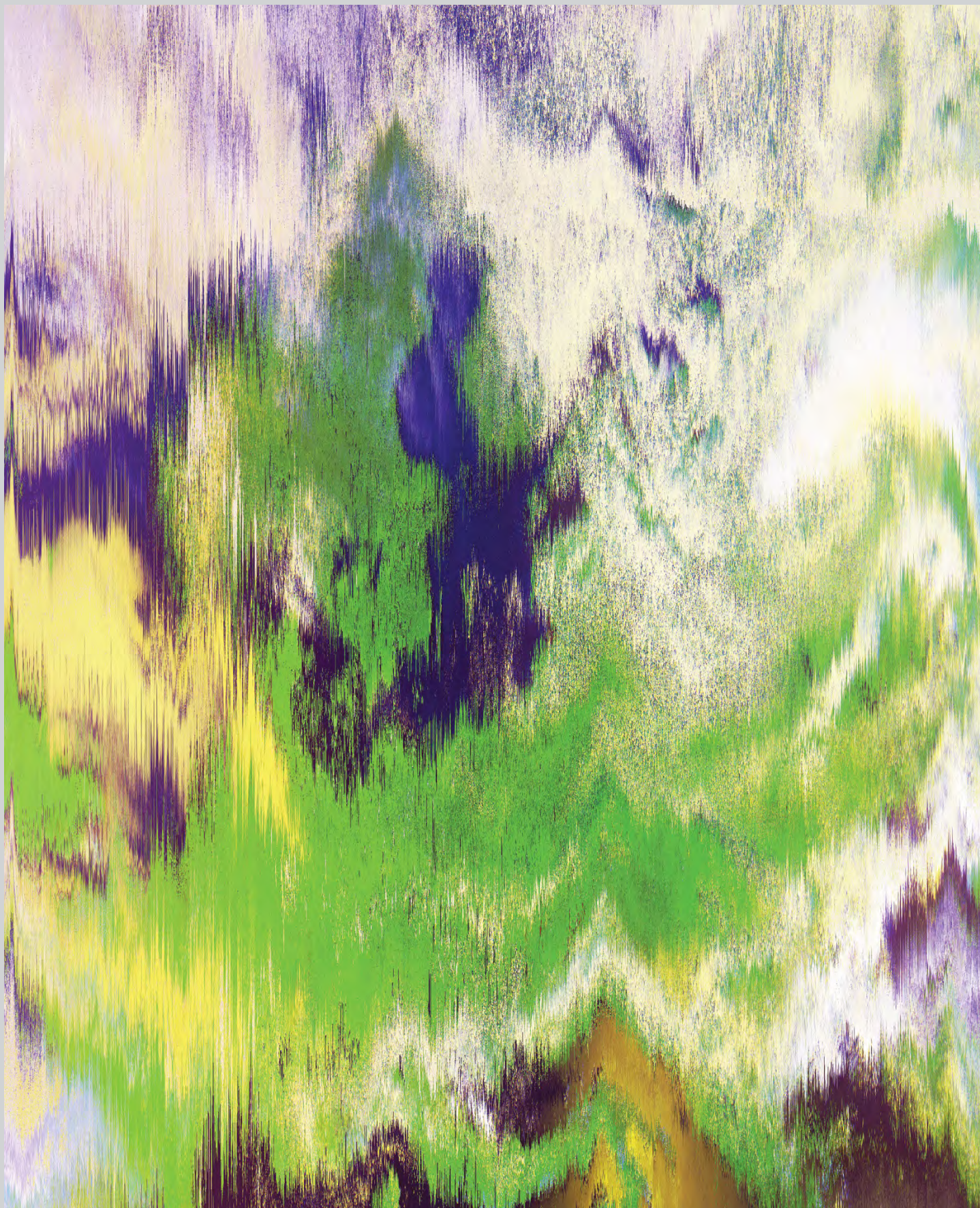


2/2017

Estonian Art



On the Screen

This
issue of
Estonian Art
focuses on screen-
based art.

In September “The Archaeology
of the Screen: The Estonian Example”,
curated by Eha Komissarov, will open at
BOZAR, the Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels. The
exhibition explores the relationship between art and
new media and includes works by Paul Kuimet, Taavi Suisalu,
Marge Monko, Sigrid Viir, Ivar Veermäe, Tõnis Vint, Yuri Sobolev
and Katja Novitskova.

The exhibition at BOZAR coincides with the move of the Presidency of
the Council of the European Union to Estonia, Estonia’s celebration of its
centennial in 2018 (EV100), and the opening of a new wing of BOZAR
focused on media art – BOZAR Lab. We delve into the medium of the
screen in contemporary art with texts by Raivo Kelomees, Andres Lõo,
Ragne Nukk, Nithikul Nimkulrat and Eha Komissarov. There are visual
essays by Marge Monko and Taavi Suisalu. This issue also includes articles
on design, books and architecture, with a special nod to Belgian/Estonian
architectural collaborations with articles by Eve Arpo, Triin Männik and
Gregor Taul.

Estonian Art celebrates its 20th anniversary (1997–2017) with a special
publication that launches at Kumu and international locations later this
year. The 20th anniversary publication will include portraits
of Estonian artists by Mark Raidpere, with a
preview included in this issue.

ART

- 3 Eha Komissarov
The Archaeology of the Screen: The Estonian Example
- 11 Keiu Krikmann
Digital Image Ecologies
- 14 Susanna Paasonen
Heartfelt, Singular, Generic, Googled
- 17 Marge Monko
Untitled Collages #1 –6
- 27 Jaak Tomberg
The Impact of Productive Frustration
- 31 Eha Komissarov
Yuri Sobolev (1928–2002)
- 35 Elnara Taidre
The Belt of Lielvārde, Multimedia Atlas
- 39 Elizabeth McTernan
Taavi Suisalu: Love at Last Sight
- 43 Taavi Suisalu
Pixel Geographies
- 52 Andreas Trossek
Ivar Veermäe: 6 Questions
- 57 Anneli Porri
The Screen, Archive and Waiting Room in Recent Estonian Photography
- 61 Ragne Nukk
Memopol-3 – The Magnifying Glass of Contemporary Privacy
- 65 Raivo Kelomees
History of the Screen in Estonian Art

DESIGN

- 67 Stefan Žarić
(Re)designing the Nation: The Compass of Estonian Design

- 75 Nithikul Nimkulrat
Crafting Digital Textiles

ARCHITECTURE

- 80 Eve Arpo
Tallinn Architecture Biennale

- 83 Triin Männik
TAB, The Test Site for Physical Digitality

- 87 Gregor Taul
A Laboratory for Symbols. Reflections on Today's Europe

BOOKS

- 91 Madli Ehasalu
Artist's Spaces

- 96 Andres Lõo
Phantom Platform

- 100 Mark Raidpere
20 Years of Estonian Art

EXHIBITIONS

- 108

Eha Komissarov (b.1947) is an art historian and curator at Kumu Art Museum.

Eha Komissarov

The Archaeology of the Screen: The Estonian Example

At the newly-opened BozarLab in Brussels, visitors will be welcome from the 14th of September to the 12th of November (2017) to get to know a selection of artists who have stood out in the Estonian media art scene, plus some of the first promoters of visual culture from the 1980s.

The exhibition “The Archaeology of the Screen: The Estonian Example” is a project analysing the relations of art and new media in connection with three major

events: in July 2017, Estonia took over the European Council presidency; in 2018, the Republic of Estonia will celebrate its 100th anniversary; and the exhibition space Bozar will be opening a new wing, the BozarLab, in September 2017, dedicated specifically to media art.

When preparing an exhibition project to deal with a national event, it is difficult to talk about the curator's approach in the form of an individual effort. Our team – the curator Eha Komissarov, the coordinator Triin Tulgiste and the art production company Valge Kuup, together with their assistants in Brussels – has primarily worked constructively. Our approach has been clearly determined by the options available to us, and we are aware that we will not be presenting the history of Estonian art nor the *crème de la crème* of our national media art in Brussels. We have made a selection of digital media artists in Estonia and will take a short look at the past, which is significantly less than a century in respect to media art.

The opportunities offered by the BozarLab favour artists whose creative processes can be brought to viewers via the tangible flat surface of a screen. We decided in favour of the screen, the virtual image, which seemingly resembles the traditional situation of the artist/artwork/representation on the surface of the screen. While the screen acts as a support structure, the overview of Estonian media art is shaped by artists of various orientations, whose artistic views cover a wide variety of phenomena, from terrorism to experiments with hypertext.

We had to overcome a lack of space and other obstructions which are a permanent part of any situation where media art is presented. Media art is certainly the most artificial and demanding branch of culture due to its connection to complicated technology which can act in unexpected ways, and to artists whose paths always take them close to the borders or who create new histories, while being closely related to the absurd, to ideas that are predetermined to fail, or to impossible starting points. Taavi Suisalu's "Landscapes and Portraits" (2016) communicates with broken satellites. The created sound installation requires a screen to service an out-of-control satellite and display visual messages received from space. This work of art, projecting the modernist past onto the post-modernist present, while elegantly alluding to the possibility that new technologies and digital art perspectives do not lack a locus classicus, has been summarised by the philosopher Eik Hermann as follows: "Working satellites are tools for the powers that be, primarily meant for military applications, serving as parts of the overall surveillance network. Their decommissioning makes us look at them in a completely opposite way. Similarly to abandoned industrial buildings, after having lost their function, they evoke sympathy and nostalgia instead. It is as if, being released from the power structures, they are automatically also freed from their past. In this respect, former satellites can be considered the most modern ruins, which seem particularly exotic due to their inaccessibility."¹

Virtuality is the most ambiguous concept in the field of networking. Artists use it to create new worlds, with opportunities to come up with completely new words and concepts. Andres Lõo has voiced the concept of a media art platform that mixes together the coordinates of space-time via poetic images of a phantom platform: "Neuroscientists claim that humans have two bodies. A physical body and a phantom body. A phantom body is our understanding of how

the various parts of the body work together as a whole, which is exemplified by the strange phenomenon of the phantom limb. In the context of contemporary art, this phenomenon can be used as a metaphor for projecting ideas into the future. Thus, I have come up with the concept of a 'phantom platform'. A phantom platform is a positively charged metaspace into which one can project one's immediate future. The phantom platform is a possibility. The phantom platform is a reaction against the inescapability of having to choose between two known polarities: it offers a new, third option. The phantom platform is a paradigm shift – if you wish."²

The backgrounds of the Estonian media artists represented at the Bozar contain many similarities; they have arrived at their chosen field from photography, graphic design and media art, the latter of which was introduced as a subject at the Estonian Academy of Arts in the 1990s. Media artists belong to the generation that grew up in a media-enriched environment, which is dominated by the digital camera and smart phone, and where life experience is dominated by the continuous supplementation of culture through media technologies that stress the visual aspect. The abundance of Estonian media artists with photographic backgrounds is, among many other factors, tied to the great demand for such skills. According to Lev Manovich, computer software does not produce images on its own, so the paradox of visual culture can be seen in the transfer of the creation of images to the computer, while outside of the computer the importance of photographic and cinematic imagery continues to grow.³

It is not difficult to characterise the art on display: in appearance it refers to camera work, from the aspect of material it is digital, and its logic is based on software. During the formation years, these artists were affected by the utopias of the globalisation process, now in danger of being forgotten; they all view themselves as members of the international digital art scene. The main theme in media art is globalisation, and their approaches have been dictated by globalisation. The screen serves as a metaphor of the global era.

A great example of the perspective of the globalised world is the career of the Tallinn-born Katja Novitskova: her joint studies at the semiotics department of the University of Tartu, and in digital media and graphic design in Lübeck and Amsterdam can be seen as a springboard to the post-Internet art community. Katja, who in 2009 helped define the discourse



Paul Kuimet "2060", 2014. Photo: Paul Kuimet



Taavi Suisalu "Landscapes and Portraits", 2016. Photo: Taavi Suisalu

of post-Internet art, describes herself as follows: "My work process, in general, consists of the visual scanning of the world and understanding the images thus created. I spend a lot of time online. Each data set, each data matrix created in today's world, is a direct image of this world and/or its author. The imagery is present in the information field, and we are only left to create a narrative and a world-view in this information field."⁴ The critique sees dread in post-Internet art: "This multiplicity of vision – recorded by a machine that humans have created, just like the algorithm commanded; displayed in front of the eyes of an artist by the will of another algorithm, the search engine; chosen by the artist to present to the viewer, now as a tangible sculpture – it's dreadful."⁵

Katja Novitskova's narrative is non-linear, presenting images taken from the information field as sculptures printed on aluminium. Her narrative depends mostly on a green world-view; however, as an artist who is forced to pay increasingly more attention to existential questions, Katja, who has always had close contact with virtual animals, now also keeps an eye on the processes linked to the spread of dystopian ideas and has adopted the mindset characteristic of the anthropocene. Currently, Katja is fascinated by views of the Earth taken from NASA satellites and, in her representation, the surface of our planet resembles the craters on the Moon.

Ivar Veermäe, who studies and works in Berlin, has created a work consisting of several projections called "Replica" (2017), which deals with the study of terrorism and events caused by the war in Syria. Veermäe employs clear-cut positions in his narrative model; his previous work was concerned with the topics of the Internet, control and observation, based on the example of the Google Corporation. The key image of the Palmyra project is a 3D model of the Arch of Triumph, destroyed by ISIS in 2015, although it had no religious significance. The work of art follows terror and propaganda campaigns related to the site or, in the artist's words: "In 2016, the Russian Air Force helped to liberate Palmyra from Daesh. Shortly afterwards, the Russian symphony orchestra with one of its best-known conductors, Valery Gergiev, and the cellist Sergei P. Rodulgin (known from Panama papers) played pieces of Johann Sebastian Bach, Sergei Prokofiev and Rodion Shchedrin in the same amphitheatre where people had been executed. There was a live video link from Vladimir Putin in Sochi. In 2008, a similar event was held in South Ossetia to celebrate the victory over Georgia. As these events seem

weird and parodic, I'm interested in what effects they have. These actions – displaced replications – are both distanced and real"⁶. What is the relationship of these events to information and how do they help manipulate information? These are the questions Ivar Veermäe asks and tries to answer in the piece completed for the BozarLab exhibition.

How can we link the dominant position of digital media in the Estonian art scene to the development policies of Estonia? In the early 1990s, the newly independent State of Estonia chose IT as one of its development priorities, launching the unique eState project, which has earned us a lot of recognition all over the world. Some of the artists working in digital media are motivated not to fall in the shadow of the innovative state, but to replace official positions with independent authors' standpoints and to approach the media-governed environment from an unforeseen angle.

Due to the lack of space, we unfortunately had to leave out a work by Timo Toots, who has been involved in revealing dialogues with the information technologies for more than a decade: the new, third version of his mirage-like, three-dimensional supermachine "Memopol". "Memopol" is a machine that visually presents information on the user found on the Internet and various national databases, while revealing with the help of a smart phone the vulnerable sides of the networked society. A citizen can use a smart phone to enter the national information networks and experience the vulnerability of data protection.

Manovich claims that the right to live in a screen society has been accompanied by major changes and sacrifices. The curator's experience shows that the screen tries to escape the function of a secondary semiotic system linked to its role as an intermediary at every opportunity. The screen is aggressive in nature; it's not simply a neutral medium of information presentation. The screen has the task of filtering, cutting, controlling, and making everything outside the frame non-existent.⁷

The screen is a symbol of change as we ceaselessly replace simpler functions with more complicated ones. Digital technologies force their logic on the whole society, one of its achievements being that, in the future, each and every story will be meant for particular people sitting at the screens.

This can be experienced in Marge Monko's work "Dear D" (2015). Here the artist develops the theme

of classic letter-writing from a new angle, taking advantage of the opportunities and conventions of the Internet. As viewers, we cannot see what letters say in paintings: their content is hidden; we can only make assumptions based on the appearance of the writer. Monko's thought process has moved in the opposite direction, turning the writer into fiction, not the letters. Observations on the textual strategies common in new media were not an attractive subject matter for Estonian artists before Monko came along. Her post-feminist work, describing online communication and activation of different textual levels, certainly has a wider focus than what is immediately visible in the work of art.

Similar changes have been reported by Sue-Ellen Case: "Two prevalent principles of organisation, printing and screens, competed with each other throughout the 20th century. Print and the screen organised their own cultural models, created their own value structures and virtual communities that supported them. The two prevalent methods of presentation walked their own paths and challenged each other on the basis of their strengths until, in the end, the computer as the dominant structure and the engine behind the new style of writing, assigned the screen as the successor of printing. The victory of the screen, accompanied by the victory of global capitalism and the new virtual construction of socioeconomic activities, has had a number of consequences."⁸

Post-structuralism has expanded the concept of the text to a point where everything has become text. The screen is a text and the database is a text and the viewer no longer focuses on a single text. Exploiting the format of the love letter, Monko models online communication in dialogue with the author Chris Kraus, whose book "I Love Dick" describes her obsession with the sociologist Dick Hebdige. It is a pretext for the creation of a multi-layered cultural space, in which one can witness the interactive, hypertextual and dynamic text in live action. The image is powerful and the viewer of this orgy of references and links would be unable to follow the written word spreading out over the vastness of the Internet without the organising quality of the voice reading the text. By offering unlimited possibilities for telling new stories, the work of art clearly shows that all of these stories are based on the digitalised texts of existing classics.

The might of the screen is limitless: it unites the old and the new media, still frames and moving images, and the analogue and digital cultures. The idea

of connecting the screen with archaeological strata came to the curator during preparatory work for an exhibition at the Kumu branch of the Art Museum of Estonia which dealt with the history of the cooperation platform of the representatives of unofficial art in Moscow and experimental Estonian artists in the 1960s and 70s.⁹ The exhibition included a collection of materials about the oeuvre and activities of Yuri Sobolev (1928–2002), a Moscow artist, designer and publisher of science fiction literature and the magazines "Znaniye" and "Znaniye Sila". In the Russian visual culture, Yuri Sobolev is known as the initiator and realiser of a composite system of a large number of projections, referred to as the polyscreen. The work was commissioned in relation to the congress of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) in Moscow in 1976, but the half-finished project was banned. The team of authors (Y. Reshetnikov, Y. Sobolev and A. Farberman) managed to give a presentation of the project in a Moscow cinema, which was also recorded on film. Based on the preserved material, the design and architectural historian Andres Kurg initiated a reconstruction project of the piece. After the experiment in 1976, Yuri Sobolev found public expression for his idea of a film on slides as a design element in a theatre headed by M. Husid in Tyumen, Siberia. With the help of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Yuri Sobolev's reversal film "Mandalas"¹⁰ (1981), which was part of the stage setting of the play "Post House",¹¹ staged at the Tyumen Theatre of People, Objects and Puppets in 1981, was reconstructed.

In the cultural space of the Eastern Bloc countries, the screen served in the 1970s and 80s as a bridge, a window to another reality, both virtual and metaphysical. The theme and ideology of the reversal film "Mandalas" is tied to the author's documentary by the Estonian printmaker and graphic designer Tõnis Vint, who was Sobolev's close friend, follower and a student of Oriental transcendental philosophies. The film-study was completed in cooperation with the Riga Cinema Studio and was entitled "The Belt of Lielvarde. Tõnis Vint's Hypothesis" (1981).

The photographers Paul Kuimet and Sigrid Viir are represented at the exhibition in a somewhat atypical format, linked to the screen, not two-dimensional photos. Both artists have exploited the synergy between cameras and the digital environment to test new horizons. The possibility of the abstract treatment of time is examined at the BozarLab in Paul Kuimet's work "2060" (2014), which focusses on mu-



Sigrid Viir "Waiting Room Improvisation" (detail), 2016

seum exhibits and their presentation. He works with an unusual image, having found a prototypical tautological structure in the oeuvre of the sculptor Edgar Viies. The 1969 aluminium sculpture, reminiscent of a Möbius strip, becomes a kinetic object during the time of the shooting. The work of art enters a new reality: the sculpture located in the display hall of the Art Museum of Estonia has been made to move in the film, forcing the viewer of the clip to think about this unusual situation through monotonous, repeated motion.

Sigrid Viir displays her photograph “Waiting Room Improvisation” (2016) in a light box; her work represents a modern self-image and its travails in the waiting room of an airport. The tedium of waiting is symbolised in a fluffy cloud with a small clot of spittle in one corner. Viir’s work is, in general, characterised by her handling of signs that can be constructed, linked to the surrounding circumstances, and reversed to become meaningless non-signs.

P.S. The exhibition The Archaeology of the Screen: The Estonian Example will continue in a further developed format at the Kumu Art Museum in the summer of 2018.

Keiu Krikmann (b.1988) is a freelance writer and translator. She is one of the co-ordinators of the project space Konstanet and works as the gallerist of the Estonian Academy of Arts Gallery.

Digital Image Ecologies

From the very start of her path as an artist, around 2010, Katja Novitskova’s work has been concerned with the ecology of digital images: how images are created, recycled and recontextualised. She also extensively uses “found images”, often from outside the art sphere, from the fields of technology and science. But rather than framing those images as feats of human progress, she gives priority to non-human agents and draws attention to the process of looking. By detaching the images from their original context and placing them in new settings, Novitskova makes us re-evaluate the way we as humans look at other entities. Furthermore, as she also uses images as they are produced by various machines, such as satellites, scanners and cameras, she gives priority to the process of seeing or witnessing. The images she uses are not “seen” in a conventional (human) sense but are witnessed by other entities. Do they look back at us? Who are we under their gaze?

The Cinematic Other

Many of the images Novitskova uses – especially those of animals – are familiar to us, or at least this is what we would like to believe. We claim the depicted organisms belong to our, the human sphere; we think we are connected to them and they to us, that they are our familiars. Yet, they are familiar only to the degree we liken them to ourselves. To remain empathic, we need to place the non-human in narratives we can understand; we need to view them as we do ourselves, placed in cinematic settings for our viewing pleasure. By using isolated and enlarged high-quality images, Novitskova makes viewers balance between feeling a connection to the images, and having an uneasy sense of not being sure what they are looking at. In “All the wild animals” Sam Kriss writes: “Faces don’t just appear in closeup; the closeup is a part of facialization. Flat and abstract, invading the terrain of the living

1 Eik Hermann. Oodates lähedust. Artishok Biennale, Tallinn 2016 http://artishokbiennale.org/ABI6/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ABI6_hermann.pdf.
2 Andres Lõo, Fantoomplatvorm. Phantom Platform. 2016, p. 220.
3 Lev Manovich, Uue meedia keel, 2012, p. 195.
4 Katja Novitskova's quote from the Venice Biennale press conference on the exhibition If Only You Could See What I've Seen with Your Eyes, representing Estonia, 18 April 2017.
5 Ott Karulin. Üks roll, Sirp, 21.04.2017, p. 3.
6 Artist's concept, in the author's possession.
7 Manovich, p. 127.
8 Игорь Вдовенко. Театр и новые технологии: интерактивность, телесность, текст. — Экранная культура. Теоретические проблемы. Санкт-Петербург: «Дмитрий Буланин», 2012, стр. 488.
9 Exhibition Symmetrical Worlds — Mirrored Symmetries. Ülo Sooster, Yuri Sobolev, Tõnis Vint, Raul Meel at the Kumu Art Museum 3.03-11.07.2017; curators: Anna Romanova and Eha Komissarov.
10 The reconstruction was made on the basis of the original colour slides from 1981 and video documentation from 1986 from the archives of the artist's family. A total of 84 out of the 92 slides have been preserved.
11 Director Mikhail Hussid, and artist Yuri Sobolev.



Katja Novitskova "Mars Potential (Cat)", 2015. Photo: Florian Kleinfenn.
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Max Herzler, Berlin/Paris

being, the face is never human, never even animal, a strange and inorganic malignancy."¹ As soon as the the human gaze is disrupted, as soon as we cannot recognize their faces, or feel them looking back at us with a little too much self-awareness, they become foreign, strange and impenetrable.

A database of acceptable cinematic gestures to reassure us the non-human is still spectacular and worthy of our gaze, yet tame enough not to pose a bigger threat than we need for moderate stimulation.

The Gaze of the Other

Novitskova often imagines alternative scenarios for the non-human: what is their potential as independent entities with their own agendas, having their own agency? It is not so much a question of if there is a present and future without humans for the non-human, but rather what it is like. What is it like to exist without the human gaze, without being constantly framed as our familiars?

By using images collected by mechanical eyes, Novitskova makes visible alternative ways of seeing the world, ways that do not rely on human vision.

Imagine their eyes.
They do not have eyes.

It is somewhat difficult for humans to imagine what and how the non-human see; the scale is often incomprehensible to us, ranging from satellite images of other planets to microscopic portraits of bacteria. It is even more difficult, as this type of seeing is done by other means that have little to do with human vision. But is putting together a database really equivalent to seeing? What is this gaze about that is able to see and record everything? Is it an inquisitive gaze? A disengaged gaze? A probing gaze? If it is probing, to what end?

The entities that look at the world in Katja Novitskova's works, are not exactly probing for research, as this would suggest intent with a purpose. Perhaps they really are just disengaged witnesses, scanning what they encounter and fulfilling their purpose as evolutionary links to an unknown future.

Possibilities for the future: they will be looking at us looking at them in the past. How helpless and lost will we seem?

There is an uneasiness in not knowing how to make sense of being recorded and looked at. Since we are unable to access data in its raw form, further interpretation is needed; we add another layer to it, and cinematic images are what we crave. In her work, Novitskova takes a step back and arranges these images into fictional compositions: fictional in the sense that, to the "original" agents or sources the images come from, these narratives are probably quite foreign. She tries to place her actors in situations where new contact points and potentials can be discovered.

This is also expressed in the settings Novitskova creates for her work. Using found images and objects detached from their initial context, mostly originating from fields outside of art, she creates scenes where unexpected encounters happen. These encounters feel like points where something is about to gain momentum. As the natural and the artificial touch, often quite literally, they create slight imprints on one another: possibly for future reference and return encounters. If this is the initial contact, perhaps somewhat robust, how long before the critical mass accumulates and the potential of the non-human is really activated?

