimental sounds', but it can also be a political statement and a particular opposition to commercial radio stations; it can be an engineering-technical journey of discovery etc.

**What kind of ideas are essential at Local Radio – locally working art radio? (See also [lokaalradio.ee](http://lokaalradio.ee))**

I can only give my own opinion. For me, all the contexts you have mentioned have been in focus at some point or another, and they do not exclude one another. I would again like to mention the possibility of collective experience, and the visual character of radio as an environment. We see everything more clearly if we compare the production of commercial channels (FM) and short wave (AM). In one case, the choices made by the heads of the radio stations can lead to a short circuit with the marketed image of performers and trademarks and, in the second case, we are cast into a dim world of blending signals. Radio can also be a means of moving around in space, which fills the sounds with images.

**What else would you like to do that you haven't yet done?**

I am thinking about re-issuing some existing recordings and documentations, e.g. Projekt Unison's *Trainpulse*, which are difficult to track down now, but perhaps deserve to be rediscovered. As for future plans – there are enough challenges.

**Raul Keller**  
(1973), a sound, video, performance and installation artist. See also [raulkeller.mkdk.org](http://raulkeller.mkdk.org).

## Kumu Art Museum

Weizenbergi 34 / Valge 1, Tallinn

[www.ekm.ee/eng/kumu.php](http://www.ekm.ee/eng/kumu.php)

Open: May–Sept Tue–Sun 11 am–6 pm, Wed 11 am–8 pm;  
Oct–April Wed–Sun 11 am–6 pm, Wed 11 am–8 pm

- until 25 Sep *gateways*. Art and Networked Culture
- until 18 Sep Pavel Filonov and the Russian Avant-Garde
- until 30 Oct *Double Portrait*. Flemish Symbolists James Ensor and Jules de Bruycker
- until 23 Oct Urmas Ploomipuu's White House (see also Estonian Art 2/2010)
- 9 Sep–Jan 2012 Tadeusz Kantor. Member of the Polish Avant-Garde and Theatre Reformer
- 7 Oct–2012 *Beyond*. International Curator Exhibition of Tallinn Photo Month 2011
- 14 Oct–Jan 2012 Ene-Liis Semper
- 26 Oct–March 2012 The Theatrical World in Estonian Graphic Arts in the 1970s and 1980s
- 11 Nov–2012 *Vinum et panis*. The Motifs of Wine and Bread in 16th to 20th Century Art

## Kadriorg Art Museum

Kadriorg Palace, Weizenbergi 37, Tallinn

Mikkel Museum, Weizenbergi 28, Tallinn

[www.ekm.ee/eng/kadriorg.php](http://www.ekm.ee/eng/kadriorg.php)

Open: May–Sept Tue–Sun 10 am–5 pm  
Oct–April Wed–Sun 10 am–5 pm

Permanent exhibitions:

**Kadriorg Palace:** Paintings from the 16th–18th century. Dutch, German, Italian and Russian masters. Western European and Russian applied art and sculpture from the 18th–20th centuries.

- until 2 Oct Estonian Icons Painting
- 22 Oct–March 2012 *Tracing Bosch & Bruegel*. Four Paintings Magnified

**Mikkel Museum:** Collection of Johannes Mikkel: the Art of Western Europe, Russia, and China from 16th–20th centuries

- until 4 Sep Russian Icons. Gunnar Savisaar's Collection
- 16 Sep–2012 Portraiture in Fine Art. Based on Estonian Private Collections

## Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design

Lai 17, Tallinn

[www.etdm.ee](http://www.etdm.ee)

Open: Wed–Sun 11 am–6 pm

Permanent exhibition: *Patterns of Time 3*  
Survey of Estonian applied art and the development of design

- until 18 Sep Imbi Ploomipuu. Ceramics & Graphic Art.
- 17 Sep–23 Oct Estonian Designers' Union. Innovation in Estonian design.
- 24 Sep–6 Nov Form in Porcelain
- 10 Nov–15 Jan *Ring – Jewelry Forever*. Hnoss Gallery. Sweden
- 11 Nov–26 Feb *Classics*. Leather artist Elo Järv

## Adamson-Eric Museum

Lühike jalg 3, Tallinn

[www.ekm.ee/eng/adamson.php](http://www.ekm.ee/eng/adamson.php)

Open: Wed–Sun 11 am–6 pm

Permanent exhibition

Works by Adamson-Eric. Adamson-Eric (1902–1968) is one of the most outstanding Estonian artists of the 20th century. The museum's permanent exhibition consists of a display of Adamson-Eric's works (painting, ceramics, porcelain painting, leather art, metal forms, jewellery, decorative tiles, textile, and furniture).

