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Art

The Architecture Issue

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Estonian Art

The Architecture Issue

In this issue of Estonian Art we focus on architecture, urbanism and the public sphere.

Tadeáš Říha, **Laura Linsi** and **Roland Reemaa** are three young architects who will represent Estonia at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale with the project *Weak Monument*. **Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla** interviews the curatorial trio in “Sensitive Interventions in Venice”.

The inspiration behind the Venice Biennale project is traced in **Tadeáš Říha’s** article “Weakness in Architecture” based on his research into the philosophical topic. **Gregor Taul’s** “Free Some Space for Weak Monuments” demonstrates how monuments can become memories and **Francisco Martinez’s** “Architectural Taxidermy” ponders the repurposing of obsolete spaces.

The *Weak Monument* theme is further explored in visual essays by **Tõnu Tunnel** with “Is a Monument Land Stuck in Time?”, **Dénes Farkas’s** “Monument” and **Paco Ulman’s** “C:\Works\2017\ Kuressaare”.

Estonian architecture is presented in bite-sized morsels in **Carl-Dag Lige’s** “Mini Architecture Histories” sampled from his popular Instagram account. **Julia Hinderink** interviews **Sille Pihlak** and **Siim Tuksam** of PART (Practice for Architecture Research and Theory) in “New Kids On the Block”. **Karin Bachmann** talks about the newest wave of green urban planning in “The New Modernity of the Urban Thicket” and **Villem Tomiste** gives us a peek into what’s coming next in “Looking Forward to the 5th Tallinn Architecture Biennial”



Free Some Space for Weak Monuments

Gregor Taul

Gregor Taul (b. 1986) is an architecture critic and curator currently living and studying in Lisbon.

The exhibition presents an eclectic collection of projects that range from explicit monuments to everyday architecture.

1

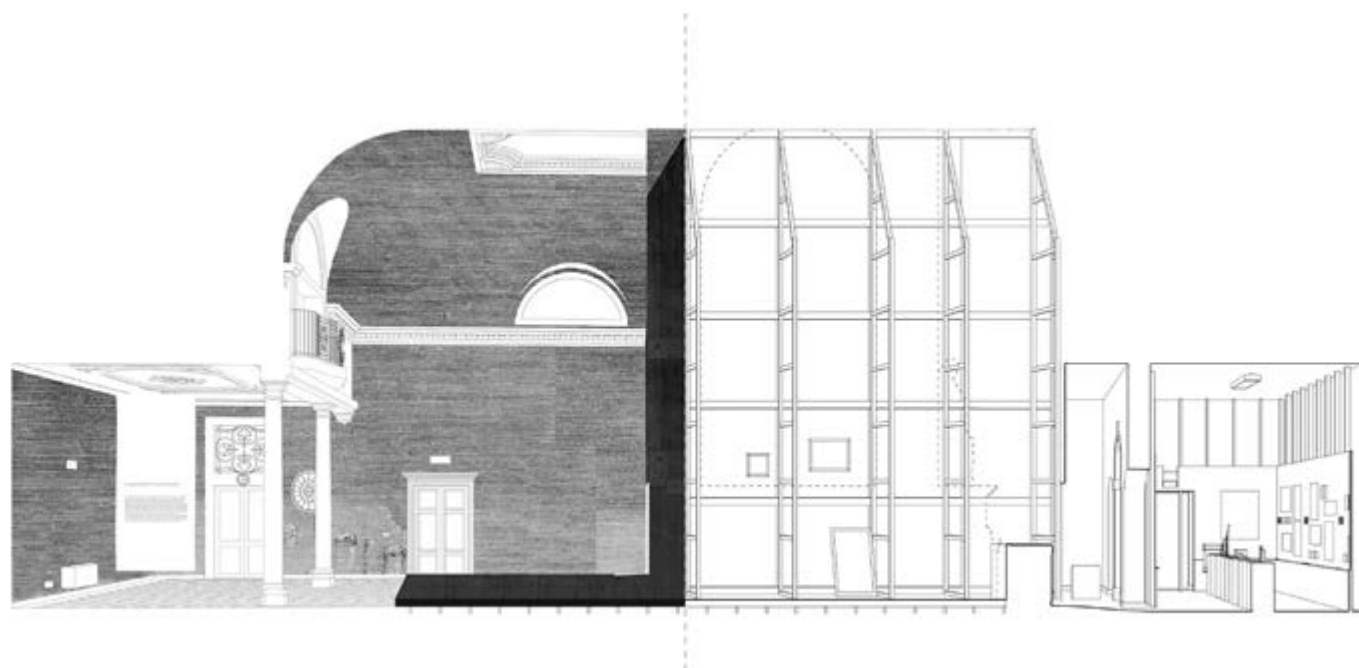
Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara, the head curators of the 16th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, have titled this year's event *Freespace*. We are in for hefty discussions about the concepts of the public sphere, public space, the commons and commonwealth. Once and for all, how does architecture serve the common good?

The Estonian national pavilion *Weak Monument* starts from this eminent question and asks how architecture – or to be more precise, the more mundane built environment – represents the good or the bad (or whatever it happens to represent). We are used to talking about paintings, sculpture and monuments symbolizing ideas such as national identity or depicting certain historical events, but what about simple infrastructure, our daily environment, or – as the curators Laura Linsi, Tadeas Riha and Roland Reemaa put it – weak monuments?

At first sight, the word “monument” seems to be misleading here. In fact it seems a major put-off, as people in various parts of the world have grown tired of the public disturbances which this “genre” seems to cause. This time the goal is to undo the monumentality and instead focus on the weakness. “Weak monuments” means frail streets, feeble buildings, fragile fountains, delicate crossings, shaky squares, worn out tunnels and weedy bridges. The ordinary stuff in the city. Do such indistinct details of architecture as pavement or scaffolding stand for anything specific? Can they act the same way as monuments do (supposedly they firmly represent something)?

Although old-fashioned political monuments are said to be dead, the need to represent, to make public space meaningful has not disappeared. Will the weak monument take over from the strong monument? Are we not already experiencing more and more architecture and infrastructure becoming increasingly “talkative”? What is the language that weak monuments speak? Is it well-phrased ultra-postmodernism, slurred neoliberalism or could it actually be an apolitical stance? Who makes weak monuments speak? Who in the world listens to them? What if weak monuments fail?

I assume that these are some of the issues the exhibition will raise. As there is still a long time to go until the vernissage (I am writing half a year before it), I had better not get into further details. As an alternative I will offer a personal reading of the (weak) monuments I have encountered. In the end I will try to draw attention to some of the “monumental weaknesses” inherent in the concept of weak monuments. This of course is not meant as criticism of the show I have not seen yet, but to provoke further discussion on this enchanting topic.



A conceptual section of the exhibition divides the exhibition into the monumental scene and the archive-like backstage.



The absence of traditional monuments in Estonia allows for other, less exceptional architectures to be recognised as political markers.

2

My kids, instead of asking me to read them children’s books before they fall asleep, demand that I tell them stories from my childhood. So far I must have recalled several hundred memories. For all these impressions, I am thankful to my parents who didn’t put me and my brother in kindergarten and let us hang around with our 90-something-year-old great-grandmother who by that time had lost nearly all of her sight and hearing. This is why we spent most of our early childhood hanging around the city and its outskirts. Likewise, I have only a few (positive) memories of school, but plenty of impressions of what we did after the school day was over. I have noticed that whenever I start to tell these stories I first have to dig deep into the *places* we visited. Memories lie in space. I think of a certain street and recall the events which took place there. I think of trams and take a trip down memory lane with the weird co-passengers we met. I am aware that there are people whose memories are dominated either by sounds, colors, tastes or seasons. In my case it is spatial relations. Mental monuments constitute who I am.

3

I tried to recall if I remembered any public monuments from my childhood. The only one I could think of which could have formed me as a citizen and turned me into a member of an imagined community was a sculpture of Hans Christian Andersen in Copenhagen. I was six years old when we first visited Denmark and I remember my mother telling me that if I sat on this figure’s lap life would bring me back to Copenhagen (it did). I can think of no other monuments being meaningful to pre-school me. At the same time all the *rest* of the city played a huge role in our upbringing: streets, courtyards, fences, garages, sheds, parks, fields and dumps. The more time we spent there, the more meaningful they became.

By the time I was more or less “fixed” as a human being, I had practically had nothing to do with public monuments. I am sure I am not the only one. What if none of us had any real association with monuments during our formative years? Why do we bother now? Indeed our lives now appear to be immersed in monuments, in strict national-cultural identities.



Amongst the examples presented is the fire-resistant staircore of the Tallinn-type house. Through multiplication, this regulatory intervention became symbolic on a city-wide scale.

4

Most probably secondary school is when our lives pass from ineffective monuments to more vigorous monuments, starting with cultural role models. What can one say about the novels of the 1940s, the films of the 1960s, the music of the 1970s or the urban culture of the 1990s which attracted us so deeply back then? Whose monuments are these anyway?

5

Then came the student years. You try to make yourself heard in the public space. At first you get the impression it is ridiculously easy. In a way it really is, unless you are unhappy with the role of being a weak monument. And then what? Should you go monumental or stick to the grass-roots level? Slow food, slow cities, slow science and Slow Movement. Forgive me if the metaphor is too abrupt, but I see a certain link between weak/monumental space and members of society with/without voices. Is having a voice a choice? Is there a middle way, a common ground in between the loud and the quiet? Perhaps some of the slow ones don't want to speak at all. Should we respect the silence of the slow monuments?

6

For me there is something unpleasant in the striving to animate, galvanize or even monetize anything or anyone. I am suspicious of a cultural agenda in which even the pavement is brought into the limelight and politicized. Even if I am conscious of the possibility of the urban space being inherently political, I need my pretense that in some parts it ain't necessarily so.

7

As any lefty will tell you, it is very much so. Politics is taking over the commons slowly but surely. Karl Popper called it Utopian engineering. A method of ruling the state from the point of view that the society has a definite aim and one can consistently approach this goal using rational social engineering. In this sense even slow monuments stand for specific objectives. This will lead us to the silly question of how much the end can justify the means.

8

I ended up opposing monumentality and humbleness, the opposite of what the curators of *Weak Monument* wish to do. But it is very hard to go beyond binary oppositions when someone brings up weakness and monumentality. Still I believe that the curators will come out with a clever dialectical synthesis. Although I have argued that I am skeptical about the over-politicization of the ordinary, it nevertheless makes a lot of sense to inquire about the daily environment functioning as a monument. After all, the notion of hegemonic political narratives which I have emphasized here is only one (narrow) aspect of the monument. If we bring into play the incredibly wide spectrum of the (mal)functions of the monument, we can come up with remarkably rich metaphors. But if the oxymoron of the weak monument is working so well, how will you convince viewers that you are not at all interested in dissecting monuments? It takes a very good, exceptionally monumental exhibition to break down language. Hopefully *Freespace*, as a collective endeavor, will provide us with one.

Sensitive Interventions in Venice

Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla interviews Laura Linsi, Roland Reemaa and Tadeáš Říha

Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara (Grafton Architects, Dublin), the curators of the 16th Venice Biennale of Architecture, have chosen *Freespace* as this year's theme of the biennial. Thew Estonian exhibition *Weak Monument* (Nõrk Monument) takes place at the former church of Santa Maria Ausiliatrice, located at the end of Via Garibaldi Street, between two main areas of the Venice Biennale – Arsenale and Giardini – and hopefully will attract visitors with both its inspirational theme and the location. We talked about the approaching Venice Biennale, Tatlin's Tower and Lapin's donkey stable at Kütiorrg with the three, young architects of the Estonian curatorial team, Laura Linsi, Roland Reemaa and Tadeáš Říha.

Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla: What is your shared background? How did you relate to the biennial and develop the joint project *Weak Monument*?

Tadeáš Říha: The three of us met while we were studying architecture at Delft University of Technology. Laura and I took Tom Avermaete's and Klaske Havik's studio course called 'Methods and Analysis', where we explored the toolbox of the architect and how architects approach their tasks but also find their own way. The tool of the section, for instance. It's something so obvious that we, as architects, use every day. I guess we learned to question the things around us which seem ordinary and not worth our interest. With the same tutor, Tom Avermaete, I then continued with my graduation project, which explored the notion of "weakness" in architecture.

Later, when we all ended up in three different architectural practices in London, we decided to participate in the competition, because we felt there was a certain kind of resonance between our interests and, as I have learned, something that is inherent to Estonian architecture and culture more broadly. Inspired by some of the works of Estonian artist and architect Leonhard Lapin, we proposed the term "weak monument", a pair of words which have stayed with us ever since.

Roland Reemaa: Oh, how did it all begin? I had a very strange obsession: at some point I got acquainted with the project for a 'donkey stable' at Kütiorrg by Leonard Lapin, in 1974. It is a project that was never realised but is, nevertheless, powerful as well as very provocative even on

Tüüne-Kristin Vaikla, PhD (b.1961) is a spatial researcher, educator and interior architect who explores the social and artistic dimensions of space. She is the curator of Estonian National Exhibition at the XIII Venice Architecture Biennale, and the Editor-in-Chief of the SISU—LINE interior architecture research journal.

paper. The project refers to Vladimir Tatlin's famous Monument to the Third International in its shape, but suggests a very different type of architectural project – not only because it is a donkey stable, but also because it embraces temporality and questions the architect's role over their project. At first, it was purely visual to me and it seemed that it could somehow be completed. Now that has changed, and the “donkey stable” has become more of an archetype.

Laura Linsi: In Estonia, the architects of the Tallinn School¹ have had a significant and interesting role in general. Their vast toolbox of ways of working with space, including collages and paintings, political happenings, buildings and poetry, expanded my and, I suppose, the wider understanding of what architecture can be. We have the project *Weak Monument*. Tadeáš had observed weakness in architecture as something positive or creative; he thought about it before and through that also connected to Lapin's project. The donkey stable became an example of what we mean by a weak monument, which is something of an impossible concept.

Tüüne-Kristin: Architecture Biennales in Venice have been very different; they always reflect their curators. How do you describe the current theme of the biennale, *Freespace*? In what way did the curatorial position touch you personally and inspire you as architects to relate to the contemporary spatial environment?



Illustrations by Kiyoshi Stelzner

Tadeáš: To me it was always interesting how different architects, and different countries, have approached the biennale topics in the past. It has always been an invitation rather than a strict directive. It is maybe also interesting to recall that the main topic was only announced after the first round of the competition

for the Estonian pavilion. But that did not really matter because the topic *Freespace* seems to be intentionally very open. It reflects the responsibility architecture has to that which is public and to that which is common. The way the “common” is represented in architectural form is where I feel our exhibition and *Freespace* most clearly intersect.



Laura: It seems that the curators, Farrell and McNamara, are particularly interested in more common phenomena of how to find meaning through everyday architecture. For me, everything that is related to the issue of public space is very interesting. Something that doesn't necessarily include creating star architecture can be very creative and interesting, and at the same time, be beneficial for users. In London, I work with public realm projects that deal with the space between streets and houses separately from landscape architecture: it is an issue of spatial coherence, which is often difficult to explain, and to photograph. When, 10 years ago, ArchDaily, the weblog, came into existence, the importance of architectural photography and rendering peaked and the question of what the work did became arbitrary. Everything became object-centred, and everything needed to look good in images. I see *Freespace* as a theme where the focus shifts to the more ordinary again. There is magic in the ordinary.

Tüüne-Kristin: The Venice Architecture Biennale is also a political event, where national pavilions represent their states and quite often it seems that it's a proud presentation of some positive phenomena. To step out there with an up-to-date critical question is not necessarily self-explanatory.

Roland: The Venice Biennale is interesting because it is very nation based. It's a bit like a march of countries; of course, all countries want to sell themselves and show the latest trends in architecture. I think the role of architecture has changed since this biennale emerged. The role of the architect has become much broader in practice.

Laura: Tadeáš told me about when he went to the biennale 10 years ago, and Kersten Geers and David van Severen curated “After the Party” at the Belgian pavilion. The pavilion was empty, with confetti on the floors, and it felt like you had arrived when everything was already over. He experienced such architecture for the first time; he remembered that something completely different was being done in the Czech Republic at that time. It was a great inspirational experience to be able to go there and see how things were being done elsewhere.

Tüüne-Kristin: The word “weak” does not have an emotional connection for you; let's talk about it more precisely. Please define the concept *Weak Monument* and describe your approach in the exhibition space.

Tadeáš: I really like the word “weak”. In English and Czech. I even like the look and sound of it in Estonian. It is not a kind word and obviously suggests a negative meaning, and yet there are all kinds of completely neutral applications of it in philosophy, physics, economics and even grammar. Weakness assumes using less obvious means to achieve goals. Instead of a straightforward force it employs an intriguing complexity. I am not the first person to notice that certain qualities of our contemporary society respond to such an approach very well: the absence of the big stories of the past, East versus West, for instance, and the complexity we are faced with when we judge the relevance of information on the Internet.

The word “monument” seems to be from a completely different world. It is strong in its persistence and materiality, and clear and straightforward in depicting a historical figure or an event. It reminds us of how explicit architecture can be in representing common values. The contradictory nature of the connection between “weak” and “monument” is something that has inspired us from the very beginning.

Laura: None of these examples we have given can be really called a weak monument. In the case of Lapin's donkey stable, he called it “an anti-monument”, which brings out the weakness, gives it a position and opposes it to another highly politicised unrealised construction, Tatlin's Tower, formally known as the Monument to the Third International (1919–1920). Lapin's anti-monument is the opposite in the sense that it uses simple materials, such as local wood. And he

made it into a donkey stable, while Tatlin's monument was a gathering place for the Communist Party and an entertainment centre. If you look at Lapin's drawings, he leaves quite a lot of freedom to the builders. As an architect, he writes such small keywords on the drawing as “the size of the window is random” and “may be different”.



Roland: Some annotations were very warm, for example “the bells are blowing in the wind” and “the rod should be painted the same colour as the flag”, but the colour of the flag was not given: a very free relationship in an architectural project. The drawing of the project is weak: it's a donkey stable that does not have very accurate instructions on how to build it; yet, at the same time, it is very powerful, the opposite of a monument to a very huge ideology Tatlin's tower was to become the headquarters and monument to Comintern, the international communist organisation to advocate world communism. This is, however, the strongest aspect: the way Lapin uses the potential with these scarce tools, to have a little fun. He is very capable of that!

Laura: We discuss this potential in Estonia: to do something meaningful with few resources. “The Donkey Stable” is partly an art project, and quite extreme in a way. With our pavilion, we are trying to move from extreme projects to nowadays and more everyday things. Let's look at, for example, Toomas Paaver's latest urban interventions, in particular the Soo street project in Tallinn, which was on the front pages of newspapers and people know it. In the end, it's just an asphalt sidewalk and a couple of lamps... The question we use in our pavilion is: where does the monument stop and the pavement begin? Often its surroundings become meaningful, and quite often the

monument itself – the sculpture – disappears rather quickly, but some sort of spatial decision remains. For example, there is Rävala boulevard, which was Lenin boulevard, with a monument to Lenin. Our generation doesn't have a direct memory of it: the sculpture is gone but there is still a boulevard and a building that embodies this background, but the material is missing.

Tüüne-Kristin: Monuments are very political interventions in terms of erection and disposal. The Bronze Soldier Monument was moved from its location in the city space of Tallinn (2007), and became a powerful art project at the 53rd Venice Biennale a few years later (Kristina Norman, “After War”, 2009). How political is your project?

Roland: Just as important, it provoked a reaction in the city. It's a very monumental project in Estonia. As early as 1995, a competition was organised to solve the problem of this triangle in Tõnismägi: how to solve it by leaving the monument there, to domesticate it or add something so that the monument would no longer somehow be painful for Estonian society. And there were interesting solutions offered. One of the ideas was that the sculpture was too hot to touch, and financially nothing could be removed, but instead new elements should be added in and around it. Of course, none of that happened, only a diagonal road was built, but the whole strategy of addition instead of removal is an intriguing example within the topic of weak monument.

Laura: One of the main goals for our exhibition is to invite people to think about how architecture can be political. Monuments are highly politicised: very directly and understandably their aim is to be political. We are looking for a relationship between the monument and everyday space, which comes with its weaknesses, and everyday space is always more implicitly and obscurely political. We want to focus on the more indirect politicisation. At the same time, we as architects have something to say about where to put a curbstone that doesn't interfere with someone in a wheelchair, and these things are also politicised.

Roland: I don't want to take the didactic role, but I think that, in Estonia, the ordinary citizen should have more energy and desire to stand up for public space, to have better curbstones or better sidewalks. Simple things like that can be in people's hands. The word “politics” has become very heavy in Estonia: when you think about politics all you think about is quarrelling. Politics comes from the word polis, the city; the public is the city: a polis. The polis should be talked about in a more unrestrained sense than just political parties.

Tüüne-Kristin: By weak action, you mean that spatial intervention is sensitive and sometimes even fragile. Is this the message to convey through your project?