¹ Sam Kriss. "All the wild animals". *The New Inquiry*. January 6, 2015
<https://thenewinquiry.com/all-the-wild-animals/>

Heartfelt, Singular, Generic, Googled

Marge Monko's "Dear D" (2015) explores the basic dilemma of emotional disclosure: the act of declaring one's attraction, even love, without any certainty as to its reception or the outcome. The piece is straightforward: it shows a computer screen where a love letter is taking shape, and the various other windows that the author navigates during the eight-minute exercise. The soundtrack consists of a female voice-over reading the emerging letter aloud.

The piece deals with the insecurities, vulnerabilities and risks that emotional disclosure entails should the love not be returned, for, as the author herself puts it, "affectations can bring about casualties" and "there is no zero-risk love". With its confession of desire, the love e-mail taking shape on the screen moves from the realm of friendship to the uncertain possibilities of sexual encounter and the risks that the relationship may face in the course of this process. In addition, "Dear D" articulates the difficulties of making such disclosures in a culture saturated with depictions and

analyses of romantic love and desire, from pop songs to films to literature, lowbrow and high, from autobiographical reflections to sociological analyses.

It is difficult to account for the particular hue and intensity of one's affections, no matter how viscerally and acutely these may be felt, when the available words and phrases have been worn down by other people's mouths, songs and texts, endlessly repeated. The words that seem to encapsulate the specific hues of emotional intensity animating one's actions may well turn out to be the most banal ones, tested in social scripts of all kinds, as in the letter addressed to Dear D: "I'm intoxicated. I long for you every day". The dilemma is not a novel one, and not specific to the early 21st century. The friction, or gap, between the intensely personal and the collectively recycled persists, and needs to be worked through.

In crafting her love letter, Monko's author moves between windows and tabs on the computer screen,

checks translations from English to Estonian, browses images and articles on the writers she refers to in her letter, listens to a Beatles tune she wants to quote and checks on accounts of physical attractiveness measured and explained to possibly understand her own cathexis of desire. The searches both support and rupture the flow of typing by shifting focus away from the singular – that which has happened, what is being felt and what may possibly follow – to the networked, factually global flow of accounts of similar attractions and attachments.

Nearly real-time, the video witnesses the coming together of the longish letter on Gmail, which is aided by Google searches and Google translate. What in the not-so-distant past would have been an enterprise involving pen and paper, or possibly a typewriter, has grown into a networked, distributed act of multi-tasking, the rhythms of which correspond to the multi-stranded character of the endeavour itself: to express and to possibly understand personal experience and connection as unavoidably generic. As the corporate tech giant providing the infrastructure for such articulation and communication of intimacy, Google exercises tangible agency in how the act of textual emotional disclosure can come about, what elements it is to include and how the very process of formulating and crafting sentences has grown inseparable from constant horizontal calibrations for references, definitions and distractions on diverse web platforms.

As viewers, we witness the writer's desktop and her movement across windows. The only human bodies seen are those on the computer screen within the screen that we are watching. The intimacy of the piece involves no displays of face, skin or body, let alone physical contact. The writer and her object of desire remain present through the means of language alone. Meanwhile, the voice reading the developing letter in "Dear D" remains soft and controlled, expressing no strong emotion and staying at the same tempo throughout. While this quality of voice brings the viewer-listener close, the piece holds her firmly at arm's length, behind the screen, with access only to traces of communication taking place.

As the author writes in reference to sociologist Eva Illouz, "love letters have always been a fantasy, representing a better-articulated and sensitive self". In other words, the exercise of writing a confessional love e-mail involves writing a particular kind of self into being. In the controlled space of the letter, displays

of feeling and personality are easy to stylize, edit and fine-tune in ways virtually impossible to achieve in physical encounters animated by the intensities of the proximity, tone, scent, sight, actions, words and looks of the other. There can be pleasure in composing and re-reading such a letter, in terms of how the writing self comes across and the possibilities that such a letter opens up for both the writer and the recipient.

For Illouz, contemporary romantic love comes embedded in the interlaced fabrics of late capitalism and self-help culture. True love and its articulations have grown inseparable from the ever-accumulating reservoir of mass-produced words and images, the phrases, turns, scenes and dynamics of which have become internalised. On the one hand, this means that the 'language of love' is by necessity a reverberation or a remix, drawing from a range of representations and cultural templates. On the other hand, the foregrounding of emotions, and romantic love in particular, as a privileged arena of self-fulfilment also means that the suffering connected with it has come to occupy a central space in how people make sense of their selves and their lives. In the words of a popular song, "Love Hurts", despite the thrills and intimacies it promises.

If conceptualisation is a means of generalising on the basis of the singular, then the singular is necessarily caught up in the general. Being aware of this, the author maps out her feelings in reference to the writer Siri Husvedt's essay on romantic and erotic attraction, philosopher André Gorz's account of his life-long love for his wife, and writer and filmmaker Kris Kraus' novel "I Love Dick". The latter consists of letters, with no replies, to a man who has become the object of the author's obsessive desire yet fails to reciprocate much of the attraction. In "I Love Dick", letters grow into diary inserts and lengthy self-reflections, where "Dick" ultimately becomes an instrument for the author processing her own self-understanding, marriage, career and future. It remains somewhat inconsequential as to whether these letters are ever sent to or read by the love object or not: the letters themselves become key objects of preoccupation around which the author's creative energy revolves.

"Dear D" sets out to articulate the singularity of attraction against a network of intertextual references, models and samples of emotional disclosure. These templates allow for degrees of safety in the task at hand but also render it a somewhat scholarly, distanced one. On the one hand, there is the fact of the

dense reservoir of words and sentences that has been used to express similar sentiment towards other people in other places that renders the individual effort a repetition on a theme both original and painfully not. On the other hand, the particular flutters of feeling remain evasive and difficult to capture within the available textual space. The author writes of wanting to see her love object’s face, even his mouth and teeth. She wants to hear him talk and laugh. She writes of his “lovely way of melodic sighing, which sounds almost like a voice exercise” and continues to ponder what patterns may lie behind attraction, both hers and those of others: indeed, “what is it that draws us to certain people?”

In “Lover’s Discourse”, Roland Barthes explores the scenes of first love, the resonances of intense attraction that make the beloved singularly unique as the focus of passion and interest, the pleasures of sex and embrace, the flames of possessiveness and jealousy, the sufferings and anxieties of waiting, as well as the eventual, gradual fading of the intensity of being in love. “Lover’s Discourse” is structured as an index of fragments laid out in alphabetical order, from “s’âbimer” (to be engulfed) to “vouloir-saisir” (will-to-possess). The fragments revolve around bodily desire but also around the dynamics and potentialities of language and writing. In fact, the two grow inseparable in how love can be communicated and made: “I can do everything with my language but not with my body. What I hide by my language, my body utters.” For Barthes, words themselves are thick with carnal resonance: vibrations that move the bodies speaking and listening, writing and reading. “Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tips of my words. My language trembles with desire.”

In the computer-aided exercise of emotional disclosure that it depicts, “Dear D” is fundamentally about the possibilities, limitations and contextual frames of language: reverberations of things read and heard, translations from one language to another and translations of intensities of feeling to textual terms. Like language generally, articulations of love develop as unique utterances that only make sense, and gain much of their power, from impersonal structures, dynamics and settings that precede the individual. The heartfelt may inescapably ring of cliché, yet the opportunity to rub language against the other, for language to tremble with desire, remains, even if the language comes in a format as impersonal as an e-mail.

Marge Monko (b.1976) is an artist living and working in Tallinn.
She works with photography, video and installation.

Untitled Collages

#1–6

Your left hand is your heart.

Your right hand is your voice.

Your left hand says “I do”.

Your right hand says “I did what?”

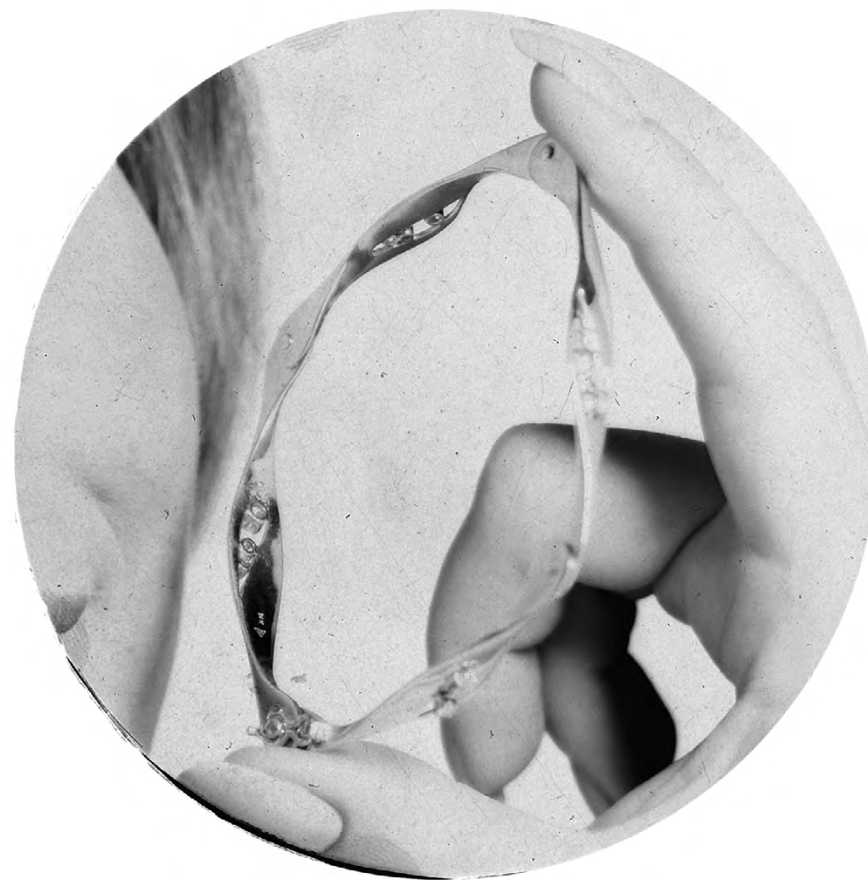
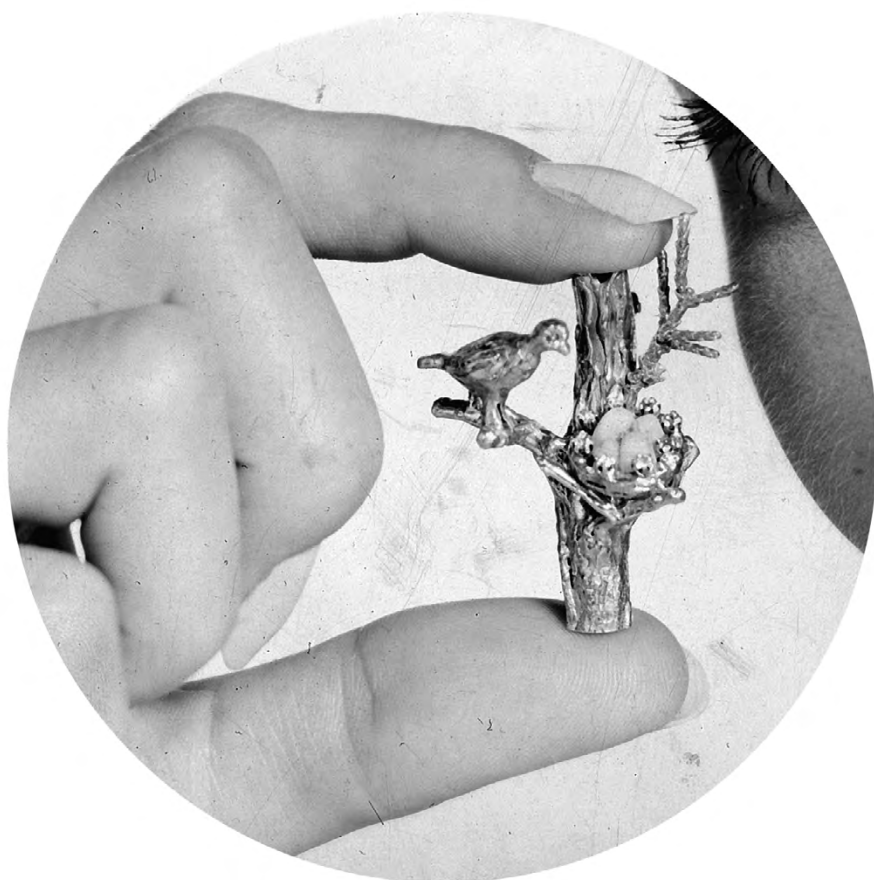
Your left hand knows the answers.

Your right hand asks the questions. *

“Untitled Collages” is a series made from a set of negatives bought on eBay. The negatives depict female models presenting jewelry, mostly rings. Based on the nails and hairstyles, the images are probably from the early 1970s.

* Text from a DeBeers advertising campaign in 2003

Pages 18–26
Marge Monko, collages of found negatives on b/w photographic paper, 300 x 400 mm each, 2015









The Impact of Productive Frustration

Jaak Tomberg (b. 1980) is a literary scholar and critic based in Tartu, Estonia. His main fields of research are literary theory and science fiction.



The central thesis of Jacques Rancière’s philosophy of art is that art introduces changes in the partition of the sensible.¹ This doesn’t mean that art’s primary function is to think, say, express or do something (although it does that too). Rather, it means that art transforms and renews the (existing) ways it is possible to perceive, think, say, express or do something in the first place. While doing this, art also transforms subjectivity: it creates new subjectivities.

In a specific way, this is also the effect exerted by Paul Kuimet’s recent oeuvre, an oeuvre that is quite easy to describe but quite difficult to address meaningfully. This difficulty can initially be characterised through the following question: how is it possible to meaningfully address something whose impact wholly precedes meaning?

In Kuimet’s recent works, one can detect a few clear-cut formal and thematic tendencies. Starting with “Horizon” (2013), his main form of artistic expression has been spatial installation, the central components of which are either (1) a darkened room with two lightboxes that photographically depict an object from two points of view, thereby creating a shift in

sensory (but not so much in ‘meaningful’) perception (spatial manipulations), or (2) a 16 mm film projection that utilises inventive techniques to ‘animate’ otherwise static objects (temporal manipulations). The range of depicted objects is likewise quite narrow and clear-cut: sculptures or sculptural objects, buildings or architectural objects.

If one is looking for injections of (social) criticism in Kuimet’s works, it is probably best to study the choice of these thematic motifs: on the one hand, the cultural and historical connotations of the buildings depicted in the lightboxes – the Atomium, built for the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair “Perspective Study” (2016); the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, a prime example of Fascist architecture “Figure-Ground Study” (2016); and the now demolished building of the Estonian Ministry of Finance, which connotes neoliberal market policies “Grid Study” (2016) – and on the other hand, the sculptural objects that the films focus on: Edgar Viies’ Möbius strip-like sculpture, which suggests the utopian potential of modernist technological progress “2060” (2014), and the constructed object, based on an encountered sundial, which resembles an alien cosmic orb of artificial origin “Exposure” (2016).

But I will argue here that despite the rather distinct choice of these objects, and the possible joint critical narrative they might make up, these thematic motifs, along with whatever content or social meaning they might connote, are altogether secondary in Kuimet's more recent works. In any case, it is very difficult to recognise them as something 'meaningful', since the buildings in the photographs are fragmented and the sculptures are almost non-figurative and extremely mute. What is of much greater significance are the ways in which these objects are presented in the overall construction of space, and the purely perceptual impact they exert on the viewer. We can be quite sure that Kuimet's installations realise the work of pure form: responding to a specific impulse, they transform the familiar ways in which bodily perception is used to confront the surrounding material reality. If I had to name and specify that impulse, I would call it a productive frustration with photography's traditional (and therefore seemingly inevitable) features: its two-dimensional and static nature, and its predominantly singular perspective.

Kuimet's work attempts to overcome these seemingly inevitable features in various ways that challenge well-known oppositions related to the visual arts in general. The two photos in the lightboxes of "Le Lys" (2014) depict a sculpture that in the first photo is presented to the viewer sideways, thereby suggesting the possibility of meeting it face-to-face in the second one; however, this is disrupted by the second photo, where the sculpture has turned its back on the viewer. During the movement from one lightbox to the other, the photograph becomes an almost three-dimensional object, a kind of 'light-sculpture in two parts', which is in turn thematically mirrored by the depicted sculpture itself. The two lightboxes in "Late Afternoon" (2016) create a kind of parallax between foreground and background, between the abstract and the figurative: that presents itself as a hazy aphasia of colours and lines in the first photo turns out to be an office-space photographed through a window in the sharper focus of the second one. Once again, it is the movement of the viewer in the installation space that creates this perceptual parallax.

"Still Life" (2016) uses cross dissolves to create a play of light that animates a series of photographed stills, thereby dissolving the static nature of photography into the movement of the film material itself. "Perspective Study" (2016) breaks up the linear perspective through several reflected compositions that are glimpses from different vantage points in the cen-

tre of the photographs. In "Grid Study" (2016), the black grid in the installation space, the geometrical scaffolding in front of the depicted buildings in the photos and the collages in the centre of the photos together pose a challenge to the familiar notion of the frame of the work of art: as the viewer approaches the depicted buildings, it becomes clear that frames can be found both inside and outside the work of art and not necessarily around the work of art.

Objects in "2060" (2014) and "Exposure" (2016) are filmed in minimalist, hygienic monochrome. The seemingly autonomous movement of light in these works, together with their measured technical realisation, leave the impression that these objects, although evidently artificial, have a cosmic or science fictional quality, and have sprung into existence without the intervention of a human hand. These installations manage to subtract all human qualities from the exhibition space, as well as, in a sense, the (human) viewer himself who happens to witness the artificial immanence of these objects. The viewer's perception merges with the 'scene' created by the depicted objects and their form of depiction, and hence the productive cognitive dissonance these works generate: it is as if witnessing these objects is both impossible and real. In addition, "2060" creates a cognitive contrast between the static object in the foreground and the moving space in the background; "Exposure" creates a contrast between the figurative quality of the object in the establishing shot and the abstract quality of the material's texture in close-up.

Kuimet's productive frustration with photography's traditional absolutes results in the spatial sculpturalisation of the photographs (the lightboxes), and in the virtualisation of the sculptures (the screens): in the dissolution of the viewer into the scene (the films) or in the dispersion of the viewer into the darkness (the lightboxes).

All of these observations are, in essence, insufficient descriptions of completely perceptual effects. Words fundamentally fail to meaningfully address Kuimet's works for one very specific reason: words, meaning and ultimately 'language' itself are completely secondary and utterly late with regard to such art. The transformative impact of these works primarily exerts itself on the level of affect: in the purely bodily and perceptual experience of the recipient. This kind of experience fully takes place long before the 'meaningful' intervention of any language: it is first and foremost an experience that precedes all meaning and therefore,



Paul Kuimet "Horizon", 2013

Yuri Sobolev (1928–2002)

in a sense, all subjectivity. Following Fredric Jameson², we may also say that these works primarily realise their transformative and enriching potential on the affective level of bodily consciousness. Jameson differentiates mere bodily consciousness from subjectivity, which is, for him, a purely lingual and meaningful phenomenon and, as such, only an object for this consciousness. Following this division, Jameson also rephrases the notion of ‘emotion’: he re-names conventional emotion that belongs to the sphere of subjectivity ‘named emotion’ (delight, sadness etc.), and differentiates it from affect, which is a purely pre-subjective and bodily phenomenon that is felt on the level of ‘mere’ consciousness and cannot be accessed through language.

In Rancière’s terms, it is safe to say that Kuimet’s work precisely redistributes the sensible on this affective level of pure consciousness. It does not convey any clear-cut (cultural, critical or whatever) meaning to us and is not associated with any clear cut ‘meaningful’ emotions; instead, it transforms our bodily potential for perception on a much more immediate and primary level, that of the impersonal present of the body, in regards to which subjective ‘meaning’ is completely secondary. Therefore, I’ll venture to claim that the impact of these works is not based on whatever ‘meaning’ they might convey, but on their simple spatial and material presence.

This article first appeared in Paul Kuimet’s exhibition catalogue “Perpendicular”, published by Lagemik & EKKM, 2016.

To write ten thousand characters on Yuri Sobolev is a daunting task and forces one into a choice: to list his life’s events or describe everything of significance in the context of the exhibition “The Archaeology of the Screen. The Estonian Example”. For the international audience, it is probably more interesting to get an overview of the branch of the Soviet art scene which dealt with the development of visual culture.

Yuri Nolev-Sobolev was an artist from Moscow who studied at the Moscow Polygraphic Institute. In 1956 in Moscow, he met the Estonian artist Ülo Sooster (1924–1970), who had been repressed and recently released from a prison camp¹, and so had no right to live in any big towns in Estonia. Sooster moved to Moscow, and with Sobolev’s help he found work as a book illustrator. Sooster encouraged Sobolev to see himself as an artist and to free his artistic spirit. In 1957, the two men started their famous project of mapping the “empty spaces” in the history of art in accordance with the aspirations of the post-Stalinist era. During the exploration of empty spaces, both men centred their individual artistic platforms around Mannerism, metaphysical art and Surrealism. Sooster became the central figure in a circle of artists with Surrealist interests. Sobolev and Sooster were also among the artists berated by Khrushchev at the Moscow Manege for their avant-gardist extravagance; in the Soviet Union, this episode marked the end of the Thaw and the beginning of the stagnation. For Sooster, this meeting was a serious blow because, as a result, he was not accepted into the Artists’ Association of the USSR.

Sobolev was not employed as an artist but he kept working on prints on his own. In 1960, Sobolev be-

came the chief artist of the publishing house “Znaniye” (Knowledge) and from 1964 to 1980 he also worked as the chief artist for the scientific publication “Znaniye i Sila”. In all of his publications, Sobolev employed future stars of Russian art: Ülo Sooster, Ilya Kabakov, Viktor Pivovarov and many others.

Together with Sooster, Sobolev dealt with mythological archetypes and opportunities to exploit them in his imagery. From non-formal artists, Sobolev expected new viewpoints and ideas that would help open up the irrational side of science outside of conventional logic. Andres Kurg has written about “Znaniye i Sila” that, in its own Soviet way, the magazine covered changes in the understanding of the environment: the textual level carried the subtext of the scientific and technological revolution, which was predetermined and censored by the official ideology; the illustrative material, which was copiously used in the publication, reflected the quest for an alternative language, describing technical effects with the subtext of surrealism or irrationalism in order to allude to the changes in the human being’s inner cosmos.²

After Sooster passed away in 1970, his role as Sobolev’s intelligent Estonian friend with modern ideas about art and a shared view of the world was taken on by Sooster’s young friend Tõnis Vint (b. 1942), an Estonian printmaker, art innovator, and student and practitioner of Oriental transcendental mysticism. The two men’s spiritual dialogue and cooperation peaked in the 1970s and 1980s.

Sobolev’s own path of life, in which contacts with visual culture assumed an increasingly important role,

¹ J. Rancière, *The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics*. In: J. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Trans. G. Rockhill. London & New York: Continuum, 2004, pp 12–19.
² F. Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism*. London–New York: Verso, 2013, pp 2–38.

making his career rather atypical for a Soviet artist, took a significant turn in 1974, when Yuri Sobolev joined a team working on the first Russian polyscreen. It is a fascinating story, and began for Sobolev at the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959, where a domed building designed by Richard Buckminster Fuller was used to display thousands of images on the lifestyle and work environment of the American middle class on seven screens. The images were compiled for the exhibition by Charles and Ray Eames.³

The world premiere of the polyscreen had taken place a year earlier at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958 in the pavilions of Czechoslovakia (which became known as *Laterna Magica*) and the Netherlands. Russia turned to this effective method of presentation in connection with the 1975 Congress of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) in Moscow. Sobolev's previous experience with animation was the main reason he was chosen for the project⁴.

In the preparatory project for the polyscreen, Sobolev was employed as the artistic director and, together with the project manager Yuri Rechetnikov, they developed a projection field of screens with a large central screen for the intermittent projection of films and slides, while the screen areas on the sides were somewhat smaller⁵. A huge number of slides were to be shown on dozens of Kodak Carousel slide projectors. The Congress, however, opened without the prepared polyscreen "ICSID", named after the Congress itself. After the preparatory work in Moscow was covered by the Voice of America radio station, the project was criticised as ideologically tainted because it sowed pessimism and did not do justice, in the eyes of the rest of the world, to the Soviet Union's possibilities of the creation of an ideally harmonious world. To approve the project, there was only one ICSID review, and based on its materials, together with Yuri Rechetnikov's original soundtrack, ICSID 2012 was restored on the initiative of Andres Kurg, an Estonian designer and architectural historian⁶. The duo of Sobolev and Rechetnikov later constructed a number of polyscreens, which were commissioned by museums and memorials.

The next area that played a major role in Sobolev's life was theatre, where he became one of the most unique designers with an audio-visual bent. In 1980, Sobolev joined the experimental Theatre of People, Objects and Puppets in Tjumen, Siberia (headed by Mikhail Khusid) and took part in the staging of Tagore's play

"The Post Office" in 1981. Khusid was not satisfied with the traditional puppet theatre, so he changed the context and focussed on the liberation of the actors and plays. Similarly to a number of Estonian theatres in the 1960s and 70s, Khusid and Sobolev followed the footsteps of the Polish theatre reformer Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999). Without negating the creative accomplishments of the theatre, the director's innovative platform caused difficulties that gave rise to many discussions of Khusid's experiment. The actors who had been taught in Stanislavski's system had major problems with a theatre that was based on such a contradictory logic and ignored the rules of staging. The theatre historian Anna Nekrylova characterised Khusid's and Sobolev's model as a carnival-type theatre platform, with the prevalent aspect being free self-expression. The artist and director had their own visions of the theme and chose what to use from the script or what to discard. The concept did not necessarily match the storyline; it was an improvisational theatre, with association-based thinking, where actors moved about and interacted with as many types of puppets as possible. This kind of theatre was only understood abroad, after it started to appear in such theatre festivals as the "Festival mondial des théâtres de marionnettes" in France and the street theatre festival in Lugano.⁷

Sobolev spoke Khusid's language from the very first play and, as the theatre did not use stage settings, his task was to employ technology and slide shows to create a tense poetic imagery for the production. The staging was a score of living impulses, which the directors attempted to translate into a Grotowskian system of signs. In the restless staging, where the sizes of objects and puppets could markedly differ and where there was an inevitable turn to mythological truths and archetypes, Sobolev's focussed and generalising structures left a powerful impression. In this period, Sobolev was interested in Jung's work, which he read in German, and based on Jung's ideas he looked for a visual equivalent to the expression of archetypes. The same problems occupied Tõnis Vint in Estonia; as early as the beginning of the 1970s, he had introduced elements of mandalas into his graphic art. The two friends even shared drama work, as both were asked to provide settings for Tagore's "The Belt".

