

Estonian Art The Archive Issue

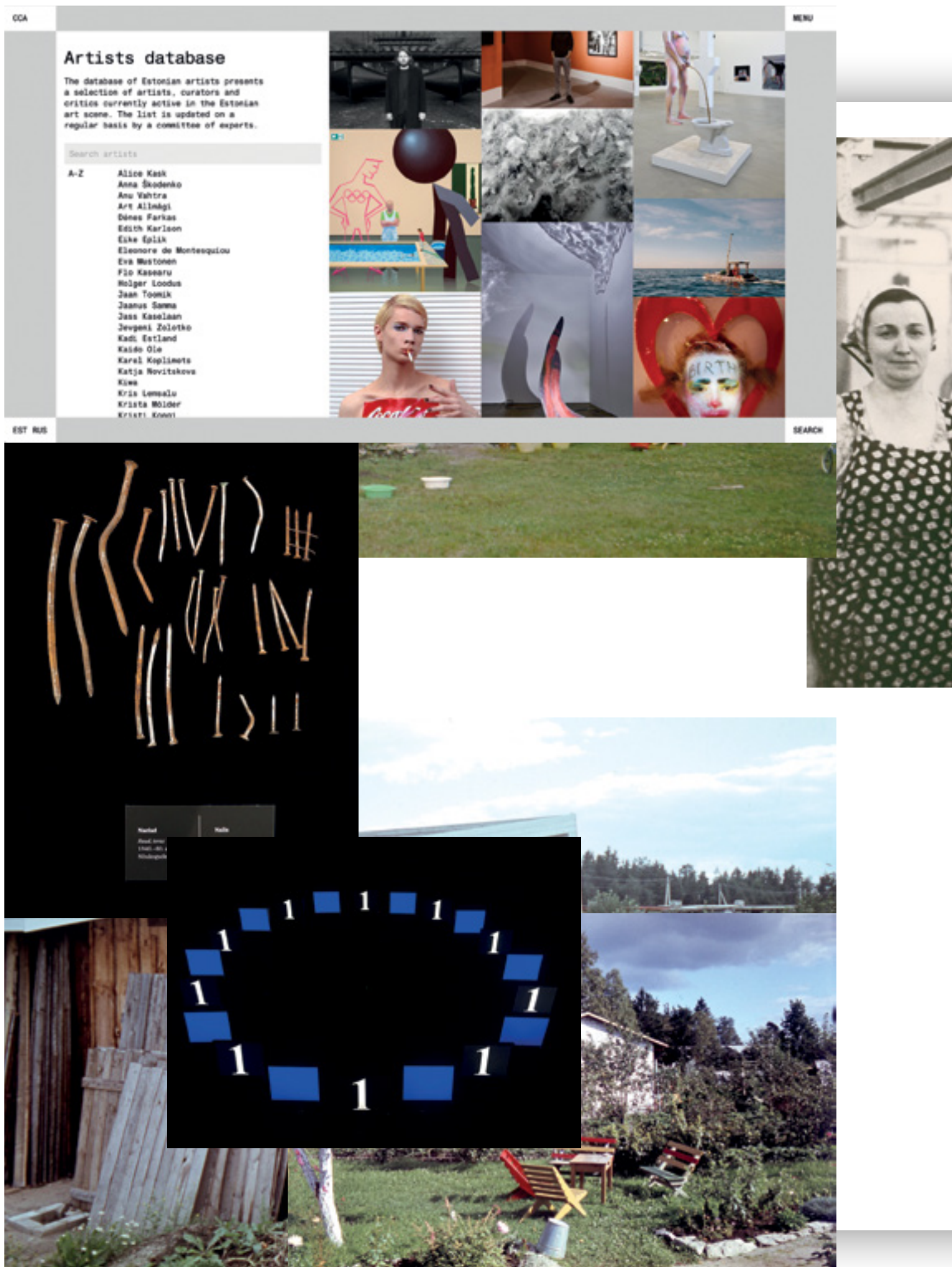
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Estonian Art 1/2020



All human beings suffer from mal d'archive, from archive fever or an archive sickness, which is the compulsion towards archiving.

—Ernst van Alphen

The Archive Issue

First and foremost, it must be mentioned that all of the articles for the Archive Issue were written well before the COVID–19 lockdown. The fate of several exhibitions mentioned in this issue is uncertain and the long-lasting effect of the global lockdown on art, culture, and on every other aspect of our lives, is still unforeseen. However, no matter what the future brings, humankind always has and always will suffer from *mal d'archive*.¹ Currently, this can be observed in the way in which people are urged to keep diaries during their quarantine—as a way of materialising the fleeting present, and also as a form of therapy. It also manifests itself in the huge numbers of virtual museum tours, digital collections and archives that opened to the public during the lockdown. Digital culture has never been more important than now when the majority of the world is forced into social isolation with the screen as the main mediator of the world.

As humans, we depend on archives in order to remember and to make sense of the world. The compulsion to collect, store and organise is something inherent to humanity. The archive itself is modernist by birth and it reached its dark potential during the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Archives are connected to time, yet they are not necessarily linear but open-ended—thus, leaving room for remembering, forgetting, rethinking and reinterpreting. They have the power to shape our social and cultural memory. Archives have many different forms, aims and uses, but they all have something in common—they are subject to the obsessive practices of administration by humans. They are a selection, a collection, a presentation—

as incomplete in their essence as they are complete, and never passive.

This issue of Estonian Art magazine focuses on the different facets of archives in art, which are relevant at this very moment—the digital era. To begin with, archives as part of artistic practices, a method which can be traced back to the 1960s, is still a significant way for artists to address the topics of past, present and future. This can be seen, for example, in the works of **Bitá Razavi**, analysed here by **Francisco Martínez**, and **Maria Kapajeva**, whose visual essay for this issue is accompanied by **Linda Kaljundi**'s foreword. With very different approaches and aims, both of these artists deal with questions associated with present pasts and identity, while using archives as a tool to create personal and collective narratives.

Exhibitions are also collections made by the curator. In **Zane Zajančauska**'s interview with **Šelda Puķīte**, who is curating an exhibition during the Riga Photography Biennial that focuses on collecting as an artistic practice and includes several Estonian artists, the curator admits that every exhibition is her own *Wunderkammer*, a cabinet of curiosities, which produces new information through a dialogue between different artworks. Puķīte is also pointing to the fact that no matter how personal or small a collection is, it always has a wider cultural and social context.

This issue of the magazine also explores the relationship between archives and architecture, which perhaps tends to resist being subject to this kind of subordination. **Sandra Mälk** writes about collecting architectural sketches and technical drawings based

on the personal archive of the Estonian architect **Maire Annus** (1941–2014), while **Triin Ojari** discusses the pleasures of putting together fragments from a box of photographs, referring to a collection of Soviet era summer cottages photographed by architect and amateur photographer Enno Raag (1926–2006).

The problematics between institutions and their archives, including collecting and digitisation, is discussed here in three articles: **Marika Agu** presents a reportage from the Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art archive, explaining the challenges facing an archive worker in defining the several cultural layers of the centre. **Annika Räim** highlights some of the complexities of creating a new permanent exhibition at Kumu Art Museum based on art in the 1990s, which was a turbulent decade of new media and ephemeral artworks, and the Head of the Digital Collection at the Art Museum of Estonia, **Ivar-Kristjan Hein**, writes about the problems and difficulties associated with digitising artworks.

In the final section of the Archive Issue, art historian and art worker **Maarin Ektermann** offers ten books to read from her recent enjoyable reading experiences. Her suggestions are based on her reading diary that she keeps on her Instagram account (#maarinloeb). This section also includes a small selection of virtual tours and digitally accessible archives and collections in Estonia, to keep you company until the exhibitions and museums are open again.

Archives, collecting, storing and preserving are especially important topics now as 2020 has been declared the year of digital culture by the Ministry of Culture and the National Archives of Estonia celebrates its centennial. Several of these articles refer to the difficulties of collecting different media, from ephemeral and temporary artworks to digital materials which are constantly threatened by the rapid development of technology. During these times of global crisis, digital access has become crucial—everything that can, will move online.

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Jacques Derrida “Mal d’archive: Une
impression freudienne” (Archive Fever:
A Freudian Impression) published in 1995,
translated into English in 1996.

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Maria Kapajeva

Dream is Wonderful, Yet Unclear

Visual essay

Women. Mostly women. Standing in groups. Looking into the camera. Almost never alone. In the factory. And out there, in leisure spaces. We all think of different things as we are looking at these images and their re-contextualisations in Maria Kapajeva's *Dream is Wonderful, Yet Unclear* project, which focuses on the former workers of the Kreenholm textile mill. We might be tempted to use "dream" as a code to this universe. And we might end up thinking how these visions of future have become history, turned into past futures.

But it is not only someone's visions of the future that have disappeared. As a historian, whenever I see this project, I always think how and why a past can be forgotten. So, more than anything else, I see it through the lenses of amnesia. In post-Soviet Estonia, we do not ask very often: whose eyes do we see the history of the country through? Perhaps because it is an inconvenient question. But perhaps also because it is obvious enough. Emphasis on the Estonian rural and urban middle class means that mainstream Estonian history excludes large parts of the society, including workers, Estonian Russians, and even more so Estonian Russian women.

In this situation, artistic research has become a valuable medium of cultural memory. In recent years, a number of artists have done much to give voice to the stories of those people who have been marginalised in historical memory—whose experiences are not reflected in textbooks, museums, films, etc. While doing so, art-based research has also demonstrated the value of personal, autobiographical archives, as well as of vernacular photography and film.

Art has the advantage of not offering overly simplified answers. It can provoke the audience—and historians—to ask new and complicated questions. This project, for example, has wonderfully brought forth the importance of dreams. It encourages us to explore the relationship between the public images and personal

identities of the Soviet working class. Harsh work in the textile mill is far from the glamour of the life of workers shown in Socialist Realist films and visual culture. Yet it would not make sense to claim the actual experience as "true" and the virtual one as "untrue", as the latter has a discursive reality of its own. There also appears another dream, which relates to the importance of the collective and solidarity. This reminds us of the need to look into the rapid changes of the 1990s not only in the sense of the massive loss of employment among workers, but also the massive loss of both group and individual status and identity.

The project clearly has a strong local dimension. It is closely tied to the local community in Narva. In the Estonian context, it highlights the serious need to collect and give voice to the stories of local Russians, showing how the histories of these people can otherwise be hopelessly overshadowed by both past and present stereotypes: the positive Soviet-era image of the heroic worker and the negative post-Soviet image of the unskilled immigrant workforce. Looming large in historical memory, both stereotypes leave little room for the agency and individual histories of the people behind them. At the same time, one can also look at this project from a much broader, global and transnational perspective, as the issues it discusses relate to post-Soviet transformations in Eastern Europe, post-industrial changes across the globe, as well as the identity and history of women in the industrial and post-industrial age.

This visual essay is created by MARIA KAPAJEVA especially for Estonian Art based on the layout of her new book 'Dream Is Wonderful, Yet Unclear' published by Milda Books in April 2020.



Tõuke siia tööle tulemiseks andis mulle film „Helge tee“, kus mängis peaosa Ljubov Orlova. Ta kõndis tsehhis tööpinkide vahel ringi ja laulis. Filmis on kõik muidugi teisiti kui elus. Kuid mulle meeldis see väga.

Прийти сюда работать меня сподвиг кинофильм «Светлый путь», там главную роль играла Любовь Орлова. Она в фильме по цеху между станками ходила и пела. В кино, конечно, совсем не так, как в жизни. Но мне это очень понравилось.

The film *The Bright Way* inspired me to come work here. The main role in it was played by Lyubov Orlova. In the film, she meandered amongst the machinery and sang. Cinema, of course, is not real life. But I really liked it.



Töö oli väga kaasakiskuv: mulle meeldis hallata kolmekümmend kuut ja isegi rohkemaid kangastelgesid korraga ja tunda end nende perenaisena. See tekitas uhke tunde – ma suudan!

Работа очень увлекла: мне понравилось управлять тридцатью шестью, и даже большим числом станков, и чувствовать себя их хозяйкой. Открывалось такое чувство гордости – я могу!

The work fascinated me: I enjoyed to manage thirty six or sometimes even more looms, to feel their master. The work gave me a feeling of self-proud: I can do it!

Naiste jaoks on kolmes vahetuses töötamine raske. Kombineerida pereelu ja tööd on tõesti raske. Meeste jaoks ei ole see nii hull – nemad tulevad töölt, söövad ja siis diivanikesele. Aga naine muudkui pöörleb ja keerleb, küll pliidi ees, küll lastega.

Для женщины работать в три смены – это тяжело. Совмещать семью и работу – очень тяжело. Для мужчин это всё-таки не так: они придут с работы, поедят и на диванчик. А жена крутится и вертится: то у плиты, то с детьми.

It is very hard for a woman to work three shifts. It is difficult to combine work and family. It is much easier for men: they come from work, they eat and head straight to the sofa. In the meantime, his wife would be turning and spinning around: cooking, taking care of children, and so on.



55 on naiste jaoks see vanus, kui nad hakkavad lõpuks teada saama, mida nad tahavad. Neil on lõpuks ometi aega enda peale mõelda – lapsed on juba suured ja kõik on stabiliseerunud. Ja siis äkki pole ei tööd ega raha. Kas te teate, kui õudne see on?

Возраст 55 лет для женщины – это только когда она начинает осознавать чего ей хочется. У неё наконец появляется время подумать о себе: дети уже выросли и всё стабилизировалось. А тут вдруг нет работы и денег. Вы знаете, как это страшно?

Fifty five is an age when a woman starts to realise what she actually wants in life. Finally she has got some time for herself: the kids have grown up and life is stable. And then suddenly there is no job and no money. Can you imagine how horrifying that is!



Ma mäletan ainult, et see oli millalgi päeva esimeses pooles. Ma läksin jala vabrikust koju ja vihma sadas. Ma kõndisin ja ulgusin, sõimasin kõiki ja kõike selle eest, mis oli juhtunud.

Я только помню, что это было где-то в первой половине дня. Я шла с фабрики пешком, и лил дождь. Я шла и ревела, ругала всех и вся за то, что так случилось.

The only thing I remember it was an early afternoon. I was walking from the factory and it was raining. I was walking and crying, swearing at everyone and everything for what had happened to me.



Need, kes jäid viimastena tööle, ütlesid: „Koondage juba ometi, me oleme nii väsinud kartmast ja ootamast.“

Те, кто остались работать последними, говорили: «Да сократили бы уже наконец, так надоело бояться и ждать».

Those who kept the job for longest used to say: “I’d rather get finally fired, I am so tired of waiting and being afraid.”



Mulle meeldib väga vaadata seriaale ja filme, kuid nendes ei näidata praegu üldse tootmist. Kõik istuvad ainult kontorites, nagu keegi ei teekski tööd. Aga mina vaatan ja mõtlen, kust siis tulevad need kotikesed ja muud asjad? Kes neid toodab?

Я очень люблю смотреть сериалы и фильмы, но в них сейчас совсем не показывают производство. Все только сидят в конторах и в офисах – как будто никто не работает. А я смотрю и думаю, а откуда тогда берутся сумочки и другие вещи, кто их производит?

I love watching television series and films, but nowadays they never show people working in manufacturing. Everyone is always sitting around in bureaus and offices – as if nobody is working. I am sitting and thinking – then where do handbags and other things come from, who makes them?

Bitra Razavi in a Reparative Mode

A Collection of Repairs

When was the last time you repaired something?
And what do you repair when you fix something?

Over the last four years, Bitra Razavi (Tehran, 1983) has been renovating an abandoned house in the Estonian countryside and an apartment in Tartu, documenting the mundane tasks done and also gathering different tools and traces that she encountered during the rebuilding process—as if it were an exercise in contemporary archaeology. Parts of a stove, furniture tags, tiles, nails, a leather drawer handle, repair tools, samplers of wallpapers, insulation fibre and board, mattress springs, a paint can, a drill, electric wires, old newspapers, a toilet seat cover and all sorts of unidentifiable things... “You are displaying trash and garbage”, said a visitor during the opening of Bitra’s ‘Museum of Baltic Remont’ at the Kogo Gallery in Tartu (17 October – 16 November 2019; in June 2020, displayed at the Juhan Liiv museum).