Roland: It is evident that in Estonia the public space is taken very lightly; if a building is abandoned or torn down, then immediately something new is built there. It's a very neoliberal environment. There is a desire and search for something new. At the same time, the countries where I have lived are accustomed to noticing and embracing continuity of their environments. Belgium discovered that maybe something that they know how to do well is to find charm in random spaces. There is a general sense that it's quite normal to do architecture that way and, in the end, the resources used are very minimal.

Laura: It's hard to define this in one way. It is, for example, using and connecting something that is already there. In my case, I'm not selecting one object; it can be fragmented, trying to connect existing things. It doesn't have to be whole and shiny, but rather it should be somewhat useful for the urban space, making it better for the user when something new is made. And what is this “new”? The new disappears into it and is not visible or definable as an object. It doesn't try to be an object. When the weather is sad and muddy and you have a feeling that you don't know where to start, it's actually as Roland put it: “then you don't need to start; you already have everything”. We have places, places have their own stories, and not every place needs a new story, a new narrative, when there is already so much that is present. It's more a matter of tying up and optimising, so that space becomes usable. Our project is a distancing from the classical monument and a moving towards a different kind of coherence.

Tüüne-Kristin: You have chosen a sacred space – a church – as a frame for your exhibition, which gives it a strong atmosphere and direction. What is the combined effect of the space and the exhibition?

Laura: It seems like a charged space. It is also beautifully weathered and saturated in materials and colours, so specific in that way as well. It's a challenge for us to make this charged space function in a different way.

[1] Tallinn School was a group of powerful Estonian architects which acted in Tallinn in the 1970s and 1980s led by Vilen Künnapu and Leonhard Lapin. The activity of the group was for example a critique of modernism (T-K).



Upon entering the church the visitor is faced with a mysterious scene. Where does the monument end and pavement begin?

Tadeas Riha (b.1988) studied Architecture at CTU Prague and TU Delft. He's worked for practices which include MVRDV Rotterdam & 6a architects in London. He is one of the curators of Weak Monument for the Estonian National Pavilion at the XVI Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018.

Laura Linsi (b.1989) studied architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, RISD and TU Delft. In 2016 Laura founded RLOALUARNAD with Roland Reemaa to continue experimenting with architectural methods and processes. She currently lives in London, where she is working at East Architecture, Landscape, Urban Design Ltd. She is one of the curators of Weak Monument for the Estonian National Pavilion at the XVI Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018.

Roland Reemaa (b.1987) studied at the Estonian Academy of Arts and TU Delft. He worked at Domain Office and Kaan Architecten in Rotterdam and was a guest teacher at TU Delft Chair of Complex Projects. In 2016 Roland founded RLOALUARNAD with Laura Linsi to continue experimenting with architectural methods and processes. Since 2017 he is based in London, where he is working for Sanchez Benton Architects. He is one of the curators of Weak Monument for the Estonian National Pavilion at the XVI Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018.



Weakness in Architecture

Tadeáš Riha

Tadeáš Riha (b.1988) studied Architecture at CTU Prague and TU Delft. He's worked for practices which include MVRDV Rotterdam & 6a architects in London. He is one of the curators of Weak Monument for the Estonian National Pavilion at the XVI Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018.

This ruined wing of Hogeschool Ghent shows the simultaneity by subtraction. The demolition of the adjacent building exposed layers of time, that never were meant to occupy one space, that never were meant to be seen simultaneously. Hogeschool Ghent, Author's photograph

'Let them be helpless like children, because weakness is a great thing and strength is nothing. When a man is just born he is weak and flexible, but when he dies he is hard and insensitive. When a tree is growing it is tender and pliant, but when it's dry and hard it dies. Hardness and strength are death companions. Pliancy and weakness are the expressions of the freshness of being. Because what has hardened will never win.'



In the shed we enjoy the complexity and softness, the picturesque disordered silhouette, the organic materiality. Compared to the absolute inspectional singularity of the pyramid the shed is a result of a series of accidental decisions that could have come in infinite iterations.
Photography by Miroslav Pazdera



The ruins are overcharged with meanings. Tragedies that still haunt us today, millennial disasters of long forgotten empires, fallen tyrants and tyrants yet to be born. It is almost impossible to look at the ruins and see just ruins. *A tank in Liberec, 1968, unknown author* (CT24 television archive, www.ct24.cz)



The disiecte simultaneity was already exploited in the past as a tool of representation. This famous painting by Joseph Gandy is a simultaneous representation of interior and exterior as well as plan and structure. It is a typical cutaway axonometric. The revelatory qualities that we ascribe to this geometric representation are also present in every ruin. *An imagined view of the Bank of England in ruins, Joseph Michael Gandy, 1830* (www.soane.org)

While carefully sneaking next to a cracked wall of a concrete ruin, Andrej Tarchovsky's stalker utters this manifesto of weakness. This insecure guide submits himself unconditionally to the invisible laws of the mysterious Zone. "*Weakness is a great thing*", we both want to persuade you. And yet, "weak" is rarely a positive description. There are kinder words, but it is this and no other which has the capacity to disclose hidden relations, allow for new understandings and open fresh perspectives.

The inventor of the term "*weak thought*", or *Il pensiero debole*, is the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. Even though his writings are from the 1980s, their postmodern message can be extended to our time. Vattimo points out, as do others, that we are living in a world where everything is subject to interpretation, where all values are interchangeable, and even facts are polemic. He proposes the term "weak thought" as a way to exploit this condition of rootlessness in philosophy, as well as in science and art.

The Catalan architect and theoretician Ignasi de Sola Morales was the first to try to appropriate Vattimo's writings for the discipline of architecture, in his essay entitled simply "Weak Architecture". Juhani Pallasmaa wrote an essay entitled "Fragile architecture", based referentially on Vattimo's essay, 13 years later.

Pallasmaa's and Morales' texts can be explained through a metaphor. Imagine a pyramid and a shed as two extremes of a formal spectrum. The pyramid represents man's ability to organize the chaos of nature by means of abstraction. The countless stone blocks are transformed into the

singularity of a mathematical volume. What is appealing to the observer is the monumentality and perfection of the absolute form, which implies that a great power, artistic as well as political, conditioned its creation.

In the shed, on the other hand, we enjoy the exact opposite qualities: complexity and softness, a picturesque disordered silhouette, and organic materiality. Compared to the inceptional singularity of the pyramid, the shed is the result of a long series of accidental decisions that could have come in infinitely varied forms. In this imagined polarity, Pallasmaa takes the position of the shed and proclaims this conquered territory "fragile architecture". Let's create beautiful sheds, because the "pyramids" of modernism deprived us of direct sensual experience, he writes.

Morales' approach is uncanny. He seeks a shed that is as monumental as the pyramid, or rather he claims that the shed can sometimes be a pyramid. According to the Catalan scholar, the experience of multiplicity, which we can relate to the shed, can intensify our already complex reality. This intensification is the new monumentality stolen from the pyramid. This kind of monumentality is, however, rather difficult to define. For this purpose an external party needs to be introduced here. The ruin.

In the realm of things, few are more charged with meaning than the ruin. The bourgeois melancholy of a Sunday walk, millennial tragedies of long forgotten empires, fallen tyrants and tyrants yet to be born are all there. The ruin dissects the world so violently that all of this and more is to be found within. The ruin reveals, hides, confuses and blurs reality so successfully that almost any notion, feeling or lesson can be derived from it.

The ruin is a realm of its own, impossible to grasp in its entirety within the scope of this short article, or in a lifetime, for that matter. It is fantastically and frightfully open, described over and over. Paradoxically,



A design project was later based on this thesis. The two projects are connected via a grid of walls, which at once creates the disordered shopping mall below and the modernist inspired park above. *The ruin and the Mall*, student project, Tadeas Riha, perspective view

the forgotten creator of every ruin, the architect, rarely showed any interest in this inevitable renegade creation of his own.

I am using the ruin only as an allegory of weakness in architecture. For the bluntest, simplest and obvious characteristics of ruins are similar to some of the most abstract and remote notions of weak architecture. Ruins and Weak Architecture are products of the same conflict between order and disorder, totality and the fragment, the material and the formal. The ruin, in our case, as with any allegory, reveals and illustrates but is also interesting in its own right. It stays within the domain of architecture, which it also illuminates from a remote time.

It is usually politicians, not architects, who contemplate the monumentality of ruins. In the crumbling pillars of the Forum Romanum, Adolf Hitler saw a monument of endurance and stability. In front of the ruinous romantic paintings of Herbert Robert, Dennis Diderot questioned the meaning of life. The monumentality of ruins can indeed refer to the history that passed through and between them. The ruin is a screen onto which we project our own images drawn from glorious pasts, real or imagined.

Instead of the antiquarian's, let us take the architect's point of view. Without any of the symbolic meaning, reference to heroic deeds and events of past millennia, where in ruins is the monumentality when seen as mere spatial arrangements?

It clearly is not the monumentality of the absolute, that of an obelisk or a pyramid. Often, it is not an issue of scale or dimension either. The central mechanism of monumentality in ruins must lie somewhere else.

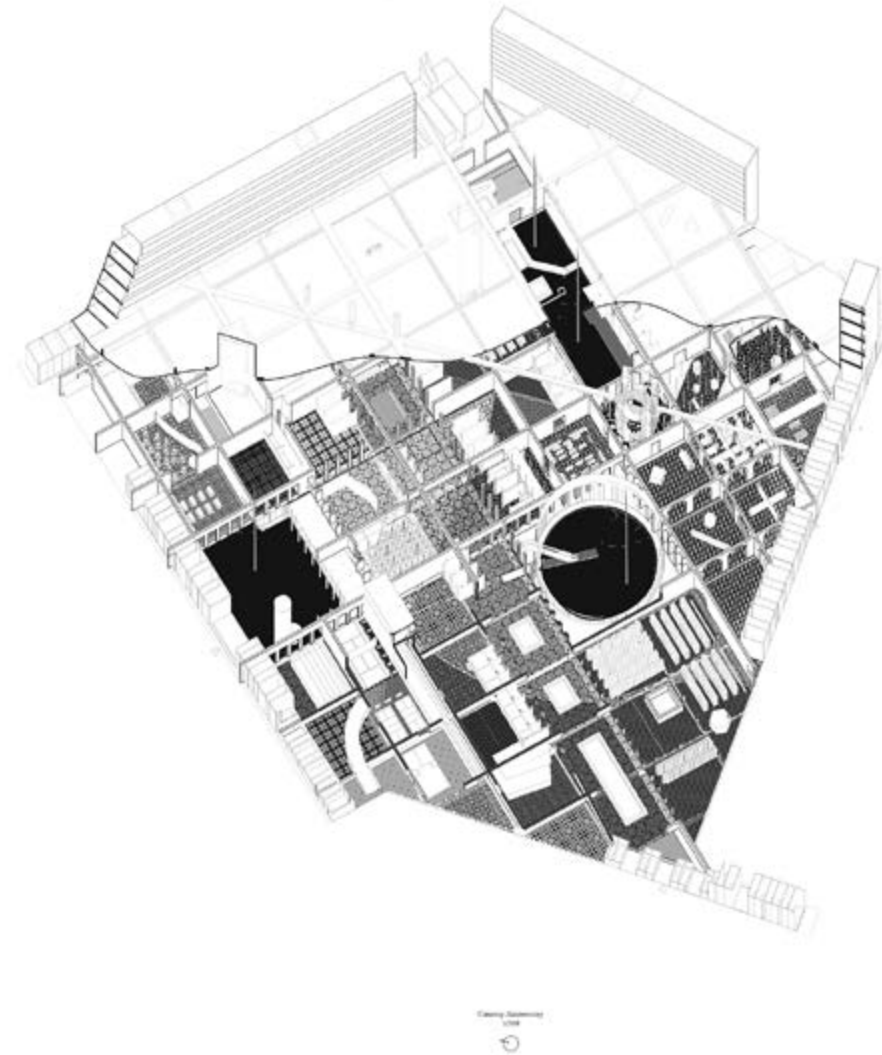
The definition of monumentality offered by Morales can hardly be more enigmatic: "*a window to a more intense reality*". He also links the

"*feeling*" of monumentality with the simultaneous experience of multiple times. Within the limits of this short excerpt, I can only present one occasion where the ruin offers a literal embodiment of concepts that seem rather distant from reality.

For, in ruins, the past and present, or even multiple pasts, can be seen, touched and bodily experienced instantly and simultaneously. The ruin is a section of time, and as with any section it reveals what was meant to stay within separate domains. Its simultaneity allows for an instant experience of multiplicity that is one of the possible interpretations of the monumentality described by Morales. Simultaneity, quite simply, is the monumentality of ruins.

And it is not just the simultaneity of times. The ruin dissects the world in various ways. The section is its most powerful tool. The suddenly exposed intimacy of a ruined home, for instance, offers us an experience of simultaneity of a rather inappropriate kind. In a terrific passage, the novelist Rose Macaulay describes her own house in London, destroyed during the blitz.

"But often the ruin has put on, in its catastrophic tipsy chaos, a bizarre new charm. What was last week a drab little house has become a steep flight of stairs winding up in the open between gaily-coloured walls, tiled lavatories, interiors bright and intimate like a Dutch picture or a stage set, the stairway climbs up and up, undaunted, to the roofless summit where it meets the sky. The house has put on melodrama, people stop to stare, here is a domestic scene wide open for all to enjoy."



Two projects simultaneously occupying one site: Modernist ruin to be (now demolished) housing estate in South London and a Shopping mall like new development (now being built). *The ruin and the Mall*, student project, Tadeas Riha, cutaway axonometric

It is no coincidence that this terrifyingly disective simultaneity has been exploited as a tool of representation of architecture. The painted visualizations of Joseph Gandy imagined designs not yet built as ruins. This technique had the revelatory capacities of the section, while keeping the integrity of the artwork intact.

Similarly, the ruin offers tools for an intensification of architectural experience, of which one can be described as a certain quality of simultaneity. The others, which will not fit within the constraints of this short article, are openness, disorder, fragmentation and uselessness. All of these outline the common ground between the pleasing formal complexity of ruins and certain types of architecture, where the will of the designer and actuality clash in a felicitous manner.

Somewhat paradoxically, it can be said that weak architecture is a product of intensification. The intensity I have in mind is the intensity of feelings encouraged by a crack between two irreconcilable fragments, that of two centuries meeting in a detail, one inspired by an unexpected breach of rhythm or the joyful deprivation of the expected.

Weak architecture is a product of the conflict between the pyramid and the shed, the conflict of two opposing styles or the transitions between them, the project and the site or multiple projects, even the designer and the client. Such projects show all of the scars of the battles from which they emerged. The accidents they suffered from are in striking resonance with the ruin. In fact, it is through the ruin that they can be conceptualized. And it is through the ruin, again, that a more general idea of architecture can be proposed. Architecture that, like the ruin, fuses the disharmony of the eternal human urge for imperfection with the pleasure of form and the beautiful abstraction of the artistic spirit. Architecture which, for its dilatory relationship to the imposing power and singular order, can be called, for instance, *weak*.

This article is an excerpt of Tadeáš Riha's Graduation Research Thesis for the Faculty of Architecture, at Delft University of Technology, 2015. Tutors: Tom Avermaete, Jorge Alberto Mejía Hernández and Mark Pimlott.

Tõnu Tunnel

Is a Monument Land Stuck in Time?

The Maarjamäe Memorial (designed by architect A. Murdmaa and sculptor M. Varik) stands in Tallinn on Pirita Road between the Lasnamäe plateau and Tallinn Bay. The complex was built during the 1960s and 1970s and is dedicated to those who died defending the Soviet Union. What makes it unique, is that in addition to commemorating Soviet soldiers, the memorial also hosts graves of German and Estonian fighters.

During the summertime the memorial is in active use as a public space. People go jogging there, have picnics, enjoy it as a viewpoint to observe the sun setting over Tallinn and even do wedding photoshoots. People don't seem to care for its representative past too much and use it as a well sculpted public park.

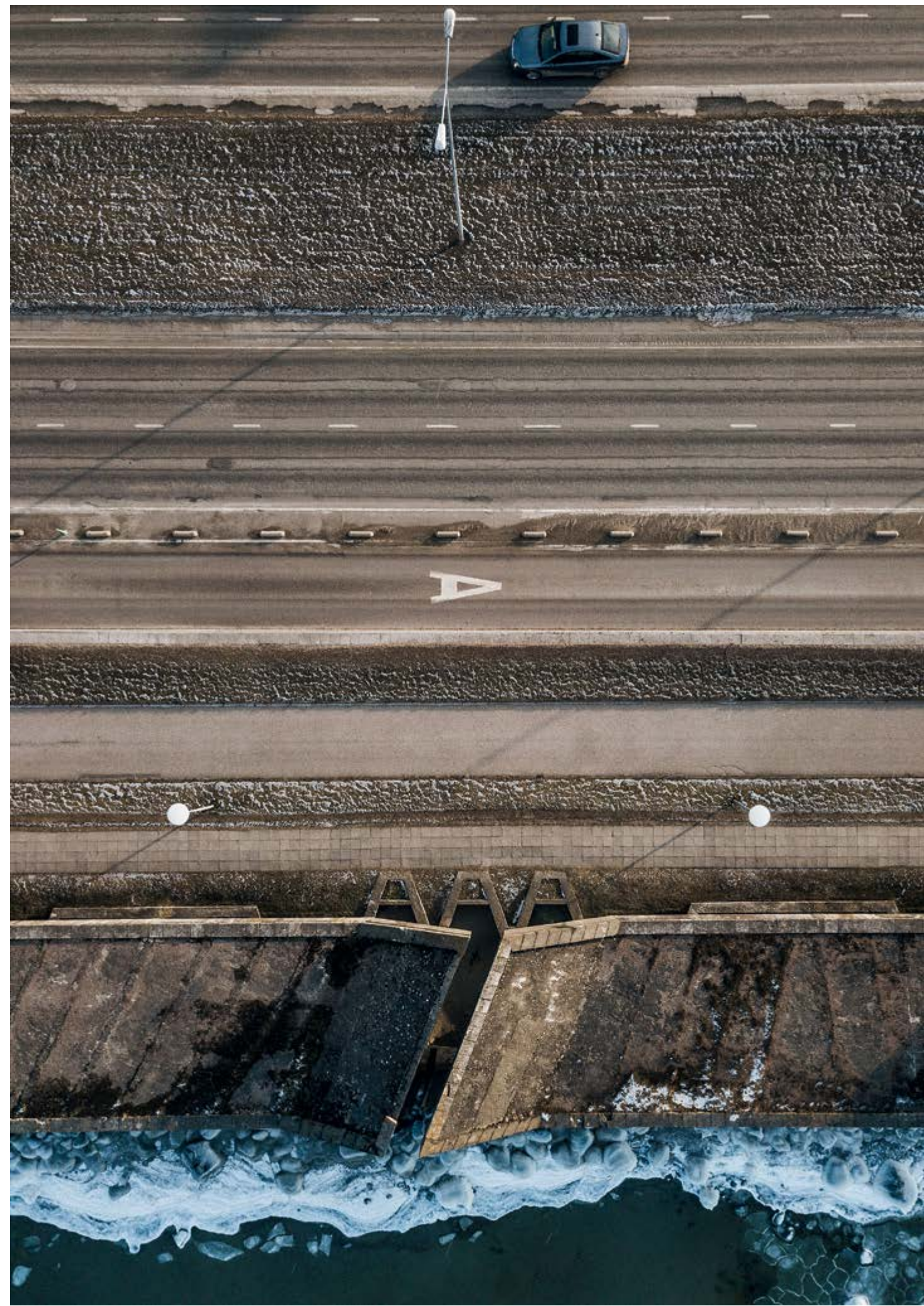
As a result of complicated ownership relations and the painful history that it stands to remind us of, the Maarjamäe Memorial is falling apart and parts of it have been closed to the public. Some politicians have come to question the rationale for renovating it and advocate for demolishing the Memorial. I think it's a unique colossal piece of land art of a bygone era. Contemporary budgets seldom allow for projects of such grandiose scale to become reality. Decommissioning rare works of land art for fast budget cuts and easy popularity is a very short-sighted strategy.

I feel it should be maintained so that it doesn't fall apart and can continue to be used by people as a public space but with the grime and authenticity of a 50-year-old monument. If it gets refurbished too thoroughly, it might start to feel too institutionalized and uncanny – and thus becoming an unused monumental wasteland.

Tõnu Tunnel (b.1987) is an Estonian architectural photographer. He graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in photography. Besides working on commissioned shoots he has focused his attention on the transformation of urban space and how it reflects different eras.













Architectural Taxidermy

Francisco
Martínez

Francisco Martínez (b.1982) PhD, is a postdoctoral researcher at Aalto University and part of the editorial teams of the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* and *Suomen Antropologi*, Journal of the Finnish Anthropological society.

There is a tradition of well-skilled taxidermists in Eastern Europe, yet the phenomenon of architectural taxidermy is an interesting anomaly in the region, showing not simply the fate of modernist architecture and industrial heritage (removing internal remnants *in order to* proceed with the repair, dressing or recycling of a building), but also the ongoing relational and processual materialization of urban settings and life, which has been for many years characterized by the withdrawal of state regulations, eclecticism, the opening up of the world and the search for exclusiveness (Hirt 2012).^[1]

"Help for the stoker of the central heating boiler", 2017 by K. Tulin.