In the cultural space of the Eastern Bloc countries, the screen served in the 1970s and 80s as a bridge, a window to another reality, both virtual and metaphysical. Tõnis Vint's studies of the archetypal collective descent were realised in the film-study "The Belt



Yuri Reshetnikov, Yuri Sobolev. Multiscreen slide film "Symmetrical Worlds – Mirrored Symmetries", Kumu 2017. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko

of Lielvārde. Tõnis Vint’s Hypothesis”⁸, in which Vint proposes an analysis method derived from belt ornaments.

In Tagore’s “The Post Office”, Sobolev’s design followed the principle of the polyscreen, projecting mandalas onto the actors, their costumes and the backdrop. This has been viewed as an attempt to highlight everything that came in contact with the mandalas in order to show that there was another reality, the reality of dreams and the past, the reality of ethnic memory.⁹ Sobolev stood out from his surroundings due to his focussed interest in archaic cultures, mythologies and local national myths. In the staging of Don Juan, Sobolev exploited Tibetan music and images from Irish sagas. The artist remained connected to Khusid’s theatre until the end of 1980, and then started his own studio near St. Petersburg under the name Yuri Sobolev’s School, in which he concentrated on performances that expressed the symbolic dimension of corporality.

The changes in his ideology in the 1980s are reflected in the first reconstruction of “Mandalas”. In 1986, when Sobolev had started to identify himself in a wider sense as a designer of audio-visual culture, he reconstructed the slides that had been preserved from “The Post Office’s” stage setting into a video version, in which the slides with mandalas were made to loop like frames in a film.

The last reconstruction of the reversal film “Mandalas” was made in 2017 for the exhibition “Symmetrical Worlds – Mirrored Symmetries. Ülo Sooster, Yuri Sobolev, Tõnis Vint, Raul Meel” at the Kumu Art Museum. The reconstruction was made on the basis of the original colour slides from 1981 and video documentation from 1986 from the archives of the artist’s family. Of the 92 slides in the film, 84 have been preserved. During the reconstruction process, the colours of the slides were not corrected.

Materials for the reconstruction were made available by Galina Metelichenko.

1 Sooster was sent to Siberia in 1949 with a group of schoolmates from the Tartu State Art Institute due to alleged anti-Soviet activity.
2 Андрес Курт. Предыстория современной среды: мультимедийная программа для конгресса ICSID-75 в Москве, стр. 145—157, р. 152, in the collection Анна Романова (Ред.), Галина Метеличенко (Ред.). Острова Юрия Соболева. Москва: Московский музей современного искусства, 2014.
3 Colomina, Betriz. Enclosed by Images: The Eames’ Multimedia Architecture, Grey Room. 2001. No. 2, pp. 7–29)
4 In 1968, Sobolev was the artistic director for the Sojuzmultfilm animation Glass Harmonium; the film was made in cooperation with Ü. Sooster and the director A. Khrizhanovski, followed by the next film, Butterflies. Cf. Анна Романова (Ред.), Галина Метеличенко (Ред.). Острова Юрия Соболева. Москва: Московский музей современного искусства, 2014, р. 291.
5 The 10×10 m field of screens was composed of 16 separate screens, on which the images constantly alternated. Cf. Юрий Решетников. Воспоминания режиссёра о Юрии Соболеве. Полиэкран ICSID, Босх и визуальный контрапункт, стр 158
6 The reconstruction was completed for the exhibition Our Metaphorical Future. Design, Technical Aesthetics and Experimental Architecture in the Soviet Union in 1960—1980 at the National Gallery of Art, Vilnius. Curators: Andres Kurg and Mari Laanemets. Анна Некрылова. Зримый космос театра синтеза и анимации, in the collection Анна Романова (Ред.), Галина Метеличенко (Ред.). Острова Юрия Соболева. Москва: Московский музей современного искусства, 2014, р. 182
8 See Elnara Taidre’s article in the same issue.
9 Анна Некрылова, р. 185

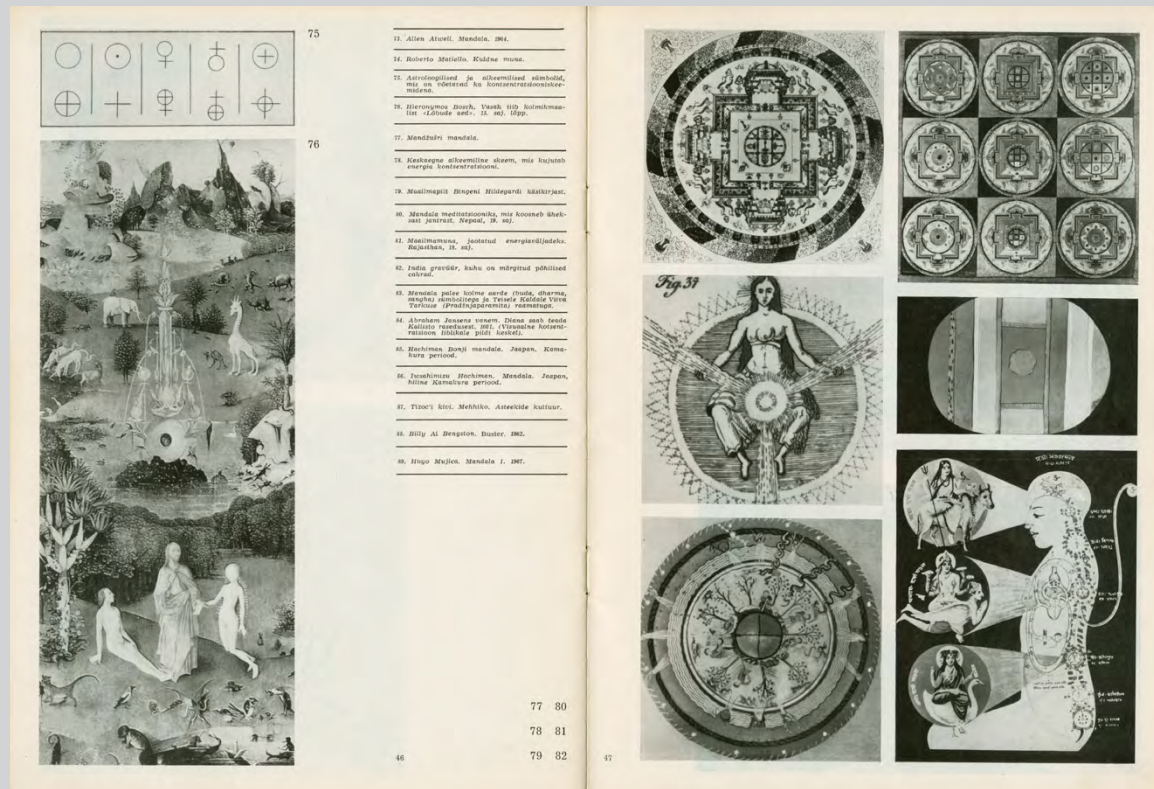
Elnara Taidre (b.1983) is an art historian, working at the collection department at the Art Museum of Estonia. Her research interests include modern and contemporary (Estonian) art and artistic mythologies in the visual arts of the 20th century.

The Belt of Lielvārde, Multimedia Atlas

Tõnis Vint (b.1942) is a legendary figure in Estonian art of the second half of the 20th century. From the late 1960s on, the works of Vint, as well as his original concept of art, had an important impact on many generations of Estonian artists, designers and architects. Tõnis Vint is primarily known as a graphic artist and designer: his works, which synthesise contemporary pop art and conceptualism with various old esoteric traditions and oriental symbolism, have renewed the language of local graphic art and graphic design. However, Vint’s aspiration to create harmonious visual structures has also been realised in projects that go beyond the two-dimensional nature of graphic arts. He interior designed two flats he has lived in and once devised a remarkable stage design. After the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991, he suggested visions for the redesign of urban spaces in Tallinn.

Since the late 1960s, relying on his on-going research of artistic and philosophic traditions of various cultures and periods, Tõnis Vint has consistently worked on a theoretical and methodological framework: a conceptual platform for the interpretation and synthesis of all kinds of visual phenomena. This concept deals with visual images and sign systems, from America to Australia and from the past to the present, focusing on “proto-images”, which Vint himself interprets as universal cosmological and cosmogonic symbols.

Starting in the 1970s, Vint introduced his understandings in articles and, indirectly, in graphic design. With the help of carefully chosen visual materials, he has constructed an additional informational layer hidden in the seemingly neutral design of publications. Thus, he created a sort of palimpsest in the de-



Tõnis Vint's article "Golden Flower. Tantra. Tao." in "Kunst almanac 2", 1975



Tõnis Vint, "The Belt of Lielvārde", 1980. Video stills

sign of the collection of articles "Teadus ja tänapäev" (*Science and Today*, 1979, Academy of Science of the Estonian SSR), basically hijacking the whole publication. Alongside contemporary scientific photos and illustrations, Vint placed numerous reproductions of ancient artefacts, and of Renaissance, Modernist and contemporary artworks. These were somewhat independent of the text, although they were cunningly fit into the theme of the corresponding chapter of the book. For example, the "Universe" chapter was illustrated, in addition to astronomical photographs, by numerous images that introduced concepts of the Universe from different periods in history, e.g. the Aztec Sun Stone and the Cartesian model of the Universe. Ignoring the text and focusing on the visual part of the book, the reader was exposed to a consistent visual narrative linked to Vint's ideas.

Tõnis Vint's method of demonstrating his theories in graphic design is based on visual analogies and was intended to function even without verbal comments. This attempt to create purely visual, "silent" art history can be compared to Aby Warburg's iconological study of "migrating images" and his "Mnemosyne" Atlas (1924–1929) project. Although Vint was not acquainted with Warburg's writings, there are several common features in their approaches: the 'anachronism' in the conceptual juxtaposition of images of different periods, as well as involving not only pieces of fine art but also other objects of visual culture. Vint's non-hierarchical approach to visual objects was quite ahead of its time, especially in the context of Soviet art. In Western humanitarian disciplines, it became topical by the 1970s, when Warburg's concept was revisited and broadened by scholars of visual culture studies and "Bildwissenschaft" (Michael Baxandall, Hans Belting, Georges Didi-Huberman et al.). But what makes Vint's approach particularly interesting is that he proceeded from his practices as an artist-researcher and not from a traditional academic background.

Vint's artistic method, which combines contemporary art forms and scientific concepts with older, Western and Eastern, traditions of visual culture and mysticism, strive for an almost transcendental synthesis that is meant to exist beyond time and history. Nevertheless, the artist performs within the system he constructs without any sense of controversy, viewing his activities as parts of an all-embracing knowledge. While proceeding with his artistic research, Vint notably has summarised the outcomes in the form of

elaborate theoretical charts. Those have been used as pedagogical tools to introduce, explain and illustrate his ideas. Cast in a primarily visual form, the charts suggest diagrams that in the universalist spirit of modernism strive to embody a total knowledge that embraces art, society and the world. Although Vint started to produce an independent series of theoretical charts in the 1990s, the described "diagrammatic" approach can even be found in his earlier graphic designs and illustrations.

Still, the theoretical charts were merely a series of static images. The remarkable "medial shift" in Vint's practices took place in the documentary "The Belt of Lielvārde" (1980, Riga Film Studio). It was made in cooperation with the Latvian film director Ansis Epners, with the concept and visual materials provided by Vint. The documentary highlighted the parallels between the ornaments of Baltic countries and the sign systems of other cultures, stressing the ability of ornaments to express universal processes: for example, the harmonious consistency of the world coded in the image-symbol of the mandala and similar visual structures based on central symmetry. Seemingly neutral, eternal issues were dealt with at the time through Estonian and Baltic ethnographic heritage, which supported the local national identity. Vint's ideas, expressed throughout his work, covertly

counterpoised the cultivation of national self-awareness against the threat of Soviet assimilation, and were a part of the national awakening of the 1980s. The hypothesis introduced in "The Belt of Lielvārde" was later presented in exhibitions, in the form of theoretical charts, and published in the press. Tracing possible connections between Estonian ethnic patterns and decorative patterns in ancient Celtic and Chinese cultures, it supported the Estonian national identity and alternative self-positioning.

Tõnis Vint interprets images as ideograms, claiming that complicated philosophical concepts can be expressed by means of images. "The Belt of Lielvārde" is the quintessence of Vint's concepts: the documentary evokes the history of the images as an all-encompassing totality, where everything is interconnected. Here,

the structural resemblance highlights the semantic analogy, proposing that similar ideas can be expressed in certain visual forms for example: a balancing of opposites in the universe, or the void as infinite potential. In this approach, some parallels with Aby Warburg's "Mnemosyne" Atlas project can be found. The Belt of Lielvārde acted as a multimedia atlas, as it used cinematic language for the purpose of systematising and juxtaposing different images. In a very dynamic way it demonstrated via formal resemblance the conceptual similarity of various images by allowing them to melt or grow into each other. Theoretical arguments were almost fully replaced by suggestive visual representation, empowered by the technical means of cinematic montage. Philippe-Alain Michaud has described the "Mnemosyne" Atlas as the notion of "image in motion," projection and montage.¹

In Vint's documentary we can see all of them in action, similarly to Warburg's technique as characterised by Michaud: not an interpretation or analysis of the visual facts of the past, but the reactivation of the past through a re-presentation taking place on a stage. On the whole, not only "The Belt of Lielvārde", but also other Vint practices can be seen as attempts at re-presentation, the re-enactment of the history of images the author believed to exist.

The text is partly based on the publication Elnara Taidre's "Synthesis of Visual Art Forms as the Total Work of Art: The Case of Tõnis Vint's Art Practices in Soviet Estonia," (*lagatud praktikad: kunstiliikide põimumised sotsialistliku Ida-Euroopa kultuuris* = Shared Practices: The Intertwinement of the Arts in the Culture of Socialist Eastern Europe.) Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia, 6 [11] 2016. Ed. Anu Allas. Tallinn: Art Museum of Estonia, 2016, pp. 111–139.

¹ Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*. New York: Zone Books, 2004.

Elizabeth McTernan (b.1981) pursues research over land and sea, processing it through actions, installations, drawing, printmaking, texts and artist's books.

Taavi Suisalu: Love at Last Sight

I first met Taavi Suisalu in 2013, in an old school-house on a hill in the highest village in England. Soon after our arrival, a group of us artists descended into a defunct mine nearby. Snaking through a tangle of narrow hand-hewn tunnels in this cold bowel of the earth, we were eventually spit out into a vast empty space, nicknamed "The Ballroom." We turned our headlamps off. Pitch black, the scope of the cavern was only detectable by sound. Obsolete mining objects and debris were strewn about. Taavi herded the group into motion, taking up and activating found objects against the clammy surfaces of the cave. A wooden beam thudded ominously against the bed-rock. Puttering hands clasped nondescript matter as it chirped and chalked along the walls. Taavi's resulting recording, "The Ballroom Improvisation", both carved out an acoustic space and filled a long-empty cavity buried in the earth. The action brought the stuff of air into the underworld, into a deep time now interrupted by scuffling rhythms of human life.

Taavi was not new to this kind of re-functioning of space and matter. When confronted with an object, however familiar, he asks himself, "How do I use this thing? Do I throw it? Do I put it on my head?" He considers the possibilities that are not presumed; he performs the uncanny on the mundane. A prime example is his piece "Noisephony of Lawn Mowers", a work that scrambles the values of functionality and labour in an orchestration of bodies wielding motorised lawn mowers as both musical instruments and chisels, mad petrol-fueled woodwind players sculpting their own stage, somewhere between leading and being led by the apparatus. The instruments here are not inherently dysfunctional; they are actively *dys-functioned* by the players.

Grass is a relatively tame material for Taavi in light of his other works. He once declared to me with a smirk, "We Estonians are proud peasants." Indeed, something subtly agrarian "crops up" repeatedly in his

choices of urban architectural frames and mechanical processes, but he explicitly refrains from indulging nostalgia. Meanwhile, with his background in new media, he is (thankfully) less a nouveau-tech fetishist and more an off-modernist. His practice transcends the moment of medium to include multiple lattices of historied tools and techniques, creating a field of time-bending reflection rather than a single plane of reference. This is visible in his ambitious curatorial work from 2014, “Project of Non-existent Villages”, as well as in his most recent exhibition, “Landscapes and Portraits”. And with every new project, in addition to media history, territory features more and more prominently as the subject itself.

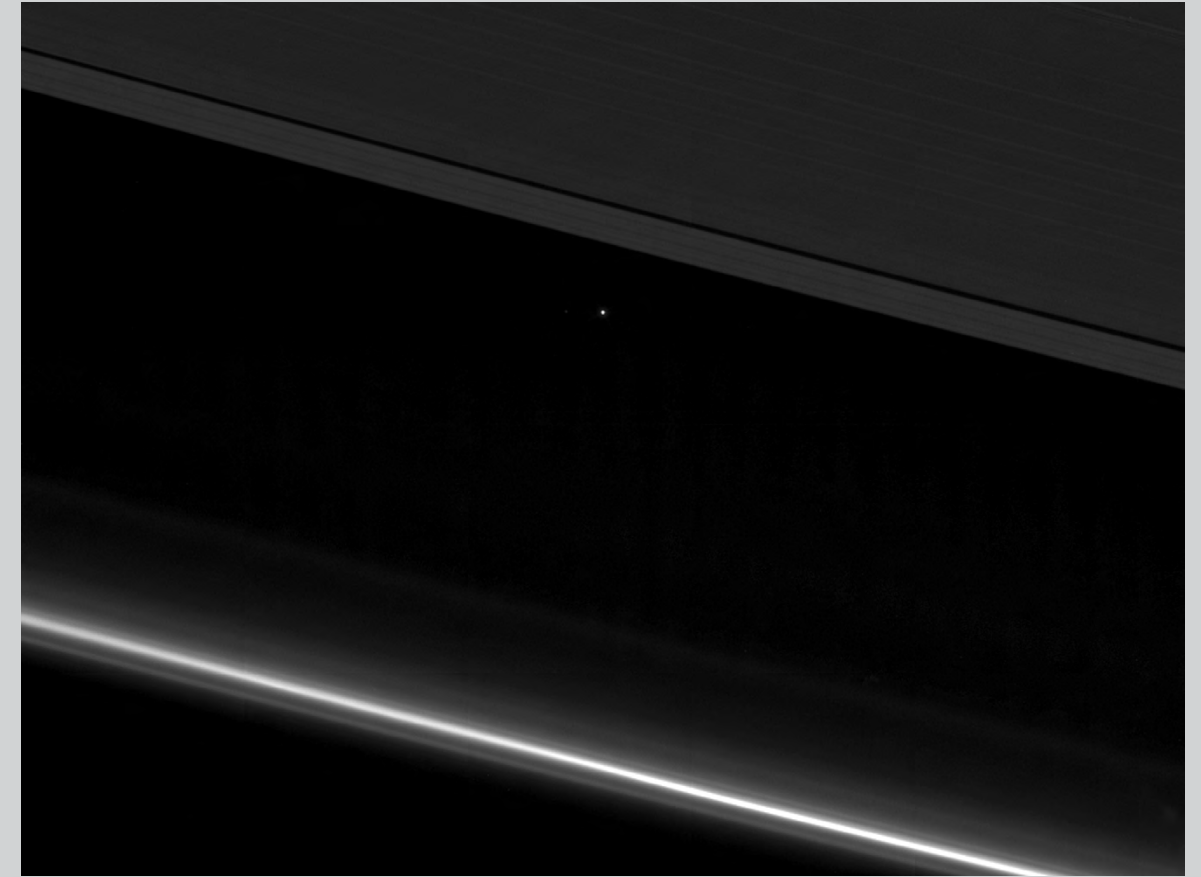
In John Durham Peters’ latest book, “The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media”, the author refers to the sky as the “extraterrestrial commons.”¹ Both the ancients and the moderns have looked to the wild blue yonder for prediction and orientation: whether for purposes of agriculture, migration or meaning. In a sense, it is a canvas we have gained access to only recently. Until space exploration, humans did not have the capacity to alter the sky as we did the earth and seas. Sky was a true other. But when we were finally able to escape the atmosphere, “the satellite was a human work in the heavens. The eternities had become susceptible to fabrication.”² In the race of nations to territorialise space, we essentially became able to plant stars. And consequently, in that newly claimed territory, those implants became another kind of farming mechanism. With satellites, we were now able to harvest the earth from above, but instead of a harvest of grains from farmland, it was and still is that of information from (commercialised and politicised) territories: pixels for seeds. And those who hold instruments to sow the seeds of information hold the power.

For his piece “Distant Self-portrait”, Taavi momentarily wrests satellite power from the state to take his own self-portrait. He has developed a method to tune into dysfunctional satellites (Russian-owned and operated) as they orbit directly overhead, usurping image data of the earth, with himself located at the very centre, pulling the camera trigger. With a strong background in experimental sound, his artistic practice is largely about the acoustic signature of space, about transmission: material and history together shaping phenomena in the zone between source and receiver. As part of the exhibition, he includes a vinyl press of sounds captured during these satellite sessions, called “Études in Black”.

Though it is certainly not the most interesting aspect of Taavi’s artistic perspective, one cannot ignore his position (however incidental to his birth) as a citizen of a post-Soviet country. If the MIR space station was the monument *par excellence* to Soviet modernity, both figuratively and physically transcending Earth and therefore nature, as per the Soviet credo, then one can view satellites as a kind of offspring of this vision, an army of modern monoliths in motion. And so, these old decaying satellites are perhaps vestiges of Soviet-era hubris. Since the advent of modernity, grappling with it has become, needless to say, a tricky business, whether for nations or cultural practitioners. In the introduction to her book “The Future of Nostalgia”, which deals extensively with our amnesiac fondness for the obsolete materials of fallen empires – depending on how you look at it, beautiful decay or ruin-porn – Svetlana Boym proposes the term “off-modern” in a critical reflection on the problematics and potentialities of a hindsight-view of modernity: “The adverb ‘off’ confuses our sense of direction; it makes us explore sideshows and back alleys rather than the straight road of progress; it allows us to take a detour from the deterministic narrative of twentieth-century history. [...] In the off-modern tradition, reflection and longing, estrangement and affection go together.”³ Part of this proposal suggests a kind of looking forward towards history.

Similarly, the satellites that Taavi has employed in “Distant Self-portrait” are both meant to be switched *off* and are *off*, as in *off-kilter*, not quite right, not functioning correctly, if not simply *off-track*. And this mutual reflection of the portrait and the landscape in his work embodies the paradox that Boym describes: it is an infinite ricochet of the subject; the image becomes a *mise en abîme*. It is a self-(re-)figuration of identity through the *off*-state apparatus, all ground and no figure, such that figure and ground collapse into each other. In “Distant Self-portrait” and “Landscapes and Portraits”, the artist is the territory and the territory is the artist. Meanwhile, he smuggles in humour with the titles, a tongue-in-cheek nod to the artistic tradition the work stands on.

There are two steps to this re-figuring: first the satellite photo, then the animation Taavi applies to that image data. This animation stems from the original installation of the image projection in an ambivalently-functional seed-sorting facility in the Estonian countryside. The imagining of seeds being sifted was applied to the sorting of pixels. One formal decision that I find compelling is that, instead of a slurry of



NASA's "Cassini" spacecraft captured this view of the planet Earth as a point of light between the icy rings of Saturn on 12 April 2017. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/Space Science Institute

moving pixels that resembles the surface turbulence of atmospheric weather patterns, the animation mobilises a cascade of pixels, verticalising the horizontal surface of the landscape and creating a strong formal relation between the movement in the image projection and the original transmission of the data from sky to earth. And so it happens that the work, when re-contextualised in another gallery space, naturally departs from its specific architectural and agricultural origin to inhabit new associations, new conditions.

In this sorting of pixels, the information no longer operates under the illusion of being fixed parcels of meaning to be delivered to us or, for that matter, to be delivered to the state for purposes of surveillance or capital. Like the artwork itself, they mix and recombine into infinite possible futures. Could this be autonomy? What other kinds of knowledge and meaning can be reaped and gathered via human exercises of dysfunctioning? In this mix is the spatial dichotomy of up and down, outer space and earth; the cultural-historical dichotomy of satellite and star, seed and pixel; the identity dichotomy of human and landscape, subject and other. With Taavi's bodily occupation of these continua as the trigger point and editor of the image data, as source and receiver, he straddles not only scales of human experience and planetary motion, but also – and more essentially – the abstract versus the specific, the universal versus the situated, “the eternal versus the perishable.”⁴

On 12 April 2017, a photo of Earth was taken from the unmanned NASA spacecraft “Cassini” before its final descent towards its “planned destruction” upon entry into Saturn’s atmosphere.⁵ It shows the Earth as a fleck of light viewed from between the icy rings of Saturn, which themselves look like digital glitches, framing, if not overtaking, said fleck. Unlike the iconic “Blue Marble” photo taken in 1972, the Earth here is but a distant star, its continental and atmospheric distinctions imperceptible. It is like the last sighting before the planet falls out of sight forever. A non-expert would likely not even recognise it as Earth without the help of the story. It is the most remote selfie taken by any person or state to date.⁶ Usually, selfies are associated with the close-up documentation of an individual’s private life, selected specifically for public self-presentation. In the case of “Cassini”, it is a selfie remotely taken through a state apparatus, by the state, also for self-presentation, but instead of the subject of an individual human face or body, it is the body politic of the whole Earth. In his own work, Taavi hijacks and occupies this subjecthood normally

reserved for the state, taking his own selfie to enter it into a complex aesthetic schema for the viewer’s consideration. Perhaps it is appropriate that Taavi’s “Distant Self-portrait” is featured at Bozar, in Brussels, the seat of the European Environmental Bureau and governance of the future of our planet. It is certainly a different kind of portrait than one would normally expect to find in those formal halls.

