

*estonian* **A** *rt*

*interview special 1/2 2008*

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## estonian

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All issues of *Estonian Art* are also available on the Internet: [www.einst.ee/Ea/](http://www.einst.ee/Ea/)

**Front cover:** SEA+EFFEKT, Denmark. *ART PLAZA*, the winning entry of the 2008 architecture competition of the new building of the Estonian Academy of Arts

**Back cover:** Emil Urbel. Victory Monument and Bronze Soldier. 2008

**Estonian Art 1/2 2008 (22/23).** Published by the Estonian Institute 2008. ISSN 1406-3549  
 (online version ISSN 1406-5711)

**Editorial board:** Tiina Abel, Andres Kurg, Piret Lindpere, Mart Meri, Johannes Saar

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**We thank:** Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Art Museum of Estonia, Turu Art Museum, Andreas Trossek, Stanislav Stepashko and Alver · Trummal Architects for their kind support.

**Photo credits:** Tanja Muravskaja: p 1, p 22, p 26; Rainer Sternfeld, Andri Laidre, Kadri Kiho, Anto Savi: pp 3-4; Peeter Langovits: p 5; Toomas Huik: p 6; Liina Siib: p 6; Merle Karro-Kalberg: p 7; Estonian Land Board: pp 7-8; Heiki Kalberg: p 8; Stanislav Stepashko: p 11, p 20, p 29, pp 31-33; Marge Monko: pp 12-13; Laura Kuusk: pp 14-15; Margit Säde: 15-16; Andreas Trossek: p 19; Kristina Norman: p 24; Vesa Aaltonen: p 28; Kari Lehtinen: p 28; Mika Eklind: p 28; SEA+EFFEKT: pp 34-35; Arne Maasik: pp 36-39; Alver · Trummal Architects: pp 40-41; NG Art Container: pp 45-46.

**Printed at Puffetinvest**



# Hasso Krull:

## Prevention magic of monuments

**Do you see any mythological urges in the Victory Monument? I have in mind two things: (a) the idea of the monument; (b) the specific design.**

In my opinion, the idea of a victory monument can only rely on mythical need. For politicians, the monument could of course be a pragmatic move, a kind of flypaper that distracts attention from reality, but the idea is still mythical. The notion of victory itself is mythical, because there are never any final victories or defeats. Thus, the victory monument refers to a certain mythical original event: this is the 'laying the basis or foundation' myth, from which a tribe's mythical era begins. Primeval monsters have been defeated, the principle of the current human race prevails, and they should not be ruled by evil. If a monument like this is taken too seriously, it will all seem childish and ridiculous.

As for this particular project, I cannot perceive any urges here. What matters most is money and ideological hegemony. People's mythical urges are simply taken advantage of. People are stupid and can easily be caught on a mythical hook and dragged out of the water gasping for breath.



Tanja Muravskaja.  
*Monuments*, 2008.  
Installation.  
Limestone, glass.  
Hobusepea Gallery,  
Tallinn

**Is the desire for a monument essentially different for a small and a big nation and do they have different aims?**

A 'small nation' is an ideological fiction. Small nations differ from big nations only in one thing: they do not believe that they have a monopoly on military violence. Small nations imitate big nations; each small nation is in fact a model of a big nation, but conquering and destroying other peoples is not that important for a small nation. In that sense, a small nation's urge for a monument is indeed a bit different: it does not rely on the illusion of omnipotence, but rather on some sort of prevention magic. "True, we are not omnipotent, but if we erect a monument similar to those in big nations who have killed and tormented many others, we might seem more awesome ourselves." Although we are not Americans, Russians or Germans, we could appear just as terrifying as they are in a certain distorting mirror.

**How would you describe the atmosphere in today's Estonia that has evoked a desire for a victory monument?**

Our present time is pretty dim and vague, without a clear orientation. We could even say that it is almost eerie: apparitions can become palpable, and they cannot really be compared with anything. This kind of time greatly favours the creation of a fetish for illusory objects. Society asks itself: why do we exist? What is the reason for this kind of life? Why do we have to pretend all the time? Why doesn't freedom make people merry? These questions require answers. And the answer to all the questions is: we are sad and pointless because we do not have a monument – a huge, tall and shining monument...

**To what extent is this particular project an art event? And if it is not an art event, then what kind of event is it?**

I asked an artist friend whether the Victory Monument could be an art event. She answered in the negative, and I believe her. But I would go further than that. I am not certain whether this is an event at all. If something happens somewhere, whether it succeeds or fails, it is not necessarily an event. We should ask whether something really has emerged, ie whether something new has been born. If not, it is not an event. [In Estonian the word 'event' – *sündmus* – derives from the word *sündima*, to be born – Ed]

**Do the symbols of the winning entry reflect archetypal models of thinking? Why are these types of symbols 'selling' so well?**

The victorious entry of the Victory Monument relies on the fixed nostalgic image that it is a copy of innumerable similar symbolic objects. We could even say that the winning entry indeed symbolises the triumph of nostalgic conservatism. The historical fact on which it is based has become secondary. There are no participants in the War of Independence alive today, but the nostalgically tuned conservative spirit still floats above every village shop. Nostalgia has a wondrous ability to melt social differences, to do away with social status and class borders. All nostalgically-spirited Russians, descendants of serfs, might lament the tragic fate of the last tsar's family. It is perfectly possible in Estonia to be simultaneously nostalgic about the stylish manor houses, the heroic deeds of the War of Independence and household items of the fifties. No need to look for something more archetypal here. Naturally, considering ancient meanings, each monument is a cult phallus – especially a monument with a cross on top. Conservative nostalgic mentality is not really interested in deeper symbols. The important thing is what a specific object reminds you of at first glance, superficially. Deeper meanings do not sell, and referring to them would even insult conservatives.

**Is the problem of the Victory Monument aesthetic or ethical for you? What is your personal opinion of the winning entry? What kind of monument would you erect yourself?**

The problem of this monument is purely ideological. There's no point in involving aesthetics or ethics in it; they are totally different fields, realised only in the wake of ideology. For art people, the issue primarily lies in the aesthetics: war veterans see here an ethical opposition, etc. We could say that the problem is mainly religious, philosophical, archaeological, or psychological, but none of this adds anything significant. The monument will be built. I have no personal relationship with it. I do not even feel indifference. Let it stand there. If it were my choice, I would of course produce totally different things: copies, labyrinths, hanging gardens... In that case, both aesthetics and ethics would come in handy.

**Hasso Krull**

(1964), poet, philosopher, translator, essayist. Author of several books, the last of which, *The Pleasure Of Creating And Letter*, deals with ancient labyrinths.

# Rainer Sternfeld and Andri Laidre:

## A cross for the entire nation

**How important was the aesthetic problem for you when you were designing the Victory Monument of the War of Independence? How much have the suggestions of various experts changed the concept?**

It was quite obvious from the beginning that creating an aesthetic-social bridge between the 20th and 21st centuries would not be an easy task. Reaching out for a clear solution of a historically critical event that happened 90 years ago and bringing it to modern society would require something that everyone would understand, while at the same time it was necessary to reflect the era when it was built – the era of material sciences, super-simple interfaces and cultural pluralism. During these 90 years, Estonia has been ‘blessed’ with rich history – from being an economic and democratic pearl (Estonia was one of the first democratic republics of Europe) to a 50-year period of Soviet occupation and finally a post-Soviet society growing progressively into a state of Scandinavian well-being. The result is a multilateral society with generations having extremely different education levels and principal understandings.

As a result of this ‘equation’, we felt that the design of the monument should evoke the feelings which were present in the post-war society of Estonia in 1920s–30s – love for the land, nature and family, and good education. So we decided to create a monument which would be traditional in form and modern in material solution, surrounded by

an architectonic environment from the 17th century – an orillon or bastion.

The monument is a 24m high glass pylon, on top of which is the first Estonian military decoration – The Cross of Liberty. The icy glass blocks of the monument are intended to make it look like an ice sculpture. Winter and ice are very familiar components to those who know the history of the Estonian War of Independence. During the 1919 winter battles, the temperature was -25° C, with knee-high snow. Imagine yourself being 18–20 years old, wearing your grandfather’s old winter coat with almost no weapons and fighting in these conditions against the biggest nation in the world. It all sounds too unrealistic to be true but, due to those circumstances and Finnish allies, Estonia succeeded in winning the only war we have ever won.

From that point of view, we felt that this monument had to tell the story of this war. The stories which all the grandparents told their grandchildren and the Soviet-period generation did not learn in school.

The realisation of the monument has been an interesting process, due to the fact that the innovative glass solution will be made in the Czech Republic – a country that has extensive knowledge of glass and its production. The biggest challenge was to find the best solution for our vision, while the construction still had to be 100% safe, vandalism proof and had to withstand the test of time.

Winning entry *Libertas*. 2007.  
Authors: Rainer Sternfeld,  
Andri Laidre, Kadri Kiho and  
Anto Savi



**Why did you use the 1st rank of the 2nd division Cross of Liberty? What does the Cross as a symbol mean to you? How does the Cross express the meaning of freedom in general?**

Of the nine different Crosses of Liberty (with three divisions, each having three ranks), there is only one that has never been given to anyone before. That is the 1st rank cross for personal bravery. Realising the effort which all of the Estonian people have made to gain, re-gain, build up and keep our independence, it was clear that this cross should be given out to the whole nation. As for Estonia, winning the War of Independence was the first time in our 700-year history that we had gained our independence, that we had established ourselves as a free country. Therefore, the connection between freedom and our Cross of Liberty is quite obvious: before our freedom there was a war, and only after winning it was there independence.

**What is your message to the people of the 21st century?**

Without a past, there is no future. Without a future, there is no life. All the questions in the world have been answered previously somewhere in history. All the future problems and challenges we might face require sensible solutions. Coming from Estonia, a country with untouched nature, we feel that there is a human limit to the technological automation of the world. If humans do not function in the way we have functioned, in harmony with nature for tens of thousands of years, we might as well choose to cease to exist.

**Did it come as a surprise to you that there was a lot of criticism of your concept? Have you had any regrets?**

If criticism is sincere, then it is always helpful and we are really grateful to a lot of people who have decided to share their ideas and knowledge with us. As I mentioned in answer to the first question, 90 years has passed since this important historical event. Furthermore, six attempts to find the best solution and erect the monument were not successful. These are facts that we already knew before starting the whole process. That is the reason why we decided to come up with the described solution – to create an aesthetic-social bridge. A solution that would fit all tastes of art, people, cultural backgrounds, education etc does not exist. The only thing that all Estonians share is history. That is the point of compromise.

**Who are your favourite artists?**

Salvador Dalí, Antoni Gaudí, Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró. Estonian artists: Jüri Arrak, Jaan Elken and Eduard Wiiralt.

**Rainer Sternfeld and Andri Laidre,**

engineers of mechanics, graduates of the Tallinn Technical University. In 2007 their entry *Libertas* (together with Kadri Kiho and Anto Savi) won the competition of the Victory Monument of the War of Independence with 889 points.

**Estonian independence, War of Independence and the Victory Monument of the War of Independence**



On 24 February 1918 the Estonian Salvation Committee published the *Manifesto to All Peoples of Estonia*, thus declaring Estonia in its historical and ethnic boundaries, an independent democratic republic. From 28 November 1918 to 3 January 1920 the Estonian troops fought the War of Independence against the Soviet Russian army and in 1919 in Latvia against the German troops made up of *Landeswehr* and the so-called Iron Division. The War of Independence ended with Estonian victory. Various monuments were put up in towns and counties to commemorate it. Attempt to find a suitable statue to the big monument of the War of Independence in the capital city reach back to 1919. The idea was supported by all the presidents of Estonia, starting with Konstantin Päts (president and state elder 1933–1940). Since that time several competitions have been organised and it was decided that the monument should be in the Freedom Square in Tallinn. The 1928 competition presented the monument as a classical colonnade on the slope of Harjumägi Hill, but the winning entry remained on paper. After Estonia regained its independence in 1991 the issue of the monument was raised again. In 2007, the seventh competition for a suitable victory monument of the War of Independence was announced, this time by the Ministry of Defence. The jury was headed by Andres Põder, archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. There were two artists among the 12-member jury – Jaan Elken and Mare Mikof, and two architects – Ülar Mark and Andres Alver. The rest were public servants. Among the 40 entries, the jury chose the work titled *Libertas*. The authors are young mechanical engineers Rainer Sternfeld and Andri Laidre and architects Kadri Kiho ja Anto Savi, all in their twenties. Despite fierce protests of the art, architecture and national heritage people, plus thousands of collected anti-monument signatures, which thought the project was of insufficient quality, the government decided to go ahead with it. This divided the Estonian society into two sides. The artists opposing the glass cross have been called enemies of the state. The foundation of the monument hired a PR company to improve the image of the undertaking. The initial opening of the monument – 28 November 2008 or 90 years from the beginning of the War of Independence – has now been postponed because of technical and co-ordination problems into unspecified future. The monument is also extremely expensive, costing approximately 7 million euros.

The Ministry of Defence, Mr Jaak Aaviksoo, has said that, “Debates and discussions have revolved around the eligibility of this conceptual design in the media. However, we have to underline the positive and constructive components in this debate, which will enable us to choose a design as appropriate as possible, by ironing out the creases and ensuring that this memorial will be erected to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the beginning of the War of Independence, as proposed by the Government of the Republic. [...] In 2007 we celebrated the 16th anniversary of the re-establishment of independence. However, we have not succeeded in erecting a memorial due to the ongoing political and artistic discussions. At times, they can be justified because we need time when making serious decisions – time to reflect and time to make plans. There is a time for making decisions and a time for acting upon decisions; it is now time for the latter.