Postimaja 1985, Harald Leppikson. Rahvusaarhiivi.



Interior Postimaja 1985, Harald Leppikson. Rahvusaarhiivi.



Reconstruction of Postimaja, photo by Ilmar Saabas

The term taxidermy itself derives from the Greek: taxi meaning “movement” and derma meaning “skin”. If not considered as embodying Soviet ideology, modernist buildings would be hunting trophies, specimens which, through the act of dissecting and freezing from the affectation of time, can achieve an outward look of the past and authenticity, an organic appearance of bohemian touristification. However, the political infection that makes internal organs rancid leads to a deeper degree of emptiness, beyond design logics of re-dressing what is raw or naked. Nowadays, new projects are not seeking to render buildings lifelike – through a process of deconstruction – but rather to show a new preference for enhancement, instead of imitation (van Dijck 2001), making buildings look as if they were not made but born (Haraway 1984).

An example of architectural taxidermy is the refurbishing of the Central Post Office of Tallinn (*Postimaja*), originally built between 1977 and 1980 on the eve of the Moscow Olympic games (in which the yachting events were held on the outskirts of the Estonian capital). The main function of the building was to host mail processing and telephone services, while long distance calls were also available through an operator on the first floor of the building. A distinctive, three-story, limestone construction replaced an old gas station, symbolically connecting the Rottermann quarter with the Old Town and the Narva highway. The Central Post Office had the first escalator in Estonia, which people came from all over the country to see and to experience. However, the escalator soon broke down, and was finally replaced by a conventional staircase in 1988.

Besides sending the social world that the internal things of these buildings represented off to oblivion, another important feature of the architectural taxidermy practiced in post-socialist cities is that the buildings-creatures were often not dead before taxidermy, but were functioning well despite sustained investment and maintenance (e.g. Krenholm). Indeed, many of the architectural and industrial ruins of Tallinn are not simply Soviet but also material signifiers of the decline of Fordism and neoliberal policies. For instance, the innovations brought about by information technologies led to structural changes in mail and communication industries in recent decades, gradually decreasing the volume of traditional mail.[2] Yet there were the privatization processes and the need for self-financing, which forced Estonian Post to sell practically

all of the real estate properties they owned, keeping just four of ninety they had in the 1990s.[3] Since 2005, the building has been under heritage protection, so its demolition is formally forbidden. However, the new owners started a complete “building surgery” (Harris 1999), which changed the façade, interior and use of the *Postimaja*, nowadays transformed into a shopping mall with a glossy crystal façade and numerous advertisements: “It is not the same building”, argues Silver Agu, the head of its maintenance for a decade; “only the form and size were preserved”.

Buildings can give and receive; they are performative, and they *happen*. The opposite of architectural taxidermy, which removes the human voice and warmth from the architectural skin, is to honor buildings maturing with occupation, repair and maintenance work, a form of warming them up as historical, political and financial bodies. An example of this is the re-discovery of the Tallinn energy plant, or more precisely the creation of the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia (EKKM) and its organic development for over ten years. The EKKM is a non-profit exhibition venue established in late 2006, when artists looking for studio space started squatting in the office building of the former boiler plant. The museum gained convenient institutional stability in 2011, as a consequence



Museum of Contemporary Art of Estonia, 2017, by F. Martínez.



Project "Help for the stoker of the central heating boiler", 2017 by F. Martinez.

of the increase in the number of visitors to the shoreline that the program of the European Capital of Culture brought. Yet, as a side effect, a detailed plan has been prepared by the city government to privatize all of the area surrounding the museum, due to the gentrification of the neighborhood and allegedly the need to pay KultuuriKatel (the "Creative Hub"), the big iconic project of the European Capital of Culture (opened three years after the event), which puts the survival of the museum directly at risk.

In November 2017, the artist Kirill Tulin presented in EKKM "Help for the stoker of the central heating boiler", an installation-performance inviting people "to imagine together what public spaces we want in winter and how we could claim and maintain them." For a period of one month, and organized into seven separate shifts (a 24h work-day followed by a 3-day break, "сутки через трое"), the museum was kept open and warm, day and night, by the stoker-artist and his successive helpers. I had the pleasure of acting as a helper, warming the building through discussions, and acting as a host for the nearly 50 people who came to visit the space during my shift. Skin to skin, the project created a thermal communicative condition (Robinson 2015), defining along the contours of help by practice and transforming the museum into a platform for think-making. In a way, this project echoes Mierle Ukeles' *Maintenance Art*, which involved shaking hands with each of the 8,500 sanitation workers of New York and expressing gratitude to them, or inviting people to perform their regular duties as art. "My working will be the work", declared Ukeles.

The bench-like structure built by Kirill in the entrance room was a reflection onto the floor of the shape of the load-bearing ceiling. This bench worked as a giant radiator, with hot water tubes inside, transforming the exhibition into a *tepidarium* by hidden pipes from an adjacent boiler-room (a design which restores the pre-museum plan, locating a shower box in the corner where it once was). The heating fuel used came from the wood material left from the museum's previous exhibitions. Besides functioning as a form of research, the exhibition had several layers of cultural and material archaeology. For instance, "Help for the stoker of the central heating boiler" borrows its title from a book found in what would later become EKKM, when the building was "re-discovered" in 2006. That manual was written in the early seventies to provide the technical instructions for heating the Tallinn Power Plant. The figure of the stoker also has particular connotations in the former Soviet Union: the embodiment of idleness, lack of ambition and inappropriate behavior, a useless drunk wasting time (although many were highly educated), and a



Kirill preparing the wood, 2017, by Alla Tulina.

low social position in official accounts; and yet it was a freer possible job for young artists, poets and musicians, allowing room for autonomy, a chosen peripherality, being simultaneously inside and outside the system.[4]

Another important layer of the exhibition is that Kirill provided a space where visitors could spend time and exchange thoughts, a simple *service* which appears critical and subversive due to the fact that physical public spaces are shrinking in Tallinn while privatized commercial ones are overwhelmingly growing. We can relate this to the phenomenon of architectural taxidermy, as well as the increasingly brief lives of buildings for speculation purposes, the actual politics of memory, and revanchist urban planning, which has resulted in recent buildings being rapidly devalued, considered unworthy of investment and finally made expendable. Thus, the question of which buildings are "worth" preserving and which are architecturally, historically and culturally "worthless" strongly echoes social considerations and values.

The negligence of buildings also entails a choice involving remembering and how we want to define ourselves, and orders of worth in the society (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). And yet, the meaning of places is not only given by getting rid of things or by design, but also by the embodied engagement that inhabits and continually reshapes a place, including maintenance and repair practices. As with displays, the emptying of buildings allows new forms of representation of the past, reinventing the inhabitants in the present, and projecting future visions, working to sort out memories and even reshape family roles and relationships (Marcoux 2001). However, the extension (number of buildings) and intensity (degree of revanchism and lack of care, reducing everything from the recent past to zero value) of architectural taxidermy in Eastern Europe show an excess that is not simply based on financial, aesthetic or design criteria, but also involves dispossession, state legibility and moral judgments.

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[1] This article is partly based on a passage from the forthcoming book *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia. An Anthropology of Forgetting, Repair and Urban Traces*, London: UCL Press.

[2] The internet and such apps as Skype brought with them new forms of communication, which created new jobs and opportunities, but also rendered obsolete old professions and, in a way, handwriting.

[3] In 2009, the Postimaja was sold to Altenberg-Reval AS (a subsidiary of the Swedish Claes Magnus Åkerborg) for 8.18 million euros. The chairman of Eesti Post, M. Atonen, stated: "Estonian Post is not a real estate company; so we contemplate real estate sales in order to finance its core and to become more competitive".

[4] "their valves and heat pipes reached like arteries into thousands of apartments

in the district, embedding these boiler rooms inside the very entrails of the system, simultaneously providing ... time, space, and intellectual freedom from its constraints. These were temporal, spatial, and thematic zones of *vnye par excellence*" (Yurchak 2005: 154). Group Kino were probably the most popular stokers, working in the boiler room "Kamchatka" between 1982 and 1987.

Mini Estonian Architecture Histories

Carl-Dag Lige (b.1982) is an architecture critic and historian. He currently works as a curator at the Museum of Estonian Architecture.

10 AUGUST 2017



This is the veranda of my childhood home a year after renovation.

The house was built by my maternal grandfather Evald soon after WW II, and was completed in 1949. It was designed by a local Estonian engineer-architect, Dmitri Tõnisberg, and is located in a garden city type of housing area called Kristiine a few kilometres from central Tallinn.

With its pitched roof, simple detailing and modest size, it represents a typical single family dwelling of its time. Evald was a carpenter and the veranda still has some original, though very simple details made by him. We saved and restored those which were in reasonably good condition. Professional workmen helped with plastering, with the roof, with drain pipes and with restoring the beautiful oak door of the main entrance.

#childhoodhome #home #renovation #restauration #timewithdad #improvingskills #gardencity #urbangreen #woodenarchitecture #residentialarchitecture #privateresidence #singlefamilyhome #architecture #housing #urbanvernacular #vernacular #veranda #oakwood #architectureintallinn #tallinn #kristiine #architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture

2 OCTOBER 2017



WHERE ESTONIANS ONCE LIVED...

This is a barn-dwelling (in Estonian "rehielamu"), the primary example of traditional vernacular architecture in Estonia and northern Latvia. Typologically, it is a multifunctional building combining both living and some agricultural work activities in a single structure.

Barn-dwellings first emerged in a simple form probably around the 10th or 11th century AD, when winter rye became the main crop for local peasants. The buildings usually consist of three separate spaces: the central space ("rehetuba") is a living room, which is also used for grain drying; it therefore has a large stove with an open hearth in front of it. Next to the living room stands the unheated threshing floor ("rehealune"), which was used for threshing grain. On the other sides of the living room are unheated sleeping chambers, which first started to emerge at the beginning of the 17th century.

Estonian traditional vernacular architecture has been preserved relatively well as substantial urbanisation began quite late, and family ties (grannies and grandpas living in the countryside!) were strong until the most recent generations. Hundreds of barn-dwellings, the majority of them 100-150 years old, have been preserved in rural areas. Nonetheless, as urbanisation continues, most of them are now used only as summer houses, or stand completely empty.

Many Estonian barn-dwellings are national heritage sites; some unique ones have been relocated to the Open Air Museum in Tallinn. The dwelling depicted is used as a summer house in western Estonia.

#rehielamu #vernacular #vernaculararchitecture #architecture #barndwelling #agriculture #peasants #woodenarchitecture #logs #traditionalarchitecture #estonia #estonianarchitecture

7 JANUARY 2018



Tallinn still has a substantial number of wooden houses from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The city grew rapidly at that time due to industrialisation, new transportation systems (railway), and other processes related to modernisation. Such areas as Kopli, Kalamaja, Kadriorg, Pelgulinn, Kassisaba and Kitseküla all have dozens if not hundreds of wooden dwellings, most of them still in active use. This one is from the Uus Maailm district and was initially, and maybe still is, used either as a sauna or workshop. Within less than two kilometres from the city centre one can find pockets of early 20th century provincial milieu.

#woodenarchitecture #housing #residentialarchitecture #sauna #woodensuburb #woodencity #romanticcity #sustainablecity #history #urbanhistory #uusmaailm #tallinnarchitecture #tallinn #estonia #estonianarchitecture

4 FEBRUARY 2018



ACCIDENTAL MODERNISM

I was mesmerised when I first saw pictures of the old lighthouse of Harilaid, a small islet near the west coast of Estonia. Captivated by the Modernist look of its glazed, minimalist yet technical lantern box, I was astonished to find out that the lighthouse was built as early as 1885.

A simple shed with an elegant glass box attached to it. If I had to guess, I would have said it was from the 1930s but, no, it was built nearly 50 years earlier.

The photos you see here were all taken before 1914 (most likely); to me they feel like time machines. Not just simple time machines, but those that mix and manipulate different fragments of time and space in one image, like a collage or a Cubist painting.

It feels surreal and cool at the same time to see something in a photo that shouldn't actually be there, something that doesn't seem to fit. And yet, it is there. I love this confusing, puzzling sensation.

Photos:

1. Estonian Maritime Museum (F216_44)
2. Museum of Estonian Architecture (Fk 6746)
3. Hiiu Museum (HKM Fp2417_10_F11208)

#lighthouse #lantern #harilaid #island #islet #estoniancoast #protomodernism #accidentalmodernism #timemachine #backtothefuture #glass #wood #woodenarchitecture #architecture #vernaculararchitecture #heritage #culturalheritage #coast #1880s #1930s #estonia #estonianarchitecture #architectureinestonia





This block of flats is at 36 Pärnu Road / 23 Roosikrantsi Street, Tallinn. Architect: Robert Natus, completed in 1936.

This is one of the more decorative if not extravagant buildings of the 1930s perimetral housing section of Pärnu Road in central Tallinn, and is among the few buildings in Estonia that can be said to represent Expressionism. Architecture historians consider Fritz Höger's Chilehaus of 1924 in Hamburg to have been the main inspiration for the architect Natus (1890-1950), a Baltic German who lived and worked in Tallinn until emigrating to Germany in 1939.

The building has shops on the ground floor (not visible in the photo) and flats on higher floors. Somewhat surprisingly, the six-storey building with three stairways lacks elevators. The brickwork is fascinating and reminds me of an earlier bank building (1931) by Natus, situated just a few hundred metres from here on Freedom Square (Vabaduse väljak).

#robertnatus #brick #brickwork
#brickarchitecture #expressionism
#artdeco #modernism #balticgerman
#apartmentbuilding #architecture
#architectureintallinn #tallinnarchitecture
#architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BOihqN-hZ4q/>

Interwar Architecture



Shot from a sharp angle to avoid the trees, this is the eastern gate of the Military Cemetery, a relatively small part of the large necropolis ("city of the dead") in central Tallinn. Reminiscent of an ancient triumphal arch, this gate was built in 1938 and designed by one of the most influential 20th century Estonian architects, Edgar Johan Kuusik (1888-1974), a veteran of the Estonian War of Independence (1918-20).

Kuusik was an intelligent and well-educated man with broad interests. He was particularly interested in classical architecture and throughout his career used motifs of historical styles. He never became a supporter of avant-garde Modernism, but rather strived to synthesise architectural knowledge and experience from previous times with contemporary needs. Yet, he supported the use of new construction materials, such as reinforced concrete; this particular gate is not the best example to prove that point. Nonetheless it indicates the direction Estonian architecture was heading at the end of the 1930s. Traditionalist motifs and extensive use of local limestone were common at the time. What makes Kuusik stand out from the rest of his Estonian colleagues is his delicate sense of proportion and precise details.

PS. The iron fence is naturally a later addition and separates the cemetery from a neighbouring military base.

#edgarjohankuusik #edgarkuusik
#traditionalism #traditionalistarchitecture
#memorialarchitecture #memorial
#classicalarchitecture #architecture
#triumphalarch #limestone
#independencewar #necropolis #cemetery
#graveyard #tallinn #architectureintallinn
#tallinnarchitecture #architectureinestonia
#estonianarchitecture
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BQgFLFXAJ3k/>



A poor shot of a rare piece of wooden Functionalism in the Järve district, a small garden city type of housing area just a few kilometres outside of central Tallinn.

Järve was planned in 1923 around a railway station of the same name. The station was one of those built for the 11.2 km Tallinn-Pääsküla line, the first section of electrified railway in Estonia. The line started operating in October 1924; the station building itself was designed by the architect Karl Burman and opened in 1926.

Earlier buildings in the Järve residential area represent the Traditionalism of the 1920s, mainly influenced by the German Heimat architecture. The pictured two-storey house, though, completed a few years later - in 1933 according to the building registry - represents the arrival of Modernism.

The former city architect Dmitri Bruns has written that the majority of buildings in this part of Järve were designed by Herbert Johanson (1884-1964), who was among the first Estonian architects to implement the ideas of Modernism. However, I doubt this one was by him, as it looks somewhat clumsy in its volumes and detailing, some of it possibly lost during Soviet-era renovations. It might have been designed by a lesser known architect or engineer-architect of the time. There are several interesting examples of wooden Functionalism, often with similar vernacular touches, designed by local engineers and architects in smaller Estonian towns.

Functionalist dwellings of the interwar period in Estonia were often built of wood, as it was cheap and accessible; reinforced concrete and steel were relatively rare in private residential architecture. Wooden walls were usually plastered to make the exterior look more solid and more modern. But, as seen here, wood was also used as a finishing material. This building, located at 23 Järve Street, unfortunately looks abandoned and seems in very poor condition, possibly waiting to be demolished.

#residentialarchitecture #architecture
#modernism #interwarmodernism
#modernistarchitecture #functionalism
#gardencity #woodenarchitecture
#emptybuilding #järve #jarve #tallinn
#architectureintallinn #tallinnarchitecture
#architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture



In the early 1920s the local building society Oma Kolle ("Our Hearth") was among the first in Tallinn to commission and build modern housing for relatively low income urban clientele. Designed by possibly the most prominent Estonian architects of the time, Herbert Johanson and Eugen Habermann, in 1922, those row-houses were built in 1923-26. Their architecture represents German-influenced Traditionalism, which became common in Estonian architecture at the time.

Most of the Oma Kolle buildings have relatively small flats on two floors. The exteriors look a little shabby nowadays but several buildings have been preserved with lots of original details. Somewhat overgrown and chaotic flora adds to the romantic atmosphere around the neighbourhood. This is very nice and modest residential architecture.

#herbertjohanson #eugenhabermann
#architecture #residentialarchitecture
#rowhouse #housing #home #romantic
#traditionalism #greenery #urbanplants
#architectureintallinn #architectureinestonia
#estonianarchitecture



This is well-preserved Modernism under a bright autumn morning sun. Kunderi 10 is a luxury block of flats in central Tallinn designed by the architect Eugen Sacharias (1906-2002). He was one of the most prolific Estonian architects of the 1930s and mainly designed blocks of flats for well-to-do clients. Depicted is the rare facade of a building completed in 1939. The front facade looks more representative, even conservative, reflecting tendencies in Estonian architecture, as well as the taste of clients at the time.

My grandfather Uno was the structural engineer for the neighbouring Kunderi 8 building, designed by Ants Kivi in the late 1960s. Once Uno had to take some measurements within the Kunderi 10 building. A lady in one of the flats refused to let him into the bathroom, where he needed to measure the cornice. Uno finally convinced the lady, who admitted that... she kept a chicken in the bathtub! The 1930s metropolitan vibe had been replaced by Soviet reality. Estonian history really has had its twists and turns.

#eugensacharias #antskivi
#personalmemories #unolige
#apartmentbuilding #housing #chicken
#residentialarchitecture #dwelling
#courtyard #architecture #modernism
#modernistarchitecture #functionalism
#yellow #plaster #tallinnarchitecture #tallinn
#estonia #estonianarchitecture



Carl Sarap's photo (1937) of the architect Olev Siinmaa's own home in Pärnu, designed in 1931 and built in 1932-33. Siinmaa (1881-1948) served as a municipal architect of Pärnu, the most popular summer resort in Estonia, for several years between the two world wars. During the 1930s he designed numerous white Functionalist buildings, both private and public. Situated on a small triangular plot and designed like a three-dimensional puzzle of spaces, Siinmaa's home is among the most interesting examples of Modernist architecture in Estonia.

Photo: Virumaa Muuseumid, RM Fn 1040:873

#olevsiinmaa #siinmaa #carlsarap
#residentialarchitecture #dwelling #house
#homeofanarchitect #functionalism
#modernism #1930s #modernistarchitecture
#architecture #modernliving
#architectureinparnu #pärnu #parnu
#estonia #estonianarchitecture



This is the back side - which also happens to be the sunny southern side - of a late-Modernist block of flats at Juhkentali 6 in central Tallinn, completed in 1972. There are five three-room flats (those on the left of the balcony axis) and five four-room flats (those on the right). There's no lift, as the Soviet regulations allowed elevators only in buildings higher than five floors. It is built of prefabricated concrete elements, and its facades are finished with granite-silica plaster. This is probably a unique project, compared to the "standard designs", which were used repeatedly. I don't know the architect, unfortunately, but love the echo of Constructivism, as well as references to Nordic Functionalism: notice the spine-shaped balcony and the angulated windows, similar to those of Aalto's Villa Mairea. Only one flat still has its original windows with black stripes. The main facade is less interesting and tries to blend in with the neighbouring building.

#latemodern #sovietmodern #modernism
#regionalmodernism #tallinnarchitecture
#estonianarchitecture #apartmentbuilding



These are Soviet-era blocks of flats from the late 1970s in the Keldrimäe ("Cellar Hill") district in central Tallinn. They were built according to an urban renewal plan by the architects Mart Port, Malle Meelak and Oleg Zhemtshugov, for the State Design Institute "Eesti Projekt" in 1970.