In a way, both Taavi’s and “Cassini’s” images are impressive in scale while tenderly melancholic, and they bring to mind the phrase “love at last sight,” an expression Walter Benjamin used when considering Charles Baudelaire’s poem “À une passante.” Unlike love at first sight, love at last sight comes at the moment before disappearance; it is the last hope for the rescue of something lost, through its remembrance; it is the antidote to historical alienation. Boym concludes, “‘Love at last sight’ strikes the urban stranger when that person realizes he or she is onstage, at once an actor and a spectator. [...] Love at last sight is the spasm of loss after the revelation; the tenderness of exiles is about a revelation of possibility after the loss.”⁸

- 1 Durham Peters, John. *The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. The University of Chicago Press, 2015, Chicago, p. 167.
- 2 Durham Peters, John. *The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. The University of Chicago Press, 2015, Chicago, p. 175.
- 3 Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001, New York, p. 30.
- 4 Durham Peters, John. *The Marvelous Clouds: Towards a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. The University of Chicago Press, 2015, Chicago, p. 178.
- 5 Spilker, Linda. “Cassini Extended Missions.” *Outer Planets Assessment Group*, http://www.lpi.usra.edu/opag/march_08_meeting/presentations/spilker.pdf
- 6 The first selfie from space was taken from NASA’s Voyager 1 as it passed Neptune in 1990. This was at the request of Carl Sagan, who later wrote a book about it called *Pale Blue Dot*.
- 7 Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyrical Poet In The Era of High Capitalism*. Verso, 1983, London, pp. 124–25.
- 8 Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books, 2001, New York, p. 254.

Taavi Suisalu (b.1982) works in the contexts of technology, sound and performance, mixing traditional and contemporary sensibilities and activating peripheral spaces for imaginative encounters.

Pixel Geographies

Field guide to distant selfies and pixel geographies.









16.02.2018 —
29.04.2018

Curated by
Katerina Gregos

ESTONIA
18

the state is not a work of art

An international exhibition
probing the ideas of nation-
hood and state, which are
under constant redefinition
in the new world order.

The State is not a Work of
Art explores the unexpected
and surprising aspects of
these ideas, proposing some
unconventional answers.

TALLINNA KUNSTIHOONE
TALLINN ART HALL

tallinnarthall.eu

Ivar Veermäe: 6 Questions

ANDREAS TROSSEK (AT)

I'll start this interview by breaking down the "fourth wall". I'm going to be talking to you by email over a laptop, and part of the correspondence might wind up printed on the pages of Estonian Art. The issues of the magazine will be distributed in Tallinn, Brussels and maybe even other places in Europe. The interview can also be read on the magazine's website, and the link can be shared on Facebook, Instagram and other social networks in future. So, then. The virtual and material worlds are intermingling, becoming part of the new 21st century economic reality, where a successful bluff is like hard currency, just as solid as actual gold reserves in a bank vault. I see from your CV that you were born in 1982, so we're part of the same generation. Maybe we're the "last of the Mohicans", the ones who still have a blurry memory of the planet the way it was before it became covered in massive computing devices – before capitalism became truly global.

IVAR VEERMÄE (IV)

It seems that having experienced both the 'before' and the 'after' gives me a slightly better ability to see the Internet as something that I can set limits and borders on: by dividing it into different channels: email, Google Search, Google Maps, a couple sites I visit daily, Facebook, which I look at some times, and a few others. I don't see it as the environment in which I live but as something I use. I've been able to more or less refrain from constantly reacting to things. That's really the difference between an environment and different channels: when you're in an environment, you have to constantly take

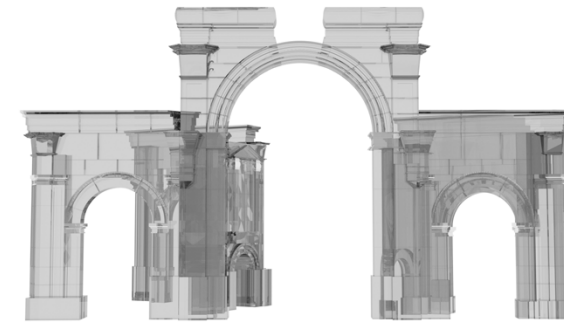
part in the interactions there. But it all depends on the user's own personality, interests and desires. In my case, various computer games have influenced my online behaviour: I was Duke Nukem, but Duke Nukem wasn't me. In other words, it was a closed system that didn't change because of my actions.

If you think about it in more general terms, the Internet and the companies that create and own it (Google, Facebook etc.) have found a very profitable global form that functions by becoming natural. It starts to seem like there's no middleman and the action and interaction are direct. One of the main changes lies in the fact that consumers are no longer offered inanimate objects for consumption but rather environments, where the consumers themselves or other users are the main draw: they are thus simultaneously the producers.

I remember someone's comment made at the transmediale festival of media art that strangely the access to an unprecedentedly large amount of information has led to an inward turn: an interest in oneself and others. Taking this idea further, we could say that the interest didn't appear out of thin air; it's always been there, with the difference being that it is now more successfully being leveraged into serving the profit motive.

Or viewed in another light: in the West, access to most information is unrestricted, and it creates very many possibilities that I probably haven't understood or won't understand because I don't live in those specific environments. In the sense of use or knowledge, Google Search has been extremely beneficial for me; without it, my

Andreas Trossek (b.1980) is an art historian and critic. He is editor-in-chief of the art quarterly KUNST.EE.



Ivar Veermäe "Servus Liberi Animalis", 2017. Credits: Ivar Veermäe / #NEWPALMYRA

latest research-based works wouldn't exist at all. Or it would take years to retrieve the right fragments from libraries. The Internet is also a very important channel for distributing my works.

Playing devil's advocate with myself for a second, I'd say free access has its 'buts': the first page of the search results displays the links that were shared and clicked the most via other pages: in other words, generally acceptable or unacceptable knowledge. A certain filtering and slanting also goes on, which one can comprehend readily by comparing different news channels, such as RT (Russia Today), the BBC and Al Jazeera.

AT One of your earlier performative works, "iTouch" (2012), which is informed by the spread of touchscreens, reminds me of a story I was told a few years ago by a young parent who would always use an iPad to soothe a temperamental child. An iPad would be slipped into the carriage and the tantrum would end. But then at some point, the parent saw the young child making the familiar pinch-to-zoom gesture on a windowpane where there was a sleepy housefly buzzing on the other side. That makes you ask yourself whether (information) technological progress makes a person smarter or dumber.

IV Maybe neither: it makes people different, with great potential to create a dependency that can suck the user in. It doesn't necessarily have to be negative, and again it depends on people's different desires and interests and how much they are able to resist what they don't need. Thinking about form, smartphones (and tablets to some degree) are very cunningly designed:

people see a small amount of information at any one time. The hand used to scroll and what you see or learn are directly linked. What is about to come is still concealed, so there's a certain expectation or even eager anticipation that you're about to get to something, something's about to come, and often it doesn't happen. Or if it does, there's a good chance it will disappear relatively quickly: it's short-term memory that's being used.

When we think about communication channels, such as Messenger, they often lead to a simplified, jocular format. Maybe it's because communication proceeds along natural lines like a large part of direct interaction; it's just intermediated and abbreviated through text and/or symbols. It could be said that more events, happenings and feelings are conveyed, as opposed to thoughts or ideas.

We might also wonder whether constant access to Wikipedia makes people smarter? It seems at first that it does, but perhaps the right term is 'better informed' rather than 'smarter'. Which might, in turn, be the basis for the creation of knowledge. It seems to me that when I read a book, for example, I might be able to remember its contents better than I do Internet content. Perhaps it's because a book is limited and you can't just keep going on from there without putting the book down first. Besides, the different designs of books might also have an effect: the sight of a book that means something to you can re-kindle a link to the ideas it contains. When something is intermediated by information technology, there are certain objects that can be thought of as becoming invisible through use (like a book when it offers something captivating). You can get to 'everywhere' through a single object, and maybe that brings us back to the example of the child.

AT Do you think the digital revolution we're going through right now is the most important breakthrough in human history? After all, people have never had access to so much information before. Many of your earlier projects, such as "Center of Doubt" (2012–2015), are largely based on the classical research method, where the news value of a given fragment of information is culled from a very large amount of starting information, and in the latest book of interviews published by the Estonian Academy of Arts, "Artists' Spaces" (2016), you describe this process in a very interesting manner.



Ivar Veermäe "Palmyra Texture", 2017



Ivar Veermäe "Replica (Egypt)", 2017

IV Yeah, I do believe that these are very major changes, where the main players in the breakthrough are tech firms, whose actions are changing the broader living environment and activity within it. Look at Fortune 500's most valuable brands of 2016, where Apple is number one followed by Alphabet (Google's parent company), Microsoft, ExxonMobil and Facebook. There are a number of reasons that information has been called "the new oil", but we can't overlook the huge amount of energy needed to keep IT infrastructure running.

The media thinker Jussi Parikka's question about whether tech giants will save the world or not is a good one: there's a positive scenario, but there's also the scenario that they will doom the world, because the solution requires such a huge quantity of resources. "Center of Doubt" maps the new industrial age, with its infrastructure and industry. Sure, you could see it as nothing all that new: besides countries, major corporations have always played an important role in searching for new resources, from the old British East India Company to the global oil industry. The information companies built on the backs of the latter aren't just dealing with exploring outer areas but also with colonizing people's inner worlds.

But looking at it another way, access to information and to the transmission of information can be the enabler of positive developments: it can draw attention to violent activity, put aggressors under pressure, and so on. But for the most part, it all depends on the local geographical, economic and political factors. Although the Arab Spring was called a Facebook and Twitter revolution, ultimately they promoted those companies but didn't do much to improve the world. If we think of the Internet as a transmission environment, we see that it can lead to both pro-peace activism and the propagation of radical ideologies.

AT In 2015, your research-based video project on Google's server farm in Belgium was nominated for Estonia's most important contemporary art award, the Köler Prize. Come to think of it, I'm using Gmail to communicate with you right now. I've been a user of Google's services right from the beginning. At the moment, my inbox takes up 10 GB, which is 70% of the free space allotted to me on the company's servers. Yet I've succeeded in boycotting Facebook and other social networks and I keep Wi-Fi functions

switched off on my smartphone. So I don't consider myself a typical Internet junkie. Yet admittedly I spend a majority of my working days at a computer sifting through information and I've basically deposited my personal archive with Google. A certain feeling of paranoia is probably inevitable here. There's a giant server farm in Belgium, but who holds the keys in the literal and figurative senses?

IV In general maybe we could say that you consume Google and Google consumes you, a co-dependency that is more impersonal than personal, because the individual isn't usually important. A mass of people with common interests is more important, because the more people click on a certain ad, the greater the profit Google makes. In general, the bigger the advertiser, the greater its chance of being seen, the greater the possibility that people will buy the product. Individual players do have a small chance of success but most of the turnover takes place between the big companies, or through the big corporations, such as Amazon and Alibaba, who account for a majority of online buying and selling.

Google and others operate based on trust, and that's why the company tries to stay in the background: their main desire, as a leading evangelist, is that Google will be a natural invisible layer that ties people to their environment. But when we think about the main way that Google is visible – their search site – it's a neutral-white-coloured gateway that I use to satisfy my hunger for knowledge, or desire to make a purchase, etc.

In one version of my work "Crystal Computing", I used a simple approach based on colour psychology: what topic or emotion does a certain colour represent? Passing the Google logo through the test resulted in the following combination: trust power optimism trust growth power. That's generally not far from what you get when you think of what you associate with Google. By the way, a couple years ago, the owners and shareholders of Google created a new parent company called Alphabet, and its logo contains only the colour red: so power was the only quality left.

AT You often use what we might call a panoptical perspective. All those big, striking panoramas, majestic satellite photos that conjure up a sense of the sublime or paranoia or information-rich schemes etc. Without delving into the interesting problems of whether and how much these

- works
owe to Michel Foucault, who always associated knowledge and power, I would say that “Crystal Computing (Google Inc., St. Ghislain)” (2014) has, paradoxically, when seen from the purely visual aspect, always struck me as very beautiful landscape art...
- IV The visuals of “Crystal Computing” truly straddle landscape, natural and industrial art. Foucault’s theories of power, knowledge, place and the body have been important to me. In practice, I have been more influenced by Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network theory, according to which, like people, things (and thinking in even bigger terms, places and space) also have their roles and effects in a network. To learn about something, it’s sometimes interesting to look at the place where the thing takes place. From here, I get to the material existence of the local, and to representing the local; these are always different to one another. I don’t have a direct interest in showing that the object and its representation look completely different to each other, but rather in thinking about how else something could be shown. What is there to see when there isn’t anything to be seen? The little boxes formed in information technology works, such as in satellite images, have a very nice look, but besides that they also have an informative effect: for example, the fact that big server farms are always built in some middle-of-nowhere place. Or at what time do these boxes start taking shape? The prowling in the bushes that goes on in “Crystal Computing” highlights very well that this is an industrial massif that looks the part. This information may be already known, but being there and re-recording it creates a greater connection with the real place, which can deepen or change knowledge through the feeling produced. I think that video-based intermediation is capable of conveying this.
- AT As I understand, you alternate living and working in Berlin and Tallinn, and in recent years you have exhibited outside Estonia more often than you have done at home. How would you describe your sense of the world? I ask half-jokingly whether life today is a sort of “Trans-Europe Express”, a genuinely integrated trans-nation-state European Union as, say, Kraftwerk conceived of it: “Wir fahr’n fahr’n

fahr’n auf der Autobahn”, “Wir laufen ‘rein in Düsseldorf City”?

- IV I’m mostly in Berlin and as time permits I often travel between different points, but I haven’t developed this feeling of amalgamation. Train travel is a good way of getting a sense of the territory: travelling the Berlin-Luxembourg-Berlin route a few months ago reminded me again that Europe doesn’t just consist of midpoints; there’s also a periphery that is quite different from the centre. As many of my works are video-based and lend themselves nicely to being circulated over the Internet, many of my exhibitions or screenings take place without me being present. This creates an interesting abstract feeling: in general it’s good that someone somewhere saw certain works of mine but still, if I had my druthers, I’d be there in person to have a better idea of how people received them, or the place itself. And generally, it’s wise to pay attention when sending material to open calls, as there are many exploitation schemes where artists are the content producers that the event organisers monetise for a profit. And this brings up the dilemma: do you keep your works to yourself and exhibit them to a small select audience, or release them to everyone at once? To keep up a certain level of interest, I’ve shown my newer works only at exhibitions, and as time goes by, I roll them out gradually via the Internet.

Anneli Porri (b.1980) studied art history at the Estonian Academy of Arts and cultural theory at Tallinn University. She is a curator at Tallinn Art Hall.

The Screen, Archive and Waiting Room in Recent Estonian Photography

When we think about the two central concepts of this exhibition – screen and archive – it’s obvious that photographic images are native inhabitants of both. The image on a diapositive (a positive photographic slide) is projected onto the fabric of a screen, transparency comes to life on a light table, a photograph is developed on paper, and coloured points of light burn bright on an LCD screen and create an endless number of images on the same surface, one after another: a photograph requires a surface on which to materialise, to create its illusion.

At the Tartu Art Museum exhibition “From Explosion to Expanse. Estonian Contemporary Photography 1991–2015”, I traced a narrative of the history of Estonian art and art photography, from the socially

active 1990s to the information-saturated present-day, with its languor, increasing attitude of blaséness and aesthetic levelling. The paradox of reaching a plateau is that the photographic image increasingly pursues ways to intrude into space, to be more than a two-dimensional index denoting something that has been photographed with just one thing in mind. In today’s critical theory-guided art, a photograph often draws attention to its own surface to emphasise its own independent identity, not as an objective fragment of life, or truth preserved by a lens. Now the surface of the photograph is open to intervention, and it can be opened and peeled as Anu Vahtra does; separate objects can be placed on it and then re-photographed, or sculptural frames can be built on it to continue the logic of the image, as Sigrid Viir has done. Images meant

for LCD screens can be blown up and cut out of the background in Katja Novitskova's sculptures, traces of fold lines can be pressed onto photographs, in the manner of Marge Monko, or pop-ups can be produced from Photoshopped collages, which is Laura Kuusk's technique. It is clear that contemporary photography needs more than just a screen to be projected upon. These images, most of them found and appropriated, actually enter our space as artists' works.

As to the other keyword of the exhibition, "archive", contemporary photography is locked in an unusual dialogue with this concept. Increasingly, artists refer to the corpus of existing images to bring into the digital environment, photos that were created using analogue means and that were also meant solely for reproduction by such means, printed in magazines, enlarged on paper, or projected as slides on a wall. The hyperrealism of technology amplifies the characteristic traits, personality and flaws in analogue material. To look at a digitalised negative, to see the particularities of the emulsion, the imperfections, surface asperities and dust is a refreshing change of scenery for eyes that have seen so many flawless and sharp images captured by digital sensors and fine-tuned with filters. Marge Monko's research trips to the Estonian Film Archives and the Agfa-Gevaert archive in Mortsel are the basis for many of her works; she also collects old magazines, advertisements and graphic designs on specific themes. Laura Toots and Maria Kapajeva draw on their own family photos and video archives for their works. Paul Kuimet brings a 17th century sundial to life on 16mm film. Various physical archives also exert a pull: Dénes Farkas visits the world's seed banks, and Krista Mölder photographs the Kumu Art Museum's repositories. It seems as if the photographers are trying, with the help of digital means, to save what is facing imminent destruction, trying to capture and typologise something that can in turn preserve and typologise our private lives, culture and scientific legacy.

Acting in this type of semionaut-prosumer manner, meaningfully appropriating found material, can be considered a second contemporary trend in photography. Can it also be called post-photography? Well, in the broader sense, certainly: now everyone can be a photographer and photographers are "artists-working-with-photography", more editors and curators than creators.¹ David Bate (author and Professor of Photography at the University of Westminster) is more careful, and reserves the term post-photography for digital photography as a mere data space in which

the photograph loses its ability to deliver social references.² Although unabashedly aesthetic, the works of these above-mentioned Estonian artists are nevertheless social; they increasingly defy easy answers but still seek contact with human heritage.

Sigrid Viir's Waiting Room Improvisation

Sigrid Viir is an Estonian photographic artist who came out of the Estonian Academy of Arts photography department (BA, 2009) and has garnered international acclaim for executing her vision from a clear artist's position. Looking at the Estonian artists who are more active and demanding of both the viewer and themselves, many were trained at the Estonian Academy's photography department, earning a BA or MA in the late 2000s. It would not be unjust to note that the primary context for these artists' works is formed by themselves, as well as by their fellow students, colleagues and friends. For instance, Viir is engaged in a number of collaborative projects and exhibitions with Kristiina Hansen and Johannes Säre and, along with Karel Koplimets and Taaniel Raudsepp, she is one of the board members of the artwork-enterprise Visible Solutions LLC.

Sigrid Viir's work is diverse, ranging from photo installations to videos and performance interventions, and addressing themes ranging from the family and private sphere to linguistic and economic metaphors. In the most general sense, Viir's preoccupation is symbolic order: a language-based representation system that governs subjects unbeknownst to themselves and which encompasses sexual relations, social and political structures, as well as laws, religious precepts and metaphorical games. Since 2013, she has gone from photography as a process of documenting and revealing to photography as a physical structure. Her artist's position, a battle against *comme il faut* behavioural correctness has gained strength: in her case, this is not a vocal protest but a quiet, flattening pressure she brings to bear on symbolic order so as to form cracks and fissures in its shell, preventing the possibility of complacently viewing the works without some unease.

We will take a closer look at Viir's earlier works, some from her school days. As the artist is committed to her creative quest, these visually varied works help us understand the foundation on which her latest, aesthetically and installatively integral series are positioned.

The series "Metamorphosis" (2007) is, in spite of its modest visual presence, a secret door leading to Viir's artistic work. The chewed-up and saliva-macerated wads of gum stuck on the underside of a table with a careless thumb and still bearing a thumbprint, later becoming cracked as they solidify – which the artist shows us in close-up – are classic abjects. Think about how you might feel if you happened to unexpectedly touch one of them on the underside of an arm rest. "It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated," says Julia Kristeva.³ It is now simple to see how other works also relate to the abject, the constant boundary between the normal and the repellent: a woman in men's clothing – in a backwards shirt seen from behind her back ("Shirt", 2007), nudity with parents, containing a ban on looking and incestuous titillation ("Nude with Parents", 2009), dirty piles of melting snow in spring, a peeled potato with only the "eyes" left intact ("Awful Pretty Pipe Neck", 2016), polish apples in a plastic bag ("Snapshot Photos on the Moon", "Black Holes Filled with Sugar Cubes", "Snowball as a Noble Gift", "Polish Apple in a Lift", 2016).... The oddly constructed scenes in the series "Routinecrusher, Wanderlust, Tablebear, etc." (2009–2011) are visually ergonomic with regard to the viewer, yet rationally absurd; it is as if these and the preceding works pose the question: can we still enjoy something that does not submit to rational order?

One of the most perspicacious works of recent times is "Hans_55" (2016), which centres on a photo taken by the German photographer Hans Silvester of members of the Surma and Mursi tribes of Ethiopia adorned by plants and natural pigments: one still from a piece of theatre presented for the photographer, meant to satisfy Western civilization's craving for the exotic and the authentic. There are sugar plantations in the region so the West can have its Coca-Cola, and this is referred to by soda bottle-shaped concrete stands on which the photographs are supported. Viir, for her part, has decorated the tribal images with the accoutrements of everyday life in the West – optical glass, caps of ballpoint pens and a Post-it note – instilling in the viewer's consciousness the guilty-conscience context in which we see this 'free, carefree' tribe.

"Waiting Room Improvisation" (2016), first presented at the Artishok Biennial, is also a challenge to the viewer. This work enters into an inspired dialogue with the venue chosen for the biennial: NO99 Theatre's rehearsal hall in a Stalinist-era building in central Tallinn, which is now the home of the most radical and interventionist theatre in the country. Viewers

entering through the brightly lit lobby find themselves in a dark hall and have to grope their way up rising rows of seats. In front of the viewer, above the stage, hovers a small light box, with a monochrome photo of a cloud. The viewers enter, take their seats and wait. They sit. Quietly. "Maybe it is a monitor, a screensaver? Will the cloud move? Will anything happen? NO? I'm confused..." Viir manages to hit on two extremes: the framed, closed nature of a waiting situation, and improvisation referring to playfulness, the unexpected, the joy of creation. She herself says: "It's not interesting. It's so long and slow that it appears to be motionless. It's a filter that has to be passed through to arrive. It's a pause. It's an opportunity to pop into the unknown and one can't be late for that." Once again, clear and cryptic at the same time. This is not a light pause to catch one's breath, which is offered, for instance, by Kristiina Hansen and Anond Versto's photograph "Sky Detail" (2011), a small piece of bright, deep blue summer sky that conjures up warm summer air in even the stuffiest room. No, this is clearly an impasse, a hopelessly snarled knot that won't start to unravel in the viewer's head in the form of words and meanings.

But let's wait a bit more. After a long enough wait, a pareidolic illusion starts taking hold: we see in the cloud the shape of a heart; we might recognize a paper aeroplane, but still Godot does not show. But we knew he wouldn't, didn't we? But still we hoped that if we waited silently long enough, the meaning would start to reveal itself, words would come and hitch themselves to the cloud and the light box. In some respects, the result of this expectation is similar to the Paul Kuimet film "2060" (2014), which in its perfection keeps the viewer going around on a Möbius strip without beginning or end. Both works, however, achieve something that in the current overproduction of news is more important than meaning: a meditative state of rest, a concentration of thought. If we're lucky, it's a rare moment when the mind is completely still and clear.

Yet, besides the cloud, there's something else in the picture, some sort of glitter. It turns out this is saliva that flew through the air in front of the camera at the moment the picture was taken.

Is this work social? As a picture, certainly not: at this point, we could talk about post-photography, as this picture does not add anything to our conception of the world that we didn't already know, but if only there wasn't that saliva, the abject that breaks the



Sigrid Viir "Polish" from three-part photo installation "Snapshot photos of the Moon, black holes filled with sugar cube, snowball as a noble gift, Polish apple in a lift", 2016

frame. Visually it's an odd sparkle on the surface of the picture, in the sense of the image file it is noise and detritus, and for our social perception it's something that breaks through the barrier of ambivalence and, whether we want it or not, we find ourselves in emotional contact with the work.

- 1 Shore, Robert. *Post-Photography. The Artist with a Camera*. London:
Laurence King Publishing, 2014, pp. 7-8.
- 2 Bate, David. *Art Photography*. London: Tate Publishing, 2015, p. 145.
- 3 Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror. An essay on Abjection*. New York:
Columbia University Press, 1982, p. 1.

Ragne Soosalu (b.1984) is a curator, critic and manager of electronic and sound art. She works at the Estonian Centre for Architecture, curating exhibitions as a freelancer.

Memopol-3 – The Magnifying Glass of Contemporary Privacy

I had to open a new personal e-mail account recently, an action one rarely does these days. A long time has gone by since I signed up for my previous one. I was shocked at the harsh reality of privacy violations. When syncing the new e-mail account in my smartphone, the mail exchange app wanted access to a massive amount of my personal information, literally every piece of data there was on my phone, including my gender, my image files and of course my contacts: e-mails and phone numbers, among many other things. Why on earth would an e-mail app need to know my gender or have access to the images on my smartphone? Of course, I was politely reassured in a brief sentence that I could change these privacy settings at any given time after I had completed the registration process.