The traces exhibited in the Museum of Baltic Remont talk of a time in which everyday life was an “object of constant improvement”—a society of *remont*.¹ This is a museum of little things, of everyday remedies to the excesses of modernity, of the Russian *byt'*, of the shortage economy, of imaginary resourcefulness in the context of scarcity, of creating symbolic spaces of autonomy, corners of freedom and camaraderie.

Bitra kindly invited me to visit the exhibition and discuss repair from an anthropological perspective. Bitra then explained her fascination with the various materials that have been used to refurbish homes in the

Baltic region throughout years of changing economic and political contexts. In the exhibition, she specifically engages with materials that were used during the Soviet era to insulate and renovate these kinds of country houses, presenting the materials as if they were samples for an ethnographic study.

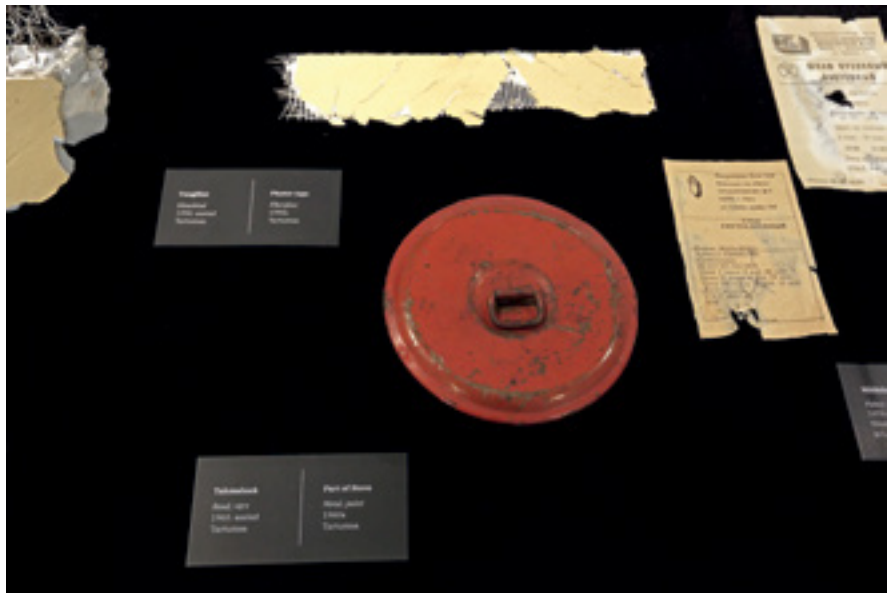
The pieces of wallpaper and the variegated array of leftovers appear as maps that give access to a past future. We encounter the corpse of belonging and also of unrooting, of multiple attachments to places and to people, like a dissected cartography, leaving emotional veins and arteries open. Nowadays, however, we live in an era of material abundance and excess of things, of digital networks, and in some cases, of poverty of imagination and detachment from life cycles.

This exhibition is also a declaration of necessity after the succession of rooting and unrooting processes on the part of the artist. Bitra aimed at constructing a sense of community and, the best way she found to do so, was to rebuild a house and refurbish an apartment. It does not matter if she lacked the skills because she managed to make friends along the way, working with them and with neighbors. For example, one neighbor told her that he could help build the stove in exchange for two of her artworks; Bitra replied that it sounded like a great idea but quite probably he won’t like to have her artworks hanging on the walls of his house. This was because her art is not made to be *nice*, but to build something bigger and transcendental: call it home, family, legacy, care or community.

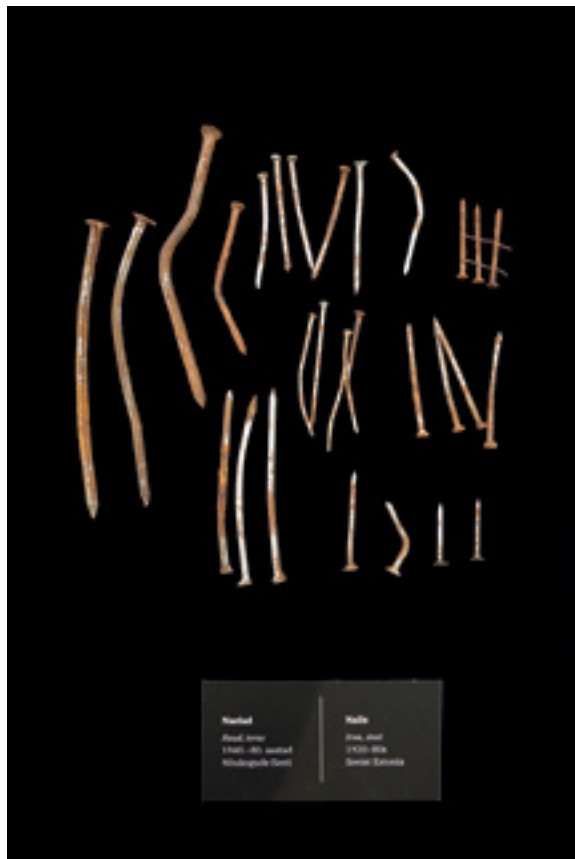
Then Bitra confessed that: “No one has ever bought any of my works, which is something I ponder on, and

Bitra Razavi.
Museum of Baltic Remont. 2019.
Installation,
dimensions
variable.
Installation view
at Kogo Gallery.
Photo Bitra Razavi





Museum of Baltic Remont. 2019. Installation, dimensions variable. Installation view at Kogo Gallery. Photo Bitra Razavi



at the same time I am proud of it; as if my works were not made to be sellable. None of my works have ever left me. And my new works are a house and an apartment, which could not be part of the collection of any museum as such”, while acknowledging that no museum or gallery has bought any of her works yet. However, in the last few months, three of her works have been acquired by two international institutions...

Heritage in the Making

By now you might have noticed that Bitra is not the only maker of her art. She leaves room for other agents to step in, other people, other natural forces and elements, the work of time, the work of failure, the work of tools and micro-organisms: But why was a piece of underwear hidden between the layers of the wall in The Yellow House? And what does it tell about the previous owners and also about our identity as bricoleurs?

Bitra's Museum of Baltic Remont is not simply informed by *remont*, but informative about it, showing how it takes place within traditional structures and matter. This artist demonstrates that a careful observation of decay and the embodied engagement with mutable things might be an original form of storytelling.

For her, to work with her hands is a form of resting and of rehearsing hospitality. Indeed, hospitality is a key trope in Bitra's work: “I was born in Tehran, and what I like the most in Iranian culture is the notion of hospitality. My home is always prepared for guests. I don't receive many guests after all, but I am always ready to host visits. I have noticed that even when

I engage in repairs, I look at it from the eyes of possible visitors ... I grew up in Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, and back then there was the feeling of living in a closed society, and an overwhelming sense of limits—of resources, materials, tools, knowledge... and also the movies and music we listen to. Then the borders slowly opened up. Something similar has happened in Estonia, from the Soviet time to the present. This has resulted in different generations having different relations to things, and also a sense of vanishing, that something is disappearing. I am personally influenced by this idea of crossing borders, and also by the aesthetics of vanishing”.

Identity and community are critical tropes in Bitra's work. For instance, in 2011, she prepared a video installation showing her performative marriage with Jaakko Karhunen at the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Alongside the video-documentation, she provided the legal documents of the marriage and a certificate applying for Finnish residency (indeed, this was a key part of both the logical motivation behind the performance and its potential critique). Bitra is interested in how identities are formed by both legal documents and objects, paying attention to the performances, rituals, enactments that they—objects and legal requirements—correspondingly generate.

Another example is her work ‘An Observation on Inhabitants of a Utopia’, based on Bitra's experience as a cleaner in different apartments of Helsinki, noticing that Iittala designs are placed to demonstrate or perform Finnish identity. Also, in ‘Pictures from Our Future, Pictures from Our Past’, she engages with the current

Museum of Baltic Remont. 2019. Installation, dimensions variable. Installation view at Kogo Gallery. Photos Bitra Razavi



Video still. Bitra Razavi. The Essential Guide to Remont. 2019. HD video, B&W, sound, duration 8' 35'', original language Estonian



Photo by
Kiur Kaasik

attitudes to newcomers in Estonia, with a photo series triggered by a comment heard by Bitá in Tartu: “This is what our future looks like”, while pointing at her.

Museum collections are made up of items that come from the past and are assembled with the intention of producing a whole that is larger than its parts.² In this case, however, the Museum of Baltic Remont collection is composed of something closer to ephemeral art, a quasi-technical set of elements produced in the present and with a limited lifespan. Bitá’s collection is a form of documentation in progress, a particular point of entry into the making of things, a knot through which to explore the aesthetic relationality of things, materialising openings and closures in a larger network. Often, collections are considered as a home for objects, but in Bitá’s case, the collection of repairs is rather a medium—for hospitality, for knowledge-making, for political concern. Her work appears then as heritage in the making,³ a sort of preservation without permission.⁴

Ecologies of Care

When listening to Bitá talking of cohabitation and accommodation, it seems, however, that the object of work is the artist herself, and the Museum of Remont a material portrait of her landing in Estonia. There is indeed a sense of melancholy in her work, one which reminds one of the Georgian artist Nino Kvrivishvili’s installation ‘Searching for Traces’. Nino tells the stories of weavers and their families in Gori, making visible how networks of memories are formed through a series of objects, in some cases capturing involuntary

retrospection and recovering thoughts and ideas that remained unacknowledged for a long time by rescuing neglected objects.⁵

In this sense, repairing cannot simply be reduced to utilitarian purposes, but also fulfils a symbolic ability for recuperating the self, healing the alienating breach of late-modernity and inter-generational ruptures and asynchrony. This was also shown, for instance, by Estonian artist Flo Kasearu, who after regaining a family house (albeit in a dilapidated condition) on the basis of the post-Soviet restitution law, decided to renovate it and transform it into the Flo Kasearu’s House Museum (FKM). Different kinds of artworks form the FKM collection: film, sculpture, ready-mades, performance, installations, drawings, rental ads—all playfully arranged.

To repair is, therefore, to connect: times, people, things. This is the key message, indeed, of artist Kader Attia, who has been practicing repair as a form of cross-cultural addition, re-appropriation and translation. Yet in its conceptual form, repair can be considered not just as therapeutic, in the sense of recovery and healing, but also political: making visible, activating, bringing to the fore, keeping people busy, as shown in the exhibition ‘Aesthetics of Repair in Contemporary Georgia’ that I organized with Marika Agu (TartMus 2016).

Discussions of repair are particularly relevant in Estonia; in this country, remains of the Soviet past were reduced to zero-value, to waste, and yet they are still crucial to understand the present, and are being rediscovered by a new younger generation.⁶ While taking care of things, and of people, we are being political,

coming to terms with matter and with our surroundings, engaging in acts that go back on ourselves, bringing about transformative knowledge, intervening in the world, liberating negativism.

Repairing is part of the cultivation of care. As Bitá’s work reminds us, the enactment of care is a matter of everyday interactions.⁷ However, as in the case of the labour of care, repair work has been overlooked in modern societies, as it favours persistence, attentiveness and accumulation instead of heroic acts of innovation. As a result, caregivers and maintenance workers have been too often left themselves without care and support.⁸

Bitá does fixing and refurbishing as if it were a ceremony of renewal and healing, making community, practicing hospitality—as a hands-on mode of ethical agency that help us establishing stability in a broken world and to deal with the coming apart of things. In the Museum of Baltic Remont, we encounter Bitá’s inner layers too; they are exposed, paradoxically, through what is removed, disposed and ephemeral. We are talking of a crafting existence, of the ordinary affects of repair, and of material sensitivity.⁹

Life is then presented as a constant process of creating a home away from home, negotiating and generating further mixed traces—which remain together in the form of unstable equilibria; as our fragile world does too.

Bitá Razavi.
Museum of Baltic
Remont. 2019.
Installation,
dimensions
variable.
Installation view
at Kogo Gallery.
Photo Bitá Razavi



¹ Gerasimova, Ekaterina, and Sofia Chuikina. 2009. ‘The Repair Society’. *Russian Studies in History* 48 (1): 58–74, p. 59.

² Pearce, Susan 1992. *Museums, Objects, and Collections*. Leicester: Leicester University Press. Martínez, Francisco 2019b. ‘The inertia of collections. Changes against the grain in the Rosenlew Museum of Pori, Finland’. *Museum Worlds* 7: 23–44.

³ DeSilvey, Caitlin 2006. ‘Observed decay: Telling stories with mutable things’. *Journal of Material Culture* 11 (3): 318–38.

⁴ Brand, Steward 2012. ‘Preservation without Permission: the Paris Urban eXperiment’. *Introduction to the Long Now Seminar*, November 13. <http://longnow.org/seminars/02012/nov/13/preservation-without-permission-paris-urban-experiment>

⁵ Grossman, Alyssa 2015. ‘Forgotten domestic objects. Capturing involuntary memories in post-Communist Bucharest’. *Home Cultures* 12 (3): 291–310.

⁶ Martínez, Francisco 2018. *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia*. London: UCL Press. <https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/109623>

⁷ Fisher, B. and J. Tronto (1990) ‘Toward a feminist theory of caring’, in E.K. Abel and M.K. Nelson (eds.) *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women’s Lives*. New York: SUNY Press.

⁸ Mattern, Shannon 2018. ‘Maintenance and Care.’ *Places* <https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/>

⁹ Martínez, Francisco 2017. ‘The Ordinary Affects of Repair’. *Eurozine* 16 March, <https://www.eurozine.com/the-ordinary-affects-of-repair/>



Bitā Razavi.
Museum of Baltic
Remont. 2019.
Installation,
dimensions
variable.
Installation view
at Kogo Gallery.
Photo Bitā Razavi

FRANCISCO MARTÍNEZ (1982) is a Lecturer in the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. In 2018, he was awarded the Early Career Prize of the European Association of Social Anthropologists. Francisco has been a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki and Aalto University. Currently, he is also the editor of the Berghahn book series 'Politics of Repair' and has published several books, including *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia*.

BITA RAZAVI (1983) born in Tehran, lives and works between Helsinki and the Estonian countryside. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Music from Tehran University of Arts and holds a Masters in Fine Art from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. Razavi reacts to and explores the agency of objects and systems as they act upon her and as she documents and records them.

Šelda Puķīte
Zane Zajančkauskā

Turning on the Peripheral Vision



Flo Kasearu.
Monument of the
Living Artist,
2013, sculpture

In the exhibition *Wunderkammer*, curator Šelda Puķīte explores the curiosity of contemporary artists, looking into their collections and proposing new affinities between them. We met and talked about the role of the image and collections in shaping and capturing the world for us.

The exhibition *Wunderkammer* is part of the international contemporary art event *Riga Photography Biennial*

2020 and is conceptually related to its focus—the archaeology of reality, which studies both the layers of our past to reveal new visions and perspectives of today as well as the legacy of the digital era. *Wunderkammer* is featuring works by Andrés Galeano, Flo Kasearu, Margit Lõhmus, Visvaldas Morkevičius, Jaanus Samma, Joachim Schmid, Iiu Susiraja, Diāna Tamane and Rvīns Varde.



Flo Kasearu.
Guided Tour of
FKM, 2014, video
still



Jaanus Samma.
Toilet Posters,
2016. Photo
Masha Kozhdan

It's 2020 and you're curating an exhibition on collecting as an artistic practice, referencing the tradition of *cabinets of curiosities*. Why now? Do you feel there is something peculiar happening with curiosity nowadays?

ŠELDA PUĶĪTE (Š.P.): I was triggered both by a sense of the overproduction of images and information that we live in and also that this theme reflects what artists are doing right now, what they are interested in. Although it is nothing new, it still happens more and more often that artists choose to work with vernacular photography, found images, sourcing from flea markets or random family albums. I think with all that digging we are trying to understand how the world looks right now and what can we say or understand about it through our selections. Nowadays, it is no longer museums as cabinets of curiosities, but it's the image and the collection of images that try to capture what is precious for us or what we are trying to deal with. An image has become the cabinet of curiosity.

Yet, at some point, we slide from the world of images into the world of objects. An exhibition exists in a realm of objects, and an image even if found on the internet becomes an object once brought into the exhibition space. Why is the realm of objects still important for you? Why will your cabinet of curiosities still be exhibited in the museum space, and not let's say your Instagram stream?