[see more at [www.laidoner.ee/index.php/lang/eng/article/131](http://www.laidoner.ee/index.php/lang/eng/article/131)]



# Mikko Lagerspetz:

## The public debates

Archaeological excavations in central Tallinn. Foundation of the medieval gate tower, with an old cemetery next to it. It will be an underground car park.



### **How would you describe the 'public' and 'public opinion' in today's Estonia? Who form them and what are their functions?**

In our conversation today, I would like to use the term 'public' in a specific sense, ie in connection with democratic governing. The public is an open arena for debates that make it possible to maintain constant communication between all members of society, including political decision-makers and others. We can tackle, in public, the present situation of society, different possible aims and significant political decisions, with the participation of people whom these decisions concern. This kind of debate can result in relative consensus, which we can call 'public opinion'. True, political surveys sometimes talk about public opinion as the average opinion of all members of society (ie those questioned by researchers). In reality, people's opinions have a vastly different intensity – there is an essential difference between whether an opinion constitutes a conviction born as a result of a debate, or whether an opinion depends on a passing mood. I think that public opinion is only reached in the course of a public discussion.

### **You have written that 'the discursive situation reigning in the new independent era in Estonia is very far from the ideal of free communication.' Could you be more precise?**

This ideal plays a significant role in the model of the public sphere presented by the German social scientist Jürgen Habermas. In order to function as part of a democratic social organisation, public debate should produce common opinions purely on the basis of how convincing the arguments that have been put forward, *pro* or *con*, are. Every member of society should basically be able to express his opinion. However, if the discussion is influenced by the participants' degree of power or the resources available to them, or if some people's access to the discussion is made difficult, or if some opinions are excluded, not by better argued opinions, but by something else, then the public discussion gets distorted by the power relations. Communication is not free of domination. It has to be admitted that Habermas's ideal cannot be realised in practice in its exact form. At the same time, it is an excellent means to see the shortcomings of the public.

I think the Estonian public has constantly ignored a large number of social-political issues. Those who benefit from a policy which produces a poorly paid and socially badly protected workforce possess more resources to influence the public than those who suffer because of that policy. The 'decisions of the century' were made in such a manner that they were almost unnoticed by the public. In addition, the wishes, opinions and arguments of Russian-speakers are practically invisible to the Estonian public.

At the same time, there is no feeling that public discussion is directed at shaping common understandings or even listening to the arguments of the other side. Quite the opposite: some people question the very right of other groups to participate in society in the first place – for example, consider the T-shirt three years ago with a logo directed against communists. These shirts were worn by quite a few prominent and respected figures. We are dealing here with one of the favourite arguments of Estonian national conservatives, the 'paradox of tolerance': if you are tolerant towards everything then why not towards intolerance? The answer is simple: democracy and a democratic public rely on the mutual respect of all members of society and their readiness to listen to one another. Radically different opinions on individual issues are natural parts of any democratic discussion, whereas intolerance is destructive. The importance of the much-derided 'political correctness' lies in the fact that it defends one of the major presumptions of public communication.

### **It has been emphasised in recent years that aesthetic decisions should be made only by a narrow segment of the public, specialists. Do you agree with this?**

Sometimes – eg in financing art projects – the issues to be decided are indeed primarily aesthetic and it is logical that the best points in the argument are presented by specialists in the art fields. However, in many cases this also means shaping a living environment and the decisions have an impact on people in various ways. Art experts focus on one aspect of the decision. If we also want a public discussion here, we must bring together the opinions of all groups who are influenced by the decision.



Freedom Square in  
Tallinn in summer  
2008

## Mikko Lagerspetz

(1963), professor of sociology at the Estonian Institute of Humanities (Tallinn University). Main areas of research: post-socialist civil society, cultural policies, identity and social problems.

**The same aesthetic decisions have brought about a situation where several front-lines have emerged: the art public *versus* the political public *versus* the 'discourse of the simple Estonian man', who, as a surprise to himself, often takes the side of the political public (see various pseudo-national monuments etc). Do you see a situation where aesthetic decisions split up the Estonian 'public'? What does this imply and what might the consequences be? And how can they be fought against?**

The 'simple Estonian man' has been dragged into the dispute against his will – if the Victory Monument had to be financed by public donations, simple Estonian men (and women) would never donate this nine-digit sum that the monument requires. Erecting the monument was the decision of politicians. However, I don't think we should underestimate the ability of the ordinary citizen to understand and enjoy anything but the simplest aesthetics.

But do aesthetic decisions indeed split society? Perhaps the cause and the consequence are backwards here. It seems to me that splitting the public has been, partly, a conscious choice and the monument policy of recent years is its outcome. Pseudo-nationalism, briefly introduced into politics again, requires for its survival an opposing side, 'non-Estonians' as well as 'not sufficiently patriotic Estonians' – they could be scientists, artists or supporters of the current mayor of Tallinn. During the last parliamentary elections, some politicians decided not to try to heal the split in society, but to increase it to boost their election campaigns. The already two-year old monument politics is a part of a more general policy-making style, which does not aim to create consensus but, rather, to eliminate opponents from the political process. If you choose pseudo-nationalism as a means in the political struggle, the aesthetic results are pretty much similar.

After a 20-year period of democracy, there is still an inexplicably strong understanding in Estonia that equates democracy with the dictatorship of the majority currently in power. However, democracy also means respecting the minority, pluralism and open debate. These values were inherent in the competition entry that came second, and not in the huge cross imitating the style of the 1930s. I am sad about all the damage the monument politics has already inflicted upon Estonian society and the Estonian image. It is also sad to realise how unnecessary this has been, the more so that there are many other issues that need discussion and solutions.

Still, maybe we can learn a lesson from each experience. When we ourselves debate and observe other debates, the activities and self-justifications of the government, we can, perhaps, better understand what should have been done and what not. Maybe we can understand the Estonian political culture better and evaluate it more precisely. Quite a few things might become clearer.



# Merle Karro-Kalberg:

## Messages of landscape

### **Who provides landscape with a political meaning – the one who commissions or designs, or someone who actually uses the landscape?**

A designed landscape has the face of them all – the commissioner, the producer and the interpreter. Political opinions are primarily displayed by those who happen to be in power. In its various huge monuments, the Soviet authorities used five-pointed stars, sickles and hammers, and the Republic of Estonia erects the Victory Monument with a freedom cross. In this game, a designer just puts the idea on paper; how subtly something has been referred to, how understandable it is to the commissioner or to the ordinary citizen, depends on the skills and tact of the designer. As a rule, designers do not display their personal ambitions or political messages to the public. Landscape usually acquires a message through people who use it.

### **What examples can you give of Estonian landscape as a presentation of politics?**

#### **MAARJAMÄE MEMORIAL, TALLINN**

In 1965, a competition was announced to find the best idea for the memorial complex on Maarjamäe to commemorate those who fought for the Soviet power and prominent figures of the Estonian SSR. The idea of the architect Allan Murdmaa and sculptor Matti Varik won. It is a rather grand landscape design, unseen in Estonia before and probably not seen since.

The Soviet memorial complexes normally consisted of all kinds of Soviet symbols – whereas Allan Murdmaa successfully managed to avoid all those attributes. In mid-1970, the construction of Maarjamäe stopped. The architect Mart Port claimed in the press that this was due to the fact that during a helicopter flight it was discovered that the promenades of the complex would form the shape of a cross against the green background. Allegedly, there were also problems with Matti Varik's sculpture *Mother and Child*, which was interpreted as the Christian image of the Virgin Mary.

However, the author regarded Murdmaa's claim that he had designed a cross in the Soviet monument as absurd and it is certain that there was never any aim to integrate a Christian symbol into the memorial. "Paths do cross..." he says.



Maarjamäe Memorial

## SQUARE OF LIBERATORS – TÕNISMÄGI GREEN AREA, TALLINN

In 1945, after Soviet troops had invaded Estonia, a competition was announced for the Square of Liberators, which was supposed to express and commemorate the sons of the fatherland killed fighting the enemy while liberating Tallinn. The winner was the entry by Enn Roos and Arnold Alas. An eternal flame was added later.

In recent years, the monument has evoked different interpretations of historical events, which in turn has deepened misunderstandings and conflicts between the Estonian and Russian-speaking populations. To avoid major rows, the monument was removed from Tõnismägi in April 2007; according to a decision made by the government of Estonia, the graves were dug up and a green area established instead.

The daily *Postimees* of 9 May 2007 reported that the Bronze Soldier had been replaced by a sea of flowers in the colours of the European Union. A few weeks later, the Social Democrats revealed their own plan – they wanted the area to be used as a square for EU flag. In other words, eliminate the red colour from people's memories and introduce blue and yellow. At the same time the state, in the form of the Ministry of Defence, advised people to avoid looking for ulterior motives in the new appearance of Tõnismägi. Plants with pink blooms and grey leaves were planted there, not just blue and yellow ones.

## MAI RESIDENTIAL AREA, PÄRNU

On 3 April 2003, the *Pärnu Postimees* newspaper mentioned that, viewed from an airplane window, Pärnu was cheering the Soviet Union. Some houses were allegedly placed so that the letter combination CCCP (USSR) was formed. The journalist admitted that the image was wrong – the P was upside down. Taking a closer look at the Pärnu city planning archive, it transpired that the plans had envisaged CCCC to appear.

At the beginning of the 1980s, when houses at 35 Papiniidu Street with a small semi-closed courtyard were built, forming an intriguing letter P, there was a fierce debate between two interest groups of inhabitants. Opponents of the courtyard demanded sunshine and wanted the houses to be more dispersed. The ones in favour of a closed yard were afraid of strong sea winds. The city government was keen to preserve land and build the high-rise houses closer to one another. The city government and those afraid of the wind won. This is how the alleged letter combination CCCP emerged with the P upside down.

For the wider public, these three examples constitute a political manifestation. On the other hand, they have been brought to notice after the public order that produced these designs had ended. So we could regard them as criticism of a politics or a public order.

## Does a politically innocent, meaning-free landscape exist?

Giving a landscape a meaning signifies associating your own principles and past with a landscape. If the landscape around you does not talk to you, and you cannot be opposed to that landscape, it has no meaning.

Why some landscape designs appear as political speeches is perhaps connected with our joint memory, how we want



Square of Liberators – Tõnismägi green area, Tallinn



Mai residential area, Pärnu

to know and remember ourselves. With reservations, it could also be called conveying the identity.

## What kind of politics can you pursue through landscape?

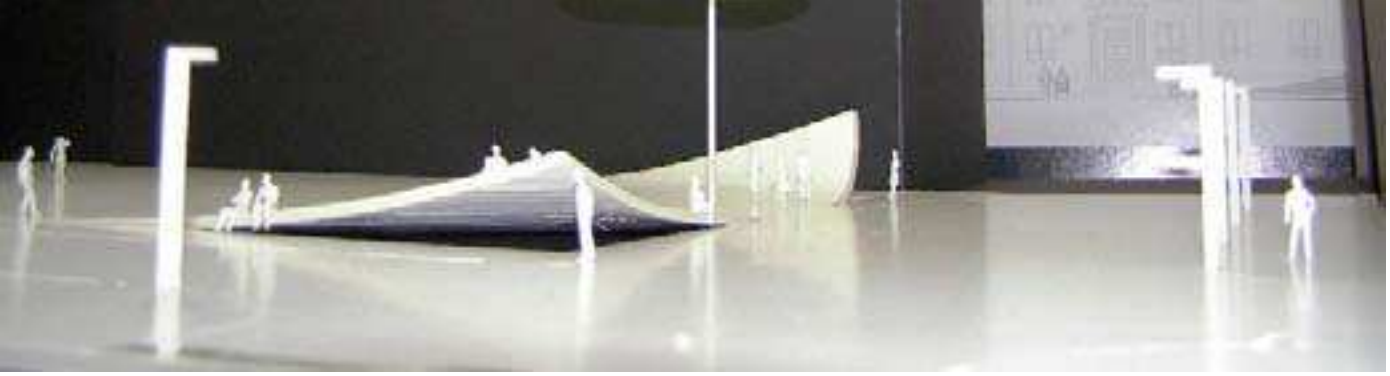
There are numerous possibilities. Designing a landscape mostly serves the wish to show man's supremacy over nature. Let's take the baroque garden in Kadriorg Park in Tallinn – nothing is left to chance, and materials used in the design are lively, but the whole design speaks volumes about man as a creator knowing what kind of nature is best and most beautiful. A few summers ago, Estonian towns were all keen on flowerbeds that depicted the symbols of the town, stressing the patriotic feelings of people.

Does the Lasnamäe dormitory area contain a political hint to the ruling power? On the one hand, it follows modern trends but, on the other, there are huge houses and spacious areas around the buildings. Doesn't it evoke a feeling in people of how small and insignificant they are, which the Soviet power perhaps actually wanted to achieve?

Designs that do not use any political symbols and emphasise instead spatial psychology and the unconscious usually last longer. Whether the power happens to belong to the right-wingers or left-wingers, whether EU membership is in favour or not – all this is too short-lived and radical to display in the landscape.

## What kind of rhetoric is applied in erecting new monuments in independent Estonia? Does it differ much from the mentality prevailing in Soviet time?

If we keep in mind that a monument is erected for future commemoration of a historical event, and history is something that different social groups interpret differently, we cannot really hope that there could be a monument at all which would appease diverse principles and interpretations of history.



Winning entry of the competition to commemorate Tartu Peace Treaty (1920). 2008. Authors: Martin Kinks and Kai Süda

The most successful solutions for a monument are those where political symbols are very cautiously and modestly applied. The Maarjamäe memorial complex was initially built to commemorate those who fought for the Soviet power and for the outstanding figures of Soviet Estonia, but a discussion emerged in 2004 as to whether the complex should commemorate the Estonians who died in Russian prison camps, in exile, wars etc. As Maarjamäe does not display a single pentagon, sickle, hammer or any straightforward symbol, it is not associated in people's memory with any specific regime and therefore free interpretations are possible.