This is the surveillance society and it has not yet reached its climax. When Timo Toots, one of the most prominent young Estonian artists working in media art, created his “Memopol” precursor in 2009, the world was a different place. Memopol clearly shows that the Orwellian surveillance society has exceeded all expectations, and we still don’t realise how dangerous it is. Among many other media art projects,

Timo Toots has also been active in a number of socially engaging projects, and has organised residencies and workshops. However, the series of “Memopol” machines have stood out the most over the years, and have also won him one of the most important media art awards in Europe: the Ars Electronica grand prix for interactive arts in 2012. “Memopol” has been exhibited eight times all over Europe.

Experience Surveillance

The story of “Memopol” started in 2009, when Timo Toots created his first and smallest data machine, based on the info accessible via the Estonian electronic ID card; it was called “Hall of Fame” and it was in the format of a small billboard with data projected onto it. It was innocent looking and a fun game that carried a warning message: the threat to our privacy has never been greater. However, it seems that even then only a few people valued their privacy.

“Memopol I” (2010) and “Memopol II” (2011) were decidedly different in design from their precursor. Also based on the electronic Estonian ID card or

passport scan, “Memopol” was now based on a spatial, theatrical experience. The environment is a dark room, and the interface machine itself is a wall-to-wall oversized electronic board in black and red, which creates an experience of doubt. It generates second thoughts, which is never the case in our everyday lives when we give out private information to unknown third parties. The carefully orchestrated Memopol experience had two important moments. First, there was the moment of hesitation of whether or not to insert one’s personal ID card into an unknown machine. Secondly, there was the awe moment when the machine started to collect and present all of the possible information available about that person online and in different databases, accompanied by flashing lights and a soundtrack.

There was nothing innocent about the data-collecting machine, as opposed to regular ID cards and smartphone applications that operate so pleasantly that we don’t even think about the fact that we are giving access to our private information. “Memopol”, however, forces an individual to actually think twice about whether s/he really wants to step in. Surveillance in this instance becomes almost physically real. The visitor is made to experience the surveillance of their private data, as opposed to in the real world, where great efforts are made by governments and other agents hungry for our personal information to mask the extent of their grasp on our personal information. While visitors to “Memopol II” in 2011 at least hesitated before inserting their ID cards into the big-dark-scary machine, since then we have become even more numb to giving out our private data without hesitation. It is not “Memopol” but society that has fundamentally changed, and very fast.

Thus it was time for “Memopol” to evolve again to meet the prevailing level of numbness and raise the bar, its data collection has grown exponentially, and so has the installation itself. “Memopol-3” is a more immersive piece of social and interactive art; it is also more insolent and intrusive in terms of the scale and depth of private data collection. “Memopol-3” tracks and mimics the actions of many multinational companies collecting our private information at every step we take in the digital world.

First of all, to gain access to “Memopol-3” one already has to give away a lot of private information at the gate by inserting an ID card or US driver’s licence, or by making a passport scan. The gate opens. The next step involves biometric measurements of the visitor,

after which he can comfortably sit down in a futuristic chair designed for smartphone users (which means for everybody) and gives the computer programme access to all of the information stored in your little life companion. Let us just stop here for a moment. Mikko Hyppönen, Chief Research Officer at F-Secure and a columnist, has said that “smart means exploitable”. The big smart explosion reached its climax around 2010, and by 2012 there were one billion smartphones in use worldwide. This has brought about fundamental changes to people’s lives and society in general.

Your smartphone knows everything about you. It knows your location at any given time. It knows all the SMS messages you have ever sent to anyone and all the contents of them. It knows who your parents are, your little sister and your son. It knows what you buy online. “Memopol” rips all of that information from the smartphone to make us think about the huge security breach we are under via our dear flat-screen friend. The only difference is that “Memopol” doesn’t sell the information to governments and marketers for big bucks like data broker companies do.

After purging their smartphone, the visitor can move to the last room, where all of the information gathered during his journey through the “Memopol-3” spaces is visually presented. As “Memopol-3” is not an evil machine, it deletes the gathered data after each session, although it leaves a trace of names and portraits on the screens in the lobby as footprints.

Memopol Doesn’t Generalise: It Specifies

“Surveillance society” sounds so tedious. We have heard about it for decades and gotten tired of the fuss. We are only now slowly starting to realise what it actually means and what threats come with it. It’s slowly entering our consciousness, although not so much for the younger generation of digital natives. We are biologically programmed to protect ourselves by ignoring problems that we cannot fix or that are so complicated or abstract that they often seem to appear to be made-up.

Evgeny Morozov has another take on this indifference: “By presuming that we are living through revolutionary times, epochalism sanctions radical social interventions that might otherwise attract a lot of



Timo Toots “The Gate of Memopol-3”, 2017.
Image: Timo Toots

www.memopol.ee

suspicion and criticism. ... The paralyzing influence of epochalism induces passivity and limits our responses to change, for the unfolding trends are perceived to be so monumental and inevitable that all resistance seems futile.”¹

Where there is a problem, technology can find a solution: technological positivism has rooted itself so strongly in our society that it is extremely difficult to express doubts about it or even dare to ask what is actually behind it. Anybody that goes against it is accused of being paranoid. Words and arguments against it are easy to twist.

Morozov, who is a well-known but controversial researcher who warns about Internet threats, published his first book in 2011 (The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom), the same year “Memopol II” was created. Morozov argues against the idea that the Internet is democratic, stating that instead it is used as a tool of mass surveillance, political repression and a way to spread all kinds of propaganda.

What if you are confronted with the physical reality of mass surveillance and breaches to your private life? Memopol’s strength as a social (impact) machine lies in the way it interacts with the visitor. “Memopol” takes on visitors one at a time, giving each an exclusive, personal experience. The visitor is singled out, thus creating a bigger impression than the world-wide data collecting companies who collect wholesale data and seemingly make a person feel like one drop of water in an ocean of information. So, inside that very personal experience “Memopol-3” provides an overview of a specific person’s private data that is accessible to many unknown agents all over the world. It doesn’t generalise: it specifies. It takes the magnifying glass and makes an individual’s private information significant through a massive pool of faceless data.

The World & Memopol After Snowden

In 2013 former CIA employee Edward Snowden leaked hundreds of classified documents revealing global surveillance programmes run in cooperation with the US government, telecommunication companies and European governments. Almost everybody was vulnerable, from national leaders to business owners.

Even though the Snowden scandal has almost died out now, it did lead to ambitious data protection reform in the European Union. At least the film director David Bernet was convinced of that. Bernet’s documentary “Democracy” (2015, original title “Democracy – im Rauch der Dates”) followed the difficult road of an idealistic and individual-centred (rather than business- or government-directed) law-making process in the European Union. The process first encountered great opposition from European leaders and corporations, only to be easily accepted after the world was shocked by Snowden’s revelations. The data protection law will take effect in the European Union in the spring of 2018.

So, what does the data protection reform protect us from and what does “Memopol” try to visualise for us? “Memopol-3” strives to make people realize the extent to which their private data is actually available and collected by different agents. Mobile phones that pinpoint your location. Cameras that track your every move. Subway cards that remember where you’ve been. Credit card purchases online. We routinely sacrifice privacy and security for convenience. Still, are we really free to decide about access to our privacy? We are put in the position where we either give access to personal information or we are denied services. Consent is one of the easiest things to get on the Internet, but it is not a guarantee of data protection. Data is forever. Literally. The ‘delete’ button doesn’t ‘wipe the information off the face of the earth’. It means ‘I just deleted the information from my device, but it will continue to exist in big server systems, where it can be found by anyone at any given time in the future’.

Timo Toots’ “Memopol” reflects our own actions back to us. Voluntary and involuntary. At the end of the day, it is really nobody’s business whom I call, where I travel, what words I Google or what shoes I have bought online.

Raivo Kelomees (b.1960) is an artist, art critic and new media researcher. He is a Senior Researcher at the Estonian Academy of Arts and a professor at the Tartu Art College.

Video Art in the Digital Age

The status of video art and experimental film in Estonia has changed, due to technological and art trends. The phenomena of video art and electronic arts did not exist in Estonia during the 1980s, but gradually emerged in the mainstream consciousness. Looking back at the 1990s, I would consider myself a graphomaniac: obsessed with writing about and documenting the new art form at the time, trying to prove the value of electronic arts, shadowboxing and arguing with imaginary opponents. At that time, painting was considered to be the “leading form of art”. Video and photography were considered to be forms of mediation, not original art. They were not considered “creative” media because “mediated” art production is produced by technology, not by hand, which was considered to be undignified.

In the meantime, countries have disappeared and emerged, media have come and gone, and renewed themselves or remained the same. As the moving image has been transferred to the digital platform, I would turn to a quote by the early video art pioneer Steina Vasulka: “I don’t consider digital video to be a different medium in itself; it is an extension of analog video and, in that sense, not a lot has changed.”¹ Undoubtedly, what she had in mind was what was being done to the audiovisual aesthetically and artistically. However, she was contradicting herself, in my opinion. When Steina Vasulka started working with her husband Woody Vasulka in the 1960s, along with Nam June Paik and other video art pioneers, they were primarily working with the signal, not with the

image. But the analogue signal and the digital signal are different. For example, if we consider any kind of glitch, or video projections dealing with noise, analogue noise and digital noise look different. But this is a separate topic.

In 2015 a group of students from the Estonian Academy of Arts took part in the 30th anniversary of the “Vidéoformes” festival in Clermont-Ferrand, France. It was surprising that the same curator had been organizing the festival since it began in 1984. It’s a pioneering international event, but mostly in French. The selection of works is “tasteful”, meaning that the selection is visually meaningful and rather technically virtuoso. But video art has fallen out of fashion and is no longer considered trendy or sexy, and screening halls are empty, although technically it is one of the most usable and accessible artistic media. The processed image is everywhere around us. Young Estonian video artists are appreciated as their works translate easily to international contexts. Ideally there would be greater export and internationalization of their works, as the Estonian art scene provides young artists with rather limited exhibiting and showcasing opportunities.

The most consistent of the video and experimental audiovisual festivals in Estonia is the “FideoFest” in Pärnu. It managed to gather a community of local professionals and dilettantes by the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, showing the works of practically everyone. The event was inclusive and allowed art-

¹ Evgeny Morozov. To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism, page 36).

(Re) designing the Nation: The Compass of Estonian Design

In his book “B is for Bauhaus: An A–Z of the Modern World”, Deyan Sudjic, the director of The Design Museum in London, under “C” states: “It is no wonder then that the history of modern design is so often told as a sequence of chairs rather than of cars, or handguns, or typefaces, all of which could be plausible candidates for the role.” Accidentally, or perhaps intentionally, an attempt to narrate the history of Estonian design through the exhibit “Encounter Estonian Design: An Introduction” (Tartu Art Museum, September–December 2016, curated by Kai Lobjakas) does start with a chair. However, what seems of more importance to understanding the history of Estonian design is what Sudjic offers under the letter “N”: national identity.

Having migrated from war-torn Serbia (Yugoslavia back then) to the UK as a child, Sudjic found himself back in Belgrade, Serbia’s capital, after a couple of decades, in 2007, the speaker at Belgrade’s pioneering design festival, “Belgrade Design Week”. During a taxi ride on his way to the airport, as noted in the book, Sudjic pondered Yugoslav architecture: Roman Catholic Croats built modern churches in concrete and glass, suggesting their belonging (or desire to belong) to a state looking West rather than East. In contrast, Orthodox Serbs built Byzantine churches in stone and tile. Countries so close, for decades part of the same geopolitical union, were now more distant than ever. On the other hand, even though there is quite some distance between them (although both

ists to come together. There were also French-Baltic video festivals taking place since the beginning of the 1990s, but they faded away as they lost their funding. Just last year (2016) “KuFF” – the Kumu Art Film Festival – emerged, organized by the Art Museum of Estonia (Kumu), but it’s too early to comment, as the festival’s history is still evolving. There were also experimental programs in the context of the popular annual film-festival “PÖFF” (Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival), but those have disappeared. The question of how to bring together the Estonian experimental film and video art community remains unanswered.

Since the late 1990s, there have been university courses on experimental film, video and documentaries at the Tartu Art College, the Estonian Academy of Arts, and Tallinn University, taught by Raul Keller (an artist and Professor of New Media at the Estonian Academy of Arts) and Meelis Muhu (a documentary film director, producer and script writer). Students are continually fed a diet of marginal (non-mainstream and non-commercial) audiovisual material. Many who started at the Estonian Academy of Arts making documentary films or video art continue their studies at the Baltic Film School at Tallinn University. The education and experience of the moving image provided by art schools is rather marginal and aesthetics based; if students want to polish their skills and become more professional, then a film school is a must.

To summarize briefly what can be described as video art: each event organizer can and does define video art according to their own taste. It can be video art as part of an installation, or video art in the context of an exhibition, but it can also be mediated in the public space. To provide a more concrete definition, I would say that “single-channel video art”, which is shown on the screen, is the most traditional and recognized form. I would also like to point out some common features or characteristics of video art, which do not all have to be present. I would consider these to be the “primary” or basic features of video art, and in real life and practice they dilute, alter, mix and change.

The classic features of video art include: visual paradoxes, superimposition, visual aphorism/paradox, non-narrativity, meta-content, medium reflexivity and marginal subjects.

– **Visual paradoxes** and wit are exemplified by most Estonian classic performative video works (by Jaan Toomik, Kai Kaljo, Ene-Liis Semper, and so forth).

– **Non-narrativity** doesn’t mean the lack of an idea, or that someone isn’t telling a story in the video;

what’s important is how the artist handles it. But for the most part, video art doesn’t include a linear storyline, as that is more the domain of movies or documentaries.

– **Meta-content** means the video deals with or references itself, or other videos or artworks; an artwork analyzes itself or other similar works.

– **Medium reflexivity** should be understood as a way of addressing the issues of a video’s technical (analogue or digital) signal and the resulting visual or audio.

– **Marginal subjects** means videos depicting the author’s or protagonist’s “internal state of being”, covering all sorts of “crazy subjects”, or the lives of socially disadvantaged groups (the poor, prisoners, LGBT people and any group that has been neglected by the mainstream culture and media). Marginal subjects can be seen as relics from the activist period of video art which stem from the desire to focus on unconventional characters and untold stories. For some time now, reality TV has found commercial success exploiting the marginal subject.

The graphic and cinematic practice of superimposition is one of the most artistically based methods of approaching the frame and consists of an electronically processed image, one feature of video art that is commonly used. This means playing with different visual layers in order to create a unique visuality, leading to picturesque and scenic projects: in a good sense. There are not many Estonian videos that belong to this category. This is partly due to poverty, because electronic manipulation takes time and resources. The first classic example would be “Fotovisioon” (*Photovision*, directed by J. Nõgisto, RTV, 1994), which wasn’t actually an artist’s project. Today, the cost of technology and the lack of editing/montage possibilities are no longer prohibitive factors, but now the trends have changed, and a densely visual video seems anachronistic. Times and tastes have changed since video art first gained mainstream acceptance in the art world: from not being accepted as an art form to being an integral part of every contemporary artist’s tool kit. Many of the above discussed characteristics of video art can now be easily applied to contemporary art in general.

1 R. Kelomees, “Kui keegi on esimene, ei tähenda, et ta on parim” (“If someone’s the first, it doesn’t mean they’re the best”). Interview with Steina Vasulka at the Kananahk Festival July 26, 2001 in Rakvere. – Sirp, August 17, 2001.

are referred to as “East”) the Baltic (Post-Soviet) and Balkan (Post-Yugoslav) republics Estonia and Serbia share more similarities than it might seem at a first glance.

The main one, at least the one that caught my eye while a Serbian student of the semiotics of art in Estonia, falls under the term that Sudjic suggests for “N” of the modern world. Even now, as the Design Museum’s director has found, identity is not an entirely comfortable subject to bring up in Belgrade, and I will dare to add that it is not comfortable in Estonia either. Historically weighed down under rapid shifts of sociopolitical ideologies and cultural codes, both Estonia and Serbia have been left with a rather bitter taste in their mouths in terms of constantly being forced to redesign their national identities. The arts, including the applied arts and design production, many times throughout the histories of both countries served as resilience, resistance, even spite, at times when the freedom to express oneself unrestrictedly was silenced, especially since the voice of freedom had to navigate through an imposed set poetics. The political control of culture, typical of Marxist countries, meant that both countries were able to freely explore and create their designs only recently, both nationally and internationally. In the case of Estonia, this was after gaining final independence from Russian domination in 1991, and then upon its ascension to the European Union in 2004; in the case of Serbia it happened after 2000 and the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic, after which the country started to shape itself into a modern democracy with an urbanized culture, hoping that this transition (still ongoing, seemingly never ending) will ensure it a place within the European Union as well.

Coming back to the exhibit, and the chair, it is interesting to observe how both relate to the idea of national identity.

Given the fact that the mentioned chair is the first object a visitor encounters in encountering Estonian design, it seems valid to dive more deeply into why this specific object was placed as the starting point of the (hi)story of Estonian design. First of all, showcasing an introductory exhibit on national art not in the capital, where the institutional alma mater of the exhibit, the Estonian Museum of Applied Arts and Design, is located, but in the city of Tartu, finds its explanation in the establishment of Estonian national identity. Between 1918 and 1920, the Estonian War of Independence, in which Estonians, with Latvians and

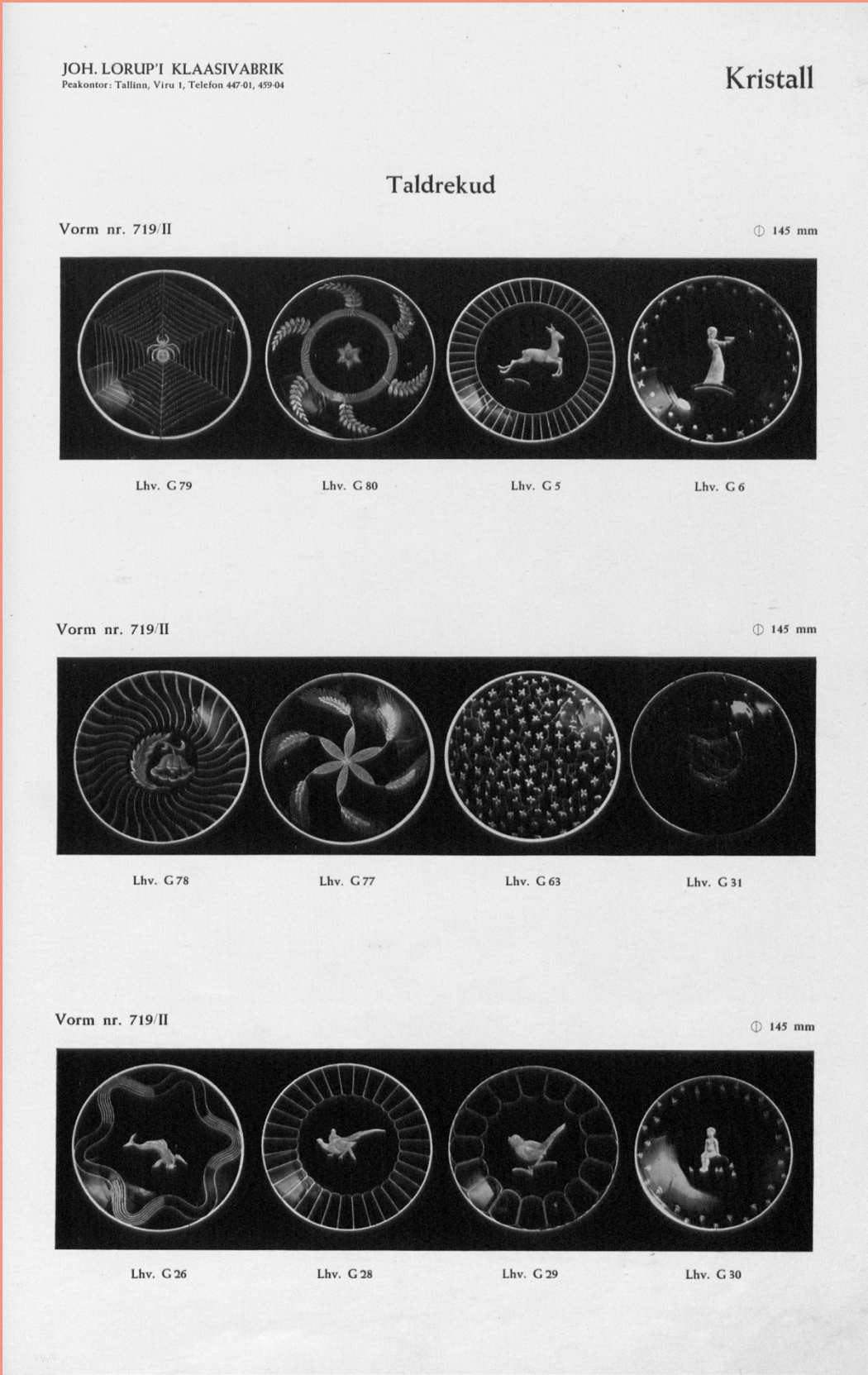
Britons as allies, fought the Soviet westward offensive, brought Estonia its birth certificate. The Tartu Peace Treaty, signed on 2 February 1920, formally declared the (first) independence of Republic of Estonia. Why then, is an object in a way older than Estonia the introductory object of the Estonian design narrative?

This is the question a fellow student asked me when I was giving the initial tour in English at the Tartu Art Museum, which held the aforementioned exhibit. As an intern at the museum, I conducted research in order to give tours in English for foreign students. Note that Estonia’s main university, the University of Tartu, with an array of international students, is based in Tartu instead of Tallinn. But, let me get back to the chair again.

The model of the chair, probably manufactured in the last decade of the 19th century or the very beginning of the 20th century (according to its catalogue number), is a piece made by the Luther factory for plywood and furniture (A.M. Luther Company for Mechanical Woodworking), at that time considered to be the largest Estonian furniture manufacturer in Russia. The factory was founded by members of a Baltic German timber guild family, Alexander Martin and Christian Luther. A legend that surrounds its foundation states that Christian decided that the Luthers’ main focus would be on renowned chairs after accidentally seeing an appealing design in a shop window during his visit to the USA. While such a statement certainly adds a bit of sensationalism to the story, a look at the Luthers’ furniture makes it clear that their designs looked beyond the tsarist borders, in a north-westerly direction.

The factory was founded in 1877, when flourishing industrialisation in the United Kingdom led to the affirmation of applied arts across Europe. The opening of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1852 initiated the hybridisation of artistic and industrial processes, as well as the presentation of design in a museum environment. The Luther factory cunningly took advantage of this, by exporting to other countries beyond the Russian core, and by establishing a sister company, “Venesta”, in 1908 in London. Some years before, the Luthers’ design won the Grand Prix at The Great Exhibit in Paris. The Luther factory grew to be a serious competitor to Western Europe’s leading furniture manufacturer, “Thonet”. Interestingly, if we were to look into Serbian design of the same period, and make an introductory exhibit on the subject of Serbian design, it would probably start with

Page from the product catalogue of the “Lorup’s Glass Factory”, 1930s





Designers Udo Umberg and Lilian Linnaks with the production of the factory "Estoplast", early 1960s. Photo: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design



Part of the set "Valli", 1971. Designer Pilvi Ojamaa, producer "Tarbeklaas"

a chair as well, a chair by the founding father of Serbian design, Dragutin Inchiostri Medenjak. Inchiostri moved from Croatia to Serbia in 1905, when he intensively began what ended up being his lifetime task: the development of applied arts in Serbia. The parallel between the Luther factory and Inchiostri does not lie in their chairs, but rather in their significance in initiating national design productions.

Prior to Inchiostri's arrival in Belgrade, Serbian applied arts were a pale echo of European applied art practices. In 1907, while preparing himself for "The Balkan States Expo" in London, Inchiostri published "Rebirth of Serbian Art". In this book, Inchiostri suggested how to create, or rather renew national applied arts, which had been lost long before due to different dictatorships Serbia suffered under from the Middle Ages on. Due to a long history of oppression, the foundation of a national style had been long sought, and long desired, just as in Estonia. After learning from the experiences of other nations, Serbian applied artists had to turn to their own roots. Only by renewing and creating domestic and native ornaments and heritage, can a nation join in the global artistic desire to create stylistically recognizable artworks, according to Inchiostri. The ornament of national provenance, according to Inchiostri, is the key ingredient in this renewal.

The Luthers did not go this far, given the fact that they were not Estonians, and that Estonia did not exist at the time. However, they did lay the foundations for future designers by introducing effective industrialisation in manufacturing products that were both commercial and aesthetic, and in a way Estonian. The company closed during WWI, but the reopening of the company at the dawn of Estonia's independence brought their designs closer to more modernist and functional, mostly British and Finnish, tendencies. In 1919, the collection of applied arts within the Estonian Art Museum was established.

What Luther's initiated – Estonian applied arts – Johannes Lorup and Eduard Taska brought to perfection. By establishing Estonian national ornamental leather craft, Eduard Taska earned the title of the founder of modern Estonian leather-work. His workshop grew into a company in 1933, and trained dozens of young Estonian professionals, many of whom were women, mostly notably Helda Reimo. Like the Luthers, he exported all over Europe, as well as to Asia and Africa. Taska also won a 'Grand Prix' for Estonia, this time at the "Paris World Exhibition" in

1937. Taska included unique Estonian ethnographic motifs in his leather-work production, which consisted of binding, gilding and decorative modelling. Johannes Lorup now had enough to work on in his attempt to establish another applied arts discipline in Estonia: glass production.

Earlier this year, the Museum of Vojvodina in Novi Sad, Serbia held an exhibit on modern Nordic glass design, which showcased designs from Scandinavia and Finland. However, the UN reclassified Estonia and the other Baltic republics as part of northern Europe in January 2017. I still remember the fireworks in Tartu. It was like Independence Day all over again. North, finally! After this change, the organizers of the exhibit invited me to give a lecture on Estonian design and its positioning between the East and the North, on the example of glass design. Interestingly, Estonian glass design was indeed initiated by the North, by a Swedish entrepreneur, Jakob de la Gardie, who founded the first glass factory in Estonia in 1628. The location of this factory, the village of Huti on the island of Hiiumaa, served as fertile ground for Gardie's efforts. He took advantage of Estonia's geopolitical position to initiate glass design. The island served as a rich source of clay and sand, there was a nearby seaport and a fuel supply in the forests, and it was far enough from Russia, which was about to begin its major expansion. According to the few preserved sources, this factory was one of the largest glass factories in northern Europe in the mid-century. Despite this, it was not until 1792 and the founding of the "Meleski" glass factory that Estonian glass production began in the way in which the Luthers initiated furniture production. The factory, again built by German landlords, was rented to the Amelung family, renowned glass producers from Germany. As Germany exported mirrors to Russia, Catherine II decided to raise the tariffs in order to initiate national glass production. Hence, the Amelungs rented the "Meleski" factory, and profited from domestic production. "Meleski" remained the largest glass producer in the Russian Empire and the Baltics until WWI and the intensifying of Russia–Estonia relations prior to Estonian independence.