Š.P.: I still like to do exhibitions in the real, physical space. Partly because of inertia—I've been interested in exhibitions and thinking about them for such a long time. And for me—I hope artists won't kill me for saying—it's a bit like a doll's house, it's my *Wunderkammer*. Every exhibition is my collection, it's not a collection to keep, but I can play with it, not only showing separate artists' works but also letting them intermingle with each other, thus changing or even making up the stories I tell through that. Just like in the tradition of the cabinet of curiosities, where how the collector narrated it became an important element.

Do you focus on the collections of images in this exhibition?

Š.P.: For me, it doesn't matter; for me, everything is an image. One of the artists in the exhibition who represents that very well is Flo Kasearu with her *Flo Kasearu House Museum*. It has become

the concept of a living artist's museum and it explores what that actually could be, how it could grow, combining both Flo's works, works by other artists using the house as a residency or just as a place to visit, for collaborative works, mythologies around the house that had existed for years or have been created by Flo, or the dead plant collection, all of it is a constantly growing collection, like a landscape which becomes more and more dense with information.

In the *Wunderkammer* exhibition, Flo Kasearu's collection will gently overtake the exhibition, in a way. The building of the Latvian Museum of Photography, which is an old merchant's house more than four centuries old with beautiful wooden stairs, is reminiscent of some old imagined home. So, I decided to invite Flo to treat it as her house, to act as if the works of other artists also became a part of her collection.

Looking from today's perspective, we are critical of the tradition of cabinets of curiosities because of its colonial baggage: a privileged class collecting and interpreting the cultures of others. In Flo Kasearu's case she is mapping and interpreting her own world, how is it with other collections that you show?

Š.P.: Another Estonian artist that we'll be showing, Jaanus Samma, is also kind of reflecting on himself but at the same time commenting upon wider, sensitive topics: identity, masculinity, sexuality. He revisits his childhood memories and collects reproductions from art and other books that have at least partly shaped him as an artist. And he reuses them as toilet posters. They will also be exhibited in the museum toilets, both male and female, which are still separated in Latvia.

Having them exhibited in toilets brings in a much wider context, not only because it is a very private space, but it is also very connected to questions of sexuality and especially homosexuality. Toilets have long since been places of communication—where one can leave messages by writing or scratching on the wall, staying anonymous or directing the message to a specific person. And for gays, when it was illegal to be who you are, toilets also became secret meeting places. Therefore, although a personal collection, it brings in wider themes.

But there will also be other works in the *Wunderkammer* that are looking at the habits of others and not so much at the self. Both Joachim Schmid and Andrés Galeano are interested in anonymous crowds—in what they are interested in and how they depict the world in their everyday practices. And artists with their selection of images that are created by others, suddenly point at some kind of pattern, almost an archetypal view of the world. We might think that

Joachim Schmid.
From series
Estrelas amadas
(Beloved Stars),
2013



Jaanus Samma.
Toilet Posters,
2016

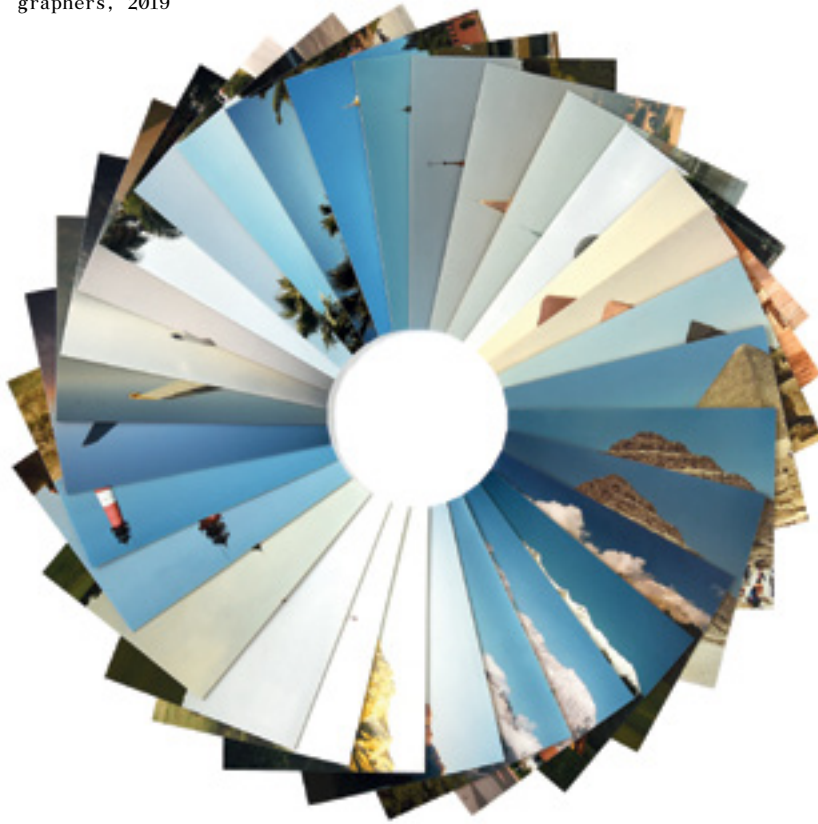


Joachim Schmid.
Estrelas amadas
(Beloved Stars),
2013. Installation
view

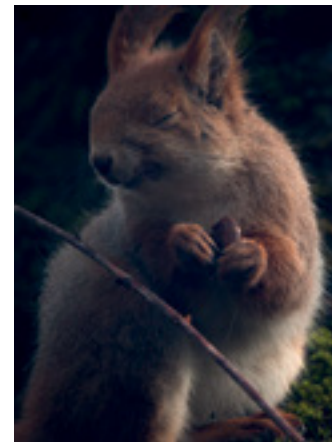


Andrés Galeano.
Oval rainbow #3.
From series
Unknown Photo-
graphers, 2013

Andrés Galeano.
Circular Skies
#21. From series
Unknown Photo-
graphers, 2019



Iiu Susiraja.
Freak Grass, 2019



Rvins Varde.
Squirrel,
16/03/2019



Iiu Susiraja.
Homemade Anarchy,
2019



Diana Tamane.
From series
Family
Album II, 2013

we are so special and different, while through their collections you realize that you're not that different at all, many things we do are just the same as everyone else; we are unknowingly trained to look at the world in a certain way and when we pick up the camera and photograph something, we do it in a very similar way. Nowadays, Instagram is a good example of this—there are a lot of identical images.

Let's do a thought experiment! Your *Wunderkammer* containing all these collections that interpret the lives of artists themselves or the lives of others, is discovered in 1,000 years by a yet unknown civilization and it is their only source for getting to know us, can you try to imagine what the story is that you are telling them with this exhibition?

Š.P.: Although it is only a microworld that I have built, I wouldn't mind someone rediscovering it, because I think it actually tells a lot. It talks about all kinds of weird habits that we have; for example, collecting. As in Schmid's case, collecting images of popstars and not only collecting but then afterwards personalizing them. In Schmid's collection of photographs found in Portugal, there has been someone who not only collected images of celebrities but coloured their lips and nails with a bright red colour. There is this curiosity about a person we don't know that suddenly electrifies the work.

Another feature I hope will be appreciated is humour. Iiu Susiraja very bravely, I'm actually angry every time I have to say 'very bravely', but still, in a sense very bravely uses herself as a model and puts herself in curious positions talking about the stereotypical female world and domestic things in a humorous way with often alarming weirdness.

Or Rvins Varde, whose photographs will be exhibited for the very first time. He is at the moment more known as a writer. Varde photographs birds in the parks and graveyards of Riga, and that seems to be something exotic, something that is expected to live in forests or maybe even different geographical zones. We are knowledgeable about the pigeons or crows and sparrows that we are used to seeing everywhere, but there are also other beautiful creatures near us.

When we go to exhibitions, we experience the space and the works in a very narrow, I would say, horizontal perspective. Sometimes there are artists who put works in unexpected places and only from the description do you realize that you have to find a little rainbow somewhere in the corner. For Rvins Varde's works, we will also be placing photographs of birds somewhere high up or very low down where you might not notice them immediately. This will be done to point out

that we actually see the world most of the time through a very small frame, almost like looking through a camera lens. We are not using our peripheral vision.

Is your exhibition also a statement about museums as the official heirs to cabinets of curiosities?

Š.P.: Not necessarily. But there were a lot of influences that led me to the *Wunderkammer* exhibition. And the very first trigger was when I was still working at the Latvian National Museum of Art, and in the collection there were always those little things that no one knew what to do with—a little sculpture of a mouse or a death mask or many others. Except in grand retrospectives of particular artists, it is very hard to put those objects in any reasonable context. So, while working there I was thinking that I should make an exhibition of curiosities using only those objects. There are objects in collections that are interesting, not because they are precious but because they are not appreciated. I haven't done it yet, but that idea helped me to develop the *Wunderkammer* exhibition. Although I do plan to return to the original idea as well. I want to switch on our peripheral vision with respect to museum collections.



Margit Lõhmus.
First white dog,
on Brick Lane,
London, 2010.
From series White
Dog Collection,
2010-ongoing

Triin Ojari

Browsing Through a Collection of Photographs

Visvaldas
Morkevičius.
Portretzine.
Issue Gintas K,
2020



ŠELDA PUĶĪTE (1986) is a Latvian
freelance art critic, curator and
researcher living in Estonia.
Šelda's special interest is projects
that examine the contact-points
between socio-political issues, mass
culture and art executed through
interdisciplinary research and
whimsical presentation.

ZANE ZAJANČKAUSKA (1984) is a curator
and author who lives and works in
Riga. Her recent curatorial work
includes the exhibition "Just on
Time" (Museum of Decorative Arts and
Design, Riga), the public programme
for the Riga International Biennial of
Contemporary Art, and the exhibition
You've Got 1243 Unread Messages
(Latvian National Museum of Art).



Photos by Enno Raag, courtesy of
the Estonian Museum of Architecture

Browsing Through a Collection of Photographs

Estonian Art 1/2020

Archives can be more or less complete, reach us anonymously or with detailed descriptions, consist of dispersed fragments from which everyone can put together their own new world. This random aspect of the specific material composition of archives, and the resulting infinite possibilities for interpretation, encourage us to inspect them in a closer way and create links, trying to assemble the puzzle. Therefore, a box of photographs that arrived at the museum years ago may serve as a missing link, paving the way for many other themes to unravel. A photograph is certainly a revealing testimony of the life, fashion and tastes of an era, but what is out of frame is just as interesting—who took the photograph and why, was this a random act or is there a pattern behind it, is it a dull documentation or a subjective view? How much can we read from the photograph without knowing anything about the photographer, the place it was taken or the object captured? Anonymity also has its charm, inspiring our sense of fantasy.

Subjective Architectural Photography

When you work at a museum, the archives become your food, and it is the incompleteness of the fragments that makes the work exciting. This is the case also here. It happened that years ago a collection of slides was brought to the Estonian Museum of Architecture, turning out to be a unique time capsule—long-lost spaces and built environments that by now have either been removed

or repeatedly overwritten. The photographer is known (and this also automatically changes our relationship to the images) to be Enno Raag (1926–2006), an architect who during the Soviet era worked for State Design Institute Eesti Tööstusprojekt for a long time and who was also an amateur photographer, which is quite common among architects, by the way. We do not know exactly what motivated him to take these pictures—as an architect he was interested in new buildings, probably also in the architecture produced by his company, but he was also inspired by construction as a process and its manifestations in landscapes. Alongside the carefully framed photographs, one can also find more arbitrary shots—the typical architectural photographs without people were side by side with images where random passers-by, excursion groups or merry gatherings had entered haphazardly. It says a lot about the context in which the photographs were taken, they were shot during some sort of group gatherings, on beautiful summer days, and targeting a classical refined style was not of importance for the photographer. These are photographs made for himself with the purpose of documenting beauty and novelty in construction according to his own subjective taste. Besides industrial architecture, which was Enno Raag’s professional field, his special interests were summer cottages, and to a lesser extent also recreational facilities and districts of private houses. So, he seemed to prefer the countryside to the city, small scale and the architect’s original vision to the large unified building blocks and generalizations.

At that time, excursions to see new architectural objects were quite common in the professional community. Summer cottage in Vääna, photographed in 1971



The A-frame building was one of the most popular local summer cottage types, the thatched roof added a sense of nationalism. Summer cottage at Rannamõisa, photographed in 1980





Summer cottage in Väana, photographed in 1971

The very first summer houses could only be 20 square meters in size. Summer cottage in Lohusalu, 1960s



The roof with a thick cornice was an absolute favourite in cottage architecture; the cornice, and the window and balcony railings were painted in lighter shades, in contrast to the dark brown wall. Summer cottage in Võsu, photographed in 1977

Building according to strict standard projects still left space for small self-made additions. Summer cottage in Harju County, 1970s





The state favoured the establishment of horticultural cooperatives, which were part of the national nutrition programme. As garden houses were mostly built by owners themselves, the process usually took many years. Garden houses in Kiisa, photographed in 1972



Freedom Accompanied by Rules

He was interested in the more private side of architecture. Raag visited the main resort areas of his time, such as Vääna-Jõesuu, Rannamõisa, Võsu, as well as Lahemaa and the surrounding areas of Pärnu. It is most likely that he visited these areas with larger groups—during the Soviet era it was very common for architects to organize tours to new objects; collegial criticism and frequent meetings to discuss new architecture were part of the design culture of that time. Social control and the definition of common goals were part of striving towards a ‘comradely’ group identity during the Soviet era; instead of the individual, the collective and its opinions prevailed. Another indicator of the multi-layered social phenomena is the chosen subject: summer cottages, holidays and leisure time. People working as hard as ants, making mortar for masonry in a land where copses have been cleared to make space for construction, piling stones and carrying wood, the most diverse-looking summer cottages pop up beside newly built roads, gardens with bedding plants emerge and curtains with large patterns are hung in front of windows. Naked people jumping from the sauna into water, sunbathing, having drinking parties in front of a grand fireplace at a resort centre, with ties loosely around the neck. This was, and at the same time, was not an officially accorded freedom, a private promise of happiness in a mass society, where everything was equal and regulated to the last detail. According to Soviet ideology, the summer cottage was not an alternative (like a private house) to the prefabricated apartment blocks, instead it complemented them, offering a temporary residence during the short summer months because the holidays were of national importance. The massive development of vegetable gardens was inspired by the need for active rest and cultivating a food supply. “In the land of socialism, work is an honour and a necessity for everyone. However, working hours must be used rationally; consequently, a rational use of leisure time is also required to ensure this,” one newspaper article stated in 1956, at a time when the first summer cottage plots were issued and standard designs for these houses produced. The state was taking responsibility for a qualified vacation—albeit while imposing norms and restrictions, as well as centralizing all resources. They made people believe they had an apparent choice in the matter, by building their own cottages, they had more freedom to express their own personal style and were being offered a temporary escape from “big brother”, from work and the city (i.e. getting away from civilization, to the forest or to a lake). A special category included the non-individual, work-related summer cottages in company-based resort centres, which represented even higher status “drinking vodka with the authorities”. Some even called it ‘legal exile’, freedom in the private space tolerated by the authorities, which in a controlled society could not, in fact, be either utterly private or inviolable.

Comrades Gardeners

The summer cottages, garden housing areas as well as all kinds of company-owned saunas and holiday resorts were still spatially controlled forms of recreation, which functioned based on a sense of community and a sense

of keeping order. To build the summer cottages, the cooperatives were organised—an association of employees of one or more institutions, which, with the support of its members, acted as an independent economic entity, had a bank account and independently organized the planning of the plots and designing of cottages on the land allocated by the state (in the city, the cooperatives for apartment buildings functioned in a similar manner). The size and layout of the plots, the size of the cottages, as well as the size of the greenhouses and auxiliary buildings had all been decided to a precise square meterage, and it must be said that despite the occasional conning and imprecise constructions, the Estonian resort areas looked very homogeneous, were well-tended and built according to plan. In order to ensure all of this, there were certain rules and procedures—committees, neighbourhood watches, comrade controls. As the vegetable gardens and garden housing districts were considered part of the national nutrition programme, even the fruit trees and shrubs had been counted by the state and neglecting them was out of the question. Productivity, rational use of resources and a kind of collective catharsis during the autumn harvest were all part of the summer cottage vacation. Building the summer cottage was also a long epopee of DIY activities, a rather painful process where, in addition to physical stamina, you had to prove your skill for outsourcing building materials as well as all kinds of building know-how. The cooperatives that occasionally grew to several hundred cottages were an ever-expanding landscape where the national control system sought to tame the proliferation of construction creativity as well as the savageness of nature. For Enno Raag, these were the “half-finished” buildings perhaps waiting to be completed, or maybe it was the architect’s eye that captured the idea that not all human-made objects have to be turned into an orderly environment controlled to the last detail. He preferred order to chaos yet took an anthropological interest to an environment created by people with different aesthetic tastes.