- until 13 November *Forever Feminine*. The Work of Johannes Greenberg and Ferdi Sannamees
- 19 Nov–March 2012 *Shackles of Beauty*

## Contemporary Museum of Art, Estonia

Põhja pst 35, Tallinn

[ekm-came.blogspot.com/](http://ekm-came.blogspot.com/)

Open Tue–Sun 1 pm–7 pm

Check the web-site

## Niguliste Museum

Niguliste 3, Tallinn

[www.ekm.ee/eng/niguliste.php](http://www.ekm.ee/eng/niguliste.php)

Open: Wed–Sun 10 am–5 pm

Permanent exhibitions:

Ecclesiastical Art from the 14th–20th centuries The Silver Chamber

- until 29 May 2011 *Villem Raam as a Photographer*

## Tallinn Art Hall

Vabaduse Sq 8, Tallinn

[www.kunstihoone.ee](http://www.kunstihoone.ee)

Open: Wed–Sun 12 am–6 pm

- until 2 Oct *Continuum\_the Perception Zone*
- 8 Oct–20 Nov Baltic photography
- 30 Nov–8 Jan Sophie Calle
- 14 Jan–19 Feb *EST\_Prologue*

## Tallinn Art Hall Gallery

Vabaduse Sq 6, Tallinn

[www.kunstihoone.ee](http://www.kunstihoone.ee)

Open: Wed–Sun 12 am–6 pm

- 1 Sep–18 Sep *Border Town*. Estonian-Portuguese exhibition of adornments
- 23 Sep–16 Oct Boriss Mihhailov
- 21 Oct–13 Nov Yael Bartana
- 16 Nov–2 Dec Valli Lember-Bogatkina
- 4 Dec–18 Dec Jüri Arrak
- 21 Dec–8 Jan Paul Kuimet (see also pp 36–41)
- 12 Jan–5 Feb Katrin Pere

## Tallinn City Gallery

Harju 13, Tallinn  
[www.kunstihoone.ee](http://www.kunstihoone.ee)  
 Open: Wed-Sun 12 am-6 pm

until 25 Sep	<i>Border Town</i> . Estonian-Portuguese exhibition of adornments
29 Sep-23 Oct	Mare Tralla & Coolturistes (Lithuania)
27 Oct-4 Dec	<i>Puerperium</i> . Minna Havukainen (Finland)
8 Dec-31 Dec	Tuuli Muukka (Finland)
5 Jan-29 Jan	Madis Luik

## Hobusepea Gallery

Hobusepea 2, Tallinn  
[www.eaa.ee/hobusepea/english/](http://www.eaa.ee/hobusepea/english/)  
 Open: Wed-Mon 10 am-6 pm

until 5 Sep	<i>sylt without ulrike</i> . Liina Siib
7 Sep-19 Sep	<i>scene</i> . Mart Vainre
21 Sep-3 Oct	<i>deconstructing x</i> . Kati Ilves & Maido Juss
5 Oct-17 Oct	Iti Kasser
19 Oct-31 Oct	Margot Kask
2 Nov-14 Nov	Kai Kaljo & Luke Davies (AU)
16 Nov-28 Nov	Artishok produces: Raul Kalvo
30 Nov-12 Dec	<i>perpetuum mobile</i> . Jass Kaselaan
14 Dec-2 Jan	Urmas Pedanik

## Vaal Gallery

Tartu mnt 80d, Tallinn  
[www.vaal.ee](http://www.vaal.ee)  
 Open: Tue-Fri 12 am-6 pm, Sat 12 am-4 pm

September	Marje Taska
October	Jaan Toomik
November	Jaak Visnap
December	Tiit Pääsuke

## HOP Gallery

Hobusepea 2, Tallinn  
[www.eaa.ee/hop](http://www.eaa.ee/hop)  
 Open: Thu-Tue 10 am-6 pm

2 Sep-20 Sep	Kaji Nanako (Japan)
23 Sep-11 Oct	Photo Jewelry
14 Oct-1 Nov	Krista Leesi
4 Nov-22 Nov	<i>August Tamm Diary</i> . Urmas Viik
25 Nov-13 Dec	<i>Still Life</i> . Mare Kelpman
16 Dec-3 Jan	<i>White White</i> . Helle Videvik