From the foundations laid by Swedes and Germans, the Estonian entrepreneur Johannes Lorup constructed the renowned “Lorup’s Glass Factory”. The year 1934, when the factory was established, is considered the beginning of the professional Estonian glass industry. Lorup updated the production processes of the factory by implementing modern technologies, which enabled him to become Estonia’s first producer of crystal and semi-crystal. What distinguished Lorup’s production was the fact that he never copied the designs of other producers in Europe. Instead, he hired Estonian designers in order to find authentic Estonian artistic expression through the glass medium. One of those designers was Agnes Ney, who meticulously incorporated Estonian maritime symbols in her glass designs.

Interestingly, even when the factory was nationalised and renamed “Tarbeklass” upon Soviet Union’s forced integration of Estonia in 1940, the factory’s production still remained North-Western in its poetics to a great extent. The free artist was replaced by the labour unit, and design came to serve utility and necessity rather than aestheticism. It seemed to be easier to be an industrial artist than a painter or a sculptor, as the former could not work with a form and aesthetics without serving political ideology. Nevertheless, all design proposals had to be analysed and approved by special committees before even reaching the production process. However, it was through Estonia, the ‘most Western’ of the Soviet states, and through design that many modernist tendencies were born.

Design didn’t necessarily deal with political iconography, except for poster and print media propaganda. It did have to serve a political purpose, mainly utilitarian, but its production allowed the West to sneak in. This was not really homage, but rather taking what was best from competitors and putting it to use within Estonian borders. While the Luthers, Taska, and Lorup used ‘craftier’ and ‘handier’ materials, the Soviet Union switched the focus to industrially flexible and mechanically reproducible materials. Wood, leather and crystal were abandoned (although not completely) in favour of plastic, metal, textile and light glass: the materials Finland used (very successfully) to both create national design expression and to make a profit. At the time, Finland was, and is pretty much still, the world’s leading design force. Meanwhile, in the aftermath of WWII and the defeat of the Nazi forces, the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (later known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was established in 1945.

Even though modelled after the Soviet Union, the SFRY remained non-aligned, and even openly denounced any Soviet interference in its politics, and basically in every other aspect of life. “We will not be dependent on anyone ever again!” stated Josip Broz Tito in his 1948 letter to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Ironically, we somehow ended up being dependent on our own union, and became quite lost after its disintegration. Regardless, we were a design force to reckon with, not to the extent of Finland, but enough to challenge others. There were “Iskra” telephones designed by Davorin Savnik, the world famous “K67” red kiosk of Sasa Machtig, Niko Kralj’s chairs, Yugoslav’s answer to “Converse All Stars” in the form of “Startas”, and, exported all the way to the USA, the car known as the “Zastava Yugo”. Since we had refused Soviet interference, “Iitala”, “Arabia”, “Marimekko”, Aalto and Saarinen were not the only competitors the Soviet Union had to deal with. However, Finland remained the biggest source of inspiration for Estonia, and the most serious competitor to Russia.

The designs of Pilvi Ojamaa and Elve Tauts were utilitarian, but they highly corresponded to the abstract organic forms of prominent Finnish design, especially glassware by Saara Hopea-Untracht and Timo Sarpasneva. Even though silenced and redirected, the artistic freedom Agnes Ney had while working for Lorup was still present in Ojamaa’s and Tauts’s designs. The Soviet Union challenged the West as well, not only with glass figures of the beloved Cheburashka, but with the Mickey Mouse glasses that “Tarbeklass” also manufactured.

The ideal Soviet society was meant to lift the working class by carrying on the tradition of the industrial revolution. Inevitably, being functional and practical made Soviet designs (including the designs of Estonian producers) modern. Just look at the production of “Estoplast”. Upon seeing their designs, I could not help but ask myself whether it was the Soviet Union that was competing in the space race with the USA, or Estonia? “Sputnik”, “Saturn”, and “Rocket” were just some of “Estoplast’s” names for their lamps and related products. The lamp called “model Э-236” proudly adorned the desk in my dorm room in Tartu for the semester I spent there. The Italian industrial design company “Guzzini”, which took Yugoslavia by storm, and Aalto’s lamps were just some of the examples that posed threats to Soviet design. Through “Estoplast” and Estonia, the Soviet Union was able to respond to this threat effectively.

Living room furnishing, Product catalogue of the “A.M. Luther Factory”, 1939–1940



Selection of products of the Eduard Taska’s Workshop, 1930s.
Photo: Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design



What struck me the most regarding “Estoplast” and other designs from the mid-century up to the 80s in the Soviet Union was how much the public identified with them. I clearly remember that with each and every one of the foreign students I guided through the exhibit, even in their early 20s, German, Latvian, Estonian, Serbian, Russian, Slovakian, Hungarian and Bulgarian students felt the most comfortable in the room where these designs were exhibited. For them, it felt like being ‘in grandma’s house’. Students from France, Spain and the USA don’t have a similar identification point. It was marvellous, especially in the case of Estonian students, to see how close they felt to these designs, but how many unpleasant feelings they produce at the same time. The same feeling is present among people from the former Yugoslav republics; culturologists introduced the term ‘Yugonostalgia’ in order to properly describe this notion.

While preparing myself to give a presentation on this era, knowing that students would react the most to it, I stumbled upon the thoughts of Gord Peteran, a furniture professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design. Discussing the appeal of mid-century modern and the notion of retro, Peteran said that for those generations that missed a certain period (i.e. the 60s), that period seems like an exciting, even sexy time. It is no wonder then that we small nations emphasised the idea of our national identities the most at times when we were not fully recognised as independent states. Our grandparents and parents transmitted their cultural memories to us as reminders of both the good and bad old days. Through those memories, we are able to relive the past and identify with it. WWII ended, and the Cold War appeared to stabilise, and at one point, even under the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, both Estonia and Serbia were able to prosper. The lamp I mentioned was kindly handed over to my German neighbour.

When he saw it, he remembered his grandparents who used to have the same one and occasionally spoke Russian to him. Around that time, I went to spend winter holidays in Berlin, and stayed in a very peculiar apartment. My host said he wanted to recall that GDR feeling when I asked him why the apartment excessively quoted the designs of the past. On the wall was a poster with a statement in Cyrillic, glorifying Soviet space accomplishments. On the night table, there was an icon of space-age design, an orange alarm clock with a tulip base, produced in the 1970s by “Blessing” in West Germany. At around the same time the clock from my host’s apartment was pro-

duced, Bruno Tomberg established Estonia’s first class in design at the Estonian National Institute of Arts, now known as the Estonian Academy of the Arts. In 1980, the Museum of Applied Art opened its doors as a branch of the Estonian National Art Museum.

On 1 February 2004 the Museum of Applied Art became the Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design, operating as an independent state museum. Three months later, Estonia joined the European Union. Unlike the previous Union, this Union enabled Estonia and its designers to enjoy previously unknown mobility and cultural (dis)integration. Around the same time, the Orthodox world (including myself) celebrated Christmas. The fireworks I saw outside my dorm room in Tartu announced something else. The United Nations officially ‘re-branded’ Estonia as a ‘Northern European Country’. The UK, also considered a northern European country, was taking a road to the unknown after voting to leave the European Union. Serbia, caught somewhere in between, at a historic crossroads between Europe and Asia, on the ever-troubled Balkan peninsula, had got its re-branding too. Well, at least its capital did. Mainstream Western media started calling Belgrade the ‘Berlin of the East’, or ‘New Berlin’, partially thanks to Belgrade’s active design scene. Prior to my departure, I read the term ‘New East’, referring to the Balkan and post-Soviet republics outside of the EU, in a fashion magazine.

On January 31st I ended my schooling at Tartu, and my visa, which I needed as a student from outside of the European Union, expired. I did not know what I was leaving behind, and where I was going. It seemed that the Estonian compass was indeed pointing north all this time. As I was waiting at the terminal to board the plane home, I spread out my Marimekko coat to rest on it, when a billboard caught my attention. It was the Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic in an advertisement for a wristwatch. Next to it, there was an informative billboard presenting fun facts about Estonia. Did you know that Skype is considered to be the most renowned Estonian design product?

Nithikul Nimkulrat (b. 1974) is a Thai textile artist, designer, and researcher currently working as Professor and Head of the Department of Textile Design at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

Storytelling Through Interactive Screens

Art and technology in the twenty-first century are no longer segregated, as they were in the past. The increase in artistic activities using computers, the Internet and other areas of technological interest shows the impossibility of understanding the future of the arts without attending to technology. Such activities are apparent in Estonia, as can be seen in creative works by a number of artists and designers who attempt to bridge the physical and virtual worlds. These worlds are where humans have always lived, for example through two of the oldest art forms: storytelling and myth¹. Storytelling helps us understand our environment and personal experience; “[a]ll human beings have an innate need to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by”². According to Benjamin, successful storytelling requires the storyteller’s craftsmanship:

The storytelling that thrives
... is itself an artisan form of
communication, as it were.

It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.³

The craftsmanship of storytelling is an aspect present in all of the creative projects discussed in this article. The three projects are: Kärt Ojavee’s and Johanna Ulfsak’s “Live Streams” (2016), Varvara Guljajeva’s and Mar Canet’s “Chameleon” (2016), and Kristi Kuusk’s “Textales” (2015). These projects deal with the creation of interactive screens and tell particu-

lar stories about our environment, national identity, and imaginative world, using storytelling as a strategy for connecting physical material and technology with the meaning of the creation. A position shared among these projects' designers is their aim of making the spectator and/or user understand the surrounding environment and generating personal experience with their work. An artifact that tells a particular story seems to possess a power to captivate and maintain the attention of its viewer and/or user for a long time. The term "interactive screens" in this article refers not only to digital screens such as computers, tablets and mobiles, but also physical screens that are specifically designed and created for particular purposes. The traces of the designers who are the storytellers of the three projects are present in both the physical and the virtual screens.

Screen for Storytelling with Climate Data

"Live Streams" [Figure 1] is a real-time data-visualizing textile installation created through collaboration between two textile designers: Kärt Ojavee and Johanna Ulfsak. While Ojavee is a smart textiles expert, Ulfsak specializes in weaving. The nine-meter long textile screen imitates the fluidity and behavior of water, a story of waves that exist in the middle of the ocean but become visible and tangible in a gallery space. The textile is hand-woven with optical fibers and a variety of yarns that glow, reflect, and shine. An LED connected to each optical fiber is lit up depending on data on wave height and wind speed received via the Internet. A double-layer structure was used to add volume and three-dimensionality to the screen.

This textile screen tells not only the invisible story of sea waves and wind, but also how the traditional craft of textile weaving is combined with new materials and computer programming. While sea waves and wind are measured offshore, the receptors embedded in the textile screen receive the real-time climate data sent via the Internet and convert them into codes for controlling the emission of LED lights in the textile screen. This is a subtle dialogue between the physical work and the actual waves and wind that is facilitated by new technology, novel materials, and the Internet. The work captures, presents, and responds to natural phenomena through its physicality and interactivity. The physical presence of the textile screen is affected by the visual presence of the data of sea waves hun-



Figure 1
"Live Streams", Kärt Ojavee's and Johanna Ulfsak's light-emitting textile screen, displayed in the Hop Gallery in November 2017. Photo: Tõnu Tunnel

dreds of kilometers away in the form of "rhythmic" light emission. Light and material interactions with the data create, on the textile screen, a luminous effect of sea waves and wind at night, which is changeable in response to weather conditions offshore, whether a storm, a gust of wind sweeping over the ocean, or a calm sea.

The work offers the spectator the experience of a phenomenon that is taking place at a particular moment in a faraway location beyond the physical reach of the spectator. The spectator can observe shifts in offshore weather conditions without being there through the responsive textile screen.

Screen for Storytelling about National Identity

Varvara Guljajeva's and Mar Canet's "Camaleón" ("Chameleon") [Figure 2] also visualizes data, like Ojavee's and Ulfsak's "Live Streams", but in this case the data is collected from the spectator's presence and the topic is the world's changing national identities. Made of white fabric and embedded with LED light strips, Camaleón is an interactive screen that can become the national flag of any country. The flag screen alternately displays national flags of different countries randomly chosen from a database. It freez-

es the alteration process when the PIR motion sensor integrated in the top of the flagpole is triggered in response to the spectator's proximity. The code gathers data from the PIR sensor and activates the LED strips embedded in the flag screen.

The light-emitting flag is intentionally designed to never be fully completed, but to mutate constantly from the flag of one nation to another. The endless transition from one national flag to another blends the colors and shapes of the flags in such a way that none of them is present entirely at once. As the title of the work, "Camaleón", suggests, the work shares the idea of the chameleon's adaptation to its environment by interacting with the spectator and his/her immediate environment.

The flag screen attempts to represent all of the nations on the planet, but ends up becoming an unidentifiable national flag. The aim is to communicate the problematic issues of national identity, the sense of belonging and tolerance in present-day multicultural cosmopolitanism, balanced by extremely polarized nationalism. In other words, the flag screen with constantly changing incomplete national flags can be interpreted as a critique of cosmopolitanism that in fact is illusory. Utilizing the national flag, which symbolizes the identity of a nation, the interactive flag screen tells the story of the contradictory identities of countries in the globalized world, in which people experience the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The work also somewhat reflects the experience of Varvara Guljajeva and Mar Canet who have developed their careers in many countries by means of artist-in-residence programs, exhibitions, and workshops, and who may question their own identities, nomadism, and the expatriate situation. The use of storytelling as a strategy in the creation of this project brings together a piece of fabric and electronically mutating light illumination to create a symbolic signal digital screen that urges us to reconsider topics related to individuals and their geographical restrictions or capacity to empathize and identify themselves.

Interaction Between Physical and Digital Screens for Telling Tales

Similar to Ojavee's and Ulfsak's "Live Streams", Kristi Kuusk's "Textales" is a project created at the inter-

section between textile tradition and technological innovation. The project uses jacquard weaving and augmented reality (AR) application to tell a fairy tale through the interaction between an analog, a tactile screen (i.e. bedding or carpet) and a digital one (i.e. a tablet or smartphone). Textales reveals the way in which digital properties can extend a textile product's capabilities and life expectancy, by allowing the textile to change its functionality from a duvet cover or a pillowcase in the "Dream Bear" edition [Figure 3] to a woven textile screen for an interactive fairytale. By doing so, the product illuminates a novel idea of what textiles can be and proposes a new way of maintaining the user's interest in a product.

"Textales" was created as part of Kuusk's PhD thesis on craft and sustainability values of smart textiles services, completed at Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) in The Netherlands⁴. In the creation of Dream Bear, Kuusk took on the role of a service designer who collaborated with multi-disciplinary stakeholders, including a weaving mill (Johan van den Acker Textielfabriek), a virtual reality developer (Unit040) and an illustrator-storyteller (Kerstin Zabransky), who told and illustrated a fairy tale about the adventure of the Dream Bear. With the woven textile screen alone, kids can follow the story narrated by their parents about the sleepy bear wandering around the forest and encountering various supporting characters, such as a star, fish, rabbits, and an owl. The tablet or smartphone AR application when used to scan the textile screen adds an extra layer to the story by generating imagery of these characters and sound effects. In other words, the digital characters of the fairytale come to life on the textile screen with the AR application.

The developed stories demonstrate the use of storytelling as a strategy in the creation of a production in which the AR fairytale application is designed and programed to interact with visual markers, which are the non-animated images woven onto the textile screen. When a visual marker on the woven screen is scanned and recognized by the application on a mobile device, it triggers the application to generate an interactive 3D image on the digital screen. By moving or manipulating the woven screen, the appearing animated image also moves. This allows parents to tell and share stories with their children. The shared tales can be personal experiences subtly woven into the bear narrative, the original Dream Bear adventures, or tales based on the randomly appearing characters of the story. To achieve a variety of ways to tell a story,



Figure 2
Varvara Guljajeva's and Mar Canet's "Chameleon", a white flag with embedded LEDs that can become any country's national flag, in the artists' solo exhibition at the Rambla Art Center, Valencia, Spain (October 2016–January 2017). Photo: Pablo Argente



Figure 3
Kristi Kuusk's "Textales" Dream Bear edition in use. Photo: Katrina Tang.
Models: Linda Nete, Airon, and Taavi

the AR application has separate settings for the storyline behavior to be on, off, or in a random mode.

Conclusion

In the three creative projects presented above, “storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it”⁵. The artists and designers have selected the stories that they want to convey from their viewpoints. Ojavee and Ulfak, and Guljajeva and Canet are inspired by information but they do not report it in their works. The works are not considered carriers of information but rather stories of what happens in our environment or society, close to us or faraway. As Walter Benjamin points out: “The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment...A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.”⁶ This is what “Live Streams” and “Cameleon” do; the stories they convey are based on stories from the lives of the storytellers, in this case the designers and the artists themselves, that survive in the viewer’s mind after a long time. This reveals not the fact of what happened but the expression of it. On the contrary, Kuusk’s “Textales” is a kind of hybrid storytelling that combines visual augmented reality on a digital screen with the tactile and visual properties of the jacquard woven textile screen. The tales told by the parents through “Textales” differ from those told in fairy tale books in that the stories are not fixed by any text, but vary depending on the storyteller’s personal experience and imagination in relation to the visuals of the tactile and digital screens. The work allows the storyteller to take “what he tells from experience – his own or, that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale”⁷: children in the case of “Textales”.

- 1 Wilson, S. *Information Arts, Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002, p. 482.
- 2 Pruitt, J. and Adlin, T. *The Persona Lifecycle: Storytelling Approaches in Use Experience: Design Keeping People in Mind Throughout Product Design*. USA: Morga Kaufmann Publishers, 2006, p. 125.
- 3 Benjamin, W. *The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov*. In W. Benjamin, H. Zohn (Trans.) H. Arendt (Ed.) *Illuminations*. New York, NY: Schocken, 1969, pp. 91–92.
- 4 Kuusk, K. *Crafting Sustainable Smart Textile Services*. Eindhoven: Eindhoven University of Technology, 2016.
- 5 Arendt, H. *Men in Dark Times*. New York, NY: A Harvest Book, 1968, p. 105.
- 6 Benjamin, p. 90.
- 7 Benjamin, p. 87.

Tallinn Architecture Biennial

“The convergence of biotechnology and IT, applied to landscape and urban design, is one of the more promising future developments for our civilization.”
– Claudia Pasquero
(TAB 2017 Curator)

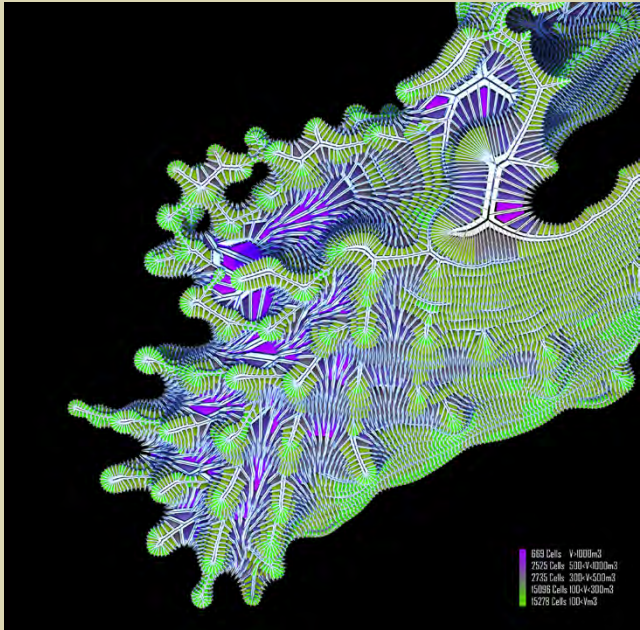
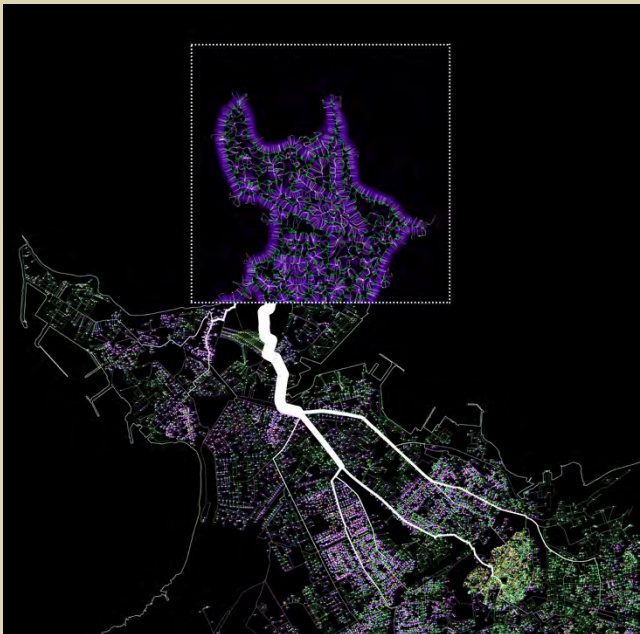
The Tallinn Architecture Biennial (TAB) is an international festival of architecture and urban planning that continues the tradition of the Nordic-Baltic Architectural Triennial held in Tallinn in the 1990s. TAB is organised and produced by the Estonian Centre of Architecture, which in the run-up to the biennial holds a competition to select a curator and theme. The inaugural TAB was held in 2011, with that year’s theme being landscape urbanism. The second biennial dealt with topics related to finding new ways of

using Soviet architectural heritage, and the last biennial, in 2015, examined changes that the city will face with the advent of self-driving cars.

This year, the biennial will be curated by the architect, urban designer and ecologist Claudia Pasquero (UK). The theme she selected, bioTallinn, will examine and challenge understandings of the boundaries between natural and man-made environments. It will examine ways of using biotechnology and information technology in architecture and city planning and highlight some of the most intriguing new figures working in the field. The fusion of biotechnology and IT in the field of landscape and urban design is seen by many leading thinkers as one of the most promising developments when it comes to the future of human society.

TAB serves as a test platform for architects and designers to study innovative nature-friendly construction methods. As an example, a study will be devoted to using the morphogenic potential of the natural environment to create a liveable, pleasant city landscape. This part of the biennial will deal with problems of

Eve Arpo (b.1979) is a producer of TAB 2017 and works at the Estonian Centre of Architecture.



Clockwise
Tallinn waste water flow diagram by ecoLogicStudio
Paljassaare biodigestive landscape by ecoLogicStudio
Paljassaare self-assembling architecture cell study by ecoLogicStudio
Claudia Pasquero, Head Curator. Photo: Naaro

constructability, embodied energy and ecological footprint. Resource-conserving architecture is capable of generating energy and clean water, as well as making waste safe and cleaning the air.

The programme of TAB 2017 is diverse, with a symposium for specialist circles and events aimed at the general public. The emphasis of the main programme will be on the North Tallinn district of the city, but exhibitions and events will be taking place in different locations all over town. The curator exhibition and vision competition, curated by Claudia Pasquero and her team, will be on display at the Museum of Estonian Architecture.

The symposium at the centre of TAB – devoted to the theme of the Polycephalum City – will be held in the pavilion of the city's central railway station. Two days of lectures and panel discussions will treat the role of architecture in the context of today's societal and economic crises and encourage critical inquiry into the notional Anthropocene epoch of geological history. The symposium will be moderated by the place vision strategist, curator, publicist and founder of urbanista.org Lucy Bullivant. Topping the list of presenters are Professor of Experiential Architecture at the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University Rachel Armstrong, Pathway Leader in MA Art and Science at Central Saint Martins Heather Barnett, the architect and designer Matias del Campo, the Dean and Professor of Architectural Theory in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Innsbruck, historian, theoretician and curator Bart Lootsma, the lecturer at New York University and founder of Terreform ONE Mitchell Joachim, and the architect, author, educator and ecoLogicStudio director Marco Poletto, among others.

The goal of the installation competition is to promote collaboration between designers and timber producers and to find solutions for adopting the use of biotechnologies in architecture and urban design. According to the competition's curators Sille Pihlak and Siim Tuksam (part.archi), the competition will offer food for thought to make sense of the role of biological self-organisation, computation technical materials and algorithmic design in the cities of the future. The winning installation, by Gilles Retsin, will be erected in the park area in front of the Museum of Estonian Architecture and will remain open until TAB 2019.

An international exhibition by schools of architecture, bio.schools, will be curated by the Estonian Ministry

of Culture architecture and design adviser Veronika Valk and the architect Merilin Kaup. The exhibition offers leading architecture studios the chance to present their latest ideas related to architecture and urban planning. Participants in the international exhibition from schools of architecture come from all levels of university study: bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. The exhibition will also feature thematic discussions on promoting architectural studies.

A cinema programme will screen architecture films on related themes in collaboration with the Arqitecturas Film Festival. Showings will take place in the Sõprus and Kinomaja venues. An outdoor cinema and animation workshop will take place at Pikakari Beach on the Paljassaare peninsula in Tallinn. This event is made possible in cooperation with Kinobuss MTÜ.

The central location and meeting point for TAB 2017 is the TAB Club, located in a bar with a particularly cosy ambience, Pudel, in Telliskivi Creative City. The club will host lectures, workshops and film evenings. The TAB information point is a dome structure, and the dome structure itself is designed by Jaanus Orgusaar.

The biennial will also be chronicled in the webzine TAB Matter, which will publish content related to the bioTallinn theme: articles, videos and interviews with leading architects, scientists, artists and researchers. The webzine's editors include Claudia Pasquero, Lucy Bullivant, Marco Poletto and Alice Buoli, and their articles can be found on the TAB 2017 website tab.ee.