Modernist Summer House

The opposite of a summer cottage with a garden was a cottage built in the forests not far from the city, where gardening was even forbidden and plots were not allowed to be separated by fences nor hedges. Enno Raag has captured a few of these modest cottages, probably near Tallinn, in Lohusalu, where the first cottages were built in the early 1960s. While the images of the summer houses in gardening districts were dominated by bedding plants and apple trees, the summer cottages in the forest were characterized by a terrace, a person sunbathing in a garden chair and the surrounding vast pine forest. Either for ideological reasons or perhaps also because of the practical mindset of Estonians, this type of vacationing soon ran its course, leaving behind only occasional resort areas for artists or for the administrative elite. One being the area called “Romantik” (“Romantic”) under the Rannamõisa bank by the beach, also extensively photographed by Raag, a cooperative designed by architect Voldemar Herkel in the 1970s in a uniform modern national style that combines the traditional farm architecture with comfortable living. The photographer has decided to capture mostly A-frame buildings, often

covered with a traditional thatched roof, while in the background you can notice a well-groomed lawn, the natural surroundings or the sea. It is a man-made environment, a geometric structure that has been trimmed, cleared of trees and scrub and carefully organized: triangles, rectangles, squares... even the recreation areas are not spared the systematic approach of the modernist style. Yet, the images capture also the summer cottages and the bright mood associated with vacationing, children, toys, outdoor life. Escaping the constraints of the city was one of the main arguments for acquiring a summer cottage, the architecture of these buildings was vastly different from the uniform blockhouses, and it is not by chance that they were all built of wood, a nature-friendly material that could not be used in the cities.

There is always a certain mystery ingrained in photographs, a sense of an encounter with the unknown that never really vanishes. As a photographer, Raag peeked into one of the semiprivate zones of Soviet society—the summer house—from the position of a specialist, inquiring how this environment was designed. We do not know all the details; these houses have not existed in a similar state for a long time now, and even the habits of vacationing have changed, yet a certain nostalgic appeal remains.

Kiisa, photographed in 1972



TRIIN OJARI (1974) is an architectural historian and the director of the Estonian Museum of Architecture, who is preparing an exhibition on summer cottages and holiday architecture in Estonia (co-curated with Epp Lankots) opening in June 2020. The exhibition is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated catalogue of holiday architecture in Soviet Estonia.

Sandra Mälk

New Kid on the Block



Maire Annus at her desk, c. 1990. Planning a 16-storey tower block for the Mustamäe IX microdistrict

Architectural archive of Maire Annus at the Estonian Museum of Architecture

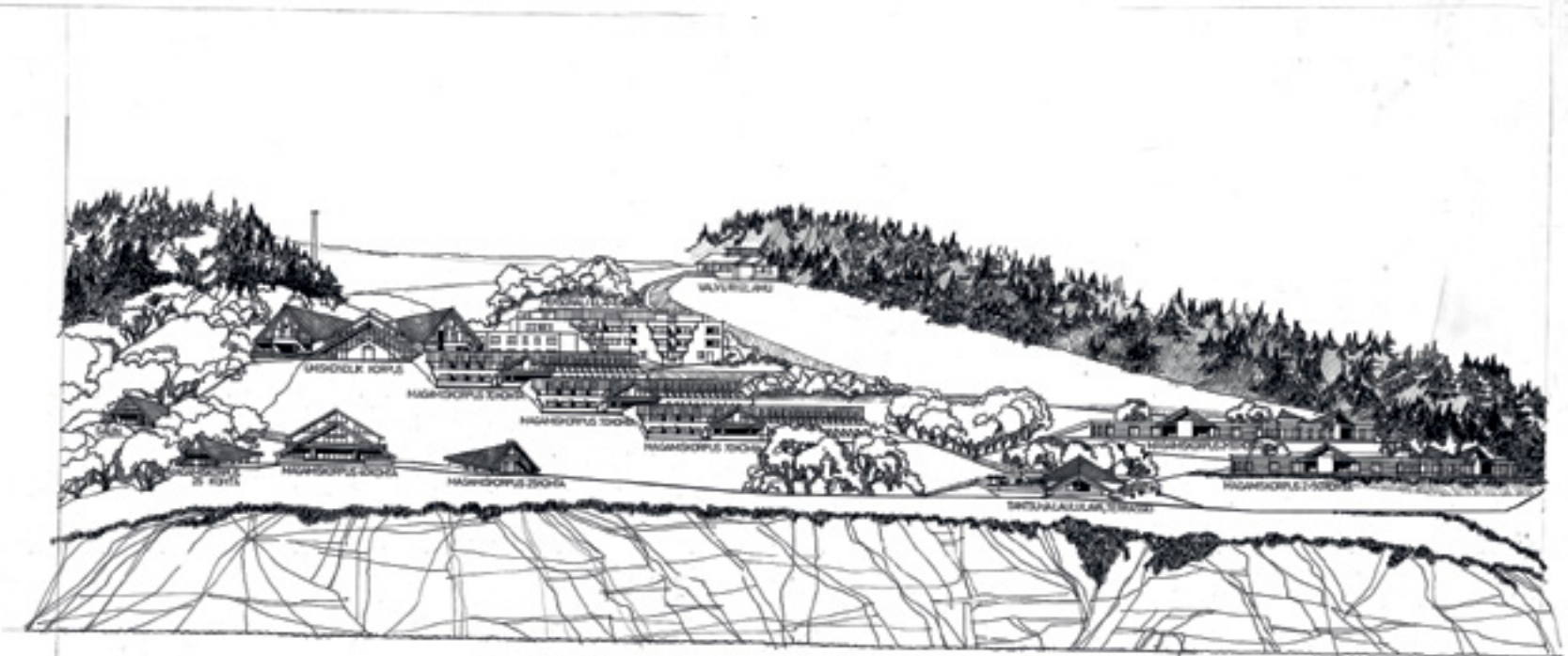
The archive collection of the Estonian Museum of Architecture, which consists mostly of designs, city plans and documents, increases largely thanks to the personal archives of architects. They contain sketches, preliminary designs, photographs, slides and documents as well as official technical designs, which shed light on the work process of the architects and provide a broader overview of the profession as a whole. Although there are people with exceptional working styles—like Herbert Johanson, Tallinn city architect in the 1930s, who apparently sat down at his table after a long time spent thinking in natural surroundings and drew the final design from memory straight onto the paper—there are many steps in an architect’s working process. This is the reason why the focus of this story is the most recent small personal archive to reach the Estonian Museum of Architecture, which belonged to the architect Maire Annus (1941–2014). As usual, it is mostly a paper-based archive. Although the architect’s last designs were completed in 2012, the archive has remained untouched by ‘born digital’ material, which the museums are now having to confront. Collecting such anachronistic collections is still a daily task of the museum 20 years after the digital revolution.

The Sketch as a Tool for Grasping the Author’s Train of Thought

The material in Maire Annus’ archive belongs to an interesting period, her creative path moves through the Soviet period into a new era, into independent Estonia after 1991. Many remember the transitional period; although, much is foreign and unchronicled for new

generations concerning this relatively recent period in history. In addition to mapping the activities of the architect, the archives of the architect’s work provide further information concerning the historical context of many decades. Various narrative levels become apparent—concerning the architect’s profession, policies during the Soviet period, being a woman in the architecture profession, moving from a collectivised to a capitalist and individualist economic model and so on. Based on a cross-section of Annus’ work we can generalise that she was an architect at a large bureau—Estonian Rural Design—who worked between the 1960s and 1980s designing new rural settlements, social buildings and recreational centres, and later in independent Estonia mostly designing private villas under her own practice. Her architectural style also changed over time: modernism was prevalent at the beginning of her career, and from the 1980s a distancing towards postmodernism was apparent—postmodernism, which considered the cultural context, spread in Soviet Estonia in the 1970s and 1980s. She considered clarity as well as comfortable and logical movement within the space more important than style, however. Capturing daylight and contact with nature are important in her private homes, which always found space for winter gardens and natural light galleries.

What is an architectural design? A typical design consists of plans, elevations, sections, perspective drawings and site plans, which range from a detailed design of the building and its location to forms described by simple outlines. Yes, there are some more artistic colourful drawings amongst this ‘technical’ material—



A view of the planned 500-place recreational centre in Izhevsk (Udmurtia, Russia) from the Kama river side, 1979–1983 (unbuilt). Maire Annus, EAM 61.1.4

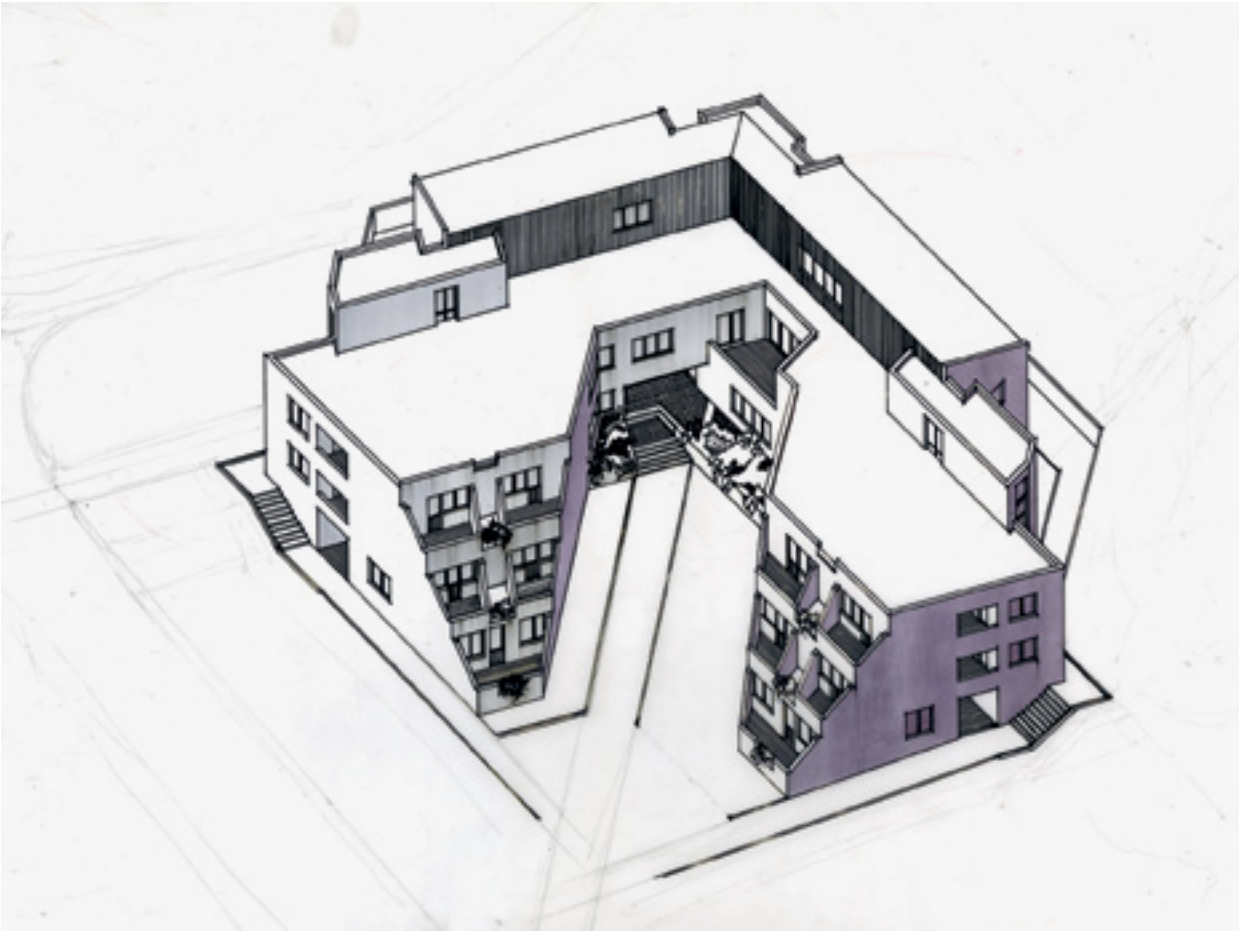
these are views drawn by hand and sometimes even sketches scrawled on pieces of paper. Official designs ratified before construction show only one stage of the architect’s drawings in the working process. As a bystander, I dare to compare the generalised planning of a building before construction to a three-course meal—the architect’s first ideas are illustrated by sketches and drafts, this is followed by the central project and finished by attractive presentational pictures for the representatives or a competition.

A small sketch is perhaps the most creative part of an architect’s creative process. Although they are often on temporary looking graph paper, silk paper, napkins or sketched digitally in a computer programme, the first sketches drawn freehand look attractive next to technical drawings. The draft illuminates the architectural process, which offers the researcher valuable material concerning the architect’s approach, helps reconstruct trains of thought. The sketch should not be underestimated and should be preserved together with the central design. Therefore, a technical architectural design can more easily be seen as a collection of ideas, it presents the creator’s exuberant vision in its entirety, as architect Johan Tali says: “Often, when I look back at some project, those first sketches are actually very important and precise. If many years have passed and you’ve solved and tested all the world’s problems in the project, then you discover the first drawing and everything is already there.”¹ In addition, a later researcher may find draft material in the outlines and sketches, clues on the corners of the pages as to what inspired the architect in the moment of creation.

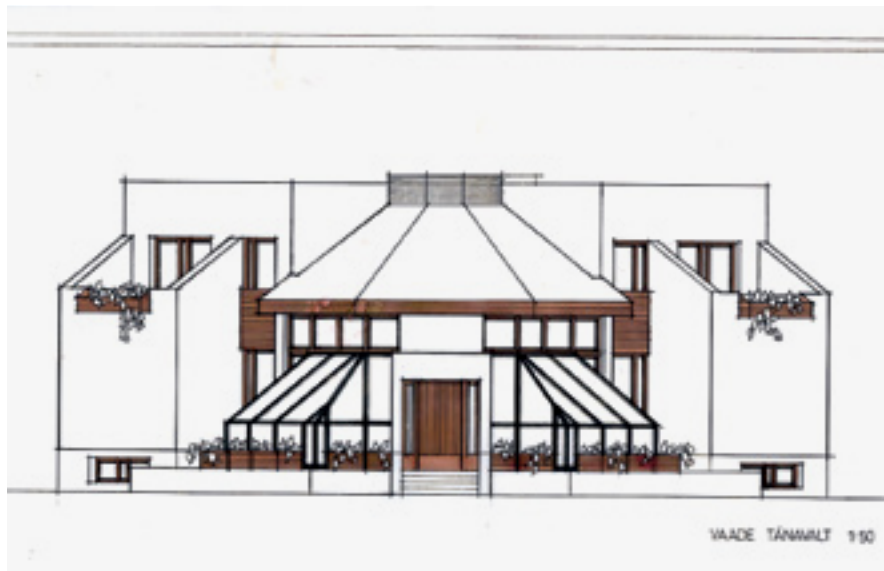
From Watercolours to Pixels and Ways of Repressing Thought

Thoroughly detailed perspective views are created for competitions or commissioners. This glamorous part of the project—artworks in their own right—are produced as ink drawings, pencil drawings and during the Soviet period very often as water colours. With the latter it is easy to depict the important part—the light and shadow—of a design. Today, the visuals of the project may be rendered by people outside the circle of architects, these are produced by studios with graphic designers specialised in 3D rendering and architectural visualisation. The technique and the medium may be different, but the end goal is the same—how to present an intricate, often technical project in a way that it would be clear for the client. It would be wrong to assume that the ground plan and plan of a site are instantly comprehensible for outsiders and that the building can be imagined in its location. That’s why presentation drawings are the most popular drawings to have as reproductions—as postcards and precise facsimiles.