**Has today's understanding of landscape as a venue for rituals changed? Also referring to the design of the Victory Monument of the War of Independence?**

There are considerably fewer rituals in landscapes nowadays. Graveyards where we can commemorate our ancestors are still there and are probably not going to disappear. Sacred groves and offerings are things of the past.

The solution of the Victory Monument is quite static. It is quite grand to look at from a distance, but it is not a solution that relates to people or encourages the carrying out of rituals. Everything huge with larger-than-life proportions psychologically causes repression and awe in a negative sense. Whether a new monument will work as a place for rituals or not is decided in the course of time.

Recently a competition to commemorate the Tartu Peace Treaty (1920) produced a winning entry that is interactive and has an open spatial concept. This is not a rigid sculpture to be admired from afar, but a solution that can be actively used by citizens. In such a place it is much easier to perform various rituals, and the atmosphere of liberal interpretation allows new rituals to emerge as well.



**Merle Karro-Kalberg**

(1981), landscape architect and lecturer at the Estonian University of Life Sciences.



# Jaak Kangilaski:

## What it meant to be an 'art historian' in Soviet Estonia

**You graduated from the University of Tartu in 1963 as a historian and art historian and defended your art history thesis in 1967. What was the topic of your thesis?**

I chose the topic together with my supervisor Vladimir Franzevitš Levinson-Lessing, Vice-Director of the Hermitage in Leningrad: the Art Group *Les Nabis* and its role in French art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After Tartu, I had planned to write something about the Fauvists, but my supervisor, who had survived both the Leningrad blockade and Stalinism, was wise and cautious and thought that, for the leaders and controllers of Soviet art life, the Fauvists were formalists and therefore ideological enemies. If I wanted my thesis to be approved in Moscow, I was not supposed to write anything positive and enthusiastic about the Fauvists. As we were both convinced that early 20th century innovative French art was wonderful, my supervisor recommended *Les Nabis*, because they were not very radical innovators and an appreciation of their art would not be dangerous. Moreover, their work was practically unknown to ideological watchdogs because, although the Hermitage had a pretty good collection of their paintings, nothing at all had been written about their work in the post-WW II Soviet Union.

**You have said that art history was your second choice at university – you would have preferred history or sociology. Did these interests come in useful in your art history research? How?**

I actually hesitated between biology and history, but chose the latter because, although both sciences were distorted by the official Soviet ideology (Soviet biology was ruled by the teaching of Trofim Lõssenko and history by the Soviet version of Marxism), I thought that if I had to adapt to some unpleasant ideology and always take that into consideration, it would be more honest in history, where having a dominating ideology somehow seemed more natural than in natural sciences.

However, studying history I soon found out that the history of the 20th century interested me most, and it was distorted not only by Marxism but directly by the politics of the Soviet Union as well. It was so revolting that I seriously considered leaving university. I finally decided to stay on because I discovered that it was possible to specialise in art history. The impact of official ideology on that subject was purely formal, because professor Voldemar Vaga had a pre-war education and held different views. Although he occasionally tried to conceal his views with Marxist slogans, his attempts were transparent and failed to deceive anyone. Reading art history, I was able to explore history and politics as well. This helped me shape my attitude towards art – for me, it is not 'a thing in itself'. I have looked at art and have tried to research it and teach it in a general cultural and social context. Art is not just an aesthetic value but, as part of a national culture, it is also a source of a nation's self-

determination and survival. During the Soviet period, it seemed sensible to argue for the autonomy of art, because it helped art to free itself from the duty of serving the official ideology. The difference between Estonian art and that of Moscow was for me, as for many others, proof of the strength of national self-awareness. In order to support the singularity of Estonian art and remind everyone that Estonia belonged to Europe, I found it essential to introduce Western art and especially its innovative side.

**What period in art history is closest to your heart?**

I would say modernism, the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.

**How did you keep up during the Soviet era with contemporary art trends and theories?**

It was difficult, but not impossible. Various pre-war texts did exist in Estonian libraries. Sometimes they were kept in the 'special closed funds', but it was possible to get permission to use them. I studied post-war texts at the Hermitage library, and later I was greatly helped by some exile Estonian and Finnish friends who always brought back books and magazines or posted them from Finland. (Some of the posted materials naturally 'got lost'.) In 1981, I stayed for a longer period at Oslo University in Norway, where everything essential was easily available, but there was not enough time to go through it and, generally, all information remained fragmentary until the end of the Soviet era.

**In order to get your articles published in Soviet magazines, did you have to quote Soviet art historians? How free were you and Ott Kangilaski in writing your *Art ABC* book (*Kunst*, 1967)?**

Indeed, we had to quote, but we quoted more sensible and liberal art historians. During the writing of *Art ABC*, the restrictions and anxieties were greater than later. Books were checked more rigorously than articles. The heads of the publishing house worried a lot and had the 'dangerous' places reviewed before publication in order to share responsibility. Some stupid sentences in the book appeared precisely because of this. As far as I know, there were no problems after it was published.

**Was art seen as part of progress at that time?**

Yes, in the sense that innovative art and growing pluralism were seen as hope or symbols of social freedom.

**How much can a contemporary reader trust art publications of the Soviet era?**

It depends on the text and the reader, but one should be familiar with the character of censorship and self-censorship of that time. Treatments of individual subjects are more reliable than any generalisations.

Ludmilla Siim.  
*Portrait of Jaak Kangilaski.*  
 1973. Oil on canvas.  
 Art Museum of Estonia



**What was your methodology in teaching art history?**

To show the general cultural connections with art and the reasons for its innovation.

**Were there any taboo subjects in art history during the Soviet era that you were recommended not to mention to students?**

There were considerably fewer taboos when you talked than when you wrote. It was, nevertheless, wise to avoid some generalising conclusions and categorical assessments. It was, for example, quite possible to lecture about the inner contradictions of the theory of socialist realism, but you were advised not to declare the whole theory bankrupt. You could practically talk about anything you knew about Western art, but had to leave any appraisals ambiguous.

**Art critic Ants Juske has called you an 'apologist art historian', thus describing a situation where a scholar had to legitimise certain manifestations of the avant-garde. Do you agree with this definition? How did the 'legitimation' actually happen – what kind of argumentation had to be used, and how important was rhetoric? Did you defend phenomena that were unacceptable to your personal taste but which you deemed important to defend? Were the discussions more to you than just aesthetic debates?**

I agree with his definition. The simplest method of legitimisation was to refer to the close contacts of the avant-garde with leftism (which you did not necessarily have to like). Naturally, I did not like everything I lectured about, but I placed truth above my own evaluations. I was able to understand art phenomena that I did not like; I talked about them because this demonstrated the freedom of a democratic society.

**During your lecturing career you have had various leading jobs in the academic sphere. How have these jobs influenced one another?**

Academic posts and, of course, also the work I did for free in the administration of the Artists' Association were interesting, but they took up most of my time as an art historian. In those posts, I supported the pluralism of art, and primarily tried to bring art closer to wide audiences.

**Did you perceive a change in your role when Estonia became independent? What was the change?**

In a democratic and market economy society, the role of an art historian and art in general are naturally on different tracks. According to Max Weber, art is, first of all, a salvation from the mundane. But it is also a means of acquiring unusual experience that enhances individuality. People's artistic needs are obviously very different, but the standard and vitality of national culture depend on the spiritual and intellectual enrichment of its members. An art historian can be of help and that is why I have recently taken to writing art history textbooks. It is not enough to write for your colleagues (although I occasionally do that as well), because art is something that should become familiar to many.

**Is the life of an art historian more boring than it used to be?**

Boredom depends on your own choices and, for me at least, there are more fascinating things than I can ever embrace.

**Jaak Kangilaski**

(1939), art historian and critic. Worked as a professor of art history and aesthetics at Tartu University and Estonian Academy of Arts, where he was also the Rector (1989–1995). Author of several art history books.

# Photography artist Marge Monko, her mother Ene and sister Liina: Publicly acknowledged work

**Marge:** What thoughts did my photographic series *Publicly Acknowledged Work* [exhibition of Marge Monko and Tanja Muravskaja at the Hobusepea gallery, 2008 – Ed] evoke in you, where I cleaned the works displayed at the Artists' Association annual exhibition [*Freedom Square*, 2008 – Ed]?  
**Sister:** No thoughts.

**Mother:** I didn't know what to think. I read some of the quotations.

**Marge:** That was another work – *Working One's Fingers to the Bone* – quotations from artists and curators.

**Sister:** Both made me wonder whether an artist is really working for free all the time.

**Marge:** There are several aspects: first, the artist and society, and then relations within the art world. Some quotations showed how the curator, often aware that the artist is not getting paid, expect him or her to work for free. There is such a thing as an artist's fee. At large curated exhibitions, artists get a participation fee, but it doesn't happen very often. This is still one of the few occasions to get a fee of some sort.

**Sister:** I didn't know there were such exhibitions.

**Marge:** As a rule, an artist in Estonia does not get paid. If an artist is invited from abroad, he will probably get a fee. I participated at the Biennale of Young Artists in Tallinn in autumn 2007 and my first artist's fee was around 1500 Estonian kroons [ca 100 euros – Ed], if I remember correctly. It was real money but it did not last me very long.

**Sister:** Maybe a week at most.

**Marge:** Indeed.

**Sister:** Are your exhibitions funded one hundred percent? Or do you have to pay something?

**Marge:** If I send a detailed budget to the Cultural Endowment, and their council decides to allocate the money, then the cost of materials is covered.

**Sister:** So the only thing you are not getting paid for is your work and time?

**Marge:** I don't get paid for the time I dedicate to art. I have to find time after my day job, and therefore I wonder what professional art really means. Is it professional art that I do besides the other job? It seems more like a hobby.

We do not have long-term grants, meaning that, on the state level, art is not considered a job; it is not useful. How could art be useful? Our mother here works for the police department, investigating drug dealers, and there is no doubt about the usefulness of her work. You certainly are useful to the economic functioning of companies [her sister works in an audit office – Ed].

**Sister:** Is art like acting work? How are actors in fact useful? Do they make people think about something? Advance society?

**Mother:** But it's the same with art and exhibitions.

**Sister:** Yes!

**Mother:** It seems this old-fashioned stereotype of a half-starving artist is still very much accepted. You read the biographies of artists, whether Michelangelo or someone else, and it's the same story. They toil away for a pittance. It's obviously assumed that a hungry artist produces better work.

**Marge:** This myth was created by art historians. There have always been very wealthy artists.

**Sister:** Picasso was very well off during his lifetime. Many artists were never famous during their lives, and were poor.

**Mother:** Yes.

**Marge:** On the one hand, there is the stereotype of the starving artist and, on the other, there is a compulsion for self-sufficiency: let her sell her work and earn her living this way. What should we think of artists who sell? There are a few names in the Estonian context, and we can see that many of those who sell well are no longer recognized by the official art world.

Marge Monko. *Publicly Acknowledged Work*. 2008. Photographs





**Sister:** Maybe this is their conscious choice, not to aspire towards some sort of supreme art but rather towards a materialistic way of life?

**Marge:** I tend to think that everybody would prefer their works to be classics and displayed in museums.

**Sister:** If you make an effort to sell and want people to like you, is that taking the easy way out? Maybe this constitutes giving up – why struggle if it is obvious that your work is not going to end up in a big art museum? Do most art people sort of surrender at some point?

**Marge:** It depends entirely on the person. At drama school, actors are constantly told to develop themselves, keep their eyes open and see what's happening all around. Maybe this is what art students should be told as well.

**Mother:** I have the impression that all your exhibitions so far are mostly your own financial responsibility: renting the galleries and the rest of it.

**Sister:** No, she gets money for that.

**Mother:** You pay for preparing pictures for the exhibition and then there's all that awful hassle and struggle, from one exhibition to the next.

**Marge:** At the moment, it is exciting for me. Heaven knows how long that feeling will last. Maybe not for long. I am simply afraid of reaching a dead end.

**Mother:** When you reach a low point in your creative work, what do you do then? Or the other way round – if you suddenly feel inspired you cannot drop your day job.

**Marge:** The inspiration stuff is a bit of a myth. Some things indeed cause an adrenaline rush. There are projects where you get an idea and then realize it, if you can, in the course of a year or two or maybe three. That requires an artist's salary, in order to test the idea in various ways, and not hurry. The work finally displayed should be well thought through.

We have a lot of project art where people book a gallery and then produce something for that time, beside doing their day jobs. They present a message, but you can see only too often that people had no time to really perceive and test something.

**Sister:** If there was no day job you might still leave the exhibition for the last minute; that's human nature. You would perhaps laze around for a year.

**Marge:** I somehow don't think that European artists on long-term grants, say five years, are whiling away their time and stop working. It simply isn't possible.

We have the grant called *Rise and Shine* in Estonia – about 1000 euros a month for one year, given to two people in one field of activity by the Cultural Endowment. I received

5000 EEK [ca 300 euros – Ed] a month from the Endowment for one year, but this sum of money does not allow you to quit your day job. It helps to travel abroad to exhibitions, buy materials and technology. But you still have to work somewhere.

**Mother:** Yes, five thousand only helps.

**Sister:** Would it actually be right if a person didn't have to go to work?

**Marge:** Active artists who also exhibit abroad must be logicians too; nobody does that for them. It takes a long time to realize the works. Art is their work. Honestly – such people get up early in the morning and are busy all day.

**Sister:** It's a lot of money – paying several people fifteen thousand a month to have a normal standard of living. Some might produce art which is excellent in their own opinion but no-one wants it.

**Marge:** The art of today has this ambition of being political and relating socially. It would be interesting to discuss whether art can actually change anything.

**Mother:** Perhaps not change but it can focus attention and express its opinion.

**Marge:** It's good to hear that you think it can. But few people visit galleries. So even the best works largely go unnoticed. What should be done?