Triin Männik (b.1978) works at Pluk and on the Tallinn Architecture Biennale.

TAB, The Test Site for Physical Digitality

In February, Belgian architect Gilles Retsin won the international TAB Installation Programme open call to build a wooden installation in Tallinn for the architecture biennale in September this year (2017). The winning proposal is characterized by outstanding aesthetic and is intellectually challenging, as it questions current beliefs and trends in architecture, according to jury member Martin Tamke (CITA KADK).

The international open two-stage competition challenged participants to develop creative designs for a temporary outdoor installation, making innovative use of the construction capacities of Estonian wooden house manufacturers. The call raised widespread international interest, 200 portfolios were submitted for the first round from all over the world. 16 architects/teams were selected for the second round by the jury, with final design proposals submitted in February.

The winner Gilles Retsin is the founder of Gilles Retsin Architecture, a young award-winning London based architecture and design practice. The practice has developed numerous provocative proposals for international competitions, and is currently working on a range of projects, among them a 10000 m2 muse-

um in China. Gilles graduated from the Architectural Association in London and prior to founding his own practice he worked in Switzerland as a project architect with Christian Kerez. Alongside his practice, Gilles directs a research cluster at the University College London/the Bartlett school of Architecture, and he is also a senior lecturer at the University of East-London.

The construction of the project will start in August in front of the Estonian Museum of Architecture and it will be opened during the Tallinn Architecture Biennale Opening Week in September.

TRIIN MÄNNIK

What made you decide to participate in the Tallinn competition? There was a lot of interest in the TAB competition, with 200 portfolios submitted in the first round, but what got you on board?

GILLES RETSIN

I knew Estonia already, because I'd been here to give a lecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, I already had a personal link with Tallinn. I heard about TAB 2 years ago, knew that the

biennale was quite an ambitious project, and a lot of people that I find interesting, like Roland Snooks and Marjan Colletti and Tom Wiscombe were in Tallinn for the 2015 biennale. So I guess that gave me an indication of the ambition. The kind of practice that I'm running – I usually don't do small pavilion competitions. I mainly either do commissioned projects or large scale competitions. It felt like a good moment for me to do something where I could materialise an idea – and I liked the proposed scale for the pavilion. I ended up turning the idea around though. If you look at my proposal, it's not really about building a pavilion. It's a proposal for a way of how to construct. It could be a prototype for a larger construction – I like to say that it's more a house that I propose, not a pavilion.

TM But why turn the idea of a pavilion around?

GR In a sense, my proposal tried to be critical of the idea of a pavilion competition in a sense. Because if you look at pavilion competitions in architecture, they have become kind of a format for experimental architecture that engages with digital technologies. Since 2005 or so, you can see truly thousands of parametric pavilions emerging through formats of workshops or small commissions. The AA had a pavilion programme, there's so many of them. So it was interesting to me, to think about the format of the pavilion. A whole generation of experimental architects has been doing pavilions upon pavilions, and I'm being very critical of that because it is in the nature of pavilion to be very single-focussed, very narrow. When you design a pavilion, you are basically only talking about material organisation and technology, but it hasn't been – at least in the last 20 years – a critical device, something that is really connected to real architectural discourse. It's been more about "look what we can do". Yes, that was important at one point, but I believe that role of the pavilion has faded now. Now it's impossible to make a pavilion that still amazes people, because we've already seen them for ten years. So I thought: maybe we could do something for Tallinn that is discursive, something that would be more about starting a new era for digital fabrication; less about solely technological innovation and more about housing, politics. It's not an innocent pavilion any more. And that's what really inspired me to participate.

TM What are you hoping to achieve – what kind of response would you desire for your project?

GP I hope people will notice that it's not so much a pavilion, but more a building system, a system of production. It's about digital fabrication methods, not just a device to make something that looks funky, or beautiful, or visible. Digital fabrication has the ability to democratize production. In the previous era of production you needed to own an entire factory, land and capital to produce something – today, you don't have to any more. You can buy a CNC machine, a 3D printer, put them in your living room. Almost any human being with a little bit of effort can start their own system of production and that is a huge disruption – culturally, politically and sociologically – from previous eras. The technology is driving us to a post-capitalist world, as the figure of the traditional capitalist in the sense of building houses, could disappear. If you want to build a house, all you need is a small machine and timber, the cheapest timber that there is – plywood: normal, off the shelf timber, cheap and thin. Plywood is not usually used for construction. It is mostly used just for decoration or furniture, although there are some examples already, where it's being tested to build housing. So I'm hoping our Tallinn TAB project would show people how digital production could democratize housing production, how it could help people to construct housing in post-scarcity. You wouldn't need a lot of people involved in the process any more, or access to factories. We could compare this approach to Corbusier's Maison Dom-Ino – also a radical, abstract model. If you look at the Dom-Ino skeleton, nobody reads it as a house – it also proposed



Gilles Retsin

a new method of production and an aspect of democratization. Dom-Ino was proposed after WW II to quickly house all the people back in Belgium where I come from – to rehouse them fast. Dom-Ino skeletons were be clad in other materials, customizing the design with different facades – that was the original idea, which later disappeared. Our TAB pavilion is in itself quite abstract, but it's something that desires to be close to the Dom-Ino, it demonstrates a system of production that is radically different from currently dominating modes of construction. It's new to how people have thought about pavilions before: it's more about digital fabrication providing social agency, political agency, and also of course architectural aspiration, because it has a very deliberate aesthetical language.

TM Where does that leave architects – you say that people could be taking production more into their own hands, not needing the resources they used to. Are you writing the architect out of the process to a degree?

GP I don't think we are writing the architect out, but we might be writing out the larger scale construction industry. As for architects: what you still need is the knowledge. This is typical for a post-capitalist world – the thing you need is knowledge. It's not about access to land, labour, capital, but more about knowledge. The architect and the engineer are both knowledge workers. So basically the knowledge that we have as architects and as engineers – that is difficult to democratize – is the ability to design and to make the structures safe and sound and to improve the system. I'm not situating the TAB pavilion in a kind of hippie world of self-build. Also, when I say "democratizing means of production", I don't mean people making things in their living rooms per se – I mean more that people could democratically organise production. It could be big scale as well as small scale.

TM You say that this pavilion is fundamentally different from generations of parametric pavilions, but how?

GP All the parametric pavilions are essentially always shells. First designers model a form and then use the computer to subdivide the form into segments and then use a machine to manufacture all the different segments and then assemble the segments. Actually, that's a very non-computational way of working. If you think about how computers work – this is not it at all. That technique is slicing, or segmenting – tak-

ing a form and cutting it up. It's really quite analogue if you think about it, not all that dissimilar to common means of construction. A computer on the other hand is very good at iterating through bits. You give it a 0 or a 1, and then it negotiates and comes up with something. If you look at the meaning of the word "digital" – what it actually means to be digital – it's about a system where there is a limited set of possibilities, 0 or 1, yes or no. And "analogue" is basically a continuous differentiation of possibilities. So the "accusation" that our pavilion kind of makes, is that none of the parametric pavilions have been doing anything materially with aspects of digitality. They have been rather analogue. There's a professor at MIT, Neil Gershenfeld who says that if you want to work digitally, then the material that you operate on has to be digital – you cannot operate on analogue material. This is very hardcore of course. When you make a pot out of clay, that's artisanal, analogue – because that material is continuously different – you can sculpt it into any possible shape. And later on there's no feedback from the material. Digital material is more like Lego blocks. A Lego block is digital because it has four or six possibilities how you can connect one to another. A Lego block is basically like a pixel, a 0 or a 1. So the idea of the TAB pavilion is that the material that we make it with, is "digital" – it's basically assembled always out of the same type of piece, there's no other pieces, like a Lego block, which has a limited, defined number of connecting the pieces. So we're making a structure that is physically digital. It's not a segmented whole, instead all the pieces are the same, but you can assemble it to different structures. This pavilion, this building could be a number of different buildings. That's physical digitality. That might just be one of the first structures in the world that is physically digital. Jose Sanchez and I visited Estonia to give a public lecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts a few months ago. We have worked together for a long time on something in architecture that you call the "discreet", which started as a criticism towards the previous generations of parametric design. It is about the next generation of young designers working in London, Los Angeles, some in Spain or France, who are really critical of the previous generations. We are asking 'what were the first parametric designers really about?' – they had no social agenda, they were experimenting with

technologies, but somehow not understanding the true nature of the digital. Instead they were doing mass-customizing, slicing things into parts, so post 2008, the financial crisis we are really trying to reboot the project of the digital, but from a new perspective: a perspective that has a political agenda, that is socially conscious, and that also tries to think more fundamentally about what it actually means to be “digital”, or what it means to work with those technologies.

TM How do you think is the timber construction industry going to respond to your proposal? What are the challenges going to be?

GP Well the proposal and the scale of it is very ambitious, so it is going to be challenging. We want to use the thinnest possible plywood and we want to not waste material. One of the most challenging aspects is making it durable in both warm and cold climates, wet and dry conditions, we need to make plywood, an indoor material, waterproof by coating it.

TM In that case, why did you decide to use plywood?

GP It's the cheapest and lightest material to do it. If you'd build it from CLT or something heavier and thicker, you would need heavy industrial machines, making it a different system of con-

struction. Plywood is accessible, cheap, small-scale material, allowing us to build the structure without mechanical lifting. The whole idea is that you take a weak but accessible material, not usually used for something structural, and try to use it for something structural. Of course if you would build a complete municipal housing block, you'd need to change to CLT to make it properly durable.

TM You've also said that you prefer working with leftover materials, why is that?

GP I prefer working with materials that are accessible, and that are overlooked for construction, but there's also ecological thought behind the choice of material, yes. But there's also the aesthetic architectural quality that comes from it.



Gilles Retsin, “Digital Building Blocks”, 2017

A Laboratory for Symbols. Reflections on Today's Europe¹

Ah, all is symbols and analogies!
The wind on the move, the night that will freeze,
Are something other than night and a wind –
Shadows of life and of shiftings of mind.

Everything we see is something besides.
The vast tide, all that unease of tides,
Is the echo of the other tide – the sea
Alluned – there, where the world that is is real.

Everything we have's oblivion.
The frigid night and the wind moving on –
These are shadows of hands, whose gestures are the
Illusion which is this illusion's mother.²

In Search of Symbols

In April 2017, on the advent of the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the architecture workshop A Laboratory for the City of Europe brought together practices from Estonia (Salto, PART, Arhitekt Must, b210 and Kaos) and Belgium (L'escaut, Lassa, Delmulle Delmulle, Bogdan & Van Broeck and AgwA) to tackle the spatial culture of the European Quarter in Brussels.

After four days of group work, five cross-national teams showcased their initial ideas, which they will eventually present in physical form at exhibitions during the Tallinn Architecture Biennial in September 2017 and at the Centre of Fine Arts, Brussels (Bozar) in early 2018. At the time of writing this text, participants were still working on their projects and there was a long way to go before they applied the finishing touches. Therefore my task here is not to critically engage with the architects' proposals, but to continue the discussion of the urban challenges in Brussels, with its many international institutions.³

The curators (Aet Ader, with help from Bozar and the Estonian Centre of Architecture) suggested re-imagining the capital of Europe from five research angles: the symbolic deficit of the European presence in Brussels, the public space of the "EU valley", security, e-government, and Brussels as a mirror of Europe (the city consists of various neighborhoods which in their diversity resemble European nation-states).⁴ Eventually b210 and AgwA addressed the characteristic debate concerning the Normalnull, i.e. the United European Levelling Net, which standardizes the height systems of the European countries. Salto and Bogdan & Van Broeck targeted the representative Station Europe, a former train station in front of the European Parliament, with the sole function of housing an interactive model of the Parliament. Kaos and L'escaut proposed that Brussels follow the example of the Vatican as an emblematic self-sufficient entity. Must and Delmulle Delmulle suggested that the European institutions be scattered around Brussels to give them a more meaningful presence. Part and Lassa advocated for an e-bureaucracy sprinkled all over the continent.

In general, most of the groups focused on the ever-present question of what constitutes the European Union, how its identity is constructed and what this peculiar "Europeanness" is that demands to be translated into architecture and urban design. Fernando Pessoa said in 1932 that "Everything we see is some-

thing besides." I do believe that this matter of symbols is at the core of any discussion of a unified Europe. Although dealing with symbols is tricky, as ideological narratives tend to simplify arguments and make them one-dimensional, we need to take extra care of our symbols.

Political Technology of Brusselization

The Belgian literary scholar Antoine Compagnon, a co-author of the notorious *The Death of French Culture*, has noted that "Ironically, what remains to this day undeniably European is the nation-state, the historical construction of national identities, of national differences, and their resistance to globalization."⁵ In his essay on European culture, he writes that a national identity requires a whole binding symbolic apparatus, whose elements include: a long and continuous history, exemplary heroes, an idiom illustrated with literature, emblematic monuments, folklore, sites and landscapes, a mentality, an anthem and a flag, a currency, a cuisine and costumes. According to Compagnon, a unified Europe is missing the inherited patrimony that fosters attachment to a territory or to a shared ideal: the absence of a European identity became obvious on the printing of the euro, which depicted fictions, not real places but abstract architectural styles, in order to harm no one. The question is whether we need to create and develop a "transnational" identity apparatus for a unified Europe as the separate nation-states did in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁶

Jürgen Habermas, the "Last European", who has devoted his entire academic life to a united continent, has interestingly argued for a European Union where supranational political culture and local national traditions are somewhat kept apart. In his vision, there should be a common political culture, while the other cultural formations, such as the arts, philosophy and literature, would remain national (for the time being). Unified Europe's political culture should be based on the idea of the universal rights of man, while the local cultures, religions and mentalities should be protected in their diversity. Compagnon summarizes his ideas in the following words: "Habermas speculates on a double culture or double truth of Europe, unified in the political realm – Europe, we might want to remember, is the only political organisation where the death penalty no longer exists – but plural and diverse in the community space."

Participants of the workshop visiting the European Quarter. Photo: Diana Tamane



Participants in front of Bozar. Photo: Diana Tamane



This is controversial and provocative. Habermas’ concept of a common political culture curiously relates to the idea of “political technology” – a term largely unfamiliar in the West – which is the euphemism commonly used in the former Soviet states for a highly developed industry of political manipulation. Why not treat the European Union as a no-nonsense apparatus for large-scale professional bureaucracy, instead of trying to adorn it with a cultural identity of its own? When it comes to the architecture of the European Union, shouldn’t we also treat it as a means of “political technology”? Although I deliberately exaggerate Habermas’ perspective, I sense that the more practical stand we take towards the EU, the more good we will gain. Hence, in an unpopular fashion, I would declare: we need more pragmatic, bureaucratic, inflexible administrative architecture obsessed with facades. Long live the Brusselization of architecture!⁷

European Ideology

Given the ambiguity of its physical status, Europe can only be an idea, an ideology. There is no symbolic architecture, nor public art without a guiding ideology. What is the European ideology? I can think of both deplorable and pleasant examples. First, this discussion reminds me of a story about Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to London. When asked by a journalist what he thought of British civilization, Gandhi replied that it would be a good idea. Keeping in mind all of the atrocities Europeans have carried out around the world, this story characterizes the tainted history of the whole continent. On the other hand, there is the European Enlightenment project and the promise of radical humanism, which at the moment is championed by such pro-European politicians as Emmanuel Macron, Sigmar Gabriel and Guy Verhofstadt. These guys seem to know the symbols heading the European ideology.

When Gandhi set forth to build up India as a modern nation-state, he understood that society would only arrive at democracy and equality through the inner struggles of its citizens. For Gandhi political life was not about large-scale political decision-making but lay in a process in which each and every member of the society would overcome his or her weaknesses. As Martha Nussbaum has put it: “Gandhi repeatedly drew attention to the connection between psychological balance and political balance, arguing that greedy desire, aggression, and narcissistic anxiety are forces inimical to the building of a free and democratic nation.”⁸

I presume that Gandhi’s ideas would work for the European project as well. How can we represent and promote the idea of inner self-development in urban space? Could it be through a museum (such as the House of European History), a school (European schools are extreme examples of institutions which have already raised several generations of pan-Europeans)? Would an art academy in the middle of the European Quarter foster democracy, innovation and economic growth?

President Macron has insisted that we need to talk about Europe with will, hope and fresh ideas because Europe is the thing that protects us from new dangers: “If you are a timid European, you are already a defeated European – so this option isn’t one I recommend. Because today Europe is the thing that protects us from new dangers.” A fresh European is someone who believes that European ideology – or should we call it the social contract – is based upon responsibility not security. In the end it is a question of what makes ethics circulate. How does one promote and translate moral codes? How does architecture encompass them and distribute the common good? It is all about understanding how symbols and analogies work.

1 The title refers to Jacques Derrida's seminal book on Europe: The Other Heading. Reflections on Today's Europe. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

2 Fernando Pessoa, Selected Poems, Translated by Jonathan Griffin, London: Penguin Books, 1974.

3 In fact, this is an age-old discussion in the European capital. Since the late 1980s a great deal has been published on the symbolic deficit of the European presence in Brussels. See, most notably, Vittorio Aureli, Brussels – A manifesto towards the capital of Europe, Rotterdam: nai Publishers, 2007.

4 It would be tempting for me to point out some of the (more) crucial issues which were not approached but should be part of any discussion concerning the European space, such as Europe and globalization (instead of European values, one ought to speak of universal human rights and Europe's responsibility in defending them globally), alterity, memory, and the pejorative model of the phantasmic Muslim, which has replaced the once infamous stereotype of the greedy Jew, and is driving Europe into moral collapse.

5 Antoine Compagnon “Culture as the koine of Europe”. – Hamilton, Daniel S. The New Frontiers of Europe. The Enlargement of the European Union: Implications and Consequences. Washington D.C: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2005, pp. 79–92.

6 Currently, the budget for culture and the audiovisual represents 0.1% of the total budget of the European Union; hence, there is very little movement towards a common politics of culture.

7 The art critic and historian Hal Foster recently referred to the political commentator Corey Lewandowski, who has said that we take Trump literally but not seriously, while his supporters take him seriously but not literally. These are important words to keep in mind while making fun of the Union, which we all owe so much.

8 Martha Nussbaum, Not for Profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010

Madli Ehasalu (b. 1988) is a curator and a creative worker. She is currently working on the apartment gallery project Gallery Mihhail, and is the editor of an art project-magazine “New Material”.

Sensibility of Space in the Studio Practicalities of Estonian Millennials

“And yet we do not want to create empty hype or package a ‘hot young scene.’”¹
– Massimiliano Gioni

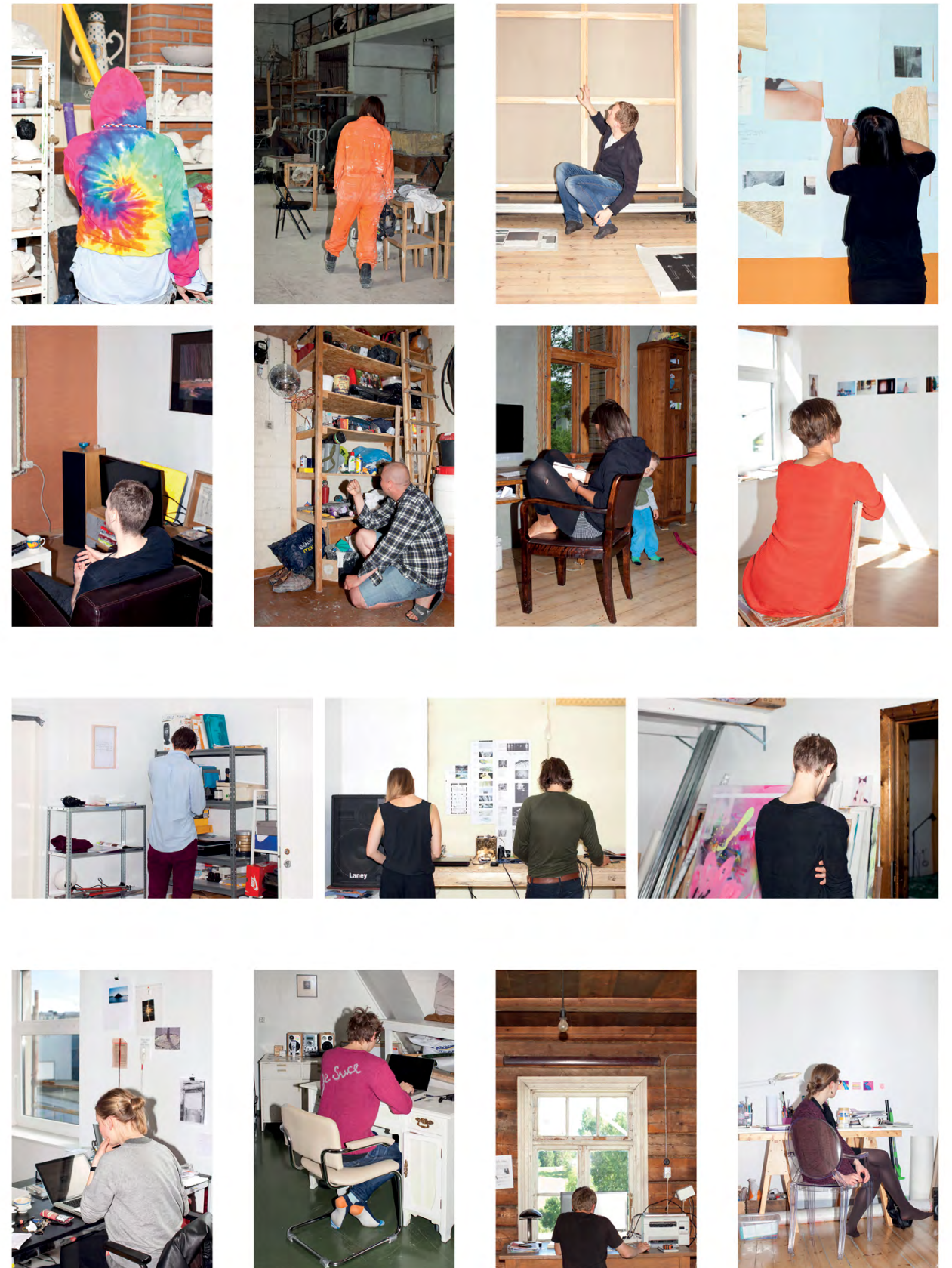
“Artists’ Spaces. 16 studio visits” is a compilation of sixteen conversations with artists born during the 1980s edited by Merilin Talumaa and Annika Toots. In the publication, the artists Kris Lemsalu, Laura Pöld, Timo Toots, Flo Kasearu, Ivar Veermäe, Karel Koplimets, Kristi Kongi, Tõnis Saadoja, Jaanus Samma, Edith Karlson, Jass Kaselaan, Anu Vahtra,

Paul Kuimet, Laura Toots, Mihkel Maripuu, Maarja Tõnisson and Mihkel Ilus reveal different aspects of their work culture. The book is available both in Estonian and English.

Since the mid-1960s, the studio has been demythologized and “associated with a variety of out-dated or suspect ideas – painting, handcraft, genius, expression, autonomy and commercialism – as opposed to ostensibly more serious values: public life, concept, criticality, sociality and refusal”². It resulted in a new attitude, which includes alienation from the studio as a traditional entity and artists often moving to exhibition locations to create site-specific projects. The authors’ foreword gives a thorough overview of the



Kris Lensalu studio. Photo: Kristina Õllek
Opposite page "Artists' Spaces". Photo: Kristina Õllek



changes in studio practices. The reader is guided from a lonely and romantic spatial approach to salon culture to a controlled creation of self-presentation.

There has also been a semantic change in what artists' working spaces are called, and it is more widely accepted to use the term "studio" instead of "atelier". The concept of a studio is connected with the intertwining of living and working spaces, and the emergence of studio apartments, which are working places in which you can live. In the 20th century, studio apartments became more common in the US, first in New York, and in the 1930s illegal loft types of studio apartments in factories emerged, which gradually became legal. The advantage of a permanent working environment is that it is a "social stage within art circles and on the broader societal level, connecting different social groups to each other"³. This kind of communication work has been done by the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center, which has organized public studio visits, popularizing the presence – if not the consumption – of contemporary art in the cultural sphere.

Looking at the pretext on which the authors rely, there has been a notable emergence of a discursive tradition in Estonia on the subject of creative work conditions. The book consists of "Ateljee-etüüde" (Etudes in an Atelier, 1983) and "Ateljee-etüüde 2" (Etudes in an Atelier 2, 1990) by Martti Soosaar and the "22+ Young Estonian Artists" compiled by Karin Laansoo. When comparing "Etudes in an Atelier" to "Artists' Spaces" the stylistic difference seems to lie in the fictional and somewhat romantic and poetic content of Soviet era art-writing. Soosaar's writing is descriptive and interpretative. The "22+ Young Estonian Artists" is based on informal artist-talk kind of conversations. However, "Artists' Spaces" presents interview questions skillfully, directing the reader to recall existing knowledge about particular artists, while unraveling various aspects of life.

Airi Triisberg comments on the changes arising from the professionalisation of the art field that "the more the local art world is institutionalized, professionalized, normalized and commercialized, the more dominant the depoliticization of the art life [...] the shifting of focus to exhibitions has restricted the discursive spaces that associate art practice with social context"⁴. The point of view of present-day young artists is not mixed with feelings of anguish or anarchy anymore, as can be perceived in the undertones of previous books, but is rather pragmatic and self-organized. "Artists'

Spaces" reminds the reader of the mundane in the process of art creation that precedes the purified and readily presented object at an exhibition. Interviewers' questions drift further from artists' work routines and deal with wider aspects of international art world buzz, such as residencies, the circulation of artworks and the project-based lifestyle. It is a commonly held belief that the work culture of millennials has been influenced by the social changes that took place during their childhood. Jobs emerging from that era allowed for flex-time and freelancing. This generation is also tech savvy, but the conversations show that when it comes to working on a computer, a balance is sought with physical activity. The interviewed artist is autonomous, often works collaboratively and has a project manager's mindset.