The most widespread form for representing ideas is perspective projection, which aims to present the two-dimensional work as if three-dimensional in its planned location. The lines in the drawing converge to one or more vanishing points. This method became popular in the Renaissance, foremost in scenography, to create the illusion that the depicted space seemed larger. Its role in architectural planning has been to present a finished idea to an outsider, not so much as part of architectural planning itself. Many presentation images are produced



Axonometric view of the personnel building of the Izhevsk recreational centre in Udmurtia, 1979–1983 (unbuilt). Maire Annus

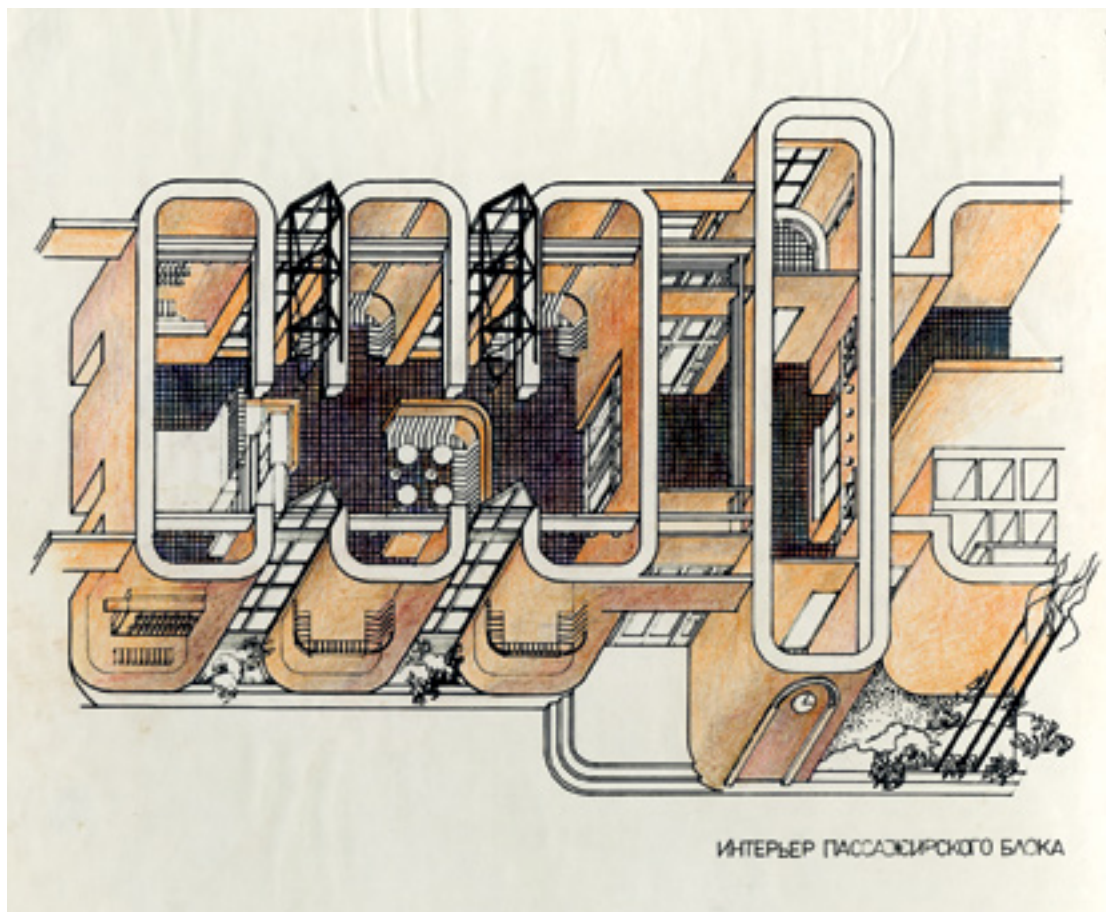


A competition entry for residential houses, 1970s. View on celluloid film, ink, felt-tip. Maire Annus

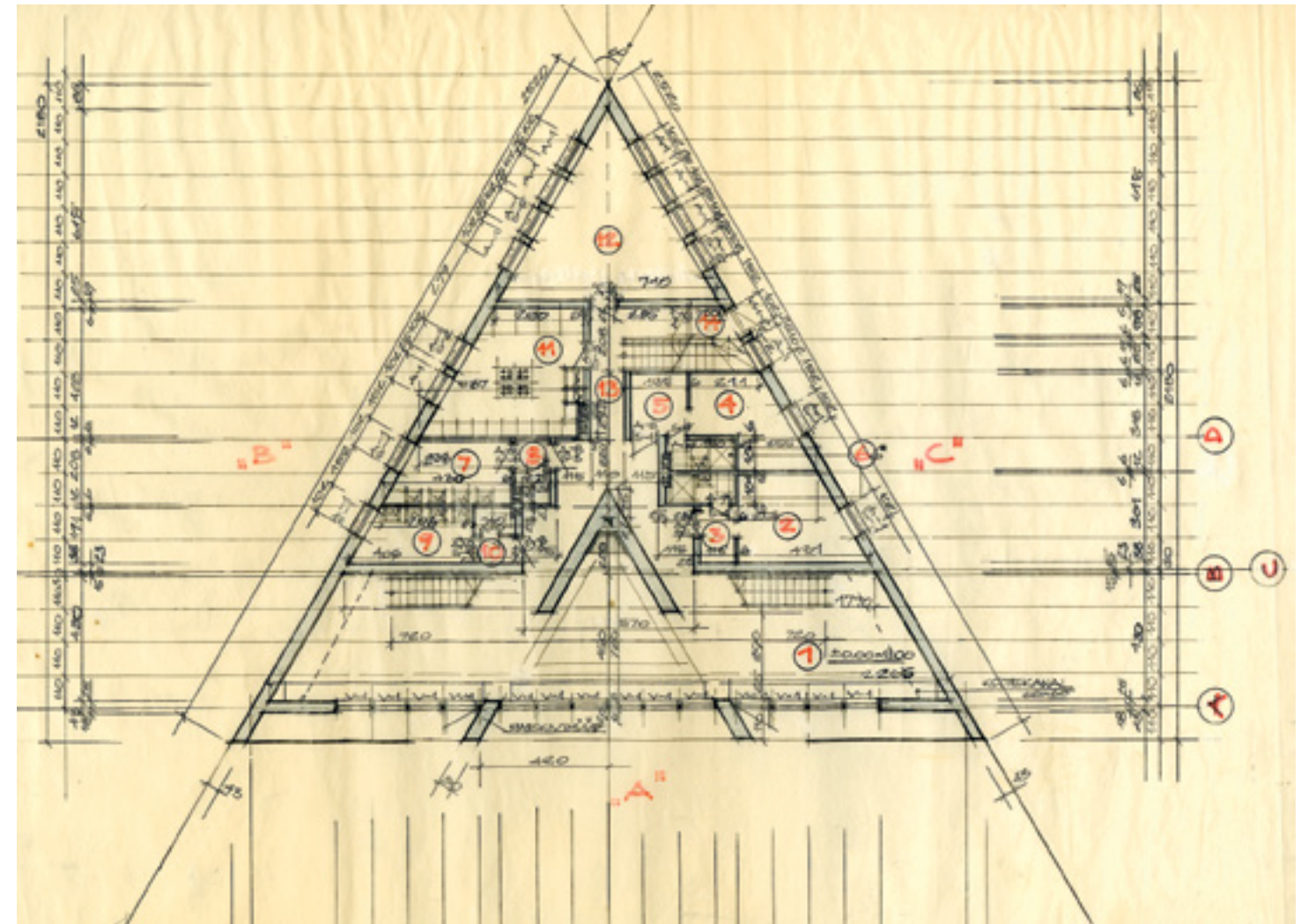
Rail Baltic
Pärnu terminal
competition work
Water Strider
(1st place, 2014).
Digital rendering.
Architecture
bureau Pluss



Kichera railway station on the Baikal-Amur mainline, in Russia, 1980s

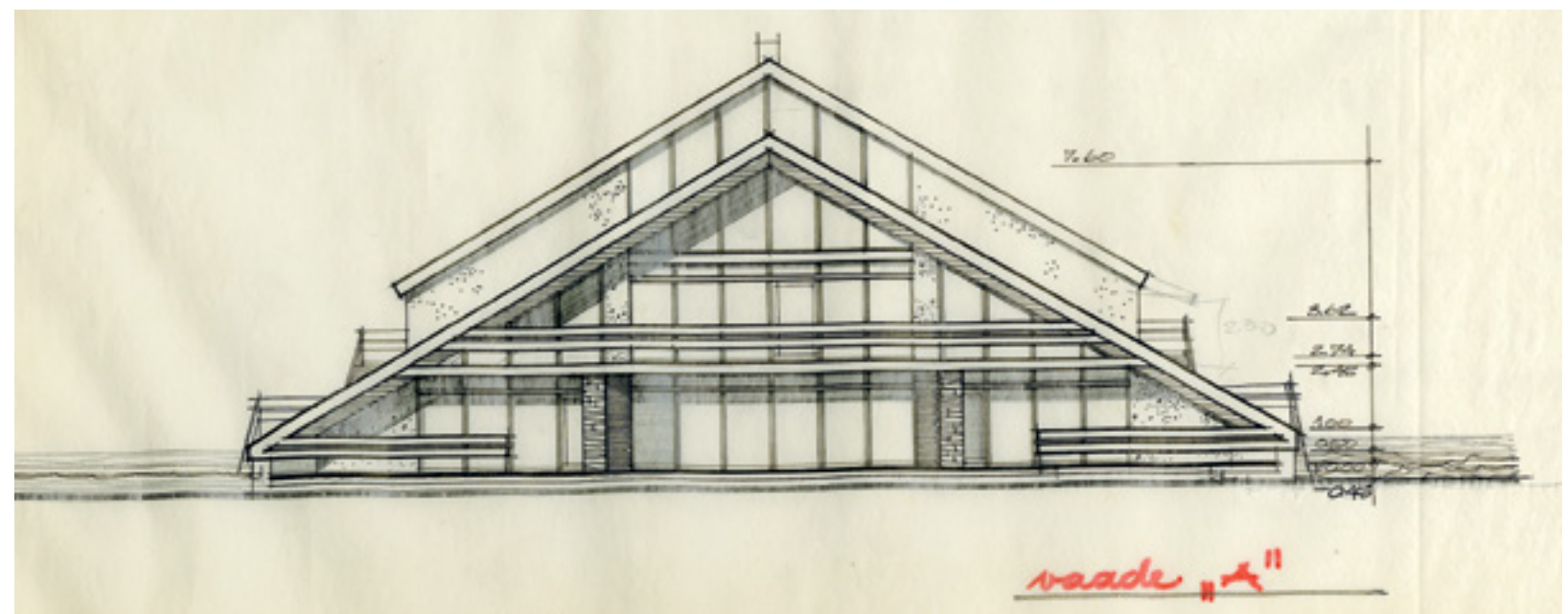


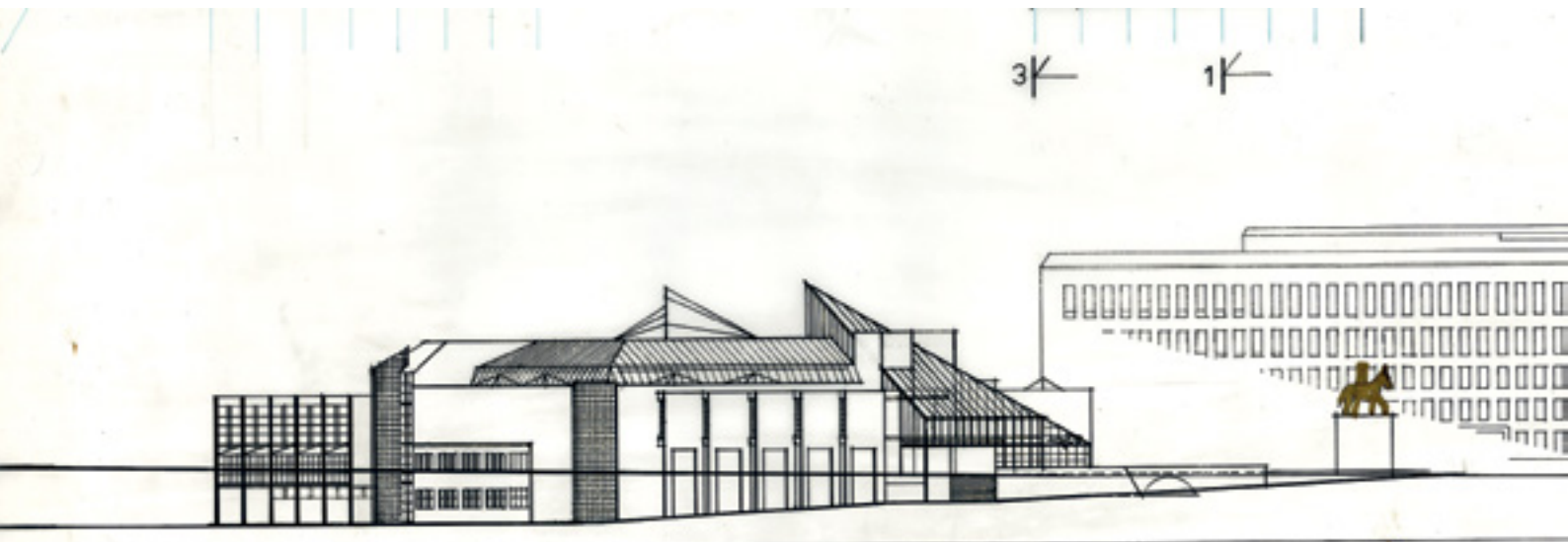
Kichera railway station in Siberia on the Baikal-Amur mainline (axonometric view of the departure lounge). 1st place in the Estonian Rural Design internal competition. Print on cardboard, coloured with pencils. Maire Annus, 1982



Uulu recreation centre in Pärnu County. Ground plan, 1971. Maire Annus

Uulu recreational centre in Pärnu County, 1971. Views (fragment of a larger drawing). Drafting paper, ink, graphite pencil





Fragment from the competition entry "Happy Fiesta" for the Finnish Museum of Contemporary Art. Celluloid film, ink, gold paint. International architecture competition, 1992. Maire Annus

some time after the ground plan, cross-sections and views of the design. For this reason, the architect Frank Lloyd Wright has even called perspective drawings picturesque instead of representative of the building.

Maire Annus often presented her ideas in the axonometric view (e.g. the personnel building of the Izhevsk recreational centre). This is also a form of technical drawing—although less popular—for representing three-dimensional objects on a plane. This method was used from the 19th century in the military and missile industry, and in the beginning it was considered closer to industrial production and connected with engineers rather than architects. In contrast to the perspective view, this is a more objective form of depiction—the dimensions keep to their ratios, lines remain parallel and don't converge to one or more vanishing points. Due to this form of depiction independent of the viewer, which allows the object to be depicted as floating in space, it was a much loved form of depiction by modernists in the 20th century, including the Tallinn school architects during the 1970s, for presenting conceptual ideas. The axonometric view has been called the worm's-eye view. There are other methods such as Karlsson or oblique perspective, which opens the interior for the viewer from above like a present. The convergence of technical and artistic achievements is best seen in beautifully finished views. It would even be wrong to separate these two, if we were to use the words of scientific philosopher Ilya Prigorine, that despite the categorisation that started in the 1950s, the humanities and sciences cannot be viewed separately, but together produce the *Nouvelle alliance*.²

Techniques and Materials that Have Changed Over Time

Considering the long-term preservation and publication of drawings and documents, it must be taken into account that works in various mediums and techniques also come in different sizes. Hand-made architectural drawings have often changed during the 20th century depending on the general development of architecture. Original drawings range from Vatman paper to waxed drafting linen and matt surface celluloid film. Collecting architectural drawings increasingly means dealing with copies. The copies that were widely used at the beginning of the 20th century are no less important compared to original drawings. In the archives these are not only valued as additions to the originals; often these are also the only remaining material from a design. The final changes made by the architect during the planning process are often recorded in the drawings copied onto celluloid film and paper. For example, Maire Annus' tower block design for the Mustamäe residential quarter (c. 1990) was drawn up on an A1 roll of diano drafting paper. The large format brown paper was expensive back then,³ and therefore there is a drawing on both sides of the paper—a copy of the plan of the site on the glossy side, on the other matt side views and additions to the building drawn with a rapidograph. In contrast, we can also find the first sketches presenting the interior of the residential building in the archive on light A5 silk paper.