**Sister:** Exhibitions also get significant media attention. Word goes round and people become interested. Location is, of course, crucial for galleries. It's best if you don't have to make a special trip but can just drop by.

**Marge:** This question is connected to my work *Publicly Acknowledged Work*. I raised the issue of an artist's work that ideally should make someone outside the art world think about it. I now think it was a closed issue, as not many people went to see the exhibition and the issue failed to attract a wider response.

**Mother:** There should be a committee of artists' representatives who decided to whom and how much to pay. It is, naturally, wishful thinking that all artists could receive a salary. There will always be artists who have to do it after their day job and those who get a salary.

## Marge Monko

(1976), photography artist and curator. In 2008 received her MA in photography at the Estonian Academy of Arts.  
See also [www.margemonko.com](http://www.margemonko.com)



# Laura Kuusk and Margit Säde:

## What can an artist do? What can an artist not do?\*

**Laura Kuusk:** *Doings Or Not* includes an exhibition, video programme and symposium in Ljubljana in June and a workshop on Muhu Island in August 2008.

**Margit Säde:** We are questioning the artist's responsibility in a contemporary society based on power, politics, capital, speed, desire and technology. What can an artist do in public and in private space? What can an artist not do?

The poster of the undertaking, which is also a work at the exhibition (author Indrek Sirkel), shows Frode, who did nothing but point his finger, which led to a gathering in a street, where passing people stopped and stared at nothing and that became something in itself. Practical jokes or pranks, as Frode calls them, are essential in today's art situation, which is groaning under the pressure to perform, the pressure to produce: the artist's works need to fill up the import-export boxes.

**Laura Kuusk:** Making something can sometimes lead to something concrete, and at other times it leads to nothing. Artists are trying hard, but often even too much is not enough. Can the artist be a 9 to 5 machine? How exactly is the audience programmed?

**Margit Säde:** Does the artist have the responsibility to gesture, communicate, interpret, duplicate, act, show, shout or stay calm?

**Laura Kuusk:** As in the Telephone Game, the artist whispers a word or phrase into the ear of the viewer. The viewer passes it on to the next. And so on until, at the end of a long line of people, the language is totally transformed. An artist gives the language and the viewer 'speaks'. Or not.

**Margit Säde:** The exhibition took place from 18 June to 8 July 2008. Parallel to this, a video programme was shown, which tackled actions in public and private space – where an artist's studio begins and ends. What is personal, private and public?

On 19 June, a symposium and a round-table took place, where Slovenian and Estonian artists, critics and curators presented papers or debated.

**Laura Kuusk:** The people participating in the exhibition and video programme were Art Security, Maria Arusoo, Liisi Eelmaa, Minna Hint, Johnson & Johnson, Iti Kasser, Tõnis Kenkmaa, Karel Koplimets, Epp Kubu, Andrus Lauringson, Triinu Lille, Helen Melesk, Marge Monko, Kristina Norman, Martin Pääsuke, Taavi Piibemann, Ott Pilipenko, Taaniel Raudsepp, Fideelia-Signe Roots, Jaanus Samma, Indrek Sirkel, Anna Škodenko, Triin Tamm, Laura Toots, Anu Vahtra and Reimo Võsa-Tangsoo. The exhibition was organised in a gallery with the Slovenian name of ...

**Margit Säde:** Vžigalica – they did not want it translated.

**Laura Kuusk:** It means 'match', which is also their logo. The meaning, after all, is 'set on fire'; they just have that sort of mentality, or so it seemed in April, when we went there to meet Bojan Gorenec, Dean of Fine Arts at the Ljubljana Art



Triin Tamm. *The Death of Effort*.  
2008. Exhibition *Doings or Not* in Ljubljana

Academy, and Alen Ožbolt, who teaches sculpture at the same place. Both are also active artists...

**Margit Säde:** We came in contact with them via Marko Mäetamm, Kaido Ole and Andres Tali. Bojan suggested that the young people could do a project together.

**Laura Kuusk:** Beti Žerovc took care of the symposium. She is a freelance critic who examines the role of the curator. The symposium tackled the issues of articulating and interpreting art. The Estonian party was represented by Krõõt Juurak, Erkki Luuk, Kristina Norman and Martin Rünk.

**Laura Kuusk:** What do the Slovenians know about Estonian art?

**Margit Säde:** Well, if you ask what the Estonians know about Slovenian art, then I think you get a similar reply. Estonians know Ljubljana mostly because of the print triennials.

**Laura Kuusk:** The group Irwin published an encyclopaedia of East-European art, and thus had contact with Sirje Helme, and through her learned about Estonian art history. This is where their knowledge comes from. The encyclopaedia has become a hit, and has sold out several times.

**Margit Säde:** If we take an average Estonian and an average Slovenian...

**Laura Kuusk:** Let us not take an average Estonian but an average Estonian art...

**Margit Säde:** ... student. I believe most have heard of Laibach and the Neue Slowenische Kunst group.

**Laura Kuusk:** Slovenians had a revolution connected with art. Here, in Estonia it was more with singing.

**Margit Säde:** ... singing and sport. Estonians have always been more a singing and sporting nation.

**Laura Kuusk:** ... theatres are full as well.

**Margit Säde:** Thinking about Slovenian art ... Radicalism, shock – somehow I have the notion that the revolutionary element is quite typical in the Slovenian scene.



Ott Pilipenko. *Still Life*. 2008. Exhibition *Doings or Not*

**Laura Kuusk:** The impact of the Balkans too ... although they kept emphasising that Slovenia is not the Balkans. We lived in a place in Ljubljana, Metelkova, which increased the impression of 'bubbling' and 'seething'. It was a town inside a town, a semi-legal area that sprang up in the territory of a former military basis, with studios, galleries, clubs and a hostel. It has also become a tourist attraction. Perhaps similar to our Culture Cauldron. A place that simply emerged.

**Margit Säde:** At the exhibition opening and the symposium, mostly the Irwin group people of the older generation took an interest in us. What the younger generation (graduates of the Academy) is doing is reflected in the paper *Rearticulacija* ([www.rearticulacija.org/english.html](http://www.rearticulacija.org/english.html)), published both in Slovenian and English, which gives a good overview of their activist mentality.

**Laura Kuusk:** Their radical side is, in a sense, quite refined. In the Skuč gallery, reputedly the most radical art venue in Ljubljana at the moment, all displayed works were aesthetically finished.

**Margit Säde:** In my opinion, contemporary art is just like that; art simply enjoys this kind of aestheticism. The smooth, cute computers and over-designed mobile phones – necessary accessories of contemporary life – certainly play their part here. Everything around us seemed so much in place. At our exhibition, this topic was tackled by Triin Tamm's work *The Death of Effort*. She displayed *patafix*, normally used in attaching something to a wall, but this time the material itself was exhibited. In a sense, a white cube conveys its character to all the works. Or emphasises the fact that some works



View of the exhibition *Doings or Not* in Vžigalica Gallery. On the foreground *Import-Export* by Karel Koplimets, on the background *Associations* by Triinu Lille and *Untitled 4* by Anu Vahtra



Poster of *Doings or Not* in Ljubljana



Ott Pilipenko, Anu Vahtra and Erkki Luuk drowning in roses in the exhibition *Doings or Not*

(especially those of M. Pääsuke, I. Sirkel, A. Lauringson and T. Tamm) do not really suit the gallery format, even if the white cube is a room that adds aesthetic weight to one work or another.

**Laura Kuusk:** Vžigalica is precisely such a white cube. It has its own specific character because of the historic buildings – the rooms all have vaults.

**Margit Säde:** Vžigalica lacks its own identity and gallery statement.

**Laura Kuusk:** It offers an opportunity for totally different fields to display their work.

**Margit Säde:** They are attached to the city museum. It is interesting that the gallery is located in the French Revolution square.

**Laura Kuusk:** The city museum resembles our National Museum, but it's newer and has an interactive display.

**Margit Säde:** Because it was recently renovated.

If we try to figure out how to make the Slovenian public sit up and take notice, I would not want to present the brand 'young Estonian art'.

**Laura Kuusk:** I'm afraid that, in the given situation, this cannot be completely avoided. We are something exotic for them, forming the other end of Europe. And they for us.

**Margit Säde:** I think the most important thing is communication, to have some sort of dialogue between their young artists and curators and ours.

**Laura Kuusk:** They did have some contacts here, and they



probably found that we think along similar lines ... a shared sense of humour perhaps. I think this is the first stage – something bigger might develop later.

The exhibition largely tackled the issue of whether a society needs someone who points out, indicates ...

**Margit Säde:** Like a court jester who can say things others won't say.

**Laura Kuusk:** This pointing out and indicating are themes for many exhibits. In Anna Škodenko's work, an art student secretly films how her work is being evaluated by professional artists. If we do not see what they are talking about, their conversation becomes truly silly.

**Margit Säde:** Total waffle. Marge Monko's work *The Ladies' Paradise* also has this kind of repetition of empty talk.

**Laura Kuusk:** Marge shakes the hands of people working in a department store, as if they are colleagues: we are all workers, we produce or we die, and we serve others. Both Anna and Marge seem to stress that an artist is more like a service sector employee than a producer of something.

**Margit Säde:** Johnson & Johnson presented a work consisting of two photographs, titled *Failing to Articulate*, where they show that a museum display or the old classical narrative does not work. They went to the Kumu Art Museum and crashed on the floor in front of old sculptures and 19th century academic paintings. In this case, such an action seems like a protest.

**Laura Kuusk:** The photographs show the difference between their postures and the solemn poses of classical sculptures. *Doings or Not* questioned the format of the exhibition in

a similar manner. This was not an overview or museum exhibition.

**Margit Säde:** To some extent, we had to take into consideration the context, whether we can linguistically show some works or whether they are too Estonia-oriented.

**Laura Kuusk:** Unfortunately, all the inside jokes had to be left out.

**Margit Säde:** We did have to consider such matters, but not too much. For the works of Martin Pääsuke (Andra Aaloe, Flo Kasearu, Tanel Rannala and Juhan Teppart), we added some explanatory texts. Pääsuke's work invited people to write/draw their own designs for the Victory Monument on posters. Estonians have always been regarded as quiet and reserved people who never ask questions, and certainly do not participate in art projects, but in this case people were amazingly keen to do so.

**Laura Kuusk:** What emerges here is the topic of the artist's work and the topic of freedom. In a sense, art has played a revolutionary role in the history of both countries, and under the conditions of early capitalism... The concept of the exhibition emerged from the works: the topics that are in the air, in the collective consciousness and therefore essential. The current economic slump is reflected in the works of our artists too. I mean, here is Ott Pilipenko, who uses materials he can easily find around him – eg the plastic caps from milk cartons.

**Margit Säde:** Ott's art is largely quite technical. Maybe it is an indication of our times: how much technology we use, and how impossible life would be without it. How can you organise an exhibition without electricity? Ott is clever in using both technology and recycling, which should actually be in conflict; technology advances daily, but the milk carton cap is not going to disappear that easily.

**Laura Kuusk:** While unscrewing the caps, the viewer looks at strange-looking looping images from videogames and gets satisfaction from the pixels. Yes, Ott collects random available objects and mixes them together ...

**Margit Säde:** In that sense, it's totally different from the Johnsons' way of relating to the environment; it's simply a parallel.

**Laura Kuusk:** He does not lie down, but instead picks things up.

**Margit Säde:** An artist imitates what he sees around him, but the imitation has a completely different result in each case.

**Laura Kuusk:** You stick your tongue out at him, and he does the same to you.

\* Laura Kuusk and Margit Säde were the curators of the exhibition *Doings or Not* in Ljubljana and organisers of the Estonian-Slovenian artists' meeting in Muhu island. *Doings or Not* was their first curatorial project.

## Laura Kuusk

(1982), studied photography and semiotics (MA in photography from the Estonian Academy of Arts). She has recently exhibited in several group shows in Tallinn, Moscow and Ljubljana.

## Margit Säde

(1984), art historian, interested in participating in different forms of artistic activity herself. Currently freelance curator and cultural worker.

Anu Vahtra and her work *Untitled 4* in the exhibition *Doings or Not*



# Andreas Trossek and Jaan Toomik:

## Why learn more about Jaan Toomik from Wikipedia when you can read a thorough interview instead?

[Interview starts on 31 July at 10.05 am]

**Jaan Toomik's first solo exhibition in Latvia, entitled *Invisible Pearls*, took place from 2 May till 16 June 2008 at the newly opened Riga Art Space. This comprehensive overview exhibition contained some fresh paintings, artist's video art of recent years and also one short film. As if looking at it through the 'tourist's gaze', almost all your key works were exhibited, except Toomik's maybe best-known video *Father and Son* (1998). Why did you decide to leave this 'hit single' out?**

Don't know really, maybe I'm a bit tired of this work. I am sure that the more knowledgeable Riga public has already seen it in other places too. As for myself, I simply see this work as a good 'pop song' that touches upon a sort of high-level mainstream, you know. Most of my works, including those at the Riga exhibition, remain in the framework of 'niche art'. Yet *Father and Son* apparently had an impact on many people. I'm not exactly sure why. For me it was still a bit freakish when I made it.

**The Riga exhibition also displayed *Father and Son 2*, where the viewer can see the artist 'having tantrums' in road traffic, as if 'dancing at the wheel' to the background sound, to the off-screen crying of his newborn child. Do I understand it correctly that through this title you are being even a bit self-ironical towards the decade long international success of your *Father and Son*?**

No, the title is quite artificial in that sense. The work was kind of experimental and I did not think of the title while I was doing it. It instead derived from, well, let's say the frustrations and anxieties of a middle-aged father, and some other contexts as well. Generally in my work, a title emerges during the process, whether it is a painting or a video. Or I think of something later. You can't have *Untitled* all the time, right... (laughs)?