## HOP Gallery

Hobusepea 2, Tallinn  
[www.agalerii.ee](http://www.agalerii.ee)  
 Open: Mon-Fri 10 am-6 pm, Sat 11 am-4 pm

until 12 Sep	Jun Konishi, Michihiro Sato, Shunichiro Nakashima
16 Sep-10 Oct	Ester Faiman
14 Oct-7 Nov	Aija Kivi
11 Nov-5 Dec	Ülle Kõuts
9 Dec-3 Jan	Merle Kasonen

## Draakon Gallery

Pikk 18, Tallinn  
[www.eaa.ee/draakon/eindex.htm](http://www.eaa.ee/draakon/eindex.htm)  
 Open: Mon-Fri 10 am-6 pm, Sat 10 am-5 pm

5 Sep-17 Sep	Fideelia-Signe Roots
19 Sep-1 Oct	<i>sex and food</i> . Eveli Varik
3 Oct-15 Oct	<i>I am so</i> . Epp Kubu & Maria Aua
17 Oct-29 Oct	Estonian Art Academy. Architecture
31 Oct-12 Nov	<i>digital natives</i> . Anna Tuvike & Andri Allas
14 Nov-26 Nov	<i>modern piracy</i> . Marko Nautras
28 Nov-10 Dec	<i>i am neesia</i> . Valev Sein
12 Dec-31 Dec	<i>reflections</i> . Marju Vaher

## Tartu Art Museum

Raekoja Sq 18, Tartu  
[www.tartmus.ee](http://www.tartmus.ee)  
 Open: Wed-Sun 11 am-6 pm

until 4 Sep	Tartu Art School 60
16 Sep-13 Nov	Festival of Contemporary Art
18 Nov-29 Jan	Jüri Arrak. Coal drawings

## Tartu Art House

Vanemuise 26, Tallinn  
[www.kunstimaja.ee](http://www.kunstimaja.ee)  
 Open: Wed-Mon 21 am-6 pm

until 11 Sep	Painters' Association
15 Sep-16 Oct	Art Ist Kuku Nu Ut (see also Estonian Art 2/2010)
20 Oct-20 Nov	Andrus Kasemaa
24 Nov-18 Dec	Mare Tralla
since 22 Dec	Artists from Tartu

in small hall	
15 Sep-16 Oct	Art Ist Kuku Nu Ut (see also Estonian Art 2/2010)
20 Oct-27 Nov	Mall Nukke
30 Nov-18 Dec	Urmas Viik
since 22 Dec	Artists from Tartu

## Pärnu City Gallery

Uus 4, Pärnu  
[linnagalerii.parnu.ee](http://linnagalerii.parnu.ee)  
 Open: Tue-Fri 11 am-5 pm  
 Sat 11 am-2 pm

until 10 Sep	Lola Liivat
14 Sep-8 Oct	ASLAK group (Finland)
12 Oct-5 Nov	Mila Balti & Meeland Sepp
9 Nov-3 Dec	Annual exhibition
7 Dec-31 Dec	Kaili-Angela Konno, Kateriin Rikken, Leho Rubis



# SKELTONS ON ROCK

## ANDRES LÖÖ

ALL MUSIC WAVE-EDITED, WRITTEN AND PRODUCED IN TALLINN, VIENNA, BERGEN, DÜSSELDORF AND LISBON BY ANDRES LÖÖ. EXCEPT "MAGAZINE" WHICH WAS WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND RECORDED BY ANDRES LÖÖ AND STEFAN MITTNER OF SEX TAGS. DRUMS ON "POST DOGMATIC LOVE" AND "INTROVERT DANCER" ARE RECORDED BY RAIMER JANICS. "POST", "SPEED OF DARKNESS", "SELECTIVE MEMORY", "TAKE THIS VAULT" AND "INTROVERT DANCER" REMIXED BY F. POMASSL. MASTERED BY SERGEY MURAYOV. ALBUM DESIGN, BITMAPING AND IMAGING BY SEX TAGS. LOGO TYPOGRAPHY BY JAAN EVART. PHOTOS BY KRIST TARKMEL. LATON 048. © 2009 LATON. WWW.LATON.EE

1. VIENNESE VODKA VAMPIRE
2. MAGAZINE
3. UNRULY BIRD
4. TRIGGER TRICKSTER
5. POST
6. POST DOGMATIC LOVE
7. LOVE HURTS
8. RAIN SKIT
9. MONDAYNITY
10. SPEED OF DARKNESS
11. SELECTIVE MEMORY
12. MONEY MORAL MOTOR
13. REMEMBER FUNES
14. TAKE THIS VAULT
15. TOUR DE FORCE VS FORCE MAJEURE
16. INTROVERT DANCER
17. OH MAN!
18. RUBIK ON THE SHORES OF RUBICON

CD ALBUM OUT NOW ON LATON!

laton

Mr Stefan Fundon Tulp FanFan Donut,

I have written a few lines about my feelings.