Resulting from developments in Western thought, the meaning of the studio has changed dramatically in different stages of history. The idea that a studio is like a Wunderkammer, a symbolic space with layers that enables the viewer to experience the mindset of the resident of the space, is an outdated understanding. What becomes apparent from the authors' preface is that the current studio should be mainly explored as a practical work space, rather than as the instrument of self-mythology and self-presentation I hoped it would be. Thankfully, Kristina Õllek's praiseworthy photographs of spatial observations provide the opposite view, showing us the personalized experience of the spaces. These photographs bind the book together quite well. When interpreted through the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's concept of the poetics of space, the case studies by Õllek can be seen as a way to search for the poetic image. Bachelard claims that when looking for a poetic image, it is not possible to proceed from previous cultural knowledge; instead, one has to remain open to receive "the image as it appears"⁵, describing the gaze of a photographer.

What can be seen in these photographs is a certain Stimmung that forms the basic tonality of being an artist today. Atmosphere and mood are converted into white walls, sound systems, storage shelves, doorways, rooms with views, with gadgets scattered on tables and kitchen counters. Õllek's photos analyze the content and context of spatial strategies. Between full page images are twelve thematically divided collections of small format photo collages, these images have been categorized according to layers that have emerged in given spaces. The visual typology that depicts artists with their backs facing the camera, operating in their usual setting, anonymously and turned away, is par-

ticularly worth mentioning. The photographer has not violated their privacy and the attitude towards the residents is respectful. The found poetic figure is fresh, unique and highlights the user experience.

The interviewers and the artists are of the same generation, and a mutual understanding is obvious. I hope that the book will reach a wider audience than the local artistic community and that the English version will give an additional boost to introducing young artists' works to international professionals, thus functioning as a means of professional communication. I'm already anticipating a publication about artists born in the 1990s, as they just might be the rule benders needed to guide the current generation.

1 Cornell, Lauren, et al. Younger than Jesus: the generation book. New Museum, 2009, pp. 8.
2 Siegel, Katy. "Live/Work." The studio reader: on the space of artists. Edited by Jacob, Mary Jane; Grabner, Michelle, University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 311.
3 Talumaa, Merilin; Toots, Annika. Kunstnike ruumid: 16 stuudiovisiiti. Eesti Kunstiakadeemia Kirjastus, 2017, pp. 6.
4 Triisberg, Airi. "Uus põlvkond, vanad probleemid." Sirp, April 29, 2016. /www.sirp.ee/si-artiklid/c6-kunst/uuspolvkond-vanad-probleemid/
5 Bachelard, Gaston. Ruumipoeetika. Translated by Sisask, Kaia. Vagabund, 1999, pp. 9.



Book “Phantom Platform” by Andres Lõo

Andres Lõo (b. 1978) is an interdisciplinary artist and composer.

Phantom Platform: The Art of Heresy and Solution

There has to be a way to imagine a suitable, necessary and household sci-fi future, in which the today is already tomorrow. If we do not know what we are looking for, but know what the attributes of it are, then in order to pursue it we need to use imagination.

A phantom platform.¹

A phantom platform can be the ‘third option’, an engine for materializing ideas, and a future that already exists today. A phantom platform is something that can be aimed for when you don’t know where you’re heading. A phantom platform is a secret agenda, an indefinable idea and instrument for reaching out, used to make progress toward a goal. A phantom platform is a positively charged metaspaces onto which one’s immediate future can be projected. It is a possibility. A phantom platform is a blow struck against the inev-

itability of choosing between two known polarities. It’s something new: a third option. A phantom platform is a paradigm shift: if you want it.

In my artist’s book *Phantom Platform*, I talked about phantom platforms as a conceptual tool, a way to get out of creative blocks. When fear is given a name, one overcomes it – it can be used to escape any ‘impossible’ situation. It’s a decision, a meta-land, a place where going forward is possible and laden with meaning. I speak of the phantom platform in the context of art and creativity because what the world needs today is the sensitivity and skillsets of its artists and scientists. In art, a paradigm shift has to be brought forward artificially – not letting it lay in the idle hands of those longing to keep the status quo in the art world. This opportunity to undertake needs to be seized.

The role of artists has to be re-conceptualized. In light of global developments taking place today, redefining the role of artists is not just a possibility but a necessity. If not intellectuals, scientists and artists, who else should conceptualize, describe and convey to the general public about the state we’re in and what to do in that situation? Leaving aside the logic of conquest, let’s not look so keenly to the future; let’s do it now and today. Now. Today.²

A phantom platform is a solution. A decision that there is a solution. The concept of the Anthropocene, floated out by Paul J. Crutzen, is today widely known and threateningly rich in meaning, but unfortunately the Anthropocene is also a story with a bad ending: a negative narrative. We also need a positive agenda, not just a threatening agenda of repentance in sack-cloth and ashes. That is why we need the phantom platform as a positively charged state of not knowing: a statement of good will.

If we look slightly past the social metaphysics of Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, contemporary political and social art is mostly merely problematizing. It points to a problem much like the media does, but it does not manage to go beyond; it only points out the problem. For journalists, this is natural, because it is a journalist's job to report, but in the art context it is equated with whining and complaining. I see contemporary art and anything resembling it as an opportunity for the rise of a new cognitive and cognizant platform that does not just problematize and worry but also tackles solutions. Art galleries (in its most general meaning) have to become agents for displaying and developing ideas and possible solutions. Of course, research-based art already does just that, to some extent, but still quite far from canonical status. The art space is not predominant, and does not hold power. Not to mention the commercial fine art industry, which is more of a sophisticated by-product of the glamorous and ever larger lifestyle industry. Political art is just a feeble grouching, except for perhaps modern theatre and film, although they, too, are not much fresher than modernized versions of Shakespeare's plays.

The Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky believed the role of the artist was to convey harmony that was otherwise not to be found in our imperfect lives. Isn't the artist's work to reveal – in the language of art – the truth and possibilities of truth in everything that people haven't conceived of or are not able to conceive of?

This is an egalitarian perspective on art. Not individualistic; it is not that which the documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis criticizes contemporary artists for. Curtis rails against the self-expressive urge, saying it should not be the primary creative impetus. Curtis is correct in that the radical individualism of the disciples of Ayn Rand and the likes shouldn't be the catalyst for the creative being of the artist. Nor should the catalyst be the mercantilist cynicism that is embodied by Damien Hirst or, respectively, by two

artists of the same line from preceding generations, Jeff Koons and Andy Warhol. Of course, we can argue about what truth is, and it can also be disputed whose truth is truer and that everything is relative after postmodernism, etc. But isn't it the whole point to discuss and seek the truth. If we were to bring scientists into the game, perhaps there would be a little more of that truth.... We are striving for it. The meta that we need as our everyday bread is the truth that can't really be spoken of but which it is not possible to be silent about.

Art should be egalitarian, not just individual. Art should deal with solutions, not with stating problems. Art should be married to science. Art should deal with the kind of exegesis of information that journalists and politicians can't manage. Art should offer people a metaspace where the inexplicable becomes explained and the unsayable becomes sayable. Art should be heresy, and science a search for truth. Together, they should form something that we all could benefit from.

Art as we know it is over. Art isn't doing what it should be doing. Contemporary art is blind and powerless. I'm not talking about commercialized aestheticized scientific achievements. I'm not talking about scientific propaganda. I am talking about a symbiosis of science and art. A symbiosis of functional, scientifically and empirically proved sublime detail and art's power to shift the frame and open up the abstract. Alongside spaces that we still frequent today to view contemporary art, new spaces should be created which serve as joint platforms for the cognitive and the scientific: an art-science collider. These should become the phantom platforms of our immediate future.

Today, when untruths are all too available and trustworthy information is becoming subsumed in lies, we should deal with integrating science and art in art-and-science centres in which we try to convey our work and true, substantiated truth, facts and the "marvellous real" to people in undistorted form. In a manner that connects people, and not just people to people but also people to nature.

The symbiosis of art and science is a marvellous real, metaphysical wonder based on hard, physical facts. In the absence of a better expression, I'll call it the 'marvellous real', but I'd like it not to be associated with magical or marvellous realism. Delving into the functioning and outcome of the natural forces prevailing in the universe is quite an amazing experience on its

own. Understanding how plants and animals communicate with each other, how we act in this environment and where we are situated is all pretty amazing. It is more marvellous than the core objects of wishful thinking, especially the icons of monotheistic religions. The marvellousness that contemporary art as we have known it for the last 150 years and science have made available to us is valuable potential that begs to be used. Who will protect people from creeping corporate enslavement? Who'll protect us from corporate monocultures? How can we make decisions on industrial food production? We don't have a say in the quality and effects of GMO foods because that is decided by corporate private capital and the same is true for energy generation. The symbiosis of the artist and scientist – in my book I use the somewhat cumbersome term 'visionary in practice' – is the guarantor of marvellousness.

Today's artists should not deal primarily with self-expression but with harmonization and smoothing the imperfections and injustices of society, shaping and designing justice and human dignity. They should do this together with scientists. Artists and scientists with similar sensitivities and a passion for in-depth work should create a new platform that seizes the reins when it comes to solving problems and communicating solutions. It has long been known that the robotization of industries and transport will mean such a lowered need for workers that entire economies could be brought to their knees. Increasing the sustainability of energy production and the growing use of renewables, coupled with the advent of new energy storage technologies, will soon and decisively create the cross-dependencies of human institutions. New cities will arise where the world economy's power vectors intersect. Dealing with matters of such gigantic importance and vivifying the near future could be a priority in the collaborative work between artists and scientists. In this manner, science would be given a conscience and art would grow a spine. Combined, this is real power.

Such an initiative exists to a certain extent at the Arts at CERN residency programme (COLLIDE Artists Residency Award), Art&Science@ESA (European Space Agency), and the initiatives to aestheticize science at the Camargo Foundation Program and NASA, but a third platform should be created alongside science centres and art galleries. The science-and-art centres should make it their goal to convey scientific achievements to people in ways that speak to them and give life new meaning that en-

riches it intellectually. Solutions, whether related to food production, energy or IT, should be conveyed to people in language that is at once comprehensible and eye-opening.

We should start with education. This is the training ground for new generations, and its principles were articulated by the first generation of scientists in the Space Age and the first hippie generation. Through education and by establishing art-and-science centres that have as much autonomy as possible, scientists and artists can preserve, develop and save the world. This is a paradigm shift. This is a phantom platform.

“Generally speaking, communicated information should be substantial. The business world and its advisors have realized this too. [...] As soon as information is viewed as capital, no one wants to communicate anything relevant anymore. We need to get back to good old-fashioned conversations where people trust each other, share their thoughts and play with ideas. Only then can things lead anywhere – slowly building confidence in the outside world and not attributing importance to every single idea.”³ – Daniel Pflumm

1 A. Lõo, Phantom Platform. Tartu: ;paranoia publishing, 2016, pp. 221–223.
2 A. Lõo, "Fuck the future – let's present!" Utopiana performance Artishok Biennale 2016, NO99 Theatre.
3 J. Kedves and Dominikus Müller's interview with Daniel Pflumm for Frieze.com, 24 April 2014 (<https://frieze.com/article/dont-believe-hype>).



Ene-Liis Semper. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017

Mark Raidpere (b.1975) is an Estonian photographer and video artist.

20 Years of Estonian

Art

This year
Estonian Art
turns 20.

To celebrate the magazine's anniversary,
a book will be published by the Estonian
Institute that brings together the stories of
contemporary artists
active between 1997–2017.

The book includes texts by a cross-section
of Estonian contemporary artists and
portrait photographs by Mark Raidpere.

Estonian Art's 20th anniversary publication launches
on November 15th, 2017 at Kumu Art Museum
in Tallinn and will later launch at
international locations.



Kaido Ole. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017
Opposite page Sandra Jõgeva. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017





Liina Siib. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017



Jaan Toomik. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017



Jaanus Samma. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017
Opposite page Jass Kaselaan. Photo: Mark Raidpere, 2017



Exhibitions

A-Gallery
Hobusepea 2, Tallinn
Open: Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 11am–4pm
agalerii.ee

26.06.17–24.07.17 Chao-Hsien Kuo & Eero Hintsanen
28.07.17–21.08.17 Annika Kedelauk
25.08.17–18.09.17 Anne Roolah & Harvi Varkki
22.09.17–16.10.17 Curator Katarina Kotselainen
20.10.17–13.11.17 Maiu Mooses
17.11.17–11.12.17 Rita-Livia Erikson
15.12.17–15.01.18 Ilona Treiman

Adamson-Eric Museum
Lühike jalg 3, Tallinn
Open: May–Sept Tue–Sun 11am–6pm
Oct–Apr Wed–Sun 11am–6pm
adamson-eric.ekm.ee

Permanent exhibition: Adamson-Eric (1902–1968)
09.06.17–01.10.17 Umwelt, 12+1 Estonian Glass Artists
10.10.17–07.01.18 Adamson-Eric 115, Modernist Games

Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia
Põhja 35, Tallinn
Open: Apr–Dec, Tue–Sun 1pm–7pm
ekkm.ee

05.08.17–10.09.17 (Hyper) emotional: YOU. Curator Evelyn Raudsepp
23.09.17–29.10.17 Tallinn Photomonth. Curator Stefanie Hessler
Draakon Gallery
Pikk 18, Tallinn
Open: Mon–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat 11am–5pm
eaa.ee/draakon

28.08.17–16.09.17 Andres Koort
18.09.17–07.10.17 Tarve Hanno Varres
09.10.17–28.10.17 Varvara & Mar
30.10.17–18.11.17 Mall Paris
20.11.17–16.12.17 Mari Prekup & Hannah Harkes
18.12.17–13.01.18 Johan Tali & Kirsi Lember
15.01.18–03.02.18 Urmas Viik
05.02.18–23.02.18 Reimo Võsa-Tangsoo
26.02.18–17.03.18 Taavi Villak
19.03.18–07.04.18 Maris Karjatse

09.04.18–28.04.18 Peeter Laurits
30.04.18–19.05.18 Urmas Pedanik

EKA Gallery
Vabaduse väljak 6/8, Tallinn
Open: Tue–Sat 12pm–6pm
artun.ee/ekagalerii

August Susanna Flock
September Marie Ilse Bourlanges and Elena Khurtova (TAB 2017 satellite exhibition)
October IMAL (Eksperimenta! satellite exhibition)
November IMAL (Eksperimenta! satellite exhibition)

Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design
Lai 17, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 11am–6pm
etdm.ee

Permanent exhibition: Story of Estonian Design
29.07.17–10.09.17 With and Without the Fashion House
12.08.17–22.10.17 Fashion Photo, Boris Mäemets
16.09.17–19.11.17 The City and the

Forest
11.11.17–11.02.18 Classics, Helle and Taevo Gans
24.11.17–21.01.18 Maie Mikof-Liivik

Hobusepea Gallery
Hobusepea 2, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Mon 11am–6pm
eaa.ee/hobusepea

30.08.17–18.09.17 Kristin Reiman
20.09.17–09.10.17 Henri Hütt
11.10.17–30.10.17 Kristina Öllek, EAA Young Artist Award
01.11.17–20.11.17 Mari-Leen Kiipli
22.11.17–18.12.17 Johannes Säre. Curator Siim Preiman
20.12.17–15.01.18 Kadri Toom
17.01.18–05.02.18 Ede Raadik
07.02.18–26.02.18 Jan Lütjohann & Uku Sepsivart (Germany/Finland)
28.02.18–19.03.18 Ella Bertilsson & Ulla Juske (Sweden/Ireland)
21.03.18–09.04.18 Kai Kaljo
11.04.18–30.04.18 Ivar Veermäe & Xiaopeng Zhou (Estonia/China)
03.05.18–21.05.18 Mari-Liis Rebane
23.05.18–11.06.18 Matthias Sildnik
13.06.18–09.07.18 Liisi Eelmaa

Haapsalu City Gallery
Posti 3, Haapsalu
Open: Wed–Sat 12pm–6pm
galerii.kultuurimaja.ee

September Anna Mari Liivrand
October Haapsalu Kunstiklubi
November Egon Erkmann
December Näitusnäitus

HOP Gallery
Hobusepea 2, Tallinn
Open: Thu–Tue 11am–6pm
eaa.ee/hop

24.08.17–12.09.17 Aleksandra Pavlenkova, Kristiina Oppi, Andra Jõgis
14.09.17–03.10.17 Darja Popolitova

05.10.17–24.10.17 Tiina Sarapu
26.10.17–14.11.17 Evelin Saul & Madlen Hirtentreu
16.11.17–05.12.17 Lauri Kilusk
07.12.17–26.12.17 Annika Kedelauk
28.12.17–16.01.18 Annika Teder
18.01.18–06.02.18 Berit Teeäär

Kadriorg Art Museum
Weizenbergi 37, Tallinn
Open: May–Sept Tue, Thu–Sun 10am–6pm, Wed 10am–8pm
Oct–April Wed 10am–8pm, Thu–Sun 10am–5pm
kadroriumuseum.ekm.ee

Permanent Exhibition: Paintings from the 16th–18th century. Dutch, German, Italian and Russian masters. Western European and Russian applied art and sculpture from the 18th–20th century
27.05.17–01.10.17 A Journey to the Orient. Otto Friedrich von Richter’s (1791–1816) Trips and Collection
21.10.17–25.02.18 With an Inquisitive Gaze. Mannerist Painting from the National Museum in Warsaw

Kumu Art Museum
Weizenbergi 34 / Valge 1
Open: April–Sept Tue–Sun 10am–6pm, Wed 10am–8pm
Oct–Mar Wed 10am–8pm, Thu–Sun 10am–6pm
kumu.ekm.ee

Permanent exhibition: Treasury Classics of Estonian Art from the Beginning of the 18th Century until the End of the Second World War
Permanent exhibition: Conflicts and Adaptations. Estonian Art of the Soviet Era (1940–1991)
Estonian Art from the End of the Second World War Until Re-Independence
07.07.17–12.11.17 Chronicles of Art Life
25.08.17–28.01.18 Travellers: Voyage

and Migration in New Art from Central and Eastern Europe
09.09.17–25.02.18 Children of the Flowers of Evil. Estonian Decadent Art
22.09.17–14.01.18 The Savages of Germany. Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter Expressionists
24.11.17–March 2018 Andres Tolts. Landscape with Still Life

Mikkel Museum
Weizenbergi 28, Tallinn
Open: May–Sept Tue, Thu–Sun 10am–6pm, Wed 10am–8pm
Oct–April Thu–Sun 10am–5pm, Wed 10am–8pm
mikkelimuuseum.ekm.ee

Permanent exhibition: Collection of Johannes Mikkel: the Art of Western Europe, Russia, and China from 16th to 20th centuries
27.05.17–08.10.17 Meissen. The World in Porcelain
03.06.17–04.03.18 Mikkel Installation Room. Visit to a Collector
21.10.17–04.03.18 In the Roman Style. Mannerist Graphic Art in Estonian Collections

Museum of Estonian Architecture
Rotermann’s Salt Storage Abtri 2, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm
arhitektuurimuuseum.ee

Permanent exhibition: Space in Motion. A Century of Estonian Architecture
5.05.17–03.09.17 Kopli Sonata. The History of Russo-Baltic Shipyard
13.09.17– 29.10.17 bioTallinn. Tallinn Architecture Biennale TAB 2017
30.08.17– 29.10.17 Home Archeology
09.11.17– 08.01.18 Finnish New Architecture

Niguliste Museum

Niguliste 3, Tallinn
Open: May–Sept Tue–Sun 10am–5pm
Oct–Apr Wed–Sun 10am–5pm
nigulistemuuseum.ekm.ee

Permanent exhibition: The Art Museum of Estonia’s collection of medieval and early modern ecclesiastical art is exhibited at the Niguliste Museum
02.03.17–10.09.17 Silver Documents. Artisan Pendant Shields from the 17th to 19th Centuries
16.09.17–04.03.18 Five Forgotten Paintings

Tallinn Art Hall

Vabaduse väljak 8, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 12am–6pm
kunstihoone.ee

02.09.17–08.10.17 Tallinn Photomonth: Visual Exhaustion. Curator Anthea Buys
21.10.17–03.12.17 Eksperimenta! Coordinator Annely Köster
16.12.17–04.02.18 Marco Laimre. Motor. Curators Indrek Köster and Taavi Talve
16.02.18–29.05.18 The State is Not a Work of Art. Curator Katerina Gregos

Tallinn Art Hall Gallery

Vabaduse väljak 6, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 12am–6 pm
kunstihoone.ee

30.07.17–03.09.17 Annika Haas, Elo Liiv, Jekaterina Kultajeva. How to Look
09.09.17–08.10.17 Holger Loodus. Journey to the End of the World
09.12.17–14.01.18 Shishkin–Hokusai. Second Life
11.01.17–11.02.18 Tõnis Saadoja
16.02.18–29.05.18 The State is Not a Work of Art. Curator Katerina Gregos

Tallinn City Gallery

Harju 13, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 12am–6pm
kunstihoone.ee

11.08.17–10.09.17 Still Life. Cherries and a Skeleton. Ketli Tiitsar & Kristi Paap
15.09.17–15.10.17 Birgit Püve
09.12.17–14.01.18 Slavic Baroque. Vladimir Kozin
11.01.18–11.02.18 Marge Monko
16.02.18–29.05.18 The State is Not a Work of Art. Curator Katerina Gregos

Tartu Art House

Vanemuise 26, Tartu
Open: Wed–Mon 12pm–6pm
kunstimaja.ee

Big hall
27.07.17–20.08.17 Eva Mustonen
24.08.17– 17.09.17 Beyond Reality. Graphic Art Group Show. Curator Lilli Krõõt Repnau
21.09.17– 15.10.17 Jüri Kask
19.10.17– 12.11.17 Tanja Muravskaja
16.11.17– 10.12.17 I Touch Myself. Latvian Feminist Art. Curator Jana Kukaine
15.12.17– 14.01.18 Annual Exhibition

Small hall
10.03.17–02.04.17 Volume. Imaginary Concert for Seven Steam Engines. Holger Loodus
06.04.17–30.04.17 Konrad Mäe Studio
04.05.17–28.05.17 Stanislav Netšvolodov

31.05.17–18.06.17 TU Graduates
29.06.17–23.07.17 Anna-Maria Saar
27.07.17–20.08.17 Külli Suitso
24.08.17–17.09.17 Beyond Reality. Graphic Art Group Show. Curator Lilli Krõõt Repnau
21.09.17–15.10.17 Alexei Gordin
19.10.17–12.11.17 Tõnis Paberit
16.11.17–10.12.17 Margrieta Dreiblate, Curator Šelda Puķīte
15.12.17–14.01.18 Annual

Exhibition
Monument Gallery
27.07.17–20.08.17 Lydia Nordentoft Lavrov Organised by KÜ Pallas. Curator Enn Lillemets
24.08.17–17.09.17 Leonhard Lapin
21.09.17–15.10.17 Eike Eplik
19.10.17–12.11.17 Sirja-Liisa Eelmaa
16.11.17–10.12.17 Mētra Saberova, Curator Šelda Puķīte
15.12.17–14.01.18 Annual exhibition

Tartu Art Museum

Raekoja Square 18, Tartu
Open Wed, Fri–Sun 11am–7pm, Thu 11am–9pm
tartmus.ee

29.09.16–04.12.17 Who Creates the City?
23.03.17–29.10.17 The Eloquent Body, Works from the Collections of Tartu Art Museum
08.06.17–17.09.17 Peeter Allik: A Retrospect
04.08.17–10.09.17 Links to the World: Martha Rosler. Curator Hanna-Liis Kont
29.08.17–07.01.18 Museum Choreography. Curator Hanna-Liis Kont
10.11.17–04.02.18 Julie Hagen-Schwarz

Vabaduse Gallery

Vabaduse 6, Tallinn
Open: Mon–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat 11am–5pm
eaa.ee/vabadusegallery

25.08.17–13.09.17 Kai Kaljo
15.09.17–04.10.17 Mare Vint
06.10.17–25.10.17 Piia Ruber
27.10.17–15.11.17 Aime Kuulbusch
17.11.17–06.12.17 Jaan Elken
08.12.17–27.12.17 Valeri Vinogradov
29.12.17–17.01.18 Mati Karmin

Vaal Gallery

Tartu mnt 80d, Tallinn

Open Tue–Fri 12pm–6pm, Sat 12pm–4pm
vaal.ee

10.08.17–09.09.17 Mall Nukke. Curator Maarika Agu
14.09.17–14.10.17 Kristi Kongi
19.20.17–18.11.17 Curator Peeter Laurits
29.11.17–30.12.17 Jaan Toomik

Voronja Gallery

Kesk 22, Varnja alevik, Tartumaa
Open Wed–Sun 12pm–6pm
voronjagalerii.blogspot.com.ee

18.07.17–16.09.17 Organic Art Exhibition, Open Borders, Curated by Peter Belyi (St.Petersburg) Featuring: Evgenii Yufit, Elena Slobtseva, Sergey Denisov,Ivan Karpov, Denis Patrekeev and Vlad Kulkov
Sauna Gallery
27.07.17–27.09.17 The Evenings are Quiet Here. Ly Lestberg

Published by

Estonian Institute
Suur-Karja 14, 10140 Tallinn, Estonia
estinst.ee
estinst@estinst.ee
Phone: (+372) 631 4355
Fax: (+372) 631 4356

Editorial Board

Katrin Maiste, Marten Esko, Elin Kard, Kadri Laas, Triin
Ojari, Elnara Taidre, Kadi Polli and Taaniel Raudsepp

Editor

Stacey Koosel

Graphic Design

Sandra Kossorotova, Aadam Kaarma (AKSK OÜ)

Language Editor

Richard Adang

Translation

Annika Toots and Gepard OÜ

Web Design

Teeet Laja

Printed at

Aktaprint

Print run

4500 copies

Cover

Taavi Suisalu “Landscapes and Portraits” (detail), 2016

Back Cover

Marge Monko “Dear D”, 2015. Video still

ISSN: 1406–3549; ISSN online-version: 1406–5711



EESTI KUNSTIMUUSEUM

KUMU