Keldrimäe is one of the more interesting - and problematic - cases of post-WWII urban renewal housing initiatives in Tallinn. The larger prefab districts of Mustamäe, Väike-Õismäe and Lasnamäe were all built on the outskirts of Tallinn, i.e. in areas with few existing buildings. But Keldrimäe was already a relatively dense housing area (approx. 30 ha) of simple wooden buildings originating mainly from the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The urban planning department, headed by the legendary city architect Dmitri Bruns (who held office 1960-80), found that 2/3 of old buildings in Keldrimäe were run-down; thus altogether 154 one- to two-storey wooden houses were supposed to be bulldozed. Placing the modern five- to nine-storey prefab blocks of flats must have been a real challenge; existing (and prospective) roads as well as older buildings had to be considered; natural height differences and soil conditions also played their role.

Keldrimäe's renewal plan was never fully realised; a number of new buildings and streets remained on paper and several historic buildings were preserved. Yet, the destruction of wooden houses in Keldrimäe and in other areas caused a heated public debate in the 1970s. The younger generation of Estonian architects, sociologists and intellectuals directed their criticism towards established planners and architects.

It has also been suggested that Keldrimäe was a Potemkin village: the area had to be "cleaned" before the sailing regatta of the Moscow Olympics (1980) because the Olümpia Hotel, which accommodated Olympic tourists, was built on the edge of Keldrimäe.

Nowadays Keldrimäe is a mix of different layers of urban culture, history and architecture; it doesn't really have a strong, coherent character. Yet, the area seems to have great potential. It has a central market (selling various food products), several nicely placed blocks of flats, some greenery and naturally sloping ground (a former riverbed), some old wooden buildings, and it's a very short distance to the city centre. It remains to be seen how this potential will (or won't) be used. True, there are also signs of gentrification, with new blocks of flats being planned to replace the market.

#keldrimäe #martport #mallemeelak
#olegzhemtshugov #urbanplanning
#townplanning #housing
#residentialarchitecture #architecture
#apartmentbuilding #modernism
#sovietmodernism #sovietmodern
#sovmod #tallinn #tallinnarchitecture
#architectureintallinn #estonianarchitecture
#architectureinestonia



The view from the terrace cafe of the Ujala Theatre in Viljandi. Architects: Irina Raud, Inga Orav and Kalju Luts; interior design by Mait Summatavet. Designed (with interruptions) between 1968 and 1976, built in 1975-81, and renovated in 2015-17. It received National Heritage Site status just before renovation.

It is a majestic, yet sensitive piece of Modernism in a small, cosy south Estonian town. The architecture is rational but treats its context and natural surroundings with respect. Historians have pointed out the relatively obvious influence of the Helsinki City Theatre (Timo Penttilä, 1967).

#irinaraud #ingaorav #kaljuluts
#maitsummatavet #theatre #ugala
#publicarchitecture #culture #redbrick
#claybricks #bricks #architecture
#modernarchitecture #modernism
#sovietmodern #sovietmodernism
#sovmod #finnishconnection #timopenttilä
#architectureinviljandi #viljandi
#estonianarchitecture #architectureinestonia



This building, probably built in the late 1970s or early 1980s, is part of the former "Балтиец" (Baltiets) factory in Narva, a border city between Estonia and Russia. "Балтиец" was established in 1947 as a secret, military experimental factory for developing technologies that used precious metals in the nuclear power industry of the USSR. From the 1960s to the late 1980s it mainly focused on producing special electronic equipment for nuclear and other industries.

At its heyday "Балтиец" was the second largest employer in Narva (after the Kreenholm textile industry), with around 4500 employees, a large number of them engineers and other well-educated specialists. The majority, if not all, of the buildings of the factory ensemble were designed in Moscow; the architects are unknown in Estonia because documents and design drawings, if they have not been destroyed, are most probably in Russian archives.

#industrialarchitecture #sovietarchitecture
#sovietmodern #sovmod #sovietheritage
#modernism #modernistarchitecture
#militaryindustry #industry #preciousmetals
#electronicindustry #baltiets #балтиец
#narva #bordercity #architectureinnarva
#architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture



This is the Mereranna sanatorium in Narva-Jõesuu. It is part of the glass and concrete gallery connecting the older wing with the new one. It was completed in 1974, according to the heritage specialist Madis Tuuder.

Next stop Narva-Jõesuu, one of the legendary Estonian resort towns. Compared to other resorts, such as Haapsalu, Kuressaare and Pärnu, Narva-Jõesuu's architecture has a more complicated history. The majority of the beautiful wooden villas from the late 19th and early 20th centuries have been demolished or burnt down; many of the Soviet Modernist sanatoriums from the 1960s to 1980s are also in sad shape, waiting to be either demolished or refurbished.

Depicted is the Mereranna sanatorium and hostel. As Madis Tuuder has written, it was initially a recreational institution for the staff of the "Балтиец" (Baltiets) factory in Narva, which from the 1960s to the late 1980s focused on producing special electronic equipment for nuclear and other industries.

Designed by the Estonian architects Pärtel Tarvas (1924-1994) and Helgi Margna (1928-1989), the first part of the building was completed in 1969. It is a nice, airy and optimistic interpretation of interwar Modernism (or Functionalism, if you like). The building has been preserved relatively well but the older part and the gallery have stood empty for several years. Mereranna had (and partly still has) visual and applied art works both inside and outside the building.

#pärteltarvas #parteltarvas #helgimargna
#architecture #resortarchitecture #hostel
#sanatorium #spaarchitecture #gallery
#reinforcedconcrete #concrete #modernism
#modernistarchitecture #sovietmodern
#sovmod #sovietmodernism #narvajõesuu
#Балтиец #baltiets #estonianarchitecture
#architectureinestonia

Soviet Modernism

21 SEPTEMBER 2016



This is the Rotermann Grain Elevator. Originally completed in 1900, the limestone and brick building was extended during the interwar years. It served its original purpose, at least partly, until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Being a heritage site and a building with almost no windows, it turned out to be a real challenge for KOKO architects, the authors of the renovation project, to adjust it for retail shops and offices. It appears that they managed well. There is some nice detailing and exposed original concrete structures. Unfortunately, it is not possible to move from one end of the building to the other, approximately 110 meters in total. Several offices are already in use, and there are retail spaces active on the ground floor. The official opening was in a couple of weeks from the time of this writing.

The glass box on top of the roof is the most visible new addition to the original grain elevator. It is somewhat futuristic, if not gimmicky, but very KOKO-esque in its ambition to provoke, yet maintain control. The balconies on the left are those of the Foorum shopping centre and housing complex by HG Arhitektuur, 2004-2007. There is a nice dialogue between the old and new layers, materials and uses.

#kokoarchitects #koko #grainelevator
#rotermannikvartal #rotermannquarter
#rotermann #R2 #industrialarchitecture
#industrialheritage #concrete
#limestone #brick #architectureintallinn
#tallinnarchitecture #architectureinestonia
#estonianarchitecture

30 SEPTEMBER 2016



This new block of flats in Tartu was designed by the architect Uko Künnap (U-Disain). It consists of 34 one-to-four room flats, retail spaces on the ground floor and a garage half-hidden under the building. I particularly like what the building does to the ground. I'd say that its relation to the ground is ambiguous. Standing on a sloping plot, the building's front facade almost denies the complex geological circumstances. On the other hand, the backside of the building (seen here in the photo) eloquently articulates, perhaps even manifests, its relationship to the ground. The expressive concrete columns in front of the garage entrance give a hint that the whole building is supported by a monolithic reinforced concrete structure. The building has other interesting aspects as well, such as the massive cut-out on the other facade for enhancing lighting and making space for balconies.

The architectural quality of new buildings in central Tartu is relatively high. That is of course a positive sign, and it shows how important it is for municipalities to have talented city architects/planners who demand quality and maintain the culture of competitions (though I'm not sure whether this building was a result of an architecture competition).

#ukokunnap #udisain #apartmentbuilding
#realestatedevelopment #red
#redbuilding #concrete #ground
#tectonics #urbanplanning #architecture
#architectureintartu #tartuarchitecture
#architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture

19 OCTOBER 2016



This is one of my personal favourites among the contemporary buildings in the Rotermann Quarter. Nicknamed R-10 after its address (10 Rotermanni Street), the multifunctional building, designed by Andres Alver, Tarmo Laht, Indrek Rünkla, Ulla Mets and Sven Koppel of Andres Alver Architects, was completed in 2013. It's a seven-storey residential and office building with retail spaces on the ground floor and parking on two underground levels. The materials and detailing are of very good quality; brick and laminated wood dominate. In terms of massing, R-10 seems to interpret its historical industrial neighbours, many of which have parts from different eras made of various materials. The lower volume has brick facades and is topped with a two-storey block, where wooden elements dominate. The upper part is supported by columns of laminated wood, which gives R-10 a somewhat dramatic, yet dignified tectonic character. The building is in the vicinity of Rotermann Square and without doubt enriches its architectural and spatial quality.

#andresalver #andresalverarchitects
#apartmentbuilding #officebuilding
#realestatedevelopment #architecture
#contemporaryarchitecture
#rotermannquarter #rotermann #R10
#architectureintallinn #tallinnarchitecture
#architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture

30 OCTOBER 2016



This is Hotel Lydia in Tartu, by Tarmo Teedumäe, Indrek Tiigi, Paco Ulman and Tõnis Savi of Allianss Arhitektid; designed in 2012 and completed in 2016. The site was developed by Toomemäe Kinnisvara, a branch of Estiko AS, which is a real estate and packaging production company owned by Neinar Seli, one of the richest and most influential citizens (if not quite an oligarch) of Tartu. Allianss's design solution was selected as the winner of a closed architecture competition back in 2012. The site was historically and architecturally challenging. 14 Ülikooli Street is located in the middle of Tartu's Old Town and stands near Pirogov Square, Toomemäe Hill and the late-Baroque/Neoclassical Town Hall (1789). Thus the municipality, which still has its offices in the Town Hall, expected to have a high-quality contemporary building somewhat sensitive to its urban context. The final solution seems to satisfy those terms relatively well, despite some controversies. Allianss initially proposed to renovate the historic neighbouring building (on the left, not shown) and integrate it with contemporary additions. For some reason, Tartu's municipality and its heritage board (possibly under pressure from the developer) changed their minds and accepted substantial adjustments to the project; now only the Neoclassical facade of the 19th century building remains, while the rest of it has been demolished. The luxury class hotel, which opened in June this year, has 70 rooms, a spa, a restaurant, conference facilities and a garage for 14 cars. It may not be a jewel, but it's definitely a refreshing piece of architecture in Tartu's Old Town, an area which has struggled to find sensitive, interesting urban renewal solutions since the devastations of WW II.

#tarmoteedumäe #indrektiigi
#pacoulman #tõnissavi #allianssarhitektid
#urbanrenewal #infill #architecture
#contemporaryarchitecture #hotel
#hotelarchitecture #commercialarchitecture
#realestatedevelopment #neinarseli #tartu
#tartuarchitecture #architectureintartu
#estonianarchitecture #architectureinestonia

9 NOVEMBER 2016



Sometimes even buildings with mediocre architecture look appealing. The Admiral's House on the harbour side of central Tallinn, close to the Admiralty Basin, designed by the Swedish-Estonian architect Aare Saks, was completed in 2005. It includes mainly offices, some flats and a large parking garage on the other side of the building. It is ambitious, extravagant but somewhat generic in its composition, and literal in its forms; it is not far from qualifying as a Venturi duck ("I wanna be a ship that sails the seas"). It is one of the buildings in central Tallinn that calls to mind the stormy seas (pun intended) of the mid-2000's building boom, when developers, contractors and architects seemed to always be in a hurry.

#aaresaks #architecture
#commercialarchitecture
#contemporaryarchitecture
#officebuilding #apartmentbuilding
#parkinghouse #buildingboom #2000s
#realestatedevelopment #tallinn
#tallinnarchitecture #architectureintallinn
#estonianarchitecture #architectureinestonia

20 NOVEMBER 2016



This is the hotel wing and backside of the Kalev Spa water park and leisure centre; architects: Emil Urbel and Ivar Lubjak, designed in 2004 and built in 2005. There is a neo-Modernist addition with a renovated Soviet Modernist public pool (1957, 1965); it is one of the largest buildings within the UNESCO heritage-listed Old Town area of Tallinn. Emil Urbel was educated at the Estonian State Art Institute in the 1980s and was among the young architects who renounced the more decorative side of Postmodernism, while being inspired by earlier, mid-war Modernism, as well as the more recent Ticino school. In the 1990s Urbel became well known for the luxurious Neo-Modernist villas he designed for Estonian businessmen. A common interpretation among local architecture historians and critics has been that, while lacking an egalitarian social agenda, those works applied Modernist architectural language on a representational level in order to articulate a connection with the Modernism of the 1930s, during the (often idealised) first independence period of the Estonian Republic (1918-1940). Personally, I am a little sceptical about that interpretation and tend to think that (at least on a personal level) Urbel didn't have such a straightforward nationalist agenda. He seems to be more of a rationalist aesthete who likes simple forms, clear plans and high quality materials. In other words, Modernism is merely a language which fits him. He doesn't necessarily conceptualise or theorise it, and he uses it wherever and however he likes. In Urbel's more recent work, clear references to early Modernism are less common, and an even more abstract language has started to emerge. The Kalev Spa is clearly an example of the previous period, when references to Le Corbusier and other grandmasters were still obvious.

#emilurbel #ivarlubjak #publicbath
#publicpool #spa #spahotel #hotel
#2000s #contemporaryarchitecture
#architecture #architecturecriticism
#criticism #architecturehistory
#modernism #lecorbusier #neomodernism
#latemodern #ticioschool #ticino #tallinn
#tallinnarchitecture #architectureintallinn
#estonianarchitecture #architectureinestonia

Contemporary Architecture

29 JANUARY 2017



The picture shows dramatic lights and the sky above central Tallinn. There is an extravagant residential and office building on the right and its lower part in the middle (architect: Indrek Allmann of PLUSS; designed in 2011 and completed in 2015), the gothic St. Olaf's church on the far left (mainly 14th-16th centuries), and the postmodern main building of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in the foreground (architects: Kalju Luts, Urmas Elmik and Kalvi Voolaid; competition in 1985, and completed in 1999).

Due to its use of various materials and details, Allmann's design for the block of flats has received several nicknames, e.g. the "Embassy of Azerbaijan". The core problem of the building is not its architecture but the planning documents, which defined the building's volumes and positioning on the axis of a boulevard. It's an echo of the neo- (or cowboy) capitalist 1990s and early 2000s in Tallinn, when urban planning was at its lowest point and individual real estate developments reflected the rapid changes in the urban landscape. The building is like a symbol of the clash (or fusion?) of cultures, a place where East meets West, just like Estonia itself.

Architecturally intriguing and well conceived in its details, as well as the public spaces around the building, Allmann's design shows a recent change in his work. It can be interpreted almost as a reaction against the tradition of modernism and the conceptual/contextual approach, both popular among contemporary Estonian architects. In terms of Allmann's and his office's recent work, it is one of a series of projects done for wealthy clients, thus providing a chance to test unconventional ideas, use expensive materials and, last but not least, provoke the local architecture scene. Yes, it's commercial architecture, but it's also clear that the architect had his own agenda here.

#indrekallmann #pluss #apartmentbuilding
#officebuilding #realestatedevelopment
#urbanplanning #urbanrenewal
#neocapitalism #capitalism
#neoliberalism #highrise #architecture
#contemporary #contemporaryarchitecture
#architectureinestonia #estonianarchitecture
#architectureintallinn #tallinnarchitecture
#architecturecriticism #criticism



Carl-Dag Lige
Mainly criticism & history of architecture Tallinn, Estonia

14 JULY 2017



The 1990s were a period of rapid, profound changes in Estonia, and architecture as a profession had to adapt. The global market economy replaced socialism; new types of production and trade were introduced. Due to the collapse of the planned economy and the lack of finances, the construction sector was at its lowest point. With the help of foreign investments and credit loans, it started to recover by the mid-90s and got up to full speed by the end of the decade.

Among the few architecturally interesting utilitarian buildings of the period was an office and storage building for the Estonian branch of the garden supplies company Schetelig. The two-storey building was located on the outskirts of Tallinn near the zoo and the Väike-Õismäe pre-fab housing district. It stood by a large road (Ehitajate tee), which provided good logistics. The site was surrounded by lots of greenery.

The relatively simple neo-modernist black/dark-grey box was designed by the architects Jüri Okas and Marika Lööke in 1998 and it was completed in 2000. Although nothing special in nowadays terms, the use of materials, some nice detailing, such as the concrete spiral staircase inside, and the proportions and typography of the main facade made it stand out among other buildings of similar function built around the same time. The building was damaged by fire last year and has since been demolished. The photo is from 2010.

#juriokas #juriokas #marikalooke
#marikalooke #abol #industrialarchitecture
#utilitarianarchitecture #officebuilding
#storage #neomodernism #modernism
#contemporaryarchitecture #architecture
#demolished #tallinnarchitecture #tallinn
#estonianarchitecture #estonia

9 SEPTEMBER 2017



I was happy to discover that one of my favourite (anti-)monuments in Tallinn had been recently renovated. Designed by the architects Indrek Peil and Siiri Vallner of Kavakava (2003; opened in 2005), it is basically a memorial commemorating those buried at the historic Kopli Cemetery, which was bulldozed by the Soviet regime in the 1950s.

Several old Estonian cemeteries were closed and turned into parks during the decades following WWII. This was sometimes due to sanitary reasons but more often for ideological reasons, in order to cut off the roots and cultural continuity. Kopli was one of the largest burial grounds closed and demolished in Tallinn. The tombstones were removed but most of the burial layers remained and still are in the ground...

Kavakava designed a delicate, minimalist "reversed fountain", as they themselves called it. It is a simple basin of water with a cavity in the middle. That hole silently swallows the water. The only thing that I have questions about is the designers' decision to cast abstract human figures into the concrete of the basin's bottom. But, overall, this is definitely a good example of what a contemporary memorial should look like.

#indrekpeil #siirivallner #kavakava #memorial
#memorialarchitecture #monument
#architecture #design #urbandesign
#fountain #water #cemetery #burialground
#graveyard #contemporaryarchitecture
#2000s #contemporarydesign
#tallinnarchitecture #tallinn #kopli #estonia
#estonianarchitecture

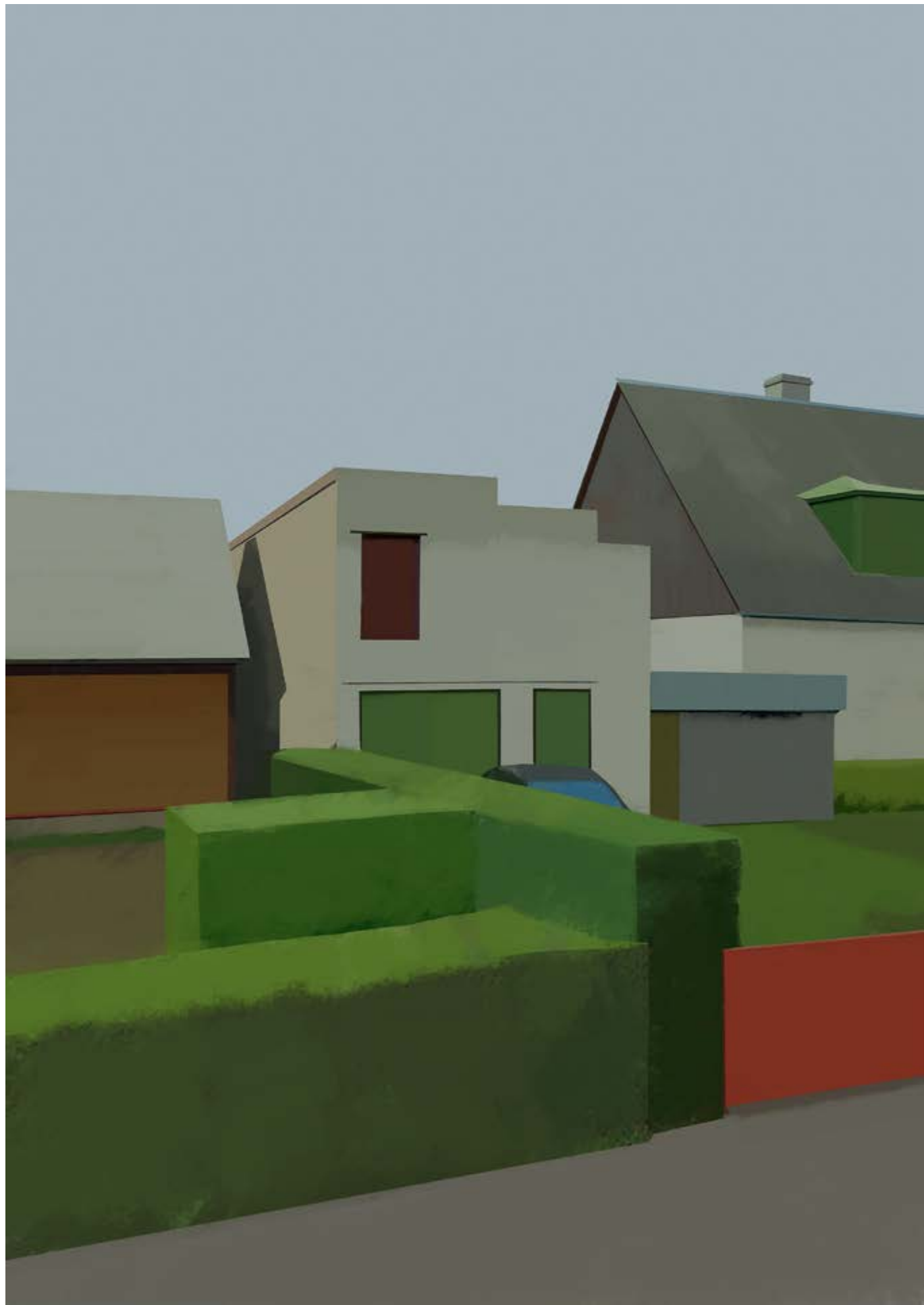
Paco Ulman

C:\Works\2017\Kuressaare

Paco Ulman (b 1980) works as an architect and multidisciplinary artist in the fields of photography and design in Tallinn, Estonia. He is interested in everything regarding space and different representations of it.