We live in interesting times. A large number of hand-drawn original and copied drawings arrive at the museum, but in the new post-digital revolution paradigm



Estonian Communist Party central committee building (now the Foreign Ministry) in Tallinn. Architects Mart Port, Uno Tõlpus, Raine Karp, Olga Kontšajeva. Perspective view by Rein Kersten, 1963. Ink, acrylic, felt-tip, cardboard. EAM 4.3.2

we stand face to face born digital materials, the survival of which are threatened by the fast development of technology. How many of the drawings created in the 1990s can be opened by programmes today or in fact—how many of them have survived? After the changes that took place before the turn of the millennium, almost all the material that we now have was produced digitally, the collection, preservation and reproduction of which must be approached differently to paper-based materials. Storing the works from contemporary architecture competitions in the museum has revealed that it is not so simple as collecting the original AutoCad files. This is problematic in terms of the rights as well as from the perspective of preservation, which means that these files are either in pdf or jpg formats. From the perspective of the archive, paper-based as well as the digital collections are simultaneously two very different and interesting branches of the same tree.

While archiving and describing works, it is important to consider that the producers of the presentation pictures may be different to the authors of the designs, because intricately finished artworks require a different devotion. For example, instead of the authors of the design, the author of the perspective views of the current Foreign Ministry built in 1968 is their colleague at Eesti Projekt, Rein Kersten. Furthermore, when it comes to competition works one does not find the name of the author as in regular projects, instead a pseudonym is used—meaning you must do some detective work with older architectural drawings due to the missing information. The role of detective also had to be applied while categorising Maire Annus’ residential building competition entries, which turned out upon closer inspection to be popular projects in the 1980s. It is always possible to find clues when archiving and studying the collection, and these may lead to untold stories of well-known buildings. In this sense, archives are never fully researched and opportunities for interpretation change with time. Archiving architectural drawings, especially in the case of personal archives, becomes a case study—every personal archive that reaches the museum is distinct.

¹ Tali, Johan. Video “Why architects draw?” accompanying the Estonian Museum of Architecture’s exhibition “Beauty in the Making. Drawings from the Museum Collection” (2018).
² Ordine, Nuccio. Kasutu kasulikkusest. Manifest. Tallinn University Press. Tallinn: 2019, p 16.
³ Komissarov, Koit. Booklet of the Estonian Museum of Architecture’s exhibition “Genesis. The History of Architectural Design”. 2016, p 6.

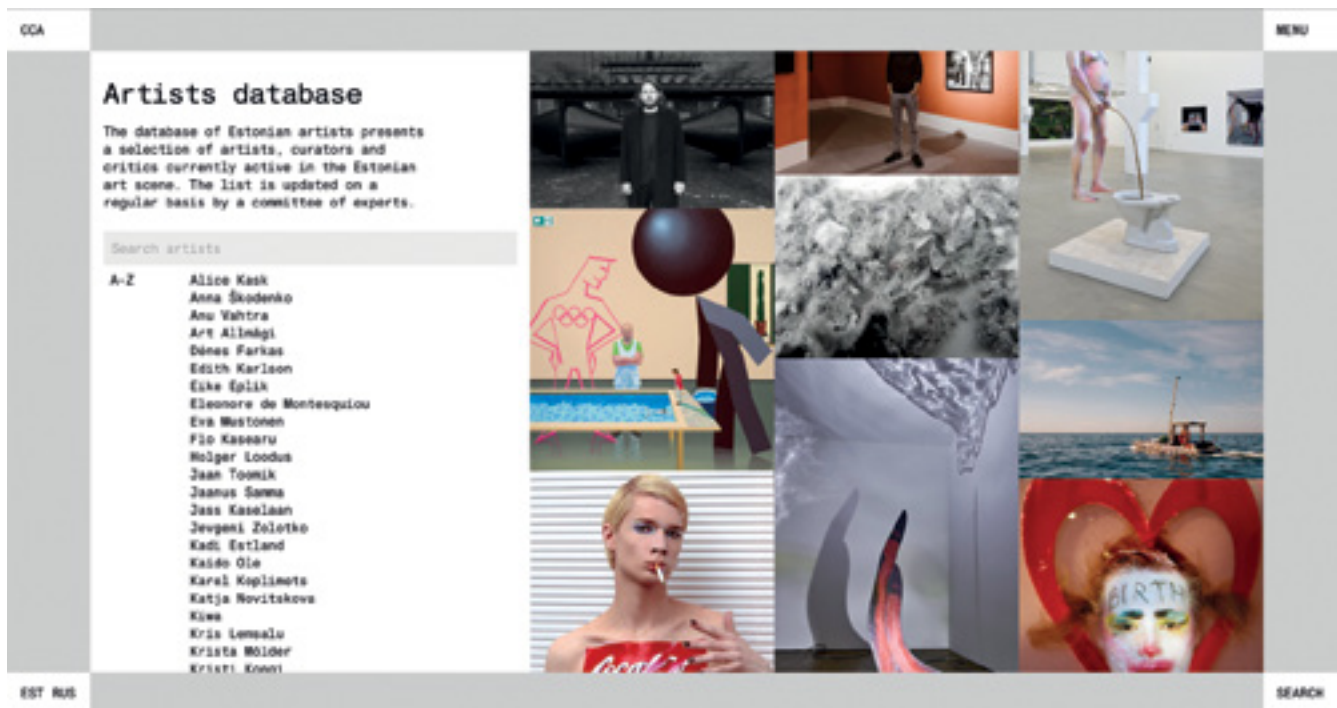
SANDRA MÄLK (1987) is an architectural historian working at the Estonian Museum of Architecture as a curator and an archivist. She has curated exhibitions on architectural drawings and is the co-author of the book Drawn Space. Works from the Archives of the Museum of Estonian Architecture (2018). She is currently working on a project collecting born digital drawings made for architectural competitions held in 1991–2019.

Marika Agu

Reporting from the Archive of the Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art

Still from Anu Juurak's video “Matsalu project I” (04:38, 2002). This video from the CCA archive was made temporarily public in a newly initiated series called Archive Courier during the coronavirus pandemic





Screenshot of online artists' database at cca.ee. The list of artists is updated on a regular basis with their respective biographies and projects' documentations

The Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) accommodates an archive and library of cultural and art historical significance, providing a comprehensive overview of the Estonian art scene since the early 1990s. As a centre for expert knowledge, the CCA has been mediating information about the work of local artists since 1992 and has contributed to the high level of contemporary art mainly through producing exhibitions. Consequently, a considerable amount of material has accumulated either as a physical presence on the centre's shelves or in digital format on the centre's web archive—including documents about past events, references to new unformulated trends, traces of the past—all to store information and form knowledge.

Even though the centre is not a memory institution like a museum is, it has a considerable cultural layer and heritage that is being preserved, researched and mediated. Therefore, the CCA is actively committed to updating the archive and library, making it more accessible to researchers, linking it to appropriate data networks as well as participating in international networks of cultural heritage, and ensuring multilingual access. The archive consists of works of art and their documentation—including digital photographic, video and audio files; exhibition materials, including artefacts, photographic documentation, books, bibliographies, administrative documents of the CCA, such as letters of application, reports, budgets, contracts, etc.

One of the instruments for making the archival materials more accessible is the Artists database,

which was launched in early 2020 on the centre's web page. The artist profiles presented on the web page contain the artist's biography specifically edited for the database, a selection of their recent works and major exhibitions, and links to more information. This is an instrument designed for art professionals (curators, editors), researchers, universities and schools, as well as art lovers who want to get to know the most significant artists, curators and critics in Estonia. For artists, the database means increased visibility and hopefully also more opportunities; for example, to participate in international exhibitions. The CCA followed the example of similar databases of artists (e.g. the artists database on the website of the Icelandic Art Center, the database for designers on the Estonian Design Centre's webpage, the Music Estonia database for musicians).

It takes extensive resources to ensure the adequacy of the database, especially if the aim is to be up-to-date and to provide interesting and significant content also for local audiences. The best way to get an overview of the Estonian contemporary art field is still to visit local exhibitions, yet in case this is not possible, art lovers from all corners of the world can visit the artist profiles on the centre's web page. The CCA's new web page was created with WWW Stuudio and the design agency AKU. The updated version is more structured and easier to use, providing a better overview of the CCA's activities. It also accommodates an online magazine for contemporary art with weekly recommendations for events as well as stories and articles contextualizing the local art field.



Ando Kesküla, Crazy Office. 1997. Interactive installation. Exhibition view of Interstanding 2, organised by Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia



Pärnu fideo- ja
vilmifestival:
2.–3. apr [2000].
Pärnu: Academia
Non Grata, 2000
(Pärnu: Hansa-
print). 60 lk:
ill. Example of
publications found
at the CCA. In
this heated and
ambitious festival
catalogue one gets
easily disoriented
in its abundant
photo and text
material

It is difficult for the CCA to meet the ambitions and expectations set by themselves as well as by the contemporary art field. One of the challenges is defining the content of the archive and library—what to accept and what to exclude. This is not about speculating on future scenarios for artists, but rather about how to notice and recognize quality contemporary content—something that would be progressive and help us give meaning to the time and space we live in. Making these choices has always been a painful process for the ones not included. In order to soften the blow and balance out the responsibility, a special committee has been convened considering the database of artists to determine its priorities and preferences.

The CCA has collected information about Estonian artists and their work since the 1990s, yet a variety of methods have been applied and as a result the overview lacks continuity and is not without its gaps. Initially, collecting information was done as part of an art historical commission, which consisted of composing a bio, CV, documentations of works and a bibliography for the artist. These materials were bound together and used as a tool for guests to give them a first insight into Estonian contemporary art. During the 1990s, VHS cassettes containing video works from artists were also mailed to curators for presentation of their work. Copies of these VHSs are still available at the CCA.

From 2005 to 2009, the centre focused on documenting all contemporary art exhibitions in Tallinn, as the habit of documenting exhibitions had been almost non-existent until then. Many projects

could only be revived through an article published in the newspaper. Even the documentation of the Estonian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was irregular during that period.

As quite a unique and comprehensive collection, the CCA has an archive of art criticism containing all copies of articles published in the media from 1993 to 2006. This archive has been a great help to art theory students who wish to have an overview of the evolution of Estonian art writing and the reception of contemporary art in general.

Besides the aforementioned archive, the CCA also has a library of nearly 3,000 copies focusing on international contemporary art. The centre filters, formulates and materializes developments in the Estonian art field, and the book as a format is one of the starting and ending points of these processes, providing support for the cross-referenced activities and events organized by the centre. The CCA library could be seen as a collection of books that has been the side-product of organizing events, which brings about the question of whether we can even talk about an organized library that can ensure the accessibility of its materials or rather consider it as a collection of books, a resource that no one really knows how to use. In what circumstances can a collection of books be considered a library? These questions form the basis for a structured reorganization process that requires us also to formulate the principles for collecting—which kinds of books should we find at the CCA?

One of the principles behind the collection of the library has been the centre's history—as it was founded



Mihkel Kleis,
exhibition
view. Artishok
Biennial. 2008.
Curated by Maarin
Ektermann and
Margus Tamm
at Tallinn City
Gallery. Example
of exhibition
documentation
as part of
an archiving
assignment during
2005–2009

by George Soros and the Open Estonia Foundation, it was part of a network of art centres that covered the entire former Soviet Union. Similar institutions that have been built on the ideological heritage of Soros can also be found in Latvia (LCCA), Georgia (CCA), Slovenia (CCA) and other countries. Therefore, the centre accommodates books that it has only received thanks to the Soros network, but with which there is little connection today. For example, books about Macedonian artists may seem like an unexpected or unjustified choice, but this is one of the features of the CCA library because of the institution’s history.

The library’s main assets include catalogues of major continuous exhibitions (documenta, Manifesta, Venice Biennale, etc.), monographs of Estonian artists and catalogues of smaller exhibitions. Self-published artist books, magazines and albums that experiment with their format can also be found on the shelves of the CCA library. These kinds of books are often not of interest for larger libraries (National Library of Estonia, Estonian Academy of Arts Library, University of Tartu Library) as they do not have ISBN codes. Since the CCA library is mostly known only to art professionals and has not been officially formulated, the limited use of the library results in books that are in a surprisingly good order—good enough to be presented at exhibitions.

The CCA archive and library function as memory storage facilities, producing and maintaining a sense of identity that renews itself over time and provides an overview not only of creative developments in the work of local contemporary artists, but also of the institutional processes in Estonia and beyond. Physical as well as virtual, the CCA archive and library serve as a public platform—a dialogue partner and a tool for artists, art researchers, curators and students to apprehend and formulate new knowledge concerning contemporary art and social developments in Estonia. It is an environment of materialized thought processes open to fresh interpretations.

MARIKA AGU (1989) is a curator and archive project manager at the Estonian Centre for Contemporary Art. She has cultivated projects from a wide range of topics, including archives, material culture, feminism, art writing and graffiti. She holds a MA in Art History and a BA in Semiotics. She has curated exhibitions since 2012 in numerous galleries but also at the Tartu Art Museum between 2014–2016. Her projects involve extensive archival research, related aspects of documentation, multiple art formats and spatial reflections.

Annika Räim

The Future is in One Hour: A Case Study on Preserving a Media Installation

In February 2020, a permanent exhibition *The Future is in One Hour: Estonian Art in the 1990s*, focusing on Estonian art from the last decade of the 20th century, opened at Kumu Art Museum. Until then, the display of Estonian art had covered the period from the beginning of the 18th century until the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991. The new extension to the permanent exhibition explores the proliferation of ideas and dynamic processes of the 1990s, while paying special attention to the role of new media in the art field.

The exhibition is based on the Art Museum of Estonia’s (EKM) contemporary art collection, founded in 1996, when the museum started to purchase installation, photographic and video works from contemporary artists with the support of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia. The 1990s artistic innovations and prolific experimentations with materials and techniques had now found their way into the museum collection, confronting museum professionals with new questions about collecting, preserving and exhibiting. Following the practices customary for more traditional collections (such as painting, sculpture and graphic art) was no longer possible; new principles for collecting, preserving and displaying contemporary art had to be invented. The prevailing topics included the notion of authenticity in reproduced works, documentation of the artist’s intentions and the semantic field of the work, the musealisation of ephemeral works and works that change over time, the long-term preservation of works with a technological component, the identification of associated copyright issues, and others. It took more than a decade to implement procedures and techniques to elaborate

these topics and to find possible solutions.¹ While the museum was debating questions concerning the collection and preservation policy, new works were being actively acquired at the same time—where the decisions for purchasing contemporary art were mostly directed by the museum’s long-time curator Eha Komissarov.

The discipline of conserving contemporary art has witnessed important advancements in recent decades, and numerous international platforms have been created to provide information on the various strategies and case studies that are leading the way in preserving contemporary art. The earlier purchases to the contemporary art collection of the Art Museum of Estonia have been subsequently reviewed for preservation and display purposes. As the collection is relatively young, this has been possible in direct dialogue with the artists. In the case of installations, the first version of display is considered of crucial importance—in cooperation with the artists, these first displays have been documented as accurately as possible. The subsequent iterations have also been carefully documented and, when necessary, the instructions for the installation have been updated with the artist. The format of the artist interviews has proven to be utterly meritorious, providing new information about the creation, concept and the artist’s intentions in the work, as well as recording the author’s vision for the preservation of the work. By now more than twenty video interviews, which have also been subsequently transcribed, have been made in collaboration with the Estonian Academy of Arts conservation department and the numbers are constantly growing.

All of the aforementioned activities, which have now been integrated into the daily practices of the contemporary art collection, provide the museum with valuable data that should also be stored with a similar level of conceptual and systematic rigour as the physical or digital elements handed over with the initial acquisition of the work. Therefore, the digital archive where documentation, instructions, schemas, spatial plans, conservation work reports, relevant texts, artist interviews and other materials related to the artwork are preserved, is now considered an integral part of the contemporary art collection. A video installation acquired in the late 1990s, which was at the time handed over on a Betacam cassette accompanied by instructions for display on paper, might by now be followed by a considerable digital “archive folder” without which the re-exhibition of the work might prove to be difficult even after just a few decades.