**Heie Treier has said somewhere that during her career as an art critic she has been amazed to witness how Toomik, to put it figuratively, always gets older together with his art. For example, when the artist is a young man he focuses on the struggle between the sexes, and when he approaches middle age he turns to various existential issues, etc. Is this a correct 'diagnosis'?**

Well, in a way, yes it is. As an artist, I rely on the processes of my own life, on its stages and acquired experience. But I'd like to think, or at least hope, that part of my work still contains that timeless essence... But I acknowledge that critics have to define things; it's their art.



Jaan Toomik. *Father and Son 2*. 1998. Video still

**Incidentally, Ieva Kulakova, the curator of your solo exhibition in Riga, has pointed out that one of your most characteristic features is working on the principle of personal archaeology. Here the examples could be *Dancing with Dad* (2003), where you 'rock' on your father's grave; or *Untitled* (2002), dedicated to your dead brother, where earth swallows you up...**

I can't say I fully like this interpretation, but what can I do if this is how it seems from the outside. I still maintain that I am trying to demonstrate a kind of universal level. The works are not exact copies of my private life. Yes, you can create this image easily and it certainly has an impact on people on the level of the tabloid press; you must always provide some kind of framework so that the viewer could think: oh, the artist is about to reveal something here! Naturally it adds extra acuity for manipulation. But I am not copying my life... For example, I simply dreamed about *Untitled* one night. You unconsciously connect those archetypal moments yourself. And when you define a work for yourself, you find the reasons why such images have emerged in your mind. This is as if personal experience is touched upon *the other way round*... Still, the longer I live and the older I get, the more difficult I find it to define anything; everything is so blended in the end and often the image of myself gets rather confusing too. In that sense, dealing with self-archaeology or personal archaeology is relatively speculative, because what is this 'self', this 'I' anyway? This 'self' seems increasingly slipping away through my fingers all the time...

**So why do you think the exhibition curator chose the title from your *Invisible Pearls* (2004) video documentary? As a poetic slogan on an exhibition poster, these words naturally sound rather charming but, at the same time, this work constitutes perhaps some of the grossest documentary shots you have ever recorded? The contrast with, let's say, *Father and Son* is quite striking – no excess metaphysics or poetic images, just simple prison tales about 'enhancing' male genitalia...**

It's difficult to say, but... What I liked about Ieva is that, surprisingly, she selected the most radical works, ie to the average taste. *Invisible Pearls* usually divides curator camps: some start avoiding me... (laughs) and seem to be personally insulted or even angry that such a work exists... I've no idea why – maybe it's the visual sharpness? Documentaries are usually made in a way that the viewer can guess what's going on, even if it's not actually shown. But I *deliberately* wanted to show the things as they are. If you remember, one shot showed the penis of an old prisoner who had been inside for 22 years – well, that in fact was his self-portrait in a way, that withered member of his.

**... and the man himself/his face hardly appeared in the video.**

Indeed, he practically wasn't there. Just a kind of appendix was present... Such things are, of course, totally unacceptable to a certain aesthetic taste. Strangely enough this work seems to have become more popular among curators recently. It has been chosen to appear at quite a few exhibitions and it's been shown at film festivals... after having sat in a 'drawer' for several years, when this work produced quite a bit of loathing. And it is truly uncomfortable. Well, not to me any more, because if you see the shots so many times in the course of montage...

**Also that same work was selected for a group exhibition *Borderlives: Contemporary Art from Helsinki, St Petersburg and Tallinn*, which took place in Germany, and in the given context the curators' choice seemed to reflect a certain wish – that Toomik's 'pearls' would be perhaps the most 'shocking' and 'boundary-crossing' among the exhibited works. What do you think, might this be a sign of a more general tendency? That even today the 'old Europe' has an insatiable thirst or wish to unconsciously seek daily socio-**

**political horrors, stories of poor and desperate people with a dark past in the post-Socialist space of the 'new Europe'? The aesthetics of *Les Misérables* once again?**

Well, you could say that... (laughs). But yes, it looks like a weird animist tradition in our modern environment; I mean the whole procedure shown in that video. It will probably disappear in the long run... I first saw this while serving in the Soviet army – a soldier somehow attached horsehair to the other soldier's penis, so that it would titillate a woman's vulva. Partly this seems to be a phenomenon of a repressive society, where creative potential is minimised. People don't have much to do in a situation like that, yet they want to find ways to express themselves. So this could be regarded as a kind of 'creative act' in a situation with very few opportunities. And also a need to emphasise maleness, essential in such a closed establishment. However, the idea of this particular documentary video was to introduce ambivalent issues, rather than explain anything in detail.

**OK, now one question about more general reception. Riga Art Space (see also [www.artspace.riga.lv](http://www.artspace.riga.lv)) is a brand new exhibition space, opened in January 2008. People working there have said that Jaan Toomik's show was highly regarded by both critics and artists, although the 'average' exhibition visitor considered it shocking and failed to understand why all this was called 'art'. One can thus summarise that the response to your work in neighbouring Latvia was binary and contradictory: professionals usually get the point, while tourist-type observers on the whole don't. Doesn't this resemble the situation also here in Estonia?**

You know, I can't really predict what would have happened had the same exhibition taken place here in Tallinn. The reactions would probably have been quite similar. But I did have one bitter moment. I have a friend from my days in the Soviet army. He's not Estonian but lives in Tallinn. And he has always regarded me with a certain respect, you know, because I'm an artist and all... Anyway, he happened to be in Riga this summer with his friends. And then he phones me, like, at about midnight, extremely excited and everything: apparently there was a 300-metre queue in front of the main entrance of my exhibition! This was the so-called Museum Night when the entrance was free and the public reached more than three thousand. But after that, I didn't hear anything from him.



Jaan Toomik. *Jaanika*. 2007. Video still



Jaan Toomik. *Communion*. 2007. Film still





Exhibition view of *Invisible Pearls* by Jaan Toomik in Riga Art Space, 2008. *Invisible Pearls*, 2004, video

Finally I rang him myself and realised that he was angry, even hurt. He said it was complete rubbish, nothing interesting at all and he hadn't really bothered to see the works properly. So, if I got this feedback from a person I know, with university education and all, then what can I really expect from the average tourist-like visitor, right? I had even told him before that there were works that lasted some minutes, and he should watch them to the end – documentary narrative, often with a twist at the end...

**Yes, we talked earlier about self-archaeology, but the majority of works exhibited in Riga were in fact based upon a more documentary approach, the interview-format. Critics in Estonia have not emphasised this aspect in your work either. Jaan Toomik's 'public image' is still that of a profound metaphysicist who creates general philosophical images of his own torments and anxieties rather than preferring a more social approach...**

Indeed, *Invisible Pearls*, *Peeter and Mart* (2001–2002), *Liina* (2003) and, with some reservations, also *Jaanika* (2007) are all interviews. As far as this exhibition is concerned, it is hard to talk about personal archaeology, although *Liina* is a weird upside down self-portrait to a certain extent. To say nothing of the new series of paintings, actually displayed in Riga for the first time, which I knowingly made looking neutral, even decorative.

***Invisible Pearls* excluded, the people portrayed in your recent videos are mostly your nearest and dearest, your friends. Isn't there a dangerous ethical dilemma here, that when you start your camera as an artist they might at some point forget that you are actually not having a private conversation?**

Well, no, perhaps not. I mostly asked their permission and often even showed them the recorded material. People

are also vain enough to agree. Still, all those topics are so universal that hardly anything truly personal emerges. Some things have always happened throughout the different times, so they appear more like phenomena. Here the issue of personality or ego crops up again – what we consider personal or private are often quite banal, archetypal things. If you try to imagine what that very thing might be that you want to conceal from others, you might not find it at all. Everything is a mixture of upbringing or *Kinderstube* or culture or various complexes in the end.

**In May 2008, short film *Communion* (2007, 12 min, 35 mm) received an award at the 54th International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen, which is one of the most prestigious and oldest short film festivals in the world. The festival's organizing committee described your directorial debut as a 'disturbing film that reflects, in a few precise scenes, a man's fear of commitment'. But how was your *Communion* received by local film people? *Teater.Muusika.Kino* (so far the only magazine publishing a regular film section in Estonia) and the cultural weekly *Sirp* recently published rather favourable reviews, but do you have any idea what's the word on the street?**

Yeah, these all came later, the one in *Sirp* appeared after Oberhausen... But when I showed the film for the first time in Kumu [Toomik's recent solo exhibition, which was curated by Hanno Soans, took place in the Kumu Art Museum from 7 March to 20 May 2007. See also *Estonian Art* 1/2007 – Ed], nobody reacted to it at all. I also offered the film to the Black Nights' Film festival in Tallinn last year, but I did not even get a negative reply. In that sense, we're still having the culture of serfdom, ie we want the 'masters' to react first. But the same goes on everywhere else as well. For example, funny things happened in Rio de Janeiro, where they refused to include my film in their program, but right after the Oberhausen festival

I received several e-mails saying 'terribly sorry, our mistake...' etc. I have not replied to them.

**So when is Toomik going to make his next film?**

Well... I was driving today and thought of a new film... (laughs). But I don't want to make another short film. In that respect, Oberhausen is the highest peak. Besides, there are many things that cannot be dealt with in such a short format. In many ways, *Communion* was a film about a *condition* – practically no dialogue...

**When I first saw that film I didn't really understand whether Alar Sudak aka Elaan, who has turned up in some of your previous videos as well, is in fact playing a certain role or not? He simply is in front of the camera – that's the impression you get.**

Yes, he's very difficult to direct. You can put him into a certain frame and let him be, unchanged. Show him the path that he should then walk. But you can't really make him, like, act. The whole process was a kind of game too. There are lots of documentary shots, almost the first half of the film is purely documentary. In the church scene, for example, he really dozed off because he had come from the night watch and was tired...

**And the pastor was for real too, the one who spoke a bit like Donald Duck?**

Yes. It was a fun process...

[Interview ends on 31 July at 10.55 am]

**Jaan Toomik's**

first solo exhibition in Latvia, entitled *Invisible Pearls*, took place from 2 May to 16 June 2008 at the newly opened Riga Art Space. The exhibition displayed Toomik's development, from the position of a (post)minimalist video artist through stark and honest video documentaries to his first experiment as a short film maker. Works such as *Peeter and Mart* (2001–2002), *Dancing with Dad* (2003), *Liina* (2003), *Invisible Pearls* (2004) and *Communion* (2007) were displayed alongside his newest paintings.

**In May 2008,**

Jaan Toomik's short film *Communion* (2007, 12 min, 35 mm) received an award at the 54th International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen, which is one of the most prestigious and oldest short film festivals in the world.

**Andreas Trossek**

(1980), works as an art historian at the Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia. See also [www.cca.ee](http://www.cca.ee)



Jaan Toomik. *Still Life (With A Car Carcass)*. 2008. Acrylic on canvas

# Viktoria Ladõnskaja, Tanja Muravskaja, Kristina Norman and Liina Siib:

## I constantly feel as if I am some sort of Michael Jackson

**Liina Siib:** Why do artists feel like strangers?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** The idea of an artist is to be alienated and at a bit of a distance from the group. A true contemporary artist is a bystander who observes and analyses.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Does the artist actually want to be a stranger?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** This is simply what artists are.

**Kristina Norman:** As a child I felt alienated from both Estonians and Russians. It was actually quite difficult. Now I feel connected with Estonia so much that I no longer feel a stranger here, and I would not want to exchange it for another environment. This is a place that feeds me as an artist.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** In connection with the recent exhibition – *They Who Sang Together* – at Vaal gallery, I was interviewed by Radio 4 and the Russian-language EURO FM entertainment programme. The Estonian Internet portal Delfi in Russian [rus.delfi.ee/?l=ht – Ed] later published comments about the exhibition, and one of them was ‘Tanja used to be a good photographer, but she has now completely sold herself for a fascist biscuit.’ So I was suddenly a stranger to both sides. On Russian radio, I was told off for tackling such topics, and was told what was wrong with me. Dealing with this topic is a criterion itself.

**Liina Siib:** Tanja’s last exhibition showed portrait photographs of politicians who helped regain independence for Estonia.

**Kristina Norman:** So in what way have you sold out, in the opinion of the commentators?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** If I tackle a sensitive and critical topic, the ordinary man is not going to think about whose side I am on; the topic itself means I am selling myself. With this exhibition I wished to depict the romantic and crazy story that happened 20 years ago, to remind Estonian society that we had something beautiful in the past, and the time had come to analyse and think about how the state could proceed, what the next steps in culture and politics might be and what was going to happen with nationality. I constructed a large mirror at the exhibition; for me the portraits were a reflection, and I expected Estonian viewers to come, think, analyse and discuss what should happen next. Alas, as a seasoned patriot, the Estonian viewer took offence and regarded the pictures as dead bodies, which supposedly signified an end to Estonia.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** I think contemporary art is a global phenomenon. And we cannot really say that we come from here and the art we have here is ours. It seems, rather, as if the art of the whole world is ours. If an artist decides to examine a topic, it means that the topic is sensitive almost everywhere in the world.

The other thing that Tanja mentioned is who in the current situation is considered to belong and who isn’t. I think about this constantly. The people who in my opinion are decent Estonian citizens, but with different backgrounds, and/or

different family names, these people are hovering somewhere near the border. They get flak from both Estonians and Russians, because the situation is as it is now. The Russians, for example, cannot quite understand why I work at the weekly *Eesti Ekspress* and not at a Russian paper. Estonians, too, look at me and wonder how I can speak about our society as if I were part of it. Maybe someone with a different name or background would have more right to speak about what is wrong in this society. I can only praise and never point out the mistakes. But it matters to me very much what goes on in Estonia today. This place is essential to me and I want things to be better here. It should not matter whether my ideas are right or wrong. I should be able to express them. I think I have a right to write about what I want to.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** It would be logical, as in a chess game, if we knew from the very beginning who was who. Who was the white knight and who the black.