The New Modernity of the Urban Thicket

Karin Bachmann

Karin Bachmann (b.1976) is a landscape architect and partner in the Kino firm; she is a member of the creative council of Apraaditehas, a member of the Estonian architecture union and landscape architecture union, a member of NGO Loomus, and a member of the creative panel of the architecture magazine Maja.

Wild mints in weed bed, Kodasema, Mere pst, Tallinn. Autumn 2017. Photo: Karin Bachmann

Estonians tend to think of themselves as “nature people”. This concept is pretty vague and describes a way of seeing the world. But nature is something foggy, holy and definitely distant: it has nothing to do with our everyday lives in urban environments. The stronghold here for “nature” is the forest. In reality most of the “forest people” live in cities, but the forest they desire is prohibited in the city.

The reason is that in the urbanisation process a large number of “nature people” have lost their skills and ability to live with the forest as it is, without domesticating and controlling it. So they are afraid. City parks are only sad quotations of forests and, in spite of the fact that they are tailored to civilization, they are not satisfying. So we need something in between, in terms of both concept and structure.

Urban Thicket

A thicket, as an overgrown group of bushes, has a negative meaning amongst Estonians. It’s used to describe neglected wastelands, deserted fields and other areas removed from human use, order and control. But from the perspective of biodiversity a thicket is a very rich society of plants, insects, animals and birds. In the urban context, a thicket as greenery is even worse because an abandoned space in a dense settlement is a potential area for criminal activity. It might produce more fear or an aura of crime than crime itself. So to avoid these negative connections local governments have very strict rules for greenery maintenance. The urban thicket as a new modern movement has lots of enemies and it produces a major conflict between generations. Biologists and botanists have a non-aesthetic interest in thickets: they focus on biodiversity. So preserving the urban thicket is a goal for many special interest groups, but for different reasons. What unifies these groups is that they all have the same main goal – to change the way people perceive the urban thicket.



Semi-natural field in front of ENM, 2017 summer. Photo: Anna-Liisa Unt

Practical Preserve

Danish architect and urban design consultant Jan Gehl has said that he has been talking about the walkable and human-scale city for 50 years and finally people are starting to listen. Changing the way people think is a slow process. It starts with determining possible users and then finding the best target group, which turns out to be children. They use the city environment in different ways than adults; since they move more slowly they have time to take in all of the sights, to smell, touch and climb. They see water as water, not the form the water is in; they see a thicket as a place to play, not as decoration or a functionally limited part of public space. They use the environment the way they need it at that moment. And this is the sign of a good public space: one that allows the user to make choices, a space full of affordances that offers activities for a wide spectrum of citizens. Different users act as different “species” of humans, who all have their distinct views of the city, nature and nature in the city. To find a balance between those different opinions, we need to work out a usable “preserve” that has a range of characteristics. It should be practical, beautiful, economical and biologically rich.

The main conflict in semi-natural or natural greeneries is the debate between what is considered ugly versus beautiful. Different people have different perceptions of nature: some may think untidy natural environments should be kept outside of the city, as the city is artificial and the countryside is natural. Some may think that flowers are beautiful, but that weeds are ugly etc. But there is a new type of citizens, weed gourmands. They value plants that would normally be regarded as weeds as they do not bloom in the traditional sense but still have form, structure, fracture and patterns. Plants that were not traditionally cultivated but still function as green space for urban areas. The group of people who value this kind of greenery is growing, they are a mirror group for this sort of new urban landscape.

The Widget Factory in Tartu

Aparaaditehas was designed in 2017 and built in 2017. It was formerly a widget factory in Tartu, Estonia and its regeneration process started around 2012. Now it functions as a culture factory. Before its regeneration, the factory’s courtyard was almost empty, so nature took over. When we started working on the courtyard, our main goal was to somehow keep the balance between the large number of people who would use it and the fragile society of wasteland plants that were growing in every crack and seam. The courtyard had to be usable for many people and



Public greenhouse in Aparaaditehas pocket park, 2017 summer. Photo: Karin Bachmann

at the same time it had to retain the look of an old factory. So we divided the space into public/semi-public and active/passive so the courtyard would be usable for all kinds of activities, involving everything from lorries to children’s games. We made a public greenhouse for the tenants to grow vegetables in, but it was also a place to drink coffee when it rained and to eat lunch. During the construction, we kept most of the self-evolved thicket. The new plants selected were mostly those we all know as weeds; maintenance was rare: we allowed almost everything that was surviving there to grow. We regulated as little as we could. Those half-wild plant species toned down the slightly clinical feeling that came with new pavement and helped to retain the feeling of an old factory. Two depressions were made in the new asphalt so that puddles could form for children to play in after it rained and for animals and birds to drink from. Also they nicely reflected the lights hanging above the courtyard at night. This was a flashback to the old courtyard, when the broken pavement was full of holes and after it rained the stars and lights were mirrored in countless small puddles.

The Estonian National Museum in Tartu

After the departure of the Soviet Army, Raadi Manor remained empty for many years, which allowed nature to take over the whole area. A rich ecosystem thrived: with many plants, birds and animal species. When it came to the Estonian National Museum, it was clear that we wanted to maintain this idea of biodiversity. On the one hand, it was inconceivable that the museum could take care of dozens of hectares of landscape on a daily basis. On the other hand, it

was conceptually clear that the surroundings of the Estonian National Museum should reflect a natural way of life, which meant a landscape that would mainly take care of itself.

Local species were used around the museum, and the landscape was preserved as much as possible . The construction involved a great deal of excavation, so all of the vegetation had to be restored. The only regular element is a orthogonal net of birch trees that filters the views of the landscape in the background. The plant community includes shrubs suitable for soil, spring bulbs and weeds. Last year, the museum’s grounds flourished throughout the summer, and the flowers varied according to their growth cycles. At the end of the summer, the hay was mowed and carried to the horse stable on Rooski street.

Rooski Street in Tartu

When it became clear that the Estonian National Museum’s new building would really be constructed in Raadi (on the outskirts of Tartu), it was necessary to start thinking more precisely about the way people would come to the museum, and to think about the surrounding area. Raadi is psychologically far away for Tartu citizens, because it was a closed district during the Soviet time. So we created a plan to re-organise Rooski street. The street runs almost straight from the city centre to the museum, a distance of under two kilometers. We focused on convenience for pedestrians and cyclists. The main transport route for cars and buses remained on Narva road. The idea was to mentally shorten the distance between the heart of the city and Raadi through the activation of Rooski street. If the distance



Weed beds around Kodusema houses, Mere pst, Tallinn, autumn 2017. Photo: Karin Bachmann

appeared to shrink, this would “move” the museum closer to the city, making it more accessible to foot traffic in particular.

In addition to other goals, such as preserving diversity and the “chaos” characteristic of a neighbourhood street, where children played and the last public well existed, while the street became a part of an internationally important cultural object, we wanted to continue to keep the semi-natural association of plants we had used around the Estonian National Museum to keep the mood of the environment consistent. Adjacent to the street, there was already a natural area that used to be a former military zone, surrounded by a barbed wire fence. We made an alternative wooden path within that area to give people a chance to look closely at details from a disappearing era. The landscaping of the whole street was consistent with the formation of semi-natural communities that have developed over the years. We used local weeds and flowers, the maintenance rules were strict: mowing was allowed only once a year, at the end of the summer. There are plants under the third protection category (marsh helleborine). This is a unique situation: less than two kilometres from the city centre it is possible to see these species; normally you have to drive an hour to a bog to find landscapes like that.

The reactions of people to such landscapes are double-edged: happy or angry; indifference is rather rare. This shows that the theme does matter and it needs to be explained and worked with. This year, in cooperation with botanists, it is planned to complete the plant gardens around the Estonian National Museum and on Roosi street. In order to get people used to more semi-natural communities, flowers (poppies and cornflowers) will be planted in the first year. These flowers are not usually found on a permanent basis; they are more likely to represent an intermediate stage. Undoubtedly, the urban thicket is one of the most prevalent methods used in urban greenery. People need to be given time to get used to it and realise its benefits. The process has started; now let's not be discouraged by criticism.

This article is a short overview of how we (the landscape architecture office Kino, which includes Mirko Traks, Uku Mark Pärtel, Kristjan Talistu, Juhan Teppart and Karin Bachmann) deal with these issues.

New Kids On the Block

Julia Hinderink
talks to
Siim Tuksam
and Sille Pihlak



Julia Hinderink (b.1971) is an architect, curator and journalist based in Munich.

Sille Pihlak (b.1985) is an architect, co-founder of PART and researcher on algorithmic design processes in timber architecture and design. She is the co-curator of the Open Lecture Series and Tallinn Architecture Biennale Installation Program, junior researcher and PhD student in Estonian Academy of Arts Architecture Department. .

Siim Tuksam (b.1986) is an architect and researcher for algorithmic architecture with a special interest in structure and geometry. He is a PhD candidate, junior researcher, lecturer and co-curator of the Open Lecture Series at the Estonian Academy of Arts Faculty of Architecture and co-curator of the Tallinn Architecture Biennale Installation Programme.

PART – Practice for Architecture Research and Theory is an architectural practice for experimental, digital and technological innovation research and implementation. Founded by Siim Tuksam and Sille Pihlak in 2015 in Tallinn, Estonia.



Illustrations by Kiyoshi Stelzner

I met Sille Pihlak at the end of last year when she came to Garmisch Partenkirchen in Germany to give a lecture at the International Wood Construction Conference. We spend a day together in Bregenz looking at examples of local architecture and crafts and discussing the potential for contemporary timber architecture. I was glad to get a chance to speak with Sille Pihlak and Siim Tuksam to get more information and a fresh perspective as I wasn't too familiar with their work but had a good insight into their motivation and ideas through our previous conversation. Practice for Architecture, Research and Theory aka PART (founded by Sille and Siim in 2015) has been invited by the European Culture Centre and GAA Foundation to participate on the collaborative exhibition 'Time Space Existence'. Their exhibit consist of PARTs previous and ongoing projects, complemented by a book and a panel discussion, presenting their approach regarding computational timber architecture.

Julia Hinderink: Both of you studied in Vienna, went to the United States to finish your architecture education and came back to Tallinn afterwards. Was that a career move or was it something else that drove you back to Estonia?

Siim Tuksam: Well for me it was kind of organic. I did a competition for the Estonian Venice pavilion in 2014 with two friends and we won it right after I finished school in Vienna. So I immediately had this very tight connection to Estonia, coming here often, and during this process I also built up relationships. So after the Venice Biennale I really didn't know what to do, but as I was involved with Estonia at that time, I came here to figure out what the next step would be. There were really not that many good job opportunities at that point. I gradually got more and more involved here with the architecture scene, until at one point Marten Kaevats, who had just become the head curator of the Tallinn Architecture Biennale (TAB), asked us to curate the main show for TAB.

Julia Hinderink: So you were 'the new kids on the block'? Was there an architecture scene in Tallinn already?

Siim Tuksam: There is a very strong architecture scene in Estonia! But our scene, design approach wise, is still pretty much just the two of us and a few of our colleagues and students. I mean we were always part of the local scene: we kept touch with the local university and the Faculty of Architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

Sille Pihlak: Because before going to *Angewandte* (University of Applied Arts, Vienna) we all studied here for two to three years. And we kept the contact, remaining exchange students in the eyes of most people here.

Julia Hinderink: When you went back to Tallinn, was it immediately obvious to you that the prevalent timber industry would hold such a potential for your work?

Sille Pihlak: No, definitely not, because when we started doing the exhibition for the Tallinn Architecture Biennale 2015, we were still doing some small competitions on the side but they were not really defined by material. But when we were curating the main exhibition, we had world famous architects, such as Achim Menges, Tom Wiscombe, Carlo Ratti etc showing the best examples of digital architecture inside this big architecture museum in Estonia. We thought we should do something in front of the building that would contextualise all the experiments that were inside the exhibition hall, put it in the local setting. We wanted to show something that was parametric, digital or "fabricated" with novel methods. We figured that the timber industry would provide affordable material and would have the most advanced machinery available. And again I had lots of family connections on all those levels so they could provide us most of it for free. Maybe it was a coincidence in the beginning but we saw a high potential for continuing this by putting digital architecture into a local context.

Julia Hinderink: It seems almost like you created a story for Estonia, which has a strong timber industry and is supposed to be very advanced as an e-society. Concatenating the traditional material with digitalisation and therefore creating a unique selling point for a whole country is clever. So is that incidental or is it something that takes me by surprise because I'm not from Estonia?

Siim Tuksam: Estonia is so small that whenever you do something you instantly feel like it is influencing the whole country. The topic for the 2014 Biennale that I did with Johan Tali and Johanna Jõekalda was about the public space of our e-society. So Estonia has this very strong international image of being a very open-minded digital society and we were looking at how this actually influenced, or rather did not influence, the public space.

Julia Hinderink: Digitalisation is something that affects us all, all over the world. If Estonia embraces that, it could probably be more in control and influential about what is happening. With your work, you combine the regional givens with digitalisation, assembling all of its possibilities and taking the biological, ecological and societal aspects into account. By doing so, would you agree that you provide familiarity while taking the society into the future?

Sille Pihlak: Exactly. I still argue that the more you want the space or the geometry of the space to be different from what you are used to, the more known

"Body Building"
installation for
Tallinn Architecture
Biennale 2015.
Photo by
Tõnu Tunnel



or familiar should be the material that you are using. Because if we did a plastic blob, I'm not sure if that would be something anyone would be so keen to inhabit. But if you take a traditional and known material and also a living material, into a newer context, a newer form, and also maybe a bit more flexible space, then I think that can be the metamorphosis or the new coming of the material.

You were asking before about representing the country. I think we are sort of growing with the country, so there has been no direction set up for us but we know that the timber industry is something that is ready for changes. We might not have clients ready but we have interesting fabrication methods and also a lot of material around so why not, instead of exporting it as undervalued material, do that in-house. And design is something that adds value to the material.

Julia Hinderink: You are probably in contact with the industry to promote these changes, but what about politicians: are they aware of that potential?

Sille Pihlak: I have to admit that we both deal with politicians quite a lot, mostly just trying to advise them and trying to get them to acknowledge what's there already. For example, if the Ministry of Environment starts planning their new building, we can show them what the modern office could look like, how we could construct with timber bigger, better and more sustainable.

I have also been discussing with wider groups of politicians and municipality representatives, to make it mandatory that every competition held in Estonia

for a public building should have a certain percentage of timber architecture. But I think the biggest problem in terms of politicians is that we don't have a built example. So as long as there's no leading case of the novel use of this material, they will remain sceptical about it.

Siim Tuksam: In politics, there are two levels. There is the status quo and then there are strategies. The vision is always amazing, promoting renewable material with the use of digitalisation, making everything seamless, working super-great online, but then the legislator's term ends and with it the project and strategy. We worked for years with people from the Ministry of Environment to help them set up a competition for a timber building for their headquarters, for instance, and then there was a change of government and the new minister didn't care about it. And the project was frozen.

Julia Hinderink: But if you create a continuous story about Estonia, not only about Tallinn, you might have continuous support from the government and from industry as well. If that is something that binds generations of mayors and generations of politicians together, that could be the powerful story behind your work.

Siim Tuksam: In a way it all seems to tie back into the digital society, which is kind of horizontal, not hierarchical, a society where people are very individualistic but at the same time where there are interest groups because of online communication. So I think in this kind of digitalisation ideology there is also

a kind of social agenda or a new way of living agenda that I think should change the spaces we inhabit.

At the same time, with the way we produce things and the materials we use and the way the material develops, timber can do more than it could before. And fabrication can help us arrange the material in ways that weren't possible before.

Julia Hinderink: How do you address these issues at the next Biennale in Venice? The social agenda of digitalisation, the material part of it, creating the space for interaction probably? How do you reach out to the visitor? If you are not a digital native, it is probably very difficult to step into that world.

Sille Pihlak: We are going to try very different mediums to achieve that. We will look at that at the installation level - 1:1 scale demonstrator for certain method, but we will also bring in scaled-down models of what we have been trying to do so far. There will be also publication of our work, with research conducted at the Estonian Academy of Arts. We are planning to host a panel discussion of international architects who work with material and form finding and who develop timber architecture in other countries, fittingly to their context

I think the whole essence of the Biennale is really having a high concentration of architects in one space in a short period of time, and provide ways of telling their story and then, and then from there, a certain dialogue or discussion will start one way or the other.

Julia Hinderink: It is not only about architecture and digitalisation and materials, but it is also about Estonia. Do you want to make people aware of what is going on in your country? Or is it something that is just in the background for information.

Siim Tuksam: I think what makes our work different from the work of other people who studied with us and moved to other places is really the contextualisation of the knowledge we have gained: bringing knowledge from L.A, Vienna and Paris to Tallinn and seeing what we can do in this context with this industry and politics.



"Rheological Formation" installation for Into the Valley music festival 2017.
Photos by Tõnu Tunnel

Looking forward to the 5th Tallinn Architecture Biennial

Villem Tomiste (b.1975) is an architect and the Head of the Committee for the Tallinn Architecture Biennale.

The 4th Tallinn Architecture Biennial (TAB) was the biggest architecture event in the region last year. Every second year, a curator is chosen for the biennial through an open call. The openness of the biennial's competition format and the courageousness of the jury have always resulted in a fresh and forward-looking perspective on contemporary architecture via the prism of Tallinn.

The focus of the biennial is the curator's exhibition and closely connected symposium. Conceptualisations of Tallinn within the framework of the biennial have proven time and again to be highlights. For example, the high point of TAB 2013, with the theme *Recycling Socialism*, was a lecture given by the Italian architect Pier Vittorio Aureli, a member of the Dogma collective, and Dogma's project, which was included in the curator's exhibition. For the work *Live Forever: The Return of the Factory*, Dogma took as their starting point the waiting pavilion for regional trains at the Baltic Station (Baltijaam) railway station in Tallinn. Within the framework of the *Recycling Socialism* theme, Dogma's project tried to restore the social dimension of architecture by opening up the building, the capacity of which was 1,600 people, free of charge, so people could 'pay' the city back by informally passing on their skills and organising workshops and cultural events.

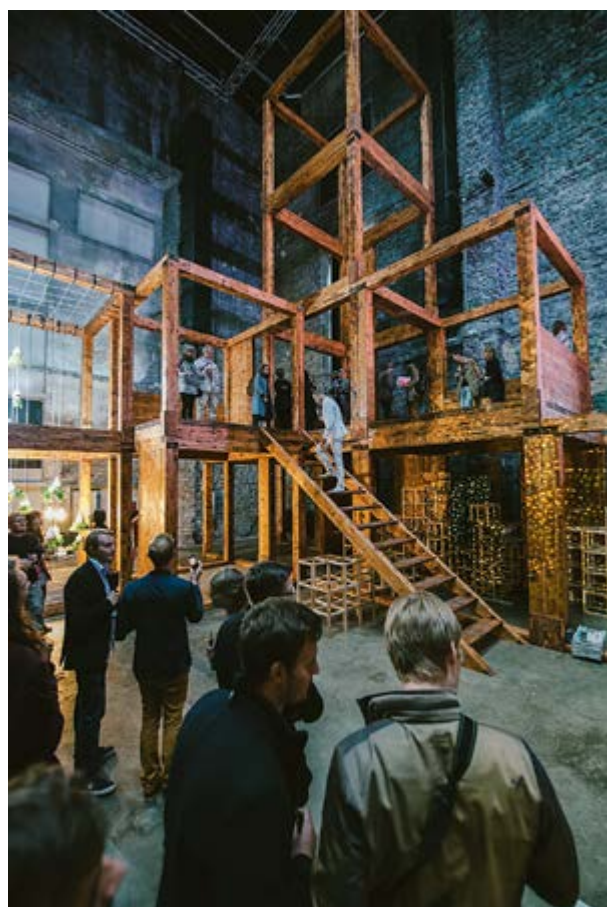
Last autumn, the same waiting pavilion at the Baltic Station (Baltijaam) that inspired Dogma's project was the location for the TAB 17 symposium, with the theme *bioTallinn*, and one of the most outstanding presentations there was given by Gilles Retsin, the winner of the installation competition, whose lecture *Digital Building Blocks* returned to the foundation elements of modernist architecture; as one of the

pioneers of contemporary parametric architecture, he was playfully critical by calling the style and its practices 'technological mannerism'. In front of the Museum of Estonian Architecture, Gilles Retsin, inspired by Le Corbusier's Maison Domino, erected an installation of universal building blocks that could be combined to create various structures.

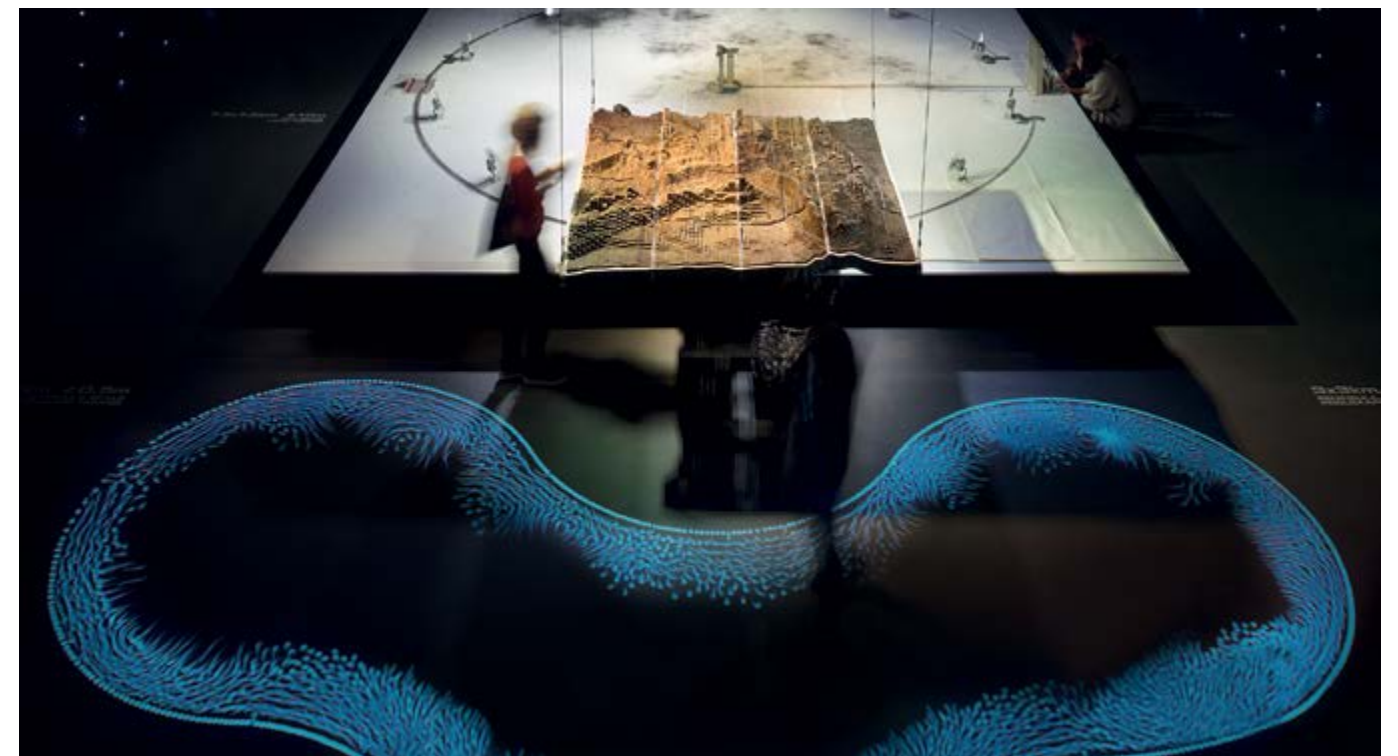
Last autumn, for the second time, a TAB-curated exhibition took place at the Museum of Architecture, but it hasn't always been like this. In 2011, the main exhibition of the first biennial, with the theme *Landscape Urbanism*, took place at the Kadriorg Art Museum, within the permanent exhibition and in the surrounding park. The works for the *Il Flirts* exhibition were created or chosen to thematically or temporally interact with the art pieces displayed in different rooms or to continue the theme of the room in a present-day key. TAB is always looking for new venues and exploring the surrounding spatial environments with its events by creating modern spatial meaning and new connections between the exhibited works and their context.

Within the framework of the biennial, a Tallinn vision competition is organised with the objective of taking the theme conceptualised by the curator to a wider audience and looking for solutions to some specific problem in the Tallinn urban space. The main theme of TAB 2015 was *Self-Driven City*, and a vision competition was held for the most central spot of Tallinn, Viru Square, under the title *Epicentre of Tallinn*. In the long line of envisioning Viru Square, the winning entries of the vision competition provided valuable input and impetus to a process that has to date become the most important remodelling project in the Tallinn city centre, titled *Main Street*.

In addition to the symposium, main exhibition and vision competition, curated by the main curator, the TAB programme also holds an installation competition and exhibition of architecture schools, which is organised by assistant curators. For the schools' exhibition, students from all over the world travel to Tallinn for one week to present and compare their studio projects from the past year, and to discuss architecture and its potential developments. Representatives of the schools participate in thematic round-table discussions and workshops. The main programme of TAB contains just a small fraction of the plethora of architecture events concentrated at the beginning of autumn. The centre of the biennial is the TAB Club, which has an open stage and runs daily throughout the biennial. The mornings are filled with thematic excursions and the evenings end with special screening programmes at a cinema. Exhibition openings and satellite events are held during the breaks in the main programme.



Installation by Marco Casagrande / TAB 2015. Photo by Tõnu Tunnel



Exhibition "Anthropocene Island" curated by Claudia Pasquero at the Museum of Estonian Architecture / TAB 2017. Photo by Tõnu Tunnel

The Estonian Centre of Architecture, who organises the Tallinn Architecture Biennale, has announced an open call for the TAB 2019 curator. The jury is looking for architecture curators to propose their visions of conceptualising contemporary architecture at the Tallinn Architecture Biennial. The submission date is the beginning of April 2018. We invite all architecture enthusiasts to come to Tallinn in September of next year and be part of the next chapter of this Nordic architecture festival.



Installation "Digital building blocks" by Gilles Retsin, winner of Installation Competition / TAB 2017. Photo by NAARO



The Universal Addressability of Contrast in Tanel Veenre's Work

Mihkel Ilus

Mihkel Ilus (b.1987) is a visual artist working in the expanded field of painting. He mainly works with large scale installations with a focus on the painterly approach. At the moment he is studying carpentry as a part of developing his arts practice.

Of all the ways to approach art, lately I feel that only personal ways matter. For me, when I try to understand other artists, one of those ways is to embody myself in their work and to imagine living in that world when everything looked like (their) art. As a painter, it's mainly a visual trip, but the same approach can help to sift cohesive understanding out of conceptual art or presence in the performing arts.

Book of Fears / pendant / carved jet, amethyst, silver, textile

To think about art as political activism in that way usually goes to the extreme in milliseconds, and in music, well, everything goes ‘way beyond’ just as quickly. I guess this sort of embodiment mainly works for fine arts but, thinking about jewelry, it is even more intriguing, as the sensation of touch is added.

In living inside Tanel Veenre’s work like this, I find myself in a vast field of pulsating organisms, where the gloomy depths of oceans and lightness of summer breezes are connected. All of the details of those creatures, their instincts and things connected with them become interwoven. There is a constant circulation, like life itself. Sure it’s a romantic world, but with the delicate interest of matter’s inner anatomy and with the realization of what dreams are made of. To balance this romance there’s always some imminent perishability. This other plane of existence in his work consists of myths and lost worlds, but also of things to come, because some things, hopefully, will always remain the same, for example physicality.

One notion that runs through all of Veenre’s work like a silver lining is contrast, perhaps even polarity. For every approach, there is an opposite waiting. In terms of bodily physicality, it lies in wearability. On one hand, his work always compliments the body and human figure in general but, on the other hand, it is not always easy to wear it. Many of the pieces demand a sort of sophistication, excessive confidence, and even majesty. One can’t just wear his more complicated pieces; one has to grow with and into them. I tend to appreciate this type of exacting quality, because it gives an undertone or constant metallic drone of awareness to his work. And, on the contrary, a large part of the work is easygoing and weightless. This side of his work is pure color and joy. It reminds me of an interview I heard in childhood. When a reporter asked the band Daft Punk if they agreed with the term

Silent Flower / brooch / carved reconstructed mother of pearl, silver



“happy house” to describe their sound, their answer was: “We don’t make some happy house music. We just do music that makes people happy.” That helps to remind people not to take everything too seriously and for a large part of Veenre’s work this directness fits well. So there’s a polarity of calculated discipline and first-hand sincerity that always balance each other in his work. Maybe it could also be called a contrast of intelligence and intuition. Both are needed and to play these characteristics against each other adds a lot of playfulness to his portfolio.

There are some things in the work of Tanel Veenre that remain a mystery to me. Mainly, how does he do it? I don’t mean the charming technicality of it, but the social side. Behind this voluminous production there have to be many time-consuming phases of planning, composing and craftsmanship, all necessary stages for cohesive work. That means a proper solitude in the studio, which tends to require strong willpower to maintain focus. I sense it almost like falling out of time. The moment of creation tends to overwrite everyday reality. So work that is meant to be worn and is dedicated to people actually grows out of studio exile. From alone to together, with all the people wearing his work. The paradox is the communicativity, as the reach and the demand for his work is acclaimed locally in Estonia and internationally. It seems to me that communication is one of the main values of an artwork and Veenre’s work can address people’s fantasies and storytelling to emphasize their charisma. I guess I exaggerated the solitude aspect a bit. It just needs to be stressed that delicate work takes time. And again, there’s an opposite side, as he has time to lead the Department of Jewelry at the Estonian Academy of Arts, finding a balance between academic and individual work. Also, not to miss, that his trademark series – TVJ – mainly comes from factories. Then he

Forever Together / brooch / carved wood, seahorses, gilded silver



has to work strategically as a project manager, where no studio contemplation of timelessness can manage. All together forming cohesive structures from controversial approaches to work.

To sum up, Veenre’s work has the ability to unite individual and collective timelines. To address finding a balance in contrasts is directly connected to the human condition. Veenre gives it a refined dimension, both as an author and as a person.

The Will / necklace / carved wood, silver / collection of Deedie Rose, USA



Right now, while I write this, it is winter. Nature is asleep and all is buried in snow. The snow covers the Bacchanals of summer and fully matured autumn ideas, creating a bit of sorrow in the soul. I wonder what the world would look like, when it consisted of Tanel’s pieces, but under snow? How will his creatures of desire survive that quiet time? Even though there will always be another spring, right now it’s hard to believe that it will happen and in this mindset there’s some beauty and comfort in contemplating oblivion. I find myself thinking that this is how we follow each other, we are... and later we perish. But meanwhile we live and we can enjoy what life has to offer, such as embodiment in art. A mindset of spring, actually. At its best, art not only represents life, but is alive. I feel the same about Tanel Veenre’s work. Even though his jewelry might seem fragile, it is strong from the inside

The Name of the Rose / pendant / carved jet, leather



by willpower and constant search and organic growth and change in life. Like that it is connected to eternity. I acknowledge that through thinking about mortality we can reach the opposite, as Veenre’s work celebrates life. If all the world looked like Veenre’s art, I would definitely want to live there.

Towards the Sunset (named after Cioran) / brooch / carved ebony, silver



The Tranquil Kingdom



of Pillezoo

Evelin Kangur

Evelin Kangur (b.1989) MA student at the Centre for Fashion Studies at Stockholm University. Her research taps into the realm of textiles, sustainability and the search for kind fashion.

The state of the Estonian design market, from both the creative and consumer perspectives, has never been more abundant in terms of inventive talent producing aesthetic and functional commodity products and educated buyers contributing to the growth of local design brands. Honouring works made by hand is something deeply rooted in the Estonian identity: it was regarded as a serious task with concrete visible outcomes, and was held in high esteem among our proud and hard-working peasant ancestors. Perhaps this is why Estonians have seamlessly adapted to the shift from handcraft to design, visible in the new wave of design shops emerging across Tallinn and elsewhere in Estonia.

Cushion Black Owl. Photo: Pille Jüriso



Cushion Baby Sea. Photo: Pille Jüriso

Originally a textile designer, Pille Jüriso has slowly but surely developed a range of eye-catching characters with whom she experiments by applying them to everyday products, thereby giving life to otherwise utilitarian objects. Pille's attraction to nature has led her to construct an animal kingdom of her own, where the owl, cat and seal co-exist in perfect harmony.

As a kid growing up in the 1980s, Pille spent her time absorbing the art and fashion publications of the time. *Siluet*, a magazine published in Estonia for more than thirty years, engaged generations of women, fashion designers and home sewers across the Soviet Union, apparently even reaching Cuba. Growing up in the small central Estonian town of Järva-Jaani, Pille was curious about all things tactile: rags, buttons, fabrics, ribbons and clothing constituted her surroundings in the attic, which she considered a land of discovery. Pursuing a growing fascination with fabrics and soft surfaces Jüriso's first instinct was to apply to a fashion design program, but further consideration led her to textile studies, a decision she's still content with as it's "so necessary for everyday life".

The majority of designers would agree that finding a distinctive language for one's creation is a constant act of becoming. To track the vestiges of inspiration is an

ambitious task, but Pille makes her way to mossy floors of vast pine forests and bogs, accompanied by created characters and recording devices to capture colors, textures and patterns of wildlife. Her education at the Estonian Academy of Arts, an extended design circle and stimulating investigation of the cultural sphere led Jüriso to produce her most recognizable character, the (grumpy) owl, in 2009. During a moment of creative crisis, when the inner negotiation about continuing on her own path versus producing textiles for others reached a peak, a friend's advice to make owl pillows pushed Pille into a new trajectory. Although Pille denies attributing a national aspect to her design, the perceived emotional state of the bird speaks for itself. When asked about the grumpy mood of the owl, Jüriso expresses surprise, stating that her intention was to capture the bird's realistic essence and not to simply create a figure. Perhaps humans need to decipher their surroundings by reflecting on our perceptions and notions of the natural order.

With the growth of animalistic characters and progress in developing designs emerged a wish to separate creative pursuits from her own persona; the eponym Pillezoo (established in 2013) made it clear that a close-knit animal kingdom was only one of Jüriso's



Playful Cat, different products. Photo: Pille Jüriso

artistic endeavors. Of course, ideas arise more often than they are realized in real life, but the preferred technique of silk-screen printing is visible throughout the brand's aesthetics. In creating textiles which later are given form as pillows, toys or other objects, Pille follows a rather serene workflow which begins by making stencils of previous sketches or photographs and then continues down two possible routes: "When printing only backgrounds I use a frame and take it quite easy. Other times I don't even use a frame and apply the color with a blade, and then I take it especially easy." In the current climate of overproduction, the practice of sustainability is omnipresent in preparing Pillezoo's products. Calculated decisions start with water-based colors, organic linen, cotton and wool fabrics to ensure that the textiles are put to full use: leftovers are used as fills to minimize waste.

Against the backdrop of the medieval Tallinn Old Town and tourist-oriented amber shops, one can find sanctuary in a bright corner shop, where the animals' gaze greets and humors passers-by. Having experimented with a makeshift shop in the past, opening a retail space for Pillezoo was a step in re-entering the realm of consumer culture. Serving as an antidote to obtuse and anonymous stores in a touristy hotspot, Jüriso emphasizes the importance of creating an amusing and consistent atmosphere powered by an approachable display of mostly textile designs. The shop has served as a necessary platform to develop product categories, experiment with sizes and test functional aspects on clients. Pillezoo's character trio have settled in the store as if it were their natural habitat.

Originally created as pillow-animals, the illustrations of the owl, seal and cat are now present on bags of all sizes and functions, as well as on



Bestseller: Little Snow Owl. Photo: Pille Jüriso



Cushion Pink Owl. Photo: Pille Jüriso

kitchen textiles, magnets and notebooks made in collaboration with Joel Leis. While the product range includes functional everyday accessories, it's the lively representatives of the animal kingdom that make people interact with the objects. Pille has discovered a surprising niche audience of 40-something men particularly drawn to the seriousness of the owl: if you've tackled the most complex audience, winning the hearts of others is no biggie. The interactive aspect, together with strong connotations of nature via organic textiles and water-color hues, represent the distinctive and minimalistic motifs that are beloved in the Nordic realm.

Although Pille Jüriso situates her work on the periphery of the local design community, it's the tranquil sanctuary she's created that places Pillezoo in the global community of designer shops.

Remember, the owls are not what they seem.

Dénes Farkas (b.1974) is a photo and installation artist mainly focusing on a critique of visual representation, the relationship of image and text, and the aspect of social determination in human experience.













Talking About the Bear in Estonian Art

Peeter Talvistu

Peeter Talvistu (b.1983) is an art historian from Tartu. He has previously worked as the photo and video collections holder and as the librarian and archives holder at the Tartu Art Museum and is currently curator and project manager at the Tartu Art House. Talvistu has curated numerous contemporary art exhibitions but has found the widest recognition for his restaging of Elmar Kits' 1966 seminal personal exhibition on its 50th anniversary.

Art Allmägi. Paint It Black II. 2017. Exhibition view at the Tartu Art Museum. Photo: Taavi Piibemann

In October and November of last year, Tartu simultaneously hosted two solo exhibitions in different venues. Overtly political, both dealt with subconscious fears of the large neighbour to the east, Russia. Although art in Estonia is constantly exploring society and politics, most of it looks at the state itself and investigates themes that affect artists.

Tanja Muravskaja's photo installation "Hero" (Tartu Art House, 19 October – 12 November 2017, exhibition design by Yevgeni Zolotko, curated by Indrek Grigor) and Art Allmägi's installation "Paint It Black II" (Tartu Art Museum, 29 September 2017 – 14 January 2018, curated by Joanna Hoffmann) were noteworthy exceptions in Estonia's general artistic practice and made up a complementary tandem that, as their greatest common denominator, emanated a sense of chilling dread.

New Fairy Tales

For his part, Art Allmägi continues the programmatic approach seen in his previous projects: his first two exhibitions were studies in white – "Cold War" at Draakoni Gallery (2014) and the exhibit of the Köler Prize nominees in the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia (2016) – followed by a pair of "black" exhibitions, both titled "Paint It Black," the first instalment of which was also held at Draakoni Gallery (spring 2017). Draakoni Gallery's strategic location, across from the Russian Embassy, (which the artist himself saw in a dream-like apparition) has symbolic importance. In the first 'white project', Allmägi displayed a work that depicted the mutual surveillance known from the Cold War era, which in one way reflects the romanticism of spy stories but also the current political reality's silent stand-off; the second project involved a public critique of the politics practised by the embassy in the neighbouring building. Its theme was the annexations carried out by the 'little green men' – irregular troops – and war, in which young men, despite their fatal bullet wounds,



Vano Allsalu, Jaan Toomik. Photo documentation of the action "My Dick is Clean" in Prague. 1989. Art Museum of Estonia

were listed on their death certificates as succumbing to heart attacks while on holiday, with their families unable to air their suspicions for fear of forfeiting their hush money. The context behind the exhibitions centres on the events in Eastern Ukraine, the discussion page of its Wikipedia ("War in Donbass") is mainly preoccupied with the topic of how to label the conflict (the alternatives are "Russia-Ukraine War", "Ukrainian Civil War" and "Counter-terrorism Operation in Ukraine"). During the outbreak of the conflict, Estonian military institutions considered it very likely that Crimea was only a smokescreen for the annexation of the Baltics.

While the action in Allmägi's installation takes place in the dead of night, and the weapons sound silent salutes, Muravskaja has created a monument to heroes whose deaths have not yet been engraved in stone. Her earlier works that address nationalism made up a specific ensemble: "Positions" (2007), "They, Who Sang Together" (2008), "The Estonian



Art Allmägi. Paint It Black II. 2017. Exhibition view at the Tartu Art Museum. Photo: Taavi Piibemann

Art Allmägi. Paint It Black II. 2017. Exhibition view at the Tartu Art Museum. Photo: Taavi Piibemann



Race" (2010) and, in principle, "Lucky Losers" (2009). At her previous solo exhibition in Tartu "Split Mind" (2010) she showed a video with the same title in which she destroyed the first works, giving the series a symbolic final act. Of her previous works, only the installation "Monuments" (2008) dealt with Eastern politics. It consisted of only a pile of limestone and a pile of glass, and was clearly inspired by the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn and the events that took place in Tallinn in the spring of 2007. Public unrest including rioting and looting took place in Tallinn on the 26–29 April 2007, mainly involving young Russian speaking Estonians which was sparked by the Estonian government's botched attempt to remove a monument from the city centre, that extolled the Red Army (Soviet Forces) as liberators of the city. Russian state interests were mainly believed to be behind the organizing of the riots, which were in large part a prelude to the Kremlin's ensuing politics.

Muravskaya took her next steps toward a more personal and political approach in the exhibition "Three Sisters" (2015), which dealt with conflict in the

Ukraine through the lens of family tragedy – families pulled apart by different political views and everyday realities. It should undoubtedly be mentioned at this point that Muravskaja's grandparents' home (she herself grew up in Pärnu) is located in this indistinctly defined conflict zone in Eastern Ukraine. "Hero" (2017) looks to the future, where the events that both Allmägi and the heads of Estonian armed forces have theorized about have become reality. In the portraits, members of the Estonian Defence League youth organisation (Young Eagles) and NATO troops providing military deterrence have similarly resolute but strange looks in their eyes: it's as if they know something that is still a secret to us, the observers.

A Treasury of Fairy Tales

Even though the approach to international politics in these two exhibitions (and more broadly in the two artists' overall work) is relatively uncommon in Estonian art, there are nevertheless a few examples from other earlier artworks. Surprisingly, artist Neeme Külm, whom we are used to associating with space-twisting works of institutional criticism, has dealt with Russian themes on two occasions: in 2008 he and the architects Maarja Kask and Ralf Lööke built the yellow gas pipelines linking the Russian and German pavilions at the Venice Architecture Biennale's Giardini, and in 2006 he put on a performance, "Beslan", in which he carried a wooden casket lid past the Russian Embassy to memorialise the victims of the hostage tragedy in Beslan.

Besides Muravskaja's "Monument" (2008), a haunting commentary on Bronze Night – the aforementioned riots of April 2007 in Tallinn – was offered by artist Mark Raidpere (the two-channel video



Neeme Külm. Beslan. 2006



Tanja Murvaskaja. Hero. 2017

“Majestoso Mystico”, 2007), where news footage from Tallinn is accompanied by Stockholm street musicians who perform a Howard Shore melody from the film “Silence of the Lambs”. Continuing the commentary on the topic, in 2009 Kristina Norma’s work that represented Estonia at that year’s Venice Biennale (her installation “After War”) included a life-size

golden replica of the Bronze Soldier statue, which was considered of such watershed significance that Kiasma (art museum in Helsinki) acquired the work. There are a few other individual examples where foreign policy is explored, for example, in a number of Peeter Allik’s works, but always with black humour.

It seems that Johannes Saar was correct when, in an article about Neeme Kõlm published on the Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia website, he mentioned the “apolitical discourse” of the 1990s, for the favourite topic of Estonian art in the last few decades has time and again been The Artist. Jaan Toomik is living proof of the above: after two works from the restoration of independence period “My Dick is Clean”, with Vano Allsalu, 1989, where the artist walked along Prague’s Charles Bridge, carrying the slogan in the title, refusing to take responsibility for Soviet crimes, and the 1993 installation “Bed 75”, during which 75 Russian military beds were laid out on Freedom Square, which has always been the epicentre of (military) parades, the questions he poses in his video works and paintings have mainly been addressed to himself.

Defensive Words

So why are two young artists like Tanja Muravskaja and Art Allmägi dealing with this topic? In one sense, it seems to come from their own backgrounds: the Muravskaja family is from Ukraine and the fact that Allmägi works for the Defence League is equally important. After all, blood is memory, and the environment makes the man! In a recent conversation with Muravskaja[1], the art historian Indrek Grigor brought up the subconscious fears of the last Soviet



Tanja Murvaskaja. Hero. 2017



Tanja Murvaskaja. Hero. 2017. Exhibition view at the Tartu Art House

generation: although the most active nuclear war rhetoric was in the past by the 1980s, gas masks were still lying around in every school for years after that, capitalism was still bad, and the lead-in music to the pan-Soviet evening news Vremya was stuck in everyone’s head.

It’s no wonder that now, at a time when spy scandals are flaring up, armed soldiers appear on the streets of Estonian cities with fighter planes overhead, and there is again talk of the division of the world into spheres of influence and deterring the enemy, these memories are climbing out of the back of our minds and into the daylight again. This is a generation for whom the fears of the Cold War were not daily ones – the real “duck and cover” mushroom-cloud video era was long past, but the things our parents subconsciously left unsaid and the silent glances they exchanged seeped into our inner being just as deeply. To be able to function on a daily basis, we have to release the tensions with a scream – and that is exactly what the Allmägi and Muravskaja works do. These exhibitions are cathartic for the artists, but it’s very clear that viewers need them, too. Entering the exhibition hall, we can say, “*What do you know, I’m not the only one who’s afraid of dark figures running across the fields in the night*” or “*Someone else besides me is thinking about the time when the gravestones of new heroes will be lining*

the roadsides”. The other possibility is that this is yet another deterrence tactic: reality can never copy art. Even if you bring a bear into a fairy tale, the story will, as always, have a happy ending.

[1] The exchange can be viewed on Tartu Art House’s YouTube channel, and a transcript was also published in the form of an article: I. Grigor, “Kõlma sõja lapsed,” *Sirp*, 24 November 2017.



There and Back Again: Building a Collection Exhibition

Saara Hacklin & Kati Kivinen

Kati Kivinen (b. 1975), PhD, is Chief Curator of Collections at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki, Finland. Previously she has held expert positions at the Distribution Centre for Finnish Media Art (AV-arkki) and Finnish Fund for Art Exchange Frame.

Saara Hacklin (b. 1978), PhD, is Curator of Collections at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma. Besides curatorial work, she has written for various publications such as online journal *Mustekala* and taught art theory in different institutions, including Aalto University.

Traditionally, Kiasma's collection exhibitions have had thematic framings. In recent years, the starting points for exhibition projects have been, for instance, the contemporary portrait and how the concept of the document is approached by contemporary art. The tendency has been to emphasise new acquisitions, although with the addition of a few older works from the collections. In this vein, the *There and Back Again* exhibition can be seen as both a continuation and a small variant.

Flo Kasearu. *Uprising*, 2015. Video, 4 min

A feature that distinguishes *There and Back Again: Contemporary Art from the Baltic Sea Region* from its predecessors is the geographical emphasis: the focus was turned to the south and south-west of Finland, to the eastern Baltic Sea coast, where Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are, like Finland, celebrating the centenaries of their independence. This geographical emphasis resonates with the collection policy set when the Museum of Contemporary Art was established back in 1991. Beside the museum's focus on Finnish contemporary art, neighbouring countries were also considered important. As the Finnish National Gallery's archives and library curator Maritta Mellais writes in the exhibition catalogue of *There and Back Again*, "The expression 'widening circles' was used in this respect to describe the weight given to various regions. The epicentre was in Finland and Finnish art, and the next ring was formed by art from the Nordic, Baltic and south-western Russian regions".

In short, the museum's aim has been to build a significant collection of works, seen from the vantage point of a specific geographical location. This approach emphasises the importance of space and place in the creation of art, within the contexts of both collecting and exhibiting. It is also a way of re-addressing the imbalance between the world's major centres of contemporary art and their margins, helping to ensure that art is not just seen vertically, through the lens of specific capitals of the art world and their histories.^[1]

The idea of widening circles became concrete in 2004, in Kiasma's exhibition *Faster than History: A contemporary perspective on the future of art in the Baltic countries, Finland and Russia*.^[2] In that exhibition, artists commented on their relationships with the recent history of the region, and on its



Alge Julija Kavaliauskaite. *Gnosis maito / Gnosis milk*, 2016. From the series Evening breakfast. Photo Finnish National Gallery/Petri Virtanen

reflections on the present day. The works were marked by the human experience and the similarities derived from it, despite differences in language, culture and history. The same themes are to some extent explored by the current collection exhibition, *There and Back Again: Contemporary Art from the Baltic Region*. This article analyses the thematic core of the exhibition: the topics of travel and migration, and issues related to identity, attachment and belonging.

Identity

As for the curatorial process, the exhibition's theme started to develop through Jaanus Samma's (b. 1982) *The Chairman's Tale*, 2015. Kiasma acquired Samma's Venice Biennale project *NSFW: The Chairman's Tale* exhibition, the videos made with Marko Raat and *Timeline* and *Showcase*, with objects. As is generally known, this piece deals with the history of homosexuality in the Soviet era. From the perspective of the 2010s, the criminalisation of homosexuality appears cruel and absurd, yet at the same time here in Finland the debate about transgender rights is still ongoing.

Through Samma's piece, identity became the central working theme. For a work that raises questions about identity, the video work *Bubble* (2017) by the Finnish artist Artor Jesus Inkerö (b. 1989) might



Jaanus Samma, Marko Raat. *A Chairman's Tale*, 2015. Collections. Photo Finnish National Gallery/Pirje Mykkänen

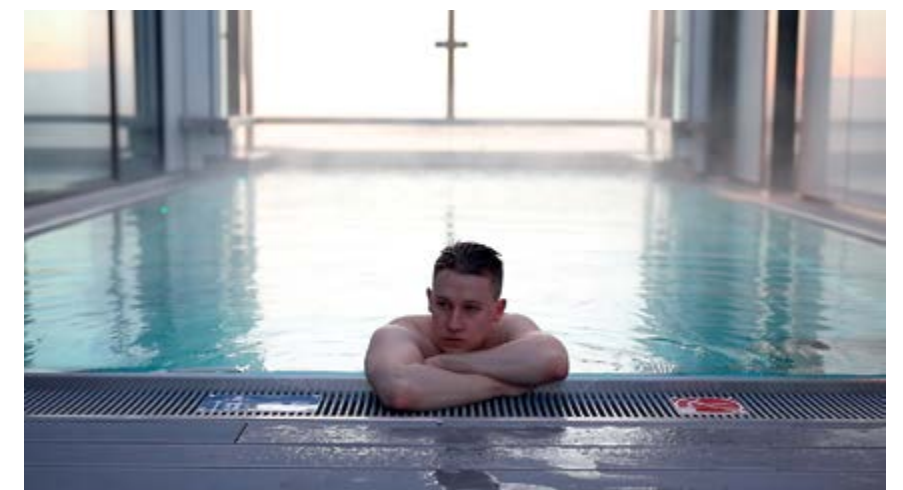


Karel Koplimets. *Case No 13. Waiting for the Ship of Empties*, 2017. Installation, empty beer cans, polyurethane, wood, motor, 3 Full HD videos, sound, 4.9 × 5 × 2.8 m. Edition: 1. Photo Manuel Mägi

at first seem superficial. It shows the artist swimming, hanging out in a hotel room and absorbed in perusing his mobile phone. The young man's clothes are sporty and he is physically fit. In the video and the related self-portrait, the viewer sees a carefully constructed performance for which the artist spent countless hours sweating at the gym. His *Bodily Project*, which was originally intended as a brief experiment, has grown into an endeavour spanning several years. The formerly delicate art student has transformed himself into a muscular young man at home fluent in the language of bodybuilders. Inkerö, who is of non-binary gender, has carried out a comprehensive exploration of identity, examining the social construction of gender while also physically shaping it.

Travel

The name of the exhibition, *There and Back Again*, can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. An internal journey and a trip through the museum's own history can be seen in the work of Tea Tammelaan (b. 1964), an artist whose work revisits the history of the Museum of Contemporary Art. In 1996, Maaretta Jaukkuri curated the exhibition *Dialogues*, whose theme was exploring viewers' encounters with art. Included in the show, Tammelaan's *Beyond Roles* (1992–96) had a strong interactive element: it was composed of diverse hats that museum visitors could try on. The artist hoped that, in doing so, viewers could discover hidden new roles or identities in themselves.^[3]



Artor Jesus Inkerö. *Bubble*, 2017. Video



Maria Tobola. Amber Kebab, 2016. Collections. Photo Finnish National Gallery / Pirje Mykkänen

A selection of these hats was bought for the collections of the museum, but this is the first time they are on display at Kiasma.

The theme of the journey can be approached through the work *Uprising* (2015) by Flo Kasearu (b. 1985). In Kasearu's video, the viewer flies over the rooftops of Tallinn towards an old wooden house, whose rusty roof is being folded into aeroplane shapes. The title denotes revolt and rebellion but is also associated with elevation. The paper aeroplane shape recalls military threats, and Kasearu's work as a whole has strong political undertones. The roof material that is being replaced also brings to mind ruins; it is simultaneously a testament to the past and a reminder of the impermanence of things.^[4] In the work, the realistic and mundane setting and the passage of history intermingle with a surreal atmosphere and dreams of flying and departure.

Epilogue

The art world has changed since the early 1990s. Travelling and studying abroad are more and more common, and many artists divide their time between countries. This makes one think anew of geographical location. In her essay, the curator and critic Maija Rudovska ponders the exhibition catalogue: "Do young artists from the Baltic region consider themselves linked to a concrete space, whether geographical or mental? How important to them is an artistic environment and infrastructure? Is a sense of belonging important in the present day? Has it perhaps become a variable that must be adjusted and adapted according to need?"

The routes and the roots of art are not insignificant. To wrap things up, we would like to turn to one final piece: in the making of this exhibition, one material was particularly intriguing: amber. In *Amber Kebab* (2016), Maria Tobola (b. 1987) mixes diverse materials and meanings in a postmodern spirit. Here the kebab, a fast food popularised particularly by German Turks, is transformed into amber. For the artist, this work is like a trophy from an imaginary cooking competition: the poor man's Michelin star. It is also a comment on a Polish debate, particularly addressing the nationalist faction, which has a problem with the great popularity of kebab restaurants. At the same time, it makes the viewer ponder what is actually genuine or pure. Often looking at something in depth will reveal its hybrid nature.

Tobola's local version of kebab is made of resin dyed to emulate amber. Anyone who has travelled on the Baltic Sea coast will be familiar with various amber jewellery stores and their inviting signs, labelled Amber Queen, Amber Dreams and so on. Today amber is kitsch for many people, but over time it has been the subject of various legends, beliefs (amber has been thought to cure illnesses, for example) and merchants' passions. An Amber Road similar to the Silk Road used to run south from the Baltic as early as the Bronze Age. These days amber is desired by the Chinese.

For researchers, amber presents a unique time capsule. As it slowly hardened on the sea bed, the material could trap insects, for example. In this way something fragile and ephemeral was preserved in golden amber. Perhaps amber is a bit like a museum. Peeking into the glowing time capsule is an exquisitely precious and – if we want to believe it – a healing experience.

Parts of this essay were previously published in "There and Back Again: From Identities to Material Memory", in There and Back Again: Contemporary Art from the Baltic Sea Region, eds. Hacklin & Kivinen, A Museum of Contemporary Art Publication 158, Helsinki, 2018, 35–47.



Flo Kasearu. *Uprising (The Aircraft)*, folded into airplane shape tin roof surface, 2015. Photo Finnish National Gallery / Petri Virtanen

[1] The Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski has proposed a horizontal view of art history as a replacement for the hierarchical Western perspective, which Piotrowski calls vertical. According to Piotrowski, the benefit of the horizontal perspective is that it offers a more context-sensitive frame of reference for art history, which pays more attention to the speaking subject: who is speaking, for whom and to whom? Piotrowski: "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde", in

European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies. Ed. Sascha Bru & Peter Nicholls, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2009, 54–58.

[2] The exhibition presented 20 artists from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Russia. It was curated by Jari-Pekka Vanhala. *Faster than history: Contemporary perspectives on the future of art in Baltic countries, Finland and Russia*. Museum of Contemporary Art publication; 90/2004, Helsinki.

[3] Maaretta Jaukkuri, *Dialogues*. The

Museum of Contemporary Art Publications 36, Helsinki, 1996.

[4] Brian Dillon, "Introduction: A Short History of Decay", in *Ruins*. Ed. Brian Dillon, Documents of Contemporary Art, Whitechapel Gallery & The MIT Press, London & Cambridge, 2011, 11.

Elisa-Johanna Liiv's Book Recommendations

Elisa-Johanna Liiv (b.1992) is a Japanese culture student and an avid book lover. With a soft spot for big books – they cannot lie.

When two book lovers (Elisa-Johanna Liiv and Triinu Kõõba) started working together on a dream, magic happened. Puänt Bookshop (Pärnu mnt 4) opened in the Old Town of Tallinn at the end of 2016. Wanting to offer a different perspective from traditional bookstores, we leave books room to breathe and a chance for the reader to find a book from a previously picked selection. We offer fiction, non-fiction, art, academic and philosophical books in both English and Estonian. And for your newly inspired ideas, some stationery to write them down.

Puänt also hosts different literary and art events: author meet-ups, book presentations, exhibitions and drawing sessions.



"How to Write About Contemporary Art"
by Gilda Williams
"Kuidas kirjutada kaasaegsest kunstist"
Estonian translation by Ingrid Ruudi
Published by Eesti Kunstiakadeemia Kirjastus, Tallinn, 2017.

A book for students, art professionals and everybody else who is interested in contemporary art. It's full of practical hints on how to write different texts about art. For example academic essays, exhibition catalogue texts and criticism.

Having studied art history and theory before, this was the book I really needed. It has been translated into Estonian by Ingrid Ruudi and published by Eesti Kunstiakadeemia Kirjastus (Estonian Academy of Arts Publishing House) just three years after the original was published. Much appreciated! Good for everybody and anybody who wants to write about art or understand how art texts came to be.



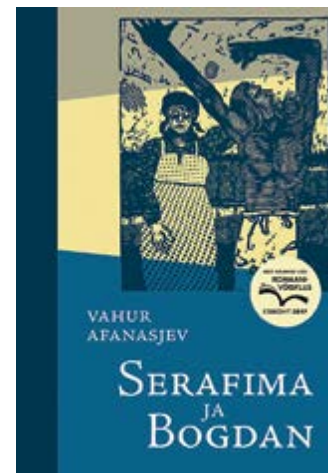
"The Little Girl Who Was Too Fond of Matches"
by Gaétan Soucy
"Väike tüdruk, kes armastas liialt tuletikke"
Estonian translation by Triinu Tamm.
Published by Draakon & Kuu, Tallinn, 2017.

A book about two brothers whose father dies unexpectedly. This is the story of how they deal with the consequences, having seen only three other people besides him in their lives. That is all that can be said about this book without ruining the surprises the story has to offer. The story rolls along both delicately and terrifyingly, making this book shocking yet hard to put down. I'm pretty sure I read the last 20-30 pages without breathing. At least the woman sitting opposite me on the train looked quite worried when I came up for some air.



"Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography"
by Roland Barthes
Estonian translation by Anti Saar.
Published by Eesti Kunstiakadeemia Kirjastus, Tallinn, 2015.

Roland Barthes's essay on photography was first published in 1980 but it still rings true in 2018. Images still rule the world, a world where it is okay to advertise burgers with breasts but breastfeeding in public is still a taboo. Roland Barthes talks about images as things that characterise people in the way beliefs used to. They might make people more open and liberal but in some ways less authentic.



"Serafima ja Bogdan" by Vahur Afanasjev
Published by Vemsa OÜ, Tartu, 2017.
The winner of the Estonian novel competition 2017.

A book about people from small villages beside Lake Peipus and their revenge on each other and somehow on the Soviet system. The novel moves from 1944 to 1987, and follows how people take responsibility for their lives, with and without God, how they believe or don't believe in the Soviet system and how they each have their own way of defying the authority of it. In this context, you see real events from the history of Estonia made richer through the addition of elaborate characters. The whole book is accompanied by text sensitive illustrations by Peeter Allik.



"Artists' Spaces: 16 Studio Visits"
Edited by Annika Toots and Merilin Talumaa.
Published in Estonian and English by Eesti Kunstiakadeemia Kirjastus, Tallinn, 2017.

The book consists of visits to the working environments of 16 young Estonian artists, introducing them through interviews and photographs. I've always been interested in the spaces art has been made in. Or is being made. The pictures start to talk to you first about how different an environment is needed for artists to make their work in. Then the words open it up even more. The last interview with Maarja Tõnisson and Mihkel Ilus shows beautifully how a couple can work together in a studio which is adjustable to their needs at the moment. And this book satisfies the curiosity of people who want to know more about each other. Yes, it's enjoyable to see work that has come out of studios, but it's also exciting to peek in the back door, and see what you might never see otherwise.



"The Black Sun" by Paavo Matsin
"Must päike", published by Lepp ja Nagel, Viljandi, 2017.

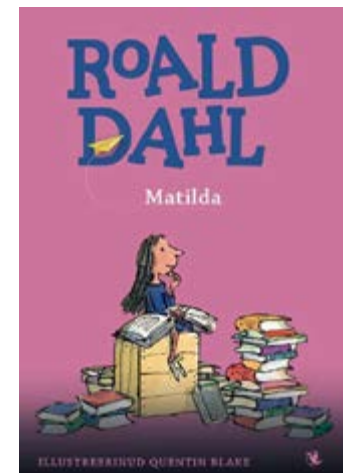
Paavo Matsin likes to tell crazy tales. If you thought his last novel "Gogol's Disco" ("Gogoli disko") was bonkers, then you haven't read "The Black Sun" ("Must päike") yet. At some time in the past, in Võru, things turn upside down as storks start to run the town, forcing people to ditch their clothes and build saunas for the upcoming visit of Queen Kristiina, who needs the air to be warmer than usual for her sex reassignment surgery. If this doesn't sound too nuts for you then you should grab the book and dig deeper.



"Contemporary Architecture in Tallinn. A Guidebook"
Compiled by the Estonian Centre of Architecture, Tallinn, 2017.

1 pocket-size architectural guidebook. 7 trips to diverse parts of Tallinn. 1 trip to hidden gems from other parts of Estonia. 80 architectural objects. 170 professional photographs.

I mean, what else do you need from an pocket-size architectural guidebook? Good for both locals and people who come to explore Tallinn and want to take a peek outside the usual tourist attractions. It's especially refreshing (for a local) to discover all the new architecture in town and to force yourself out of your regular routes. And for travelling readers, we all know that saying that when locals visit certain places they must be worth it.



"Matilda" by Roald Dahl
(or anything else by Roald Dahl to be honest)
Published by Draakon & Kuu, Tallinn, 2013.

Yes, it's a children's book, but who decides when you're too old to stop reading them? Never, I'm thinking. I re-read this old favourite last year and discovered that it's even better than I remembered. A story about a little girl called Matilda, who hasn't exactly been blessed in the family department. So she finds consolation in books, which help make her life right in the end. Like all of Dahl's books, it has a moral hidden somewhere in the pages. That's in addition to the fact that books are awesome and can save your life and make everything better. Roald Dahl has a way with words that is remarkable. He writes stories for children and grown-ups with a playfulness that sucks you in and enchants you completely. Roald Dahl's books are accompanied by illustrations by Quentin Blake.

Exhibitions

A-Gallery

Hobusepea 2, Tallinn
Open: Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 11am–4pm
agalerii.ee
23.02.18 – 26.03.18 Kadi Kübarsepp
30.03.18 – 30.04.18 Ivar Kaasik
04.05.18 – 04.06.18 Pilvi Tammoja
08.06.18 – 09.07.18 Hanna Ryynanen
13.07.18 – 13.08.18 Sanna Nuutinen & Kaisa Vuorinen
17.08.18 – 17.09.18 Dot Melanin & Dana Seachuga
21.09.18 – 22.10.18 Erle Nemvalts
26.10.18 – 26.11.18 Raili Vinn
30.11.18 – 31.12.18 Marita Lumi

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)
26.01.18 – 03.06.18 Art Society Pallas
100. Birth and Rebirth
15.06.18 – 28.10.18 Under the Crux. Gunnar Neeme: an Estonian Artist in Australia
09.11.18 – 01.04.19 Estonian Jewellery through the Millennia

Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia
Põhja 35, Tallinn
Open: Apr–Dec, Tue–Sun 1pm–7pm
ekkm.ee
31.03.18 – 20.05.18 Köler Prize 2018. Exhibition of Nominees. Anna Škodenko, Holger Loodus, Taavi Talve, Tanja Muravskaja & Tarvo Varres
02.06.18 – 15.07.18 XVII Tallinn Print Triennial
Cloudbusters: Intensity vs Intention. Margit Såde (curator)
04.08.18 – 09.09.18 Ekaterina Scherbakova (curator)
29.09.18 – 04.11.18 (ground floor) Life Essentials. Dre Britton, Ingrid Allik & Laura Pöld. Marika Agu (curator)
29.09.18 – 04.11.18 (upper floors) On Slowness. Mania and Meditation. Kati Saarits & Laura Pöld
17.11.18 – 16.12.18 Ingel Vaikla, Laura Toots (curator)

Draakon Gallery
Pikk 18, Tallinn
Open: Mon–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat 11am–5pm
eaa.ee/draakon
27.02.18 – 17.03.18 Linnar Uum Balanced in Zero Tolerance
19.03.18 – 07.04.18 Maris Karjatse
09.04.18 – 28.04.18 Peeter Laurits
30.04.18 – 19.05.18 Urmas Pedanik
21.05.18 – 09.06.18 LÖPPMÄNG 2018 – EAA Architecture Department
11.06.18 – 07.07.18 Kelli Valk
09.07.18 – 04.08.18 Lembe Ruben
06.08.18 – 01.09.18 Kristel Saan & Sten Saarits
03.09.18 – 22.09.18 Uno Roosvalt
24.09.18 – 13.10.18 August Sai
15.10.18 – 03.11.18 Saskia Järve
05.11.18 – 24.11.18 Mari Volens
26.11.18 – 15.12.18 Ann Pajuväli – EAA Young Artist Prize
17.12.18 – 12.01.19 Karl-Kristjan Nagel

EKA Gallery
Vabaduse väljak 6/8, Tallinn
Open: Tue–Sat 12pm–6pm
artun.ee/ekagalerii
March 2018 – Anna Slama & Marek Delong
April 2018 – Triin Marts & Siiri Jüris
May 2018 – Students of EAA's Graphic Art Department (satellite exhibition of the 17th Tallinn Print Triennial)
June 2018 – EAA's Graphic Design Department's Graduation Show

Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design
Lai 17, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 11am–6pm
etdm.ee
Permanent Exhibition:
Story of Estonian Design
03.02.18 – 29.04.18 Nerves. Urmas Puhkan
23.02.18 – 27.05.18 New Pain. Young Estonian design in the 1980s
04.05.18 – 05.08.18 Room. Urmas Ott
15.06.18 – 09.09.18 Bron. Ruudt Peters
10.08.18 – 07.10.18 Body and Soul. Me and You. Peter Ramsebner, Anna Steinhäusler
21.09.18 – 06.01.19 Classics. Anu Rank-Soans

Hobusepea Gallery
Hobusepea 2, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Mon 11am–6pm
eaa.ee/hobusepea
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
11.07.18 – 06.08.18 Gudrun Heamägi
08.08.18 – 03.09.18 Mare Mikoff
05.09.18 – 24.09.18 Robin Ellis Meta
26.09.18 – 15.10.18 Andres Tali
17.10.18 – 05.11.18 Eike Eplik
07.11.18 – 26.11.18 Mart Vainre
28.11.18 – 17.12.18 Tõnis Saadoja
19.12.18 – 14.01.19 Madis Kurss

Haapsalu City Gallery
Posti 3, Haapsalu
Open: Wed–Sat 12pm–6pm
galerii.kultuurimaja.ee
March – Elis Saareväli
April – Jekaterina Kultajeva & Elo Liiv
May – Maria-Kristiina Ulas
June – Isikupära 2018
July – Textile Art
August – Art Allmägi
September – Erik Alalooga
October – Raivo Kelomees
November – Painters Union
December – EAA Textile Department

HOP Gallery
Hobusepea 2, Tallinn
Open: Thu–Tue 11am–6pm
eaa.ee/hop
01.03.18 – 20.03.18 Urmas Lüüs
22.03.18 – 10.04.18 Keiu Koppel
12.04.18 – 01.05.18 Katrin Kabun
03.05.18 – 22.05.18 Tanel Veenre
24.05.18 – 12.06.18 Leena Kuutma
14.06.18 – 10.07.18 Kadri Kruus & Birgit Skolimowski
12.07.18 – 07.08.18 Mari Käbin
09.08.18 – 04.09.18 Lillian Meister
06.09.18 – 25.09.18 Swedish Applied Arts Exhibition
27.09.18 – 16.10.18 Hansel Tai & Anna Maria Vanaküla
18.10.18 – 06.11.18 Marita Lumi

08.11.18 – 27.11.18 Raija Jokinen
29.11.18 – 18.12.18 Hans Otto Ojaste
20.12.18 – 15.01.19 Anne Türn
17.01.19 – 05.02.19 Krista Leesi

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
kadriorumuseum.ekm.ee
Permanent Exhibition: Paintings from the 16th–18th centuries. Dutch, German, Italian and Russian masters. Western European and Russian applied art and sculpture from the 18th–20th centuries.
10.03.18 – 08.07.18 Aivazovsky. In Pursuit of the Ideal
24.07.18 – 22.10.18 Kadriorg 300
08.12.18 – 01.10.19 In the Beginning There Were ... Köler and Weizenberg

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.
24.11.17 – 01.04.18 Andres Tolts. Landscape with Still Life
17.01.18 – 06.05.18 Let's Add Some Colour. Estonian Exhibition Posters from the 1980s
09.02.18 – 13.05.18 Leonhard Lapin. Void and Space
23.02.18 – 10.06.18 Katja Novitskova. If Only You Could See What I've Seen with Your Eyes. Stage 2
16.03.18 – 05.08.18 History in Images – Image in History
20.04.18 – 26.08.18 Puzzling Over the Labyrinth. 50 Years of the Tallinn Print Triennial
11.05.18 – 16.09.18 Kristi Kongi and Kasper Bosmans in Dialogue

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 the 16th to the 20th centuries.
11.04.18 – 11.11.18 Saved Sanctity. Icons from the Collection of Nikolai Kormashov
01.12.18 – 10.03.19 Money Art

Museum of Estonian Architecture
Rotermann's Salt Storage
Ahtri 2, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm
arhitektuurimuuseum.ee
I Floor
Permanent exhibition – Space in Motion: A Century of Estonian Architecture

II Floor Great Hall
26.01.18 – 25.03.18 Wasteland. Paco Ulman
04.04.18 – 27.05.18 Building a Community – Estonian Architects in Post-War Toronto
14.06.18 – 07.10.18 100 Years of Estonian Urban Homes
17.10.18 – 18.11.18 100 Buildings – 100 years (Association of Construction Material Producers of Estonia)
III Floor Gallery
24.03.18 – 15.04.18 Architecture and Design Pavilion Competition Works
25.04.18 – 13.05.18 Fredi Tomps 90
16.05.18 – 19.08.18 Bohuslav Fuchs
30.08.18 – 30.09.18 Luther & Isokon (Estonian Association of Designers)
11.10.18 – 18.11.18 The National Heritage Board Anniversary Exhibition
Basement
28.03.18 – 01.07.18 Drawn Space. Works from the Collection of the Museum of Estonian 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
16.09.17 – 04.03.18 Five Forgotten Paintings
19.10.18 – 01.05.19 The Power of Things

Tallinn Art Hall
Vabaduse väljak 8, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 12am–6pm
kunstihoone.ee
16.02.18 – 29.05.18 The State is Not a Work of Art, Katerina Gregos (curator)
19.05.18 – 17.06.18 Spring Exhibition
30.06.18 – 02.09.18 The Baltic Triennial 13
15.09.18 – 04.11.18 Abstraction as an Open Experiment, Mari Laanemets (curator)
17.11.18 – 13.01.19 Marko Mäetamm, Rita Bozi & Ken Cameron. One Month in Canada

Tallinn Art Hall Gallery
Vabaduse väljak 6, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 12am–6pm
kunstihoone.ee
16.02.18 – 29.04.18 The State is Not a Work of Art, Katerina Gregos (curator)
19.05.18 – 17.06.18 Spring Exhibition
28.06.18 – 26.08.18 Small Monumentalists. Villu Plingi & Silja Saarepuu (curators)
31.08.18 – 14.10.18 Hive Mind, Stacey Koosel (curator)
26.10.18 – 02.12.18 Ivar Veermäe, Eternal Interests
07.12.18 – 13.01.19 Imat Suuman & Eike Eplik. In the Cover of Night. Peeter Talvistu (curator)

Tallinn City Gallery
Harju 13, Tallinn
Open: Wed–Sun 12am–6pm
kunstihoone.ee
16.02.18 – 29.04.18 The State is Not a Work of Art, Katerina Gregos (curator)
19.05.18 – 17.06.18 Spring Exhibition
22.06.18 – 05.08.18 Viktorija Rybakova. Mechanical Human
30.08.18 – 14.10.18 Hive Mind, Stacey Koosel (curator)
20.10.18 – 25.11.18 3/8, kim?
30.11.18 – 06.01.19 Varvara & Mar: Chameleon

Tartu Art House
Vanemuise 26, Tartu
Open: Wed–Mon 12pm–6pm
kunstimaja.ee
Big Hall
15.03.18 – 08.04.18 Dead Man's Skis. Peeter Laurits (curator)
12.04.18 – 13.05.18 Aesthetics of Boredom, Peeter Talvistu (curator)
17.05.18 – 22.06.18 Sven Saag
05.07.18 – 29.07.18 Indrek Aavik, Edgar Juhkov & Kaspar Tamsalu. Joanna Hoffmann (curator)
01.08.18 – 26.08.18 Kursi School 30
30.08.18 – 23.09.18 Fred Kotkas
27.09.18 – 21.10.18 TAVA – Tartu Light Festival. Kiwa (curator)
25.10.18 – 18.11.18 Raivo Korstnik. Meelis Tammemägi (curator)
22.11.18 – 16.12.18 Jevgeni Zolotko & Dénes Farkas
21.12.18 – 13.01.19 Annual Exhibition
Small Hall
15.03.18 – 08.04.18 Kadri Toom
12.04.18 – 13.05.18 Aesthetics of Boredom, Peeter Talvistu (curator)
17.05.18 – 22.06.18 Today I'm a Mermaid, Tomorrow a Unicorn Šelda Puķīte (curator)
05.07.18 – 29.07.18 Helgi-Maret Olvet, Blue Year
01.08.18 – 26.08.18 Kursi School 30
30.08.18 – 23.09.18 Siiri Jüris & Anastasia Lemberg Lvova
27.09.18 – 21.10.18 TAVA – Tartu Light Festival. Kiwa (curator)
25.10.18 – 18.11.18 Piret Kullerkupp
22.11.18 – 16.12.18 Evelyn Grzinich
21.12.18 – 13.01.19 Annual Exhibition
Monument Gallery
15.03.18 – 08.04.18 Kaisa Maasik
12.04.18 – 13.05.18 Aesthetics of Boredom, Peeter Talvistu (curator)
17.05.18 – 22.06.18 Mirjam Hinn
05.07.18 – 29.07.18 Alar Tuul
01.08.18 – 26.08.18 Kursi School 30
30.08.18 – 23.09.18 Kristin Reiman
27.09.18 – 21.10.18 TAVA – Tartu Light Festival. Kiwa (curator)
25.10.18 –18.11.18 Ulla Juske & Reet Varblane
22.11.18 –16.12.18 Aleksandr Tishkov
21.12.18–13.01.18 Annual Exhibition

Tartu Art Museum
Raekoja Square 18, Tartu
Open Wed, Fri–Sun 11am–7pm, Thu 11am–9pm
tartmus.ee
19.01.18 – 15.04.18 Metaphors for a Home
23.02.18 – 15.04.18 100-Year-Old Works in the Collection of Tartu Art Museum

Vabaduse Gallery
Vabaduse 6, Tallinn
Open: Mon–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat 11am–5pm
eaa.ee/vabadusegallery
16.02.18 – 29.04.18 The State is Not a Work of Art, Katerina Gregos (curator)
04.05.18 – 23.05.18 Lilian Mosolainen
25.05.18 – 13.06.18 Enn Põldroos
15.06.18 – 04.07.18 Erki Kasemets
06.07.18 – 25.07.18 Maie Helm
27.07.18 – 15.08.18 Aet Andresma-Tamm & Mare Soovik-Lobjakas
17.08.18 – 05.09.18 Lilja Blumenfeld
07.09.18 – 26.09.18 Urve Küttner
28.09.18 – 17.10.18 Paul Rodgers
19.10.18 – 07.11.18 Olga Jürgenson
09.11.18 – 28.11.18 Lillian Meister
30.11.18 – 19.12.18 Lilli-Krõõt Repnau
21.12.18 – 09.01.19 Ivi Arrak

Vaal Gallery
Tartu mnt 80d, Tallinn
Open Tue–Fri 12pm–6pm, Sat 12pm–4pm
vaal.ee
March – April Mauri Gross
April – May Estonian Sculptors' Union
June – July Kristel Saan
August – September Young Painting, Kristi Kongi (curator)
October – November Peeter Laurits
November – December Laurensius

Voronja Gallery
Kesk 22, Varnja alevik, Tartumaa
Open Wed–Sun 12pm–6pm
voronjagalerii.blogspot.com.ee
Boatshed Gallery
17.06.18 Seven Sisters, Otso Kantokorpi (curator)
Artists: Emma Helle, Kaisu Koivisto, Tuuli Saarekas, Sanni Seppo, Minnamari Toukola, Pauliina Turakka Purhonen & Milja Viita
Sauna Gallery
Spring 2018 The Evenings are Quiet Here, Ly Lestberg
July – August 2018 Siamese Sauna, Peter Laurits

TAB

2019 CURATORIAL COMPETITION IS OPEN

Deadline
24 April 2018

TAB is taking place
September–October
2019

Competition brief
arhitektuurikeskus.ee

The aim of the TAB 2019 curatorial competition is to find the best theme and team for organizing the 5th Tallinn Architecture Biennale. The task of the curator is to set up an innovative and responsive theme related to the context of Estonia and relevant in the contemporary world of architecture. The main theme must be centred around architecture and/or urban planning.

Tallinn Architecture Biennale TAB is an architecture festival with a diverse international programme that fosters synergies between architecture and the general public, introduces the local architecture culture, addresses relevant issues in architecture and delves into the future of the field. TAB 2019 will take place in September and October 2019, with the opening week in September.

TAB 2017 “bioTallinn” was exploring the possibilities of applying biotechnology and IT in architecture and urban design.

TAB 2015 “Self-Driven City” was looking into the changes and opportunities that our cities will be facing once we start using self-driven cars.

TAB 2013 “Recycling Socialism” was exploring the modernist and socialist architecture from the 1960s to the 1980s.

TAB 2011 “Landscape Urbanism” concentrated on the hybrid issue of landscape urbanism.



Estonian Art 20



Foto: Mark Raidpere

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A series of architectural interventions transforms the church
of the Santa Maria Ausiliatrice into the Weak Monument Pavilion.

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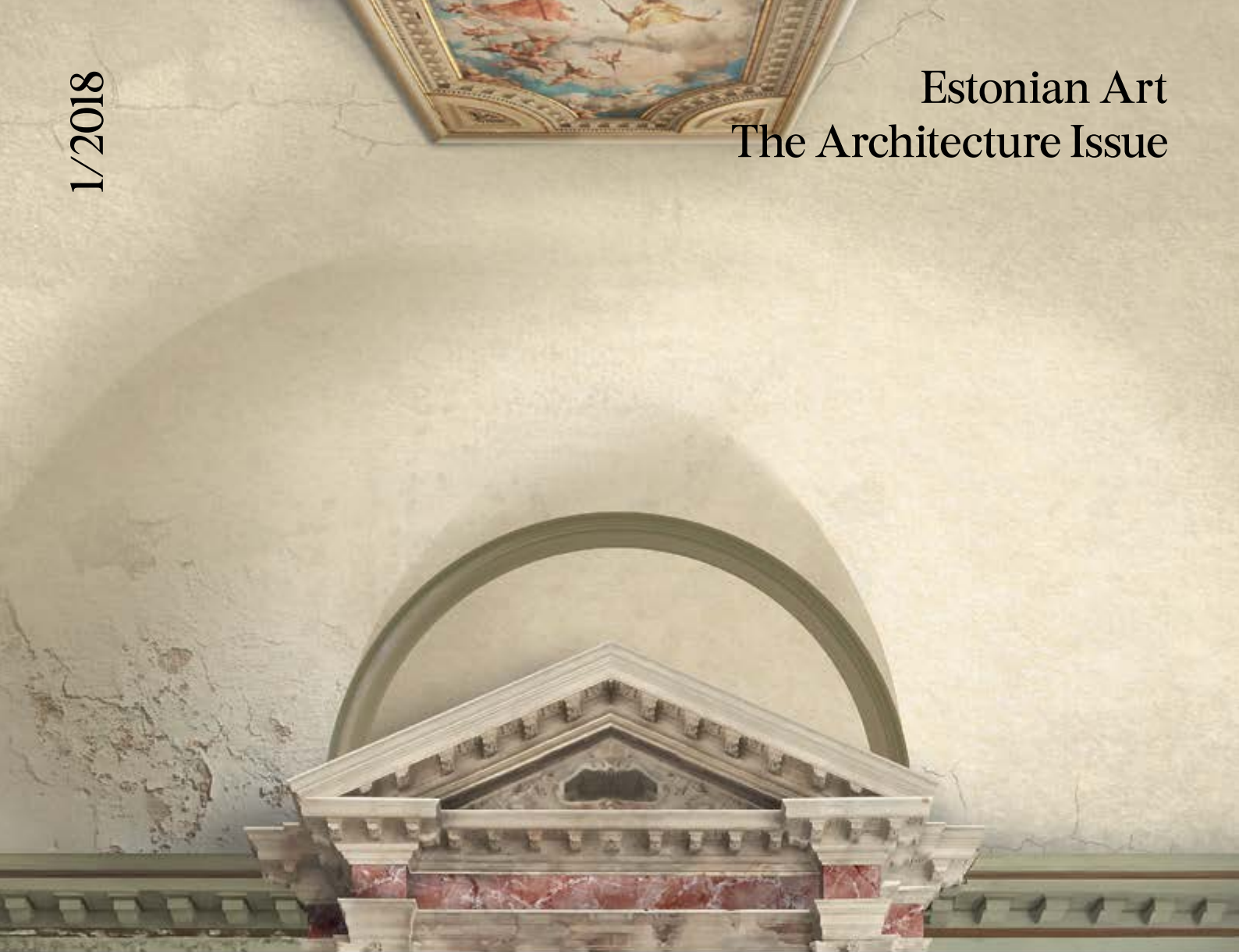
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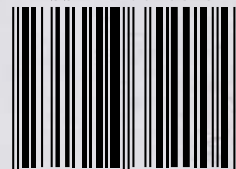
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