Skeletons on Rock.

I guess it is quite a dark album. As the name implies there are issues of things to be killed or things being observed while they die - feelings, memories, illusions to egoism, powerplay, reaching to almost autistic introspection and introversion. The album has been in the making for the last three years and during that period there have been many scattering, shocking and route changing things happening. So it is pretty personal at times. Still, to turn there are lots of bits that are extended, to tell a more compelling story, to give it a more powerful feeling and to make it more picturesque. And that is the emotional side of "Skeletons on Rock". Perhaps not as important to listeners as it is to myself.

It's also celebrating life, because it's quite a boy's album, too. It's got a lot of mojo in there and it invites to rumble around. It invites one to make a mess and not think about cleaning when party is over... There wouldn't be any need because it's pure fun and no real damage would be caused.

"Skeletons on Rock" is a play-room. It's where musical styles collide in some Lego-like ways. It's where hard core meets prog rock and where metal is converted into sterile skeletons of power beats and straight forward power chords, lending it's edge from electro and hip hop, even r'n'b if you like - with avantgarde singing in "Unruly Bird", for example.

But even more than an intentionally subproduced record with extrapolated vocalities of conceptual exercises with pop rhetoric, the album clings to be a storytelling.

I have had this idea of so called "contemporary berytates" for some while and without yet acknowledging of compiling this album, I started singing. It allows me communicate with audience and it allows me to create worlds with more colour, especially when music sits towards utter purity.

And... Well, I don't really need to talk much about wave editing as the main tool for creating those sounds to you, but it should be mentioned somewhere.

Perhaps saying "WAVE-EDIT ON ROCK" somewhere on the sleeve?

Alright, about the tracks separately:

1. Viennese Vodka Vampire - It's based on a true story. I had a romance in Vienna with a girl with vampire teeth. A slight feeling of love. "I wanted to create this pseudo gothic feel with metal synths and a humming wall of background vocals. Her real name is Rita Novak and she was artist name Casper von Tannenbaum. You can see her picture on my Myspace in the player's window while VVV plays. I saw her last in Vienna at a biennial opening. We hung around and I made my record not of traveling with almost no luggage at all.

2. Magazine - I know my singing is not exactly radio friendly, neither dance floor friendly, but it's the album version and I think "Magazine" is a kind of a turning point of the whole album. It gives a lot of milder feelings. But the main reason it's entitled is that I want to move on from wave editing and this one is like a hint to what could be possible in the future. With vocals I tried to tell two different stories. In the beginning this booby one tells a rather banal "where have you been, pop song love story, but the "real" story takes place in the one underneath. That one tells a story of a guy walking on streets of European cities and their glamour weight always with expensive shops and expensive relationships.

You know:  
"I went walking by the boulevard"

along the helly pictures

It was as if I was beautiful myself

Walking by the screens

hairs, facelines and shapes unveil

hearts of glamour

canvases de l'amour

look who's coming!

on heels,

so-how-do-you-do!" etc.

yeah, and on it goes. In the end everything gets kind of mixed. Magazine tells a glamorous story with moviestars and big feelings. lot of weaker brothers there, isn't it?

3. Unruly Bird - minimalism alongside a true story. It's about my friends who "can't stop singing", you know, the manic types... recently I did a live version singing "You Do Something to Me" instead and it worked out really well.

4. Trigger Trickster - Between you and me - VVV and Trigger are based on the same sample throughout the track. One where wave editing can take you. There's also a third one - the first one with this sample called Linear Soldier (aka Decography), but I don't make it to the album. I think Trigger Trickster is a rather new party prank with some typical rhythmic jokes I enjoy so much. Stylistically it was a big mock on MC, but as it came out so nicely I just left it the way it was.

5. Post - That's a prog rock remake and it was a bloody struggle to get it where it stands now. People who don't have sense of rhythm might find most of my music highly annoying, but who cares.