Kristina Norman’s art seems to me, since the ‘grey passport video’ (*Contact*, 2005), to be telling Estonians how we are doing with the Russians here. This is why Estonian society has accepted her. I have not been accepted because I, as a local Russian-speaking person, talk about Estonians. I show them in a mirror so they can see what they look like. The project with the flag, *Positions*, was such a mirror. Take a look in the mirror! My exhibition at Vaal gallery is another such ‘mirror’. That’s why I am not accepted and am regarded as alien.

**Kristina Norman:** The video *Contact* was my first work where I had to think about how to produce something socially sensitive; it was a school task. In my earlier works, I tackled the topic of parallel realities (*The Field of Genius* and *Mysterious Radio*) [See also *Estonian Art* 2/2006 – Ed]. It was a contact where the protagonist had an alien’s passport and lived in a kind of parallel reality. In a sense this work was quite primitive, but I think it was still able to say something. I took one quite cliché Russian, who reads the Estonian law on aliens that determines him. His reading makes it quite clear that he does not actually understand the words he reads about himself. It is a simple work that only works for Estonians, who understand that the man does not understand what he is reading. Russians might not grasp this at all.

I wouldn’t do it that way now. It does not make clear that the man in question was not born here, that he got his value criteria from his family and that he had studied English at university but did not think it necessary to bother with Estonian. He does not need Estonian in his daily work – there are your parallel realities.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** In the next video [K. Norman’s *Pribalts* – Ed], you showed exactly the same thing. I am just talking about differences. I depict an Estonian and you present a cliché Russian, to Estonian society, who cannot speak Estonian, who is not integrated enough.





Tanja Muravskaja. *Positions*. 2007. Video still



Tanja Muravskaja. *Position*. 2007. Photograph

**Kristina Norman:** Quite the opposite. In that video, I tackle the problem of how much people are actually integrated. The target group of the film is not just Estonians!

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Last year's conflict was very important to me [unrest in April 2007 because of the relocation of the Bronze Soldier, the Soviet war memorial – Ed]. If we had a correct integration policy, common values, this conflict would not have happened.

**Kristina Norman:** The unfortunate soldier would not have been moved.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** The Bronze Soldier constitutes a very complicated issue. The conflict showed that our integration policy does not work. We, as a state, want to know how well the Russians speak the official language, but we could not care less what they think and feel. Where exactly does their identity lie?

**Kristina Norman:** We now have a different Republic of Estonia than the first one. Not all were Estonians who voted for this new republic. There were Russians as well. They were granted citizenship. Many, probably Estonians

too, did not vote in favour because they feared the Moscow tanks. The wise decision would have been to grant everyone citizenship who was born here or had lived here for a long time. Then everybody who wanted citizenship would have become a citizen.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** The problem was that the newly independent country was not prepared to accept the Russians who lived here. Either you go home or prove that you want to be a citizen of this republic. The proof was learning the language, passing exams. Proof is an understandable logic and I immediately thought that these were like rules of physics about force and counterforce. It proved to be the case. This tactic was understandable at first. But Estonia continued this policy, largely ignoring the Russians living here and what they thought. It was and is dangerous; one third of the population has totally different values and knows nothing about Estonian life. Even if they understand the language, they still behave differently. But why do they behave differently?

**Liina Siib:** Why? And what can be done?

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Shared values.

**Kristina Norman:** Shared heroes, shared suffering.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** The idea at the time was that we should domesticate our Russians. If they left there would be a gap, which could be filled by Turks or blacks, absolutely 'alien' people. I have been through the whole process, getting a passport and citizenship etc. In hindsight, this seems a very naïve and childish politics. It's part of Estonian history. There are different opinions about whether a new republic was established or the old re-established. The state was there, but it had no experience with citizens. It was a totally new situation. Estonian politicians are now promoting this experience in Georgia and Ukraine.

**Kristina Norman:** In order to create shared values, everybody should have become a citizen, with media in both languages. There should have been an official Russian-language TV channel, with both Estonian and Russian people who would have proclaimed those shared values.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Had we done, in the early 1990s, what Kristina is now saying, the situation would be quite different now. The Russians here were then a bit miffed because Russia had abandoned them. The Russians would have accepted Estonia as their home. Unfortunately, the Estonian state made it clear that Russians were some kind of residue, not at all important.

**Kristina Norman:** Rudimentary.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Yes. But the situation could not go on forever. In the early 2000s, people started speaking of local Russians as our Russians. I am Estonian-Russian, and I like the term. For me, Estonia and my Russian blood are equally essential. It is high time to realise that these Russians do matter. They are here and we have to accept them.

**Kristina Norman:** We alienated these people ourselves.

The more so that the whole Russian identity policy relies on the victory in WWII. That's the main religion.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** A shared value.

**Kristina Norman:** Our Russians are part of the same cultural space or construction created in Russia. And then the Estonians come and say your sacred construction is bullshit. Your liberators were our occupiers etc.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** And now we have ended up in bed with the enemy. Today's Russians perceive what is happening in

Russia. When Russia starts its propaganda machine abroad, they target local Russians in Estonia, and that is very dangerous. The Russians here now watch Russian television, and after April 2007 they don't have much respect for the Estonian state.

**Kristina Norman:** Theoretically, everyone should be loyal to their country but, the way things are, many non-Estonians are losing faith rapidly. Their foundation has been taken away and nothing offered in return. Become Estonian, or you're rubbish.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Kristina, I read a comment on a Russian-language Internet site about recording your film on 9 May [2008 – Ed]. It said that a journalist named Kristina Zaitseva had interviewed people, asking whether they would like to buy a figurine of the [Bronze] Soldier or not. What did you want to achieve with that, and why did you approach mostly elderly women? Why didn't you appear under your real name, and why did you speak Russian with them?

**Kristina Norman:** Firstly, I did not introduce myself to these people. Secondly, it took place in the military cemetery where the monument now is. It was all quite different. Information for the newspaper article was taken from web comments, where people talked about the photographs taken on site (ie in the cemetery). The first entries said this was cool, she is cool, the monument is cool etc. Then came a comment from a schoolmate who professed to know me, said my name was Kristina Zaitseva, my mother Russian and father Estonian and that I had always been a nationalist.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** I heard about this experiment, as I would call it, but not via the paper but from my friends who were there, probably part of your experiment.

**Kristina Norman:** This is a work-in-progress, I don't really want to discuss it. It isn't finished.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** But it's part of your life and art. You cannot just leave it out.

**Kristina Norman:** I had a right to let these commentators and journalists write whatever.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Why are you sometimes represented in the media under another name?

**Kristina Norman:** I told you that I didn't introduce myself to anyone. The whole article rests on false information that came from the Internet comments. This shows how unprofessional the Russian media was in this case.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Why was it unprofessional?

**Kristina Norman:** Journalists shouldn't rely on what women gossip about at a hairdresser's, as it were. What would you call that?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** It's the same when the Estonian media writes 'based on information from an unspecified source.'

**Kristina Norman:** The Russian paper did not say it was an 'unspecified source'. What I find interesting is that by my mere presence I have started a process and cannot control what happens next. I'd like to know where this is leading. In that sense, I could not care less that everybody hates me for it. Quite the opposite.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I was talking about something else. It seems that you have different images for society. Whether the media or the Russian-language press are professional enough is beside the point. It doesn't matter whether it's good or bad media. Didn't it occur to you that this might offend those Russians who wanted to perform their ritual on 9 May?

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** My friends said it was a provocation.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Did you want to provoke?

**Kristina Norman:** Provocation wasn't the aim, I simply wanted to encourage some discussion on the spot.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** How do you think these little old Russian babushkas see it?

**Kristina Norman:** I think their attitude is there in the comment. It's fascinating information, documentary material that I could use.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** But what purpose did it serve?

**Kristina Norman:** I wanted to know how people would react when I stood there with small plaster figures of the Bronze Soldier. I did not want people to do this or that. I simply stood there, and people approached me, started talking and wanted to know where they could buy such a figurine?

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** I have the same question I started with – whether an artist is a bystander or whether he or she wants to be, and can be, the centre of attention, change the situation. This experiment shows that you wished to improve or alter this situation.

**Kristina Norman:** No. If we talk about documentary film-making, there are different types, including interfering documentaries.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Is interference justified in your opinion?

**Kristina Norman:** As an artist? There are various ways to interfere. I didn't simply go and attack, or ask directly. I was just standing there and people came up to me.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Before turning up there you knew you were going to get a result of some sort, that people would take notice. And you thought you knew what the result would be. Does an artist have a right to interfere, in your opinion?

**Kristina Norman:** Absolutely.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Then you change reality.

**Kristina Norman:** Here I see a difference between the artist and the journalist. I am not claiming I get the truth. I can play around with reality as well. I can document it at a distance and I can interfere. By interfering or starting a process, I actually get a reaction from people – whether negative or positive. I learn a lot about what these people are thinking.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Can an artist really interfere?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Good art justifies everything. Art can and must interfere.

**Kristina Norman:** The women on whose comments the newspaper article relied would have bought figurines from me, but they did not like being filmed. The discussion that erupted afterwards was all because of the filming; they were convinced I worked for the daily paper.

**Liina Siib:** They saw you as an Estonian?

**Kristina Norman:** Yes. The hostile reaction was not because of the figurine but because it was the Estonian media. They thought *a priori* that if you've got Estonian media and a Russian symbol in one context this will lead to something that shows them in a bad light.

**Liina Siib:** Maybe they were not that wrong?

**Kristina Norman:** It's a fascinating phenomenon.

**Liina Siib:** I think what you achieved there was all quite logical. Had you tried to behave like a Russian, revealed your Russian side, how would you have behaved then?

**Kristina Norman:** I cannot behave like that because both sides act together. I cannot separate them. I am what I am. I cannot be one thing in one situation and another thing

in another. My mentality is something else altogether. I am not an Estonian and I am not a Russian.

**Liina Siib:** Maybe it's precisely this that caused the feeling of unease in people.

**Kristina Norman:** This version has been demonised most. The worst case is when those who have Russian blood try to prove to Estonians that they are Estonian, and thus do all sorts of idiotic things.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** What annoys me in tackling this sensitive issue is Kristina's claim that she is neither Estonian nor Russian. Well, who are you then?

**Kristina Norman:** Tanja, I am neither, I am of mixed blood. I don't have any clear identity. Why should I? Who are you?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I can reply to you if you reply to my question. This is not an issue of getting a reply. It is in fact different when we talk about art. A point of comparison.

**Kristina Norman:** I can't understand what it is you cannot understand?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I see your message in your art, but when you give an interview, I cannot understand what your position as an artist is.

**Kristina Norman:** In my film *Monolith*, I was not taking any sides. It is a clear statement when I don't take sides. It's also a position. Why can't you accept that?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I do accept that. We are dealing with a conflict issue here. To the old Russian women who are not sufficiently integrated, you presented yourself as a journalist from a Estonian-language daily paper; you played a role. I'd like to know why your role wasn't clear enough.

**Kristina Norman:** Because I did not present myself as anybody.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** But you followed a certain pattern, didn't you? You spoke to them in Russian.

**Kristina Norman:** It would have been pointless to speak Estonian to them. Most of them had no Estonian at all. I know both languages, and I wanted communication.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** You went to a sacred place with a saint you had made yourself. To me it seems a rather painful and sensitive process, for you to be here and there at the same time.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** It seems that it was your figure in Tõnismägi [the place where the Bronze Soldier monument stood – Ed], and flowers were brought to you. Estonian and Russian media, even in Russia, later showed how Russians had put up a monument to the monument, but it had been produced by you.

**Kristina Norman:** Cool! By the way, it wasn't me who took that figurine to Tõnismägi.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** What's cool about it? You constructed quite another reality!

**Kristina Norman:** So what? I am responsible for it.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** The Russians didn't do that, but an artist, and later the whole world showed it in a totally wrong light. You allowed the Russian media, as well as local media, to claim that it was a Russian who was playing there, but it wasn't a Russian or Estonian; instead it was someone of mixed blood who was conducting her experiment. You were constructing quite a different reality. You were playing in an area that is too painful. Do you have a right to play there?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** As an Estonian you shouldn't.

**Kristina Norman:** I'm not an Estonian.



Kristina Norman. *Monolith*. 2007. Video stills

**Tanja Muravskaja:** As a Russian you shouldn't even more.

**Kristina Norman:** I'm not a Russian.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** I don't think you should play as an artist either.

**Kristina Norman:** As an artist I can do anything, except that I must not kill anyone.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** But you are killing emotions now, aren't you?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Exactly.

**Kristina Norman:** Quite the opposite.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** You are killing.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Someone was killed on the Bronze Night.

**Kristina Norman:** You are now recreating the image that the Russian media promotes.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** You did exactly the same. You created the impression that figures of the Bronze Soldier had been made in Tallinn and placed on Tõnismägi. You are responsible for that pattern.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** You should have turned up the next day to say 'well, I'm the god who played with you yesterday.'

**Kristina Norman:** Why should I have done that? If I could observe the process?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Because you influenced the overall process.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** You are now interfering.

**Kristina Norman:** Yes, I am.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Why?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** The image of the Russian community has changed because of this.

**Kristina Norman:** Public space is public space. The artist



has just as much right to organise things there as any other activist does.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** You as an artist started a process for which you were not prepared to be responsible.

**Kristina Norman:** Why wasn't I prepared?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Because you did not object to being called Kristina Zaitseva, and did not explain your real purpose.

**Kristina Norman:** Who sets the time limit? Who says I can't do this?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Because the process has already come to an end.

**Kristina Norman:** No it hasn't. Far from it. We are sitting here today, and it's still a topic.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Why did you want to do it?