The recently opened Kumu exhibition about Estonian art in the 1990s is the first permanent exhibition involving media art installations. Authentic and long-term exhibiting of media art created over 20 years ago poses a number of key questions that can be answered based on the materials collected over the years in the archive. The following example illustrates the life cycle of a media installation from acquisition to long-term exposition. An important aspect to understand here is that the essence of the work depends on the specific “behaviour” of digital files. The work described below takes physical form only in the context of an exhibition, and therefore to assess whether the work has been preserved in its integrity, it needs to be installed.

Raoul Kurvitz
Pentatonic Color System
Programme 01, 02 and 03
1994/1999/2020
(EKM 47870 FV 105, acquired in 2000)

The installation *Pentatonic Color System* consists of 21 computers and 20 monitors placed in a circle (with a diameter of 3.5 m) on the floor, displaying a series of colour and light effects and images that, combined with quadrophonic sound, create a powerful spatial sensation. The work consists of a cycle of colours and symbols in three parts that blend into optical light. The sound that was specifically created for the occasion is also part of the work.

The original version of the installation was first exhibited as part of *Non-existent Art*, the 2nd annual exhibition of the Soros Center of Contemporary Art, Estonia (curated by Urmas Muru) in the gallery of the Institute of History in 1994. In 1999, the second version of the work was on display at Raoul Kurvitz’s solo exhibition *Symphony in B-flat minor. Post-apocalypse* at Tallinn Art Hall. The Art Museum of Estonia acquired the second version of the work from the exhibition at the Tallinn Art Hall.

The main difference between the two versions (1994 and 1999) of the work is that a greater variety of video files was displayed from the monitors in the earlier version, including different forms drawn in Corel Draw by Raoul Kurvitz (circles and spirals; vulva, eye,

mouth, fish, knife, moon, triangles, teeth, etc.) and the video files were activated by a synthesizer instead of the computer in the later version. For the 1999 exhibition, it turned out that the part with the forms (part II) could not be activated; therefore, only part I (depicting colour runlets flowing from the heart) and part III (depicting colour charts) were displayed.

In 2000, the museum acquired the later version of the work in two parts on 2 CDs, which included instructions by the programmer and the artist. At the time, the museum did not have the resources to acquire the necessary hardware. In 2008, the work was exhibited for the first time since its acquisition at the exhibition *Struggle in the City (Koht, mis paneb liikuma*, curated by Maria-Kristiina Soomre and Eha Komissarov) at Kumu. For the exhibition, the necessary computers as well as 4:3 screens, akin to the ones used when the work was first exhibited, were purchased. The selection of equipment was confirmed with the artists and the programmer. A similar set of hardware was used during Raoul Kurvitz’s solo exhibition (curated by Kati Ilves) at Kumu in 2013, when the installation was once more exhibited. Before the exhibition, an interview was organized with Raoul Kurvitz and the programmer Andres Lepp, discussing the possibilities for exhibiting in a situation where due to obsolescence, the technical equipment must be replaced. The installation had been displayed using 4:3 monitors, which are not produced anymore and have been replaced by 16:9 widescreens. When it was incorporated in the new permanent exhibition of Estonian art of the 1990s in early 2020, the previously acquired equipment could no longer be used, as it would not have been able to withstand such long-term use. The museum was able to locate the required number of unused 4:3 monitors, though instead of the previously used cube-shaped CRT monitors they were flat screens. According to the artist, it was important to try to follow the original format of the work, but the sculptural form of the monitors was less significant. Also, the programme running on the computers created using Visual Basic had to be re-written in Linux, as the original operating system (Windows XP) had been retired. The updated programme did not alter the work visually, but rewriting it allowed the restoration of the second part of the original version of the work, which could not be exhibited at Raoul Kurvitz’s solo exhibition in 1999. This opportunity posed a peculiar dilemma for the museum—on the one hand, the museum should strive to exhibit the work as closely as possible to the way it was acquired in the collection in 2000 (i.e. as a programme consisting of two parts, not three, as in the original version of the work). On the other hand, it was hard to resist the opportunity to exhibit the work in its original 1994 version. After some consideration, we opted for the latter, arguing that the reason the second part had not been exhibited since 1994 and was not acquired for the museum collection was clearly technical rather than conceptual. It is important that the choices made regarding the purchase of new hardware, upgrading programmes and the selection of the version to be exhibited were well debated and also documented for future discussions.

This example demonstrates the value of the information contained in the materials that have been collected for the museum’s digital archive. The identity of such complex works exhibited in updated versions due to technological development is mainly preserved in the extensive documentation and accompanying archival materials concerning each case. In order for the ever-extending archive of the contemporary art collection to be used in the future, it is important for it to be systematised, coherent, using unambiguous terminology and precise working procedures. It is also vital to work towards making the database of museum collections³ flexible enough to accommodate different versions of installations and artworks using technological components, documentation describing their essence, detailed instructions, etc. All of these materials are currently stored in the archive of the collection.

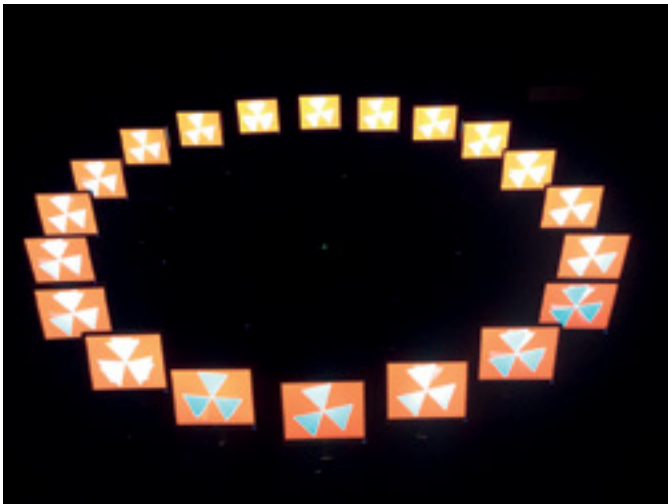
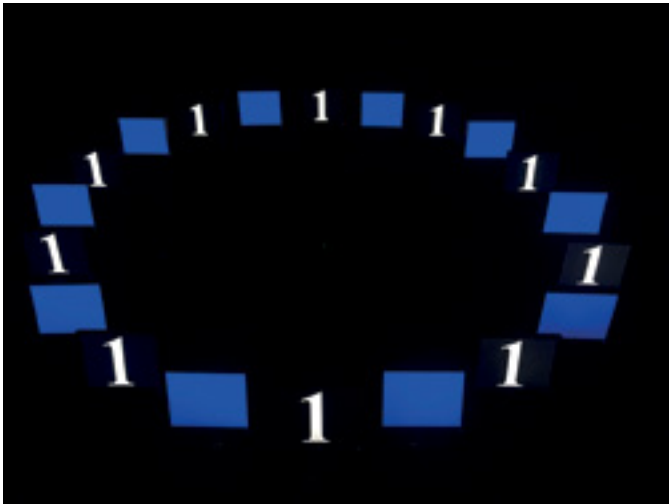
ANNIKA RÄIM (1979) graduated from the University of Tartu in 2004 as an art historian. She studied the preservation of moving images at the University of Amsterdam in 2012–2014. Since 2005, she has been working in the Art Museum of Estonia as the Head of the Contemporary Art Collection. Her main research interests are preservation and musealisation of time-based and installation art.

¹
In 2006, the position of conservator of contemporary art was created within the structure of the Art Museum of Estonia. From 2006 to 2013 Hilkka Hiiop was hired for the position, and in 2012 she also wrote her doctoral thesis about the problematics of preserving contemporary art: *Contemporary Art in the Museum: How to Preserve the Ephemeral? The Preservation Strategy and Methods of the Contemporary Art Collection of the Art Museum of Estonia*

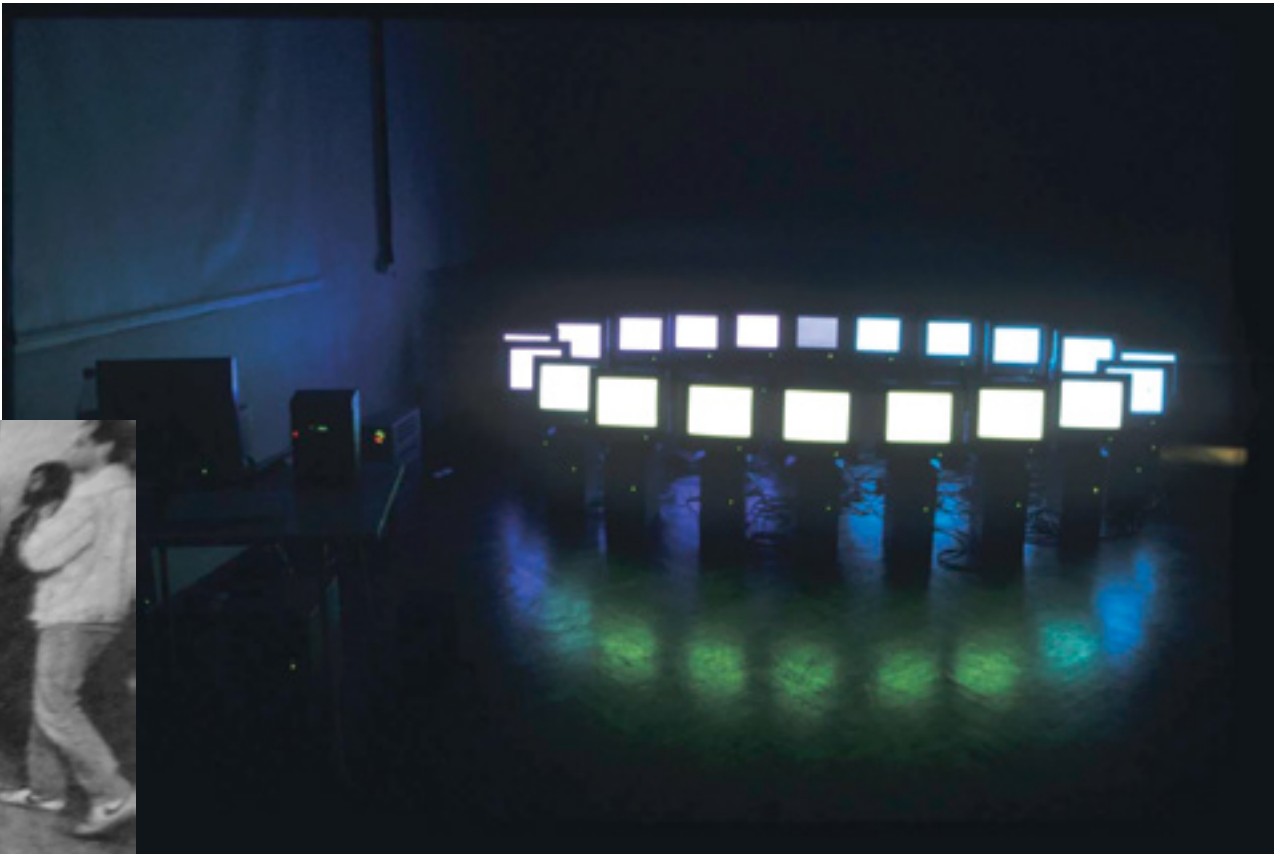
²
International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art—INCCA, Variable Media Initiative, Centre of Expertise in Digital Heritage—Packed, etc. (<https://www.incca.org/>, <https://www.guggenheim.org/conservation/the-variable-media-initiative> <https://www.packed.be/en/>)

³
The Estonian museums, including the Art Museum of Estonia, use the web-based information system MuIS (www.muis.ee/en_GB), which is primarily designed for describing and managing physical museum objects and does not provide a convenient management system for museum objects that change in time and are presented in various versions.

Raoul Kurvitz.
Pentatonic
Color System.
Programme 01, 02,
03. 2nd annual
exhibition of
the Soros Center
of Contemporary
Art, Estonia,
Non-existent
Art, 1994. Photo
credit: Õhtuleht,
19. X 1994



Raoul Kurvitz.
Pentatonic
Color System.
Programme 01,
02, 03. Permanent
exhibition The
Future is in One
Hour: Estonian
Art in the 1990s,
Kumu, 2020



Raoul Kurvitz.
Pentatonic Color
System. Programme
01 and 03 at
the exhibition
Symphony in
B-flat minor.
Post-apocalypse,
Tallinn Art
Hall, 1999.
Photo credit:
Archive of the
Estonian Artists
Association



Raoul Kurvitz.
Pentatonic Color
System. Programme
01 and 03 at
the exhibition
Struggle in
the City, Kumu,
2008. Photo
credit: Stanislav
Stepashko

How to Digitise Materiality? Artworks as the Objects of Digitisation

Digitisation describes the process of taking an analogue object and creating a reproduction, copy or backup copy¹ of it that can be read on a computer, while digitalisation involves using the result as the afterlife, long-term preservation and public accessibility of a digital record and the reuse of digitised materials. But even the basic terms providing conceptual framework and meaning to the digitisation process of artistic heritage, are already problematic.

The main aim of digitising in the art museum is to produce reproductions of pieces in the collections of sufficient resolution and with a colour rendering index which would correlate as closely as possible to the original piece within a scale visible to the human eye, which would allow for the pieces to be reproduced in various sizes and on different materials. Digitising is primarily part of the work of a contemporary museum that supports the general activities of the museum. Museum publications, the opportunity to buy reproductions of works in the museum, museum webpages and databases introducing the collections are the most important outputs of the digitising process and help spread awareness of the museum's collections.

The relationship between art and the terms copy or backup copy used widely in the field of digitising as the general aim of memory institutions is a little more problematic. These notions describe mainly the activities of libraries and archives in the digital age. A library digitises a page from a book and saves the information it contains in digital format; the same process also takes place with documents in an archive. The appearance

or material characteristics of the page of an archival document or book are relatively unimportant. One can also consider the production of a backup copy of a photograph through digitisation. A photograph on paper is already essentially a copy and the production of a digital copy from an analogue copy are not contradictory activities. There are also certainly exceptions among the aforementioned types of cultural records. A book may be copiously illustrated with unique works, the base-material of an archival document may be as important a source of information as the information it holds and the original photographs as negatives may be just singular examples of exceptions.

How should we understand the nature of a backup copy in the case of art? A backup copy is designated a “copy, which has been produced to preserve and make available the information in case the original is destroyed”² and according to a broader definition “the high quality of a backup copy and its safest possible long-term preservation (digital archiving) allows for a digital copy as close to the original as possible to be produced from the backup copy in the case of the destruction of the original”³. Here the terms ‘destruction of the original’ and ‘as close to the original as possible’ are important.

The digital recordings that adhere to the current digitising standards only provide information concerning the visual appearance of the piece in the case of the destruction of the artwork. A large proportion of the information, which may be important in terms of the meaning of the artwork, would be lost in the case of the destruction of the piece. In the case of books,



R. Demytyev. Greetings to the Leninist Communist Youth Organisation! 1958. Art Museum of Estonia

An example of the same poster, which has been digitised using various devices. The poster with more contrasted colours was digitised using an Océ wide format scanner (2011), the poster with the subdued colours using a digital camera and digital back Leaf Aptus II (2013). A general problem with the scanned poster is the over-contrasted colours, and the poster digitised using the camera with its subdued colours better documents the state of the piece in the collection of the museum. Details from the same poster show that other basic rules have been broken in the scanning process. One arrow shows the defects in printing quality, which are also visible in the poster digitised using the camera, the other arrow shows mistakes made in the digitisation, which have added vertical coloured stripes to the file. The person digitising using a scanner has trusted too much in the automated workflow. The files produced in the digitisation process have not undergone even a sample quality check, which would have revealed the defects even upon a brief observation. The actual digitised object and the appearance of the digitised result have also not been compared. This would have allowed the scanner to be calibrated for more precise colour rendering.





archival documents or photographs, we can consider the production of backup copies because the information contained within the document can be copied and recorded. In the case of an artwork, the term backup copy is misleading and does not consider the possibilities and limitations of current technology. With artworks, it would be more precise to talk only of the production of digital reproductions. Technically, the digital reproduction still has to adhere to the requirements of archival backup copies—using tiff file formats, a resolution of at least 300 dpi, colour correction charts and scales—but still the digitising process can only record the appearance of the piece. The materiality of the piece is lost in the process. Digitising artworks according to current means and understandings is inevitably restrained by the shallowness of the production of digital reproductions.