6. Post Dogmatic Love - The apocryphal sequel to Post with lovable powerchords. I needed a track that had happiness to it and would again fit into less than 3 min. pop song convention. But I also loved the idea of coming out with a total series of musical triptychs, all based on the same sample although sounding so extremely different.

7. Love Hurts - Last part of the triptych. I've always loved extremely straight power beats and here, I think, I have managed to make a good one myself. I have the same quality as "Linear Soldier" and "When the Saints Go Marching In, then the Priests go Pale", but I left those two out, because I didn't want to overload this album with heaviness.

... and I think I found a perfect name as well

8. Rain Skit - Franz thought there should be something slow between track 5. and 8. to kind of decide the album into more parts essentially or surely. I think he was right about making it more listener friendly. By the way, you can hear traces of Düsseldorf in this one.

9. Mondaynity - ... and "Mondaynity" as a fully legitimate heir of Rain Skit... I think it adds a lot to the whole atmosphere.

10. Speed of Darkness - It was previously called "Sometimes Conceptualizing Doesn't Help", but I thought that was too arty and I changed it into a more metal sounding one. By the way, the speed of darkness is 1,079,252,348.3 km/h. I remade the sound a bit. Franz really likes the track so I put it on. I like it too although it doesn't give in too oftenly. But when you're into it, it is quite satisfactory and rewarding in it's rawness and the shit-fuck-piss-off-motherfucker-shoot-you-in-your-knee attitude.

11. Selective Memory - Oh, this track was my favourite for a long time. It's syncopated and in perfect order and balance. I really worked like a madman on this one. I wanted it to maintain it's strong metal drive and still be appealing experimentally. To me it sounds well

balanced and I can air drum it by heart. It's a study of rhythmical repetition, syncopation and rhythmic harmony.

12. Money Moral Motor Steam - You know this one. It's a prank... again and I didn't like this one for a long time, but now I love it for it's simplicity and the punk rock middle part a lot. Good sampling material, as you know.

13. Remember Funes - a beautiful skit that has some kind of bizarre phantom radio quality in there.

14. Take this Vault - This one is a hand played waltz with a twist of dub. Mid and a rather prolonged interlude.

15. Tour de Force vs Force Majeure - ... and one more skit here ...

16. Introvert Dancer - this one is from my first web release "monitor", but I collected "monitor" from looning.org a while ago. I think nobody really cares about web-releases, do they? It's post rock, beautiful and simple. Electronic, drums and a lonesome Roland Jupiter ontop. Haunting.

17. Oh Man! - The hit. Nothing to add to the fact that it is based on David Bowies' "Life on Mars" sample. I think he can't sue me for making such a nice one.

18. Rubik on the Shores of Rubicon - Encore! Realized in good out-up technique. I think most of the track (if really don't remember exactly) - is based on Antony's piano sample from his bestselling album. But who would make the connection? - hehe, who knows... ("Selective Memories" sample is taken from Helmer)

Oh yes, that's a lot of text already.  
"SoR" is like my break-away from any "experimentalism" trap. I wanted to do stuff that matters to people. Something that people can relate to with more ease than with for example a remake of minimalist sculpture by Robert Morris.

I think I have a huge thank you list, but I haven't decided whether I should put it there or not. If yes, then everybody, if no, then nobody. Depends on design. What do you think, Stefan?

CREDITS:

All tracks are wave-edited, written, produced and performed by Andres Löö except "Magazine" that was co-produced by Stefan Mittner of Sex Tags. Drums on tracks 4 and 14 are recorded by Rainer Janics. Tracks 5, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 16 sound-manipulated by Franz Pomassl. The album was created and tested in cities of Europe as follows: Tallinn, Vienna, Oslo, Bergen, Düsseldorf, Salzburg, Lisbon, Berlin, Vilnius, Helsinki, Saint-Petersburg, Riga.

Bows and handshakes to Anna Ceeh & Franz Pomassl, Karolin Tampere & Stefan Mittner, Margit Argus, Bert Tõlv, Rein Jakobson, Rainer Janics, Kees, Hanno Soans, Mammu & Kati, Casper von Tannenbaum, Västari Gailits, Inger, Lina Vainik, Andre Teodosio, Romeo Runa, Krist Tarkmel, Martin Padarik, Fabrique, Priit Raud, Martin Uusiküld, Jaan Murt, Mihkel Kiess, Alvar.

How about mentioning the bits I don't really want to do... but

Andres Löö  
Lisbon, February 3rd, 2008



Eesti Instituut