**Kristina Norman:** I said I was just interested in the reaction. And it isn't yet finished. It's a work-in-progress, and it's more than the figurine of the Bronze Soldier.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** But you were accused.

**Kristina Norman:** That's cool.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** I don't really know whether an artist has a right or not, but he definitely should observe the reality that already exists.

**Kristina Norman:** No, that's journalism.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Did you have a right to do that? You constructed a different reality via the media, and that's totally new information. Were you playing the role of an artist or perhaps God? There's a third aspect as well. You knew very well what was going on in Estonia, and why the topic was so painful. And then you used it. Why? Perhaps because the topic attracted attention, and you were noticed.

**Kristina Norman:** I am convinced that as an artist I had every right to do that. I did not force anyone to communicate with me.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** But as a patriot and citizen of Estonia you wanted to influence the Russian media and show a different reality.

**Kristina Norman:** I'm not a patriot.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Why are you not a patriot of Estonia?

**Kristina Norman:** I naturally associate myself with the country where I was born, and with the environment where I grew up. I am loyal to the state, but that does not make me a patriot.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** The Bronze Soldier topic is very sensitive and I, with my background, would never undertake an experiment like that.

**Kristina Norman:** Our backgrounds are different.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Why different! You went to a Russian school and you know exactly what goes on in the Russian soul.

**Kristina Norman:** I don't, and that's why I went there.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** You knew what to expect.

**Kristina Norman:** I knew how much the soldier monument meant to them, but I didn't know how much a small copy would mean to them.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** That's playing with people. So why? You certainly wanted to see the reactions, but why? What is the end result? Was the project or the film really worth it?

**Kristina Norman:** It was worth it, one hundred percent.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Then you had the right.

**Kristina Norman:** I would never have attacked the interests of an individual. I went against the construction.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I think it was a wonderful experiment and a highly regarded art project in European countries. You will get attention all right.

**Liina Siib:** Tanja, are you an Estonian patriot?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Above all, I am a citizen of Estonia and naturally I support the country.

**Liina Siib:** How do you produce a good work of art about Estonia?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Whether art is 'good' or 'bad' is essential. In the first case, we can forgive everything. In *Positions*, I deal with the Estonian flag because no-one else is doing that.

**Kristina Norman:** Did you show some Russians too with the flag?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** No, that's purely Estonian blood.

**Kristina Norman:** Why only Estonians?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** It's simple. I found people who already had their own position as artists, who were Estonians and were born in a new country. They knew nothing about the Soviet era. And they show what the state really is. I asked them what their country, and its symbol, the flag, meant to them. They all decided themselves and we chose the visual together. I worked with the identity of Estonia and the Estonian Republic. I was trying to understand what my identity in the Republic of Estonia was.

**Kristina Norman:** If you're examining the identity of Estonia and tackle only Estonians, aren't you then leaving out something?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I am working with the identity of a young country, established 20 years ago.

**Kristina Norman:** Russians were born here as well.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I am interested in constructing a mono-national country.

**Kristina Norman:** Does this construction exclude non-Estonians?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** It doesn't. It is basically the same – while you show Russians, I work with Estonians.

**Liina Siib:** Have you ever thought about what it might feel like to be Estonian?

**Kristina Norman:** I have thought about it, yes. Equally, I have thought the same about being Russian.

**Liina Siib:** Is there a difference?

**Kristina Norman:** Of course, an enormous difference. Value criteria are different.

**Liina Siib:** What criteria do the Estonians have?

**Kristina Norman:** They have a different understanding of history, for example.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Maybe we are lucky, because we can understand both Estonians and Russians. It's a minus and a plus. Talking with Estonians, I know the Russian background and can explain what the local Russians think. And the other way round. I know what is going on in both communities. As a student, I once replied negatively to the question of whether I wanted to be Estonian. Such a thing has never occurred to me. Now I think that the background we have here is in fact a very good background.

**Kristina Norman:** Being Estonian or Russian also involves whether you are prepared to accept 100% of the value criteria of either community. I can't do that.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** Nor I. I have my own criteria.

I remember a situation involving a sense of patriotism. A few years ago, I was having a drink with my Estonian friends while



Tanja Muravskaja.  
*They Who Sang  
Together.* 2008.  
Photographs

the Estonia-Russian football match was in progress. They wanted to know on whose side I was.

**Kristina Norman:** The Estonian national team has several players with a Russian background.

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** I went to kindergarten with the goalkeeper of the Estonian team. I know him and naturally I am on his side. Here's the sense of patriotism for you. It's no big deal that historically I am connected with Russia or any other country. You are with people you were with in your childhood. This is patriotism. I am an Estonian patriot, absolutely. I know this country, its good and bad sides. I think I know how to defend it. At the same time, I am very conscious of my Russian roots.

**Liina Siib:** Do you think you have an advantage because of your mixed identity, both as an artist and a human being?

**Viktoria Ladõnskaja:** It has its advantages and also drawbacks. The advantage is that I can talk about both, and the drawback is that I get flak from both too. All the stories I have written are like tattoos. Like writing on my own body. I have the sign for life, regardless of the context. I think we can use a metaphor such as Michael Jackson. Neither white nor black. I constantly feel as if I were some sort of Michael Jackson.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** Viktoria is prettier! I have a badge proclaiming how wonderful it is to be Estonian [by Johnson & Johnson – Ed]. I put that on when I enter the enemy camp. I don't need it when I am with my own.

**Liina Siib:** Who is the enemy?

**Tanja Muravskaja:** People who keep asking where I was born, who my parents are, did my parents come here before I was born, and what their purpose was. Everybody seems happy that I do not come from Russia, that I am not Russian, but of Ukrainian descent. This is not the way a human being should be evaluated.

**Kristina Norman:** I don't want anyone else to think about who I am. People have tried to find a slot for me all my life.

**Tanja Muravskaja:** I don't think it's acceptable if a person is regarded first of all...

**Kristina Norman:** ... as a representative of a nation,

**Tanja Muravskaja:** ... if it doesn't happen to be an exhibition about nationalism. We have now got through that phase; twenty years have passed, and perhaps now we can start talking about real things, art and culture. The issue of where we came from, and whether our parents had any right to come here, will be left behind.

## Kristina Norman

(1979), artist involved in moving pictures and drawing. Her art talks about the results of the integration process of Estonian Russian-speaking community. Participated in the 5th Berlin Biennial. Will represent Estonia with her project *Eternal Memory* in the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009 (Palazzo Malipiero, 3rd floor, S. Marco 3079). See more [www.cca.ee](http://www.cca.ee).

## Tanja Muravskaja

(1978), photography artist. Has participated in a number of exhibitions in Estonia and abroad, most recently in the 1st Moscow International Biennale for Young Art. See more [www.tanjamuravskaja.com](http://www.tanjamuravskaja.com)

## Viktoria Ladõnskaja,

(1981), graduated as journalist from the Tartu University, works at weekly *Eesti Ekspress*. Has several times written about the Russians in Estonia. See also [blog.ekspress.ee/viktoria](http://blog.ekspress.ee/viktoria)



Viktoria Ladõnskaja shakes hands with Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, at the reception celebrating the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia on 24 February 2007

# Tiina Abel and Ingrid Sahk:

## The idea of location during periods of national self-assurance in Estonian and Finnish art

In talking about Estonian art, we usually mean the parallel time to the Golden Age of Finnish art, the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

### What part does landscape play in the construction of nation and nationalism?

**Ingrid Sahk:** A landscape painting can reflect the attitude and value criteria attributed to nature at home. The natural environment obviously has a fixed role in national identity – one type of landscape is considered more Estonian than another. People determine themselves by the place of their permanent residence, within certain geographical and landscape borders ('here under the northern skies'). Individual motifs and landscape pictures can gradually acquire greater symbolic value and present certain aspects of a national feeling ('Estonians as the people of nature', 'of the forest'...).

**Tiina Abel:** In the classics of Estonian painting, landscape is an absolutely dominant genre, with only portraits offering modest competition. It is obvious that landscapes have acquired symbolic status, and part of the iconographic system of presenting a nation has emerged from them. Such landscapes embody ideas, memories and feelings that unite people into a nation. In constructing a nation, landscape starts playing an especially significant role when it is equated with homeland or simply the countryside or even soil, if it is used with propagandist aims. Thus, at times the theme of the nation or nationalism becomes topical for political or ideological reasons, as happened at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries in Finland or in the 1930s in the Republic of Estonia. These were periods that clearly favoured the national over the international. The idea of a specific location therefore becomes topical during periods of national self-assurance. But also, when the domestic landscape is only a pretext for achieving artistic aims, as with the paintings of Konrad Mägi, it can be a means of emphasising national singularity: we value Mägi's landscapes not only for their artistically high level, but also because he was the first to unite the means of modern art and beloved Estonian landscape motifs.

### Why did Estonian and Finnish artists turn to symbolism in their search for landscape?

**Tiina Abel:** It was due to a change of mentality and new artistic aims, besides involving a political situation for the Finns. After the open-air painters had learned to convey the tiniest detail of any landscape, as happened in Estonia with the followers of the Düsseldorf school, it was only natural that their interest turned to inner landscape, abstract existential ideas. According to a popular saying, this constituted a turn from the world of Marx to that of Freud. In Finland, this coincided with the need to find symbols of national self-assurance, where the message could be read between the lines, as it were. But even there, just as in Estonia, the artists were trying to find an easily readable and modern artistic form to convey national myths. R. W. Ekman depicted Väinämöinen long before A. Gallen-Kallela did but, due to the clichés of academic art, this still resembled (rather a wild version of) Zeus.

**Ingrid Sahk:** The romantic belief that it was possible to convey certain morals or meanings by means of pictures of pure nature was transferred to symbolist art in the late 19th century. The Golden Age Finnish landscapes are dominated by a strong allegorical undercurrent. The Finnish landscape was depicted precisely and faithfully, but with a certain subtext. It was convenient to hide invisible meanings behind forests and lakes, and I would like to stress here that, for example, A. Gallen-Kallela and P. Halonen did that quite purposefully. Later interpretations, naturally, further amplified the allegory in these paintings.





Akseli Gallen-Kallela  
(1865–1931).  
*Wintry Imatra*. 1893.  
Oil on canvas.  
Turu Art Museum

Konrad Mägi  
(1878–1925).  
*Norwegian Landscape*.  
1908–1910.  
Oil on canvas.  
Art Museum of Estonia



Eero Järnefelt  
(1863–1937).  
*Early Spring Sun*.  
1893. Oil on  
canvas.  
Turu Art  
Museum



Victor  
Westerholm  
(1860–1919).  
*Åland Islands*.  
1899–1909.  
Oil on canvas.  
Turu Art  
Museum

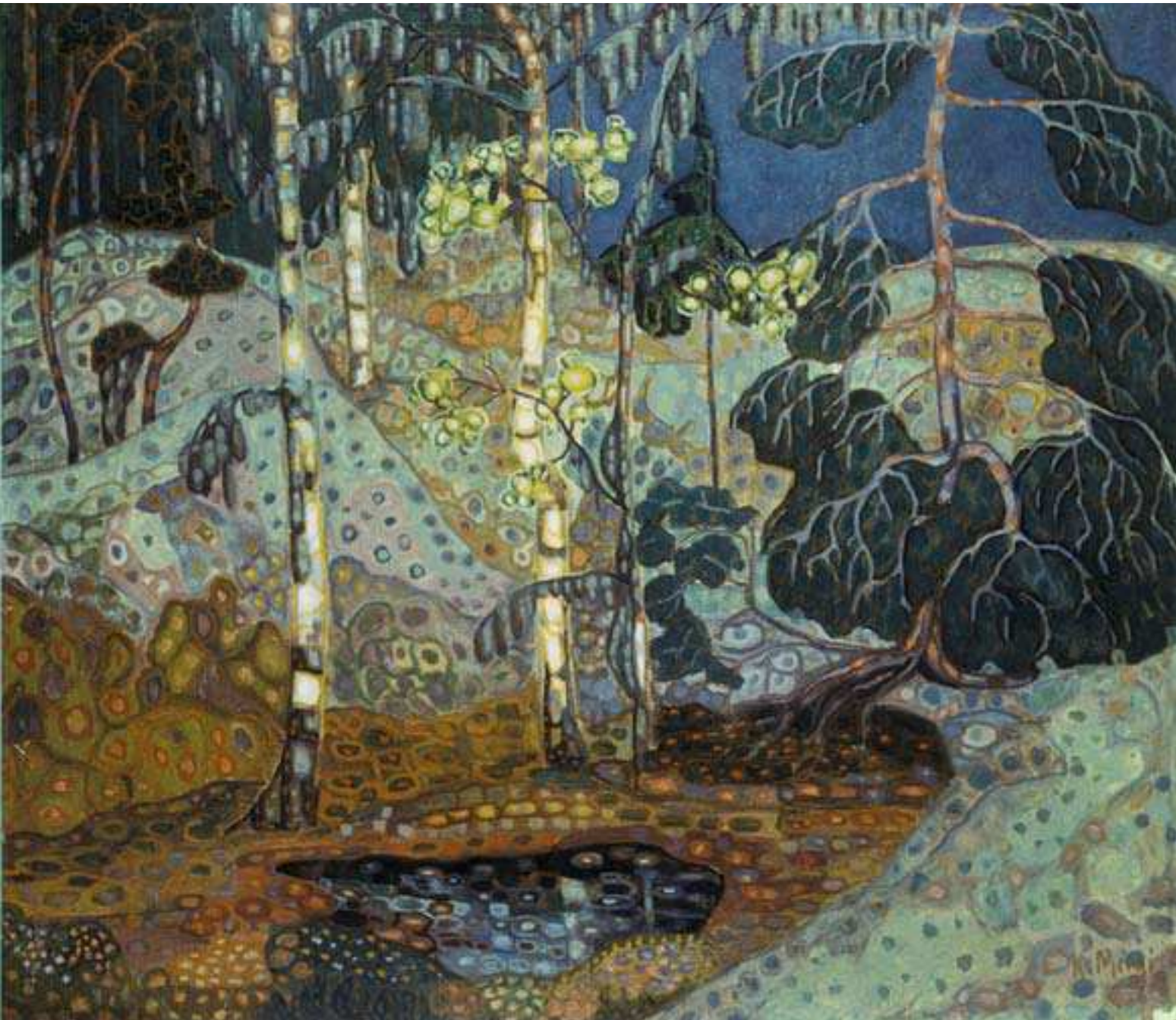


Pekka Halonen  
(1865–1933).  
*Autumn*. 1901.  
Oil on canvas.  
Turu Art Museum



Nikolai Triik  
(1884–1940).  
*Finnish Landscape*. 1914.  
Oil on canvas.  
Private  
collection





**Did the fact that one prototype of Estonian national landscape was Norwegian landscape, and that the Finnish prototype comes from Karelia, have political-pragmatic reasons? Or did everything domestic just seem too ordinary and was the suitable heroic and mythical environment found in the north and east?**

**Tiina Abel:** The notion that cultural, intellectual and aesthetic innovation comes from the north was a popular notion at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, the prototype of Finnish landscape is not just Karelia; it is based on the more general idea of primeval nature untouched by humans. Karelian Finns, with their archaic life style and folk poetry, represented everything primeval, and this was the location of the heroic deeds taking place in the national epic *Kalevala*. For Gallen-Kallela, it was necessary – to use a well-worn phrase – to really perceive one's roots, to find a contemporary language of art based on a synthesis of folk art elements and the methods of modern art. On the other hand, the majority of Finnish artists who focused on landscapes (V.

Westerholm, E. Järnefelt, A. Edelfelt and A. Gallen-Kallela, not to mention the symbolists) had developed into artists in the civilised environment of France. They were not used to thinking of Finnish landscape as heroic and worthy of painting. Primeval nature was, therefore, at first something new and exotic, a cradle of neo-heroicism with a national flavour. The singularity of such landscape was a revelation which enhanced the wish to see, confirm and also to mystify nature, to employ it as an argument to achieve political aims. In Finland, landscape and the anti-Russification movement were certainly closely connected.

**Ingrid Sahk:** The nature of both Karelia and Norway clearly revealed the features that were sought at that time and that were regarded as familiar (Nordic nature = primeval, singular, untouched). Aspiring to the shared Nordic part and identity was a prominent feature in Estonian culture in the early 20th century. They were always trying to differentiate themselves from their neighbours and rulers (Baltic Germans, Russians etc), without any specific political programme.

**What were the political-social aims reflected in the Estonian and Finnish national-romantic landscape painting? Whose aims were they, and who put them into words?**

**Ingrid Sahk:** We should here refer to Finnish artists such as Gallen-Kallela and others who consciously hid symbols of national independence in their landscape paintings. There is no such direct and intentional coding in Estonian art. The programmatic ideas of Estonian nature paintings are expressed in words, and there are fewer visual equivalents in landscape painting. The use of motifs of folk traditions and art was intentional and programmatic, but no examples emerged from there for landscape painting. Besides, we should keep in mind the constant arguing about the issue of nationalism – discussions about how directly Estonianness should be visually depicted, whether Estonian subject matter determines the national aspect of a work of art. So there was really no point in sticking solely to Estonian motifs.

**Tiina Abel:** The national movement in Finland was politically organised, because by the 1890s the Russian central power was attempting to restrict the extensive autonomy granted to the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1809. The radical Young Finland Party put into words the political requirements expressed at the time via cultural independence. It makes sense to emphasise cultural sovereignty if it is possible to organise massive support for the idea of territorial independence. Our social-political circumstances at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century were quite different from those in Finland. The privileges available to many in Finland here belonged to the Baltic Germans, whose inability to consolidate society quickly enough cost them dearly during the Russification period of the last decades of the 19th century. The Baltic Germans were left to fight on their own, because the Estonians saw the tsar as a political ally against the Baltic German 'oppressors'.

The Young Estonia movement was primarily cultural and largely opposed national romanticism. West-European examples and internationalism were essential in the ideology of the members of the movement. A precondition of modernisation was supposed to be a synthesis of the national and international. In the spirit of that synthesis, Estonian artists combined a local theme-motif and the language of modern international art. The pathos of national sovereignty was primarily realised in the practice of building up the structure of art life: establishing museums, art societies and schools, organising exhibitions, publications etc.

**How can we compare Finnish and Estonian national-romantic art in political terms? Whose attitude was more militant, critical, indirect etc?**

**Ingrid Sahk:** At the start of the 20th century, the Finns were far ahead in their landscape paintings because of their landscape painting's programmatic nature and clarity of position, and local landscape was simply painted more on the other side of the Gulf.

**Tiina Abel:** Finnish landscape – and this genre is a good example – had, as I told before, an obvious political subtext. As with us in the Soviet era, the Finns too had a 'hidden' struggle. Finnish art historians have emphasised that winter motifs in particular had a clear message. Winter frost and ice depicted the state of the Finnish soul under the political oppression. This clear political and aesthetic message achieved its most international response at the Finnish pavilion of the 1900 World's Fair in Paris, where *Kalevala*-related, fashionably synthetist, monumental paintings presented a synthesis of all the ideas floating around Europe at the time. However, the impact and revelatory nature of Gallen-Kallela's most important national-romantic works of the 1890s are not so much connected with their *Kalevala* subject matter as with their monumental and modern form.

**What meanings, besides the political, did landscape have back then?**

**Ingrid Sahk:** I think we should remember that, since the early 19th century, it is the landscape genre that has, on the whole, best reflected changes and innovations: the movement towards increasingly realistic and true-to-nature depiction, and the triumph of open-air painting over the earlier studio (historical) painting. Landscape was, in a sense, the flagship of the avant-garde, to express it in the terminology of progress. Landscape is a genre that experiments, seeks and plays through many new stylistic methods and solutions. This has also been true for Estonian artists.

**Tiina Abel:** The landscapes of both Estonian and Finnish artists are revealing the spirit of synthesis typical of the era. At least as far as Estonian artists are concerned, these were primarily manifestations of artistic freedom, modern art language and individualism, accompanied by the ideas of symbolism and theosophy, which were popular at that time. They were attempts to find an all-encompassing universal formula. In Estonian art, this additionally meant a synthesis of form, a simultaneous testing and accepting of various methods and trends in modern art. The landscapes of, for example, Nikolai Triik, Aleksander Tassa, Konrad Mägi and Jaan Koort clearly show how one single work can bring together the elements of neo-impressionism and *art nouveau*, the influence of the Fauves and van Gogh, the impact of symbolism and expressionism. These landscapes are short courses of modern art which went far beyond the individual self-realisation of the first generation of Estonian modernists.

## Ingrid Sahk,

(1976), MA in art history from University of Tartu, continues there her PhD studies. Works as the chief purser of the Tartu University Art Museum. Has researched the Estonian landscape paintings of the 19th and 20th century.

## Tiina Abel

(1951), art historian, curator at the Kumu Art Museum. Main areas of research: Estonian art history from 1850 to 1940, contacts between Estonia and other European countries etc. In 2008 curated the exhibition *The Golden Age of Finnish Art* in Kumu Art Museum.



# Reeli Kõiv:

## Eerik Haamer in double exile

**Eerik Haamer is probably still considered an 'exile Estonian artist' – someone whose best creative years were spent abroad. His work is consequently not very well known, as the activities of Estonians living outside of Estonia were not covered during the Soviet era. Being 'an exile Estonian artist' also meant that a person did not actually belong anywhere: none of them really managed a proper breakthrough in the local context, and had to make do with exhibiting only in exile Estonian circles. They have also not yet been included in official Estonian art history because so much of their work is still unknown, and also because, living in exile, the standard of their work was often unimpressive. What do you think exile, being an exile Estonian, meant for Haamer? After all, he continued to depict the life of coastal people, and interpret the history of his country and his nation.**

Being forced to leave home was naturally very difficult for Haamer, and it seems he refused to believe for a long time that the situation was going to be permanent. For him, escaping from the closed system of Soviet Estonia to the Western world [Sweden – Ed] meant tragedy. His motifs were thoroughly Estonian, and he said himself that he always keenly felt what he painted, which made it difficult to get used to his new surroundings. Exile was tragic for the majority of Estonian artists. Karin Luts [See *Estonian Art* 1/2005 – Ed], for example, tried to connect more with Swedish art, but she achieved recognition only as an exile artist. Haamer did not even try – it was not his nature to attract attention to himself and promote his work. If he had found an enthusiastic manager in the 1960s who had introduced his work, everything might have been different. This person emerged in the 1980s, during Haamer's later period. He was Wello Uuskyla, an Estonian exile architect, who had some useful connections. He organised exhibitions and published books, but all this concerned Haamer's later work. The sad thing was that Haamer's output of the 1950s and 1960s was not promoted and, at least in my opinion, this was his best work. Who knows how Haamer would have fared here in Estonia. It is likely that he would have been deported to Siberia. If he had returned, he would probably have excelled in the 'rough style', although the ideology would have been totally unacceptable to him.

It has been suggested that Haamer would have appreciated the cult of work in socialist realism because he liked to depict the process of work, relations between man and nature etc. I doubt that. The working man was indeed close to Haamer's heart: through him the artist interpreted the world. But the word 'pathos' doesn't apply. Haamer painted simple things and made them big, but this was not an ideological choice.

**Did Haamer voluntarily accept his double exile – being cut off from his homeland as well as from Swedish art life?**

It is questionable how voluntary the Estonian artists' exclusion from Swedish art life actually was. I have no knowledge of Haamer ever offering his works to local exhibitions. There is only one exception – in 1974 his drawings were displayed at a local exhibition. The reason was that Haamer could not adapt to Swedish society and its way of life. He never thought of himself as Swedish, even making fun of things Swedish in his later work. It is then only logical that he had no wish to belong to the Swedish art world.

**During a museum tour you once said that Haamer was also sceptical of new art trends.**

Haamer was indeed ironic towards people who desperately tried to keep up with everything modern. At the same time, he regularly visited exhibitions, wanted to understand what was going on and did not try to distance himself from anything new. On one of his visits to Paris, he saw a compressed wrecked car [by Arman – Ed]. He admitted he could not see the point of this kind of art, but was still impressed. A polished tree stump nearby, on the other hand, left him unmoved. Perception was important in Haamer's work, and thus he could not understand innovations that relied purely on form. Abstractionism was one of the key issues for exile Estonian artists – whether to join in or ignore. Haamer's works actually come quite close to it at some points.



Eerik Haamer. *Village Swings (Midsummer Day)*. 1966. Oil on canvas. Madis Üürke collection





Erik Haamer. *Young Mother*. 1940.  
Oil on canvas. Art Museum of Estonia



Erik Haamer. *Forest Brothers*. 1941. Oil on canvas. Art Museum of Estonia







Eerik Haamer. *Builders*. 1942. Oil on plywood. Private collection



Eerik Haamer. *Card Players*. 1935. Oil on canvas. Tartu Art Museum

Eerik Haamer. *Sailors*. 1940. Oil on canvas. Art Museum of Estonia

**According to some opinions, exile Estonian art was basically a failure, as it got stuck in the model of the 1930s, which was quite outdated, and also it did not manage to break through institutionally.**

This is largely true. Only a few artists were able to maintain a high level, and Haamer is indeed an exception: his work is not embarrassing to look at. His work was born out of a need to create, and not out of an attempt to 'keep up with the times'. Other really good artists include Herman Talvik and Karin Luts, especially her graphic art. Still – in order to give an honest opinion, we need to see more. We know too little and have not seen enough.

**Is it true that Haamer, in a sense, represents a 'typical Estonian' – not wanting to theorise about his art, but to connect it with life?**

Haamer himself said that he lacked imagination – he needed an impulse from reality. Theoretical constructs were alien to him. I do not know of a single painting of his that was painted 'for no reason'. There was something specific behind every picture, usually a connection with the seaside. After all, he wanted to become a sailor, but his poor eyesight made that impossible.

**It sometimes seems that the early and the late Haamer are completely different artists, because the work is so different. What do you think caused this?**

The perception of the strong connection between himself and the fate of his country and people in his early work was later replaced by a realisation of having no roots. After all, Haamer started work at a time of radical changes. Interestingly enough, there are not many Estonian painters who depicted the fate of Estonia – perhaps only Johannes Greenberg and Olga Terri [the latter was Haamer's student – Ed]. Later, in Sweden, Haamer still had contact with what he depicted – he went out to sea with fishermen and so on, but something was lacking. Sweden was not home.

**How much did he talk about his creative method?**

Very little. His main credo was – as mentioned above – that you have to get totally involved in what you paint. He was quite a sensitive man, which explains the grotesque in his later work (although Haamer claimed that his work always contained the grotesque), and because of that we could perhaps say that he observed the world from a distance, not directly. It has been claimed that Haamer's later work does not contain the grotesque and a sense of being excluded, but that it is simply funny. I do not think that's true.

The exhibition *Eerik Haamer. On Both Sides of the Sea* is open in Kumu Art Museum until 12 October 2008. The exhibition was previously shown in Tartu Art Museum. The monograph about Eerik Haamer by Reeli Kõiv will be published shortly.

## Eerik Haamer

(1908–1994), painter. In 1930s known for his epic works, where he depicted life and faith of the Estonians. Fled to Sweden in 1944, where he continued working.

## Reeli Kõiv,

art historian, works currently at Tartu Art Museum. Curator of the exhibition *Eerik Haamer. On Both Sides of the Sea* in Tartu Art Museum and Kumu Art Museum in 2008.



# Mart Kalm:

“This is not the republic of Estonia