There are certainly exceptions among artworks, which allow for the use of current widespread technical tools and practices for the production of reproductions which are very close to the originals, an example of this is printmaking. But here too the results of the digitising process may differ greatly (see illustrations).

The technical manuals that advise memory institutions on achieving the standardised quality for digitising are also coming up against the intricacies of the process of digitising artworks, especially paintings. For example, the Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials (2016) by the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) claims that colour maintenance is problematic with paintings and other two-dimensional artworks because contemporary digital technology does not allow all colours to be correctly recorded and adds the requirement that all paintings should be digitised as three-dimensional objects.⁴ This is due to the fact that the relief of the surface of the painting may convey information and be an inseparable part of the expression of the piece.

How would it be possible to overcome the immateriality of artworks brought on by the digital age and achieve a backup copy of the digitised piece? Technically? According to a technological-positivist understanding and allowing for a flight of fancy, we can imagine how a piece could be recorded in all its finest details, including unconventional base materials in the structure and all the characteristics of the techniques used by the artist, in addition to the materials used in the creation of the piece and layers which would remain invisible upon normal observation. In the case of a few singular projects, digitisation which considers numerous aspects of a piece has been attempted, but the aims of these projects have been to record information pertinent to conservation using imaging technology,⁵ not to produce a model of the piece, according to which it could later be restored as precisely as possible.

With enough information it is possible to create a three-dimensional model of the piece, which along with the necessary metadata about the materials and techniques of the piece could be 3D-printed. But this approach would also require a new type of technology. In the case of producing a backup copy of a painting, we could consider the capability of a 3D-printer to

reproduce the support material and fill it layer-by-layer with paint of the authentic consistency. With current technology, this is only a faint vision of the future, which poses the question that museums are already coming up against while digitising their collections today even more pointedly: “What is the artwork in the age of digital reproduction?”⁶

Even the most precise model of an artwork would not be its backup copy. Without attempting to designate what an artwork is, the formal characteristics it should adhere to or how it should come about, I will focus in the following solely on the meaning of originality. An artwork is usually original and authentic. Even if it were possible to create a model of the piece that could be described as a backup copy, the process would lose the originality of the piece and after the destruction of the original, only an intricate reproduction of the artwork could be restored using machines, which could be viewed as a copy of the piece, if the materials and techniques used were close or identical to those of the original artwork. This doesn’t mean that the possibilities offered by technology in the digital age should not be implemented, although the greater aim of digitising artworks in a way that would allow them to be restored based on the data recorded in the case of the original piece being destroyed remains unachievable. Quite the contrary, the means offered by technology for recording artworks should be implemented much more broadly.

Digitisation as a technological process is only the first step in a chain of actions, that have changed the work of memory institutions in the digital age and which will also alter how art history is studied and written in the future.

The files recorded through digitisation require long-term preservation because the need to reproduce pieces inside as well as outside museums occurs repeatedly. The files also need to be easy to find, there is no point spending large amounts of time searching for the necessary piece of information from disorganised piles of data. In the digital age the “symbolic forms”⁷ for organising data that describe the world are databases. If a database has been implemented by a memory institution, there is a temptation as well as a need to make the information about the collections of the museum more widely accessible over the internet.

Electronic catalogues with images of the pieces are publicly available in most of the world’s memory institutions by now, be they solutions created by the museums themselves or broader developments that combine a region or whole country like the Museums Information System (MuIS) and its public user interface Museums Public Portal. In one sense, internet technology provides art historians a more effective way to study art, actualising on a new level the Mnemosyne⁸ project started by Aby Warburg about the pictures that affected (Western) civilisation and their use in various eras.

Digitalisation has created the prerequisites for a more thorough study of art, but technologically there are still many limitations keeping us from digital art history. For digital art history we needed to teach computers to see and to look, important advances have been made in this field, but computers still have difficulties understanding pictures and analysing them.

Implementing developments in AI can also improve these capabilities and reach a general visual literacy.⁹ Digitisation is a process that relies on technological developments. Active digitisation started in memory institutions in the 1990s, with the broadening of technological means it started to be conceptualised and standardised. The standard technical requirements for digitisation and the aim of creating digital backup copies of cultural heritage were best met by the types of objects, which could be reproduced in large quantities also without the use of digital technology: books, photographs and documents. Art heritage, foremost with the example of painting, continues to be a contradictory and problematic field in terms of digitisation, which requires the implementation of the most contemporary imaging technology as well as the use of a new kind of technology. This would allow for the creation of visual studies, in which technology supports the study of art and studies of art help technology achieve better results.

¹ See Raamatukogusõnastik <https://termin.nlib.ee/view/6242> [checked 15.01.2020]

² Kurmo Konsa. Bitid purki. Teabe säilitamine digiühiskonnas. Tartu. Tartu Art College, 2018, p 159.

³ Mari Siiner, Martin Sermat. Museaalide digiteerimine.—Renovatum Anno 2015, <https://renovatum.ee/autor/museaalide-digiteerimine> [checked 15.01.2020]

⁴ Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials (2016), p 47, http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/FADGI%20Federal%20%20Agencies%20Digital%20Guidelines%20Initiative-2016%20Final_rev1.pdf [checked 20.01.2020]. Vahur Puik has started rewriting the FADGI guidelines in Estonian and conducted symposiums on standardized digitization based on the guidelines and workshops mostly with a focus on digitizing photographic heritage.

⁵ Andres Uueni, Hembo Pagi, Hilka Hiiop. Getting in between the Paint Layers by Way of Natural Sciences. The Use of Imaging Methods in Documenting Heritage.—Rode Altarpiece in Close-Up, Art Museum of Estonia, 2016, pp. 69–90.

⁶ Paraphrase of the title of Walter Benjamin’s cultural-critical essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”.

⁷ Lev Manovich. Database as Symbolic Form.—Museum in a Digital Age. Ed. R. Parry. London and New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 64–71, here: p. 65

⁸ Leonardo Impett and Franco Moretti have studied the Mnemosyne project with digital tools. Totentanz. Operationalizing Aby Warburg’s Pathosformeln.—Pamphlets of the Stanford Literary Lab, 2017, <https://litlab.stanford.edu/LiteraryLabPamphlet16.pdf> [checked 31.01.2020]

⁹ Maria D. Avgerinou and Rune Pettersson provide an overview of the themes and problems of visual literacy. Toward a Cohesive Theory of Visual Literacy.—Journal of Visual Literacy, 2011, Vol. 30, no 2, pp. 1–19, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267988880> [checked 10.10.2019]

IVAR-KRISTJAN HEIN (1976) is an art historian and the Head of the Digital Collection at the Art Museum of Estonia.

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Tartu Art Museum’s virtual tours: tartmus.ee/en/virtuaaltuurid/
and interviews with artists art art professionals: [youtube.com/user/tartmus/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/tartmus/videos)

Kumu’s virtual tour: foto360.ee/kumu/

The Estonian Museum of Natural History’s virtual tour: loodusmuuseum.ee/en/virtualmuseum

University of Tartu’s digital art collections: dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/15

Gallery Temnikova & Kasela’s exhibition archive: temnikova.ee/?c=past-exhibitions&l=en

Art Museum of Estonia digital collection: digikogu.ekm.ee/eng

Online gallery **Konstanet**: konstanet.com/archive/

NOAR: noar.eu

CCA’s artists database: cca.ee/en/artists-database

Tallinn Art Hall Digital Guide: digigiid.ee/

Estonian Museum of Architecture’s Collection’s Diary: arhitektuurimuuseum.ee/en/museum/collections/collections-diary/

360° tour of **Katja Novitskova’s** exhibition **If Only You Could See What I’ve Seen With Your Eyes** at the 57th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia: ifonlyyoucouldseewhativeseenwithyoureyes.com/360/

University of Tartu Museum’s virtual exhibitions: www.muuseum.ut.ee/en/node/293

University of Tartu Library’s online exhibition 19th-century artists in Tartu: utlib.ut.ee/kogud/bskunst/

Estonian National Museum’s virtual exhibitions: erm.ee/en/näitused/virtuaalnäitused

Estonian Open Air Museum’s virtual tours: evm.ee/eng/virtual-tours

National Archives Photo Database Fotis: ra.ee/fotis

Top Ten Books



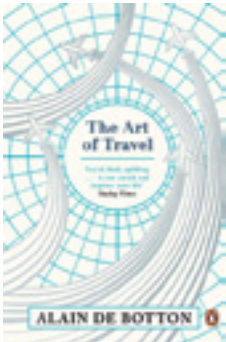
Sigrid Nunez
Sempre Susan: A Memoir of Susan Sontag

As a young emerging writer Sigrid Nunez was dating Susan Sontag’s son and they all also lived together for a while—until Nunez got fed up with this kind of *ménage* and moved away from both the mother and son. A few pieces of information I retained from Sontag as a person—according to Nunez, she was hyperactive and unable to be alone, which of course affected also the life and relationships of her son. They did not cook at home, instead they ate out a lot or had take-away. She was always late and not a little, but thought that the person waiting can only blame themselves if they did not bring a book to fill time. She was passionately intolerant of weakness, hypersensitivity, feeling pain etc., especially in women. She was a natural-born mentor, constantly suggesting books that people should read but she was not fond of teaching, being rather the eternal student herself. Another thing she did not tolerate was public speaking, which she still had to do in order to be on the radar as a writer, yet Sontag gained a bad reputation as a moody and arrogant performer. She saw herself as a writer, not an essayist, although she was recognized mostly for her essays.



Sidsel Meineche Hansen and Tom Vandeputte
Collection of interviews Politics of Study

An excellent book about higher education (in Arts), para-academies, non-formal critical education, the factory of education, feminist teaching practice etc.



Alain de Botton
The Art of Travel

For all of you out there who happen to be on a vacation and discover to your unpleasant surprise that you are not automatically zen 24/7 floating in complete peace of mind on cloud nine. De Botton contemplates the expectations related to travel, different sides of human nature, cultural-historical aspects of travelling and romantic escapism, tips for travelling and having diverse experiences à la try being a tourist in your own city or even in your own room (one should not forget that he is one of the founders of #schooloflife). Intelligent reading, yet not too heavy on the brain, can be consumed also while travelling in the thick of all the new experiences.



Mason Currey
Daily Rituals: How Artists Work

Currey has gathered information from 160 famous artists, writers, scientists, philosophers, playwrights, composers etc. on how they work and organize their daily lives. The formula for success seems to be working from early morning (waking up around 5–6–7 am) till noon; after that, one can go for a long walk, socialize, have a few drinks or take care of smaller daily duties (the only person I know who starts work at 5 am is the rector of the Estonian Academy of Arts Mart Kalm). And no one has had time to wait around for any kind of muses, over time different stimulants have proven to more helpful!



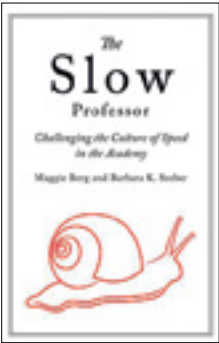
Marisa Jahn
Pro+agonist: The Art of Opposition

A small collection of essays compiled and designed by artist and activist Marisa Jahn dealing with positive friction, agonism instead of antagonism, introducing the rhetoric of dance/play/tennis instead of fighting. Long live agonistic pluralism! About the design—through a hole in the middle of the book “you can constantly keep your eye on the Other”... and the colour scheme: blue and black are the colours of a bruise (as a mark left from maximum contact)... I see bruises as unwelcome contact even if I agree with the need for more positive friction, but the peephole is fun.



Jonathan Crary
Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art

Unfortunately, I don’t know many people who could answer “no” to this question... Nor does this book bring about a radical break but maybe it’s still good and encouraging to sometimes read someone else’s thoughts about the grim life of immaterial workers, the zombie-like state of modern workforces (who are incapable of fighting for better working conditions), the difficulties for the global cognitariat of forming a collective front, the fake-criticality of the art world which comments on working relations elsewhere in society, etc. Neoliberalism has of course its own agenda, but in the end, it is us who tie ourselves down (and sometimes also for too long) and it is also us who face burnout, instead of the system. There is food for thought... yet no time to think, as the infinite field of cultural work needs ploughing.



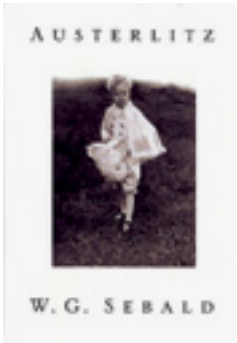
Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber
The Slow Professor

Short manifesto-like book on how the principles of the slow movement could be used as practices of resistance in modern neoliberal universities—the main techniques should be applied from the personal to the global, meaning that one should start with personal readjustment, resisting pressure, worrying less and being less self-judgmental, being more present in the teaching situation, paying attention to the general use of language and being supportive of each other. Some of these issues sounded very familiar to me as a lecturer, some things made me think that in my home university things are okay still. I also liked very much how the book was written with thorough references to different sources, but at the same time it exuded a rare sincerity and... a sense of vulnerability? The authors also refer to a certain softness as a form of resistance, the importance of joy and pleasure in teaching and learning, and it’s true that this aspect seems to be often forgotten in the constant rush and performance anxiety.



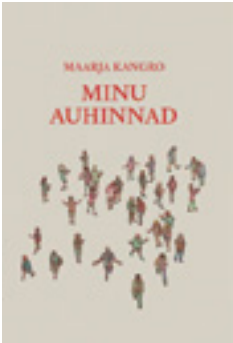
Jonathan Crary
24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep

Otherwise a quite general critique of the modern capitalist system, but the main idea of sleep as a form of resistance was very interesting—a state where you cannot produce nor consume, a state where you are disconnected from the 24/7 rat race.



W. G. Sebald
Austerlitz

A book for which I would like to distinguish the “about” and “how” parts, spoiler—for me the latter was more interesting. “About”—by chance the first person protagonist meets a slightly eccentric man, an architectural historian Jacques Austerlitz, who, over several decades, during their various encounters, tells him of his quest to understand his constant sense of not belonging, providing another possible way of sharing the tragic stories of the Jews during WW2. “How”—the main part consists of recounting the protagonist’s memories, which often go on for pages—thus, the book is written predominantly in the first person, but interlaced with “said Austerlitz” and sometimes even multiplied by “said Vèra, said Austerlitz” etc. which helps to enhance the otherwise “out of focus” sensation dominant in the book. Also, the use of photographs, which I thought about a lot while reading—are these pictures real documentations (e.g. is the railway station in the image the same currently talked about in the narrative)? Does it even matter? Why *these* photographs? Where did the author get them? And most of all, how these unexpected images add a totally different consciousness to the experience of reading the book; pictures that seem to illustrate something, but also have their own agenda.



Maarja Kangro
Minu auhinnad (My Awards)

An anatomy of recognition, how, to whom, with whom, for what, why, why not, etc. The first half of the book presents personal experiences, how it felt, how she got the news, how it was celebrated; in the style of “scenes of writers’ lives”, the gossip glands of the reader get tickled, too. The other half of the book provides a broader analysis on the subject of awarding in the literary field in Estonia and beyond, many thoroughly studied articles and research, as well as personal interviews with colleagues on this highly intriguing topic, for which it seems slightly inappropriate to admit how exciting it really is. And all of this presented in Kangro’s habitual, as if without a filter, commentaries seasoned with dark humour: “One of the motivations that psychologists point out is narcissism. No hidden motifs here, it is just uplifting to see myself shine. Who is that on the pedestal or on the cover of a newspaper, who is that walking in the sun—me, me! So pretty, hooray!”. This book should be given as a bonus to people from every cultural field who are receiving some kind of award.

MAARIN EKTERMANN (1983) is an art worker who creates connections between contemporary art, more or less experimental education, art criticism and other similar topics. Her last major project was Artists in Collections organized with Mary-Ann Talvistu in the framework of the ‘Estonia 100’ jubilee year, for which they were awarded with the Annual Prize of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and conferred a special mention at the Annual Awards of Estonian Museums. On a daily basis, she works as the Head of the Centre for General Theory Subjects and a lecturer at the Estonian Academy of Arts and runs the monthly broadcast Ministry of Art on the Estonian Public Broadcasting radio channel Klassikaraadio (with Indrek Grigor). For book suggestions, Ektermann picked out some of the entries from her reading journal on Instagram. See also #maarinloeb (so far only in Estonian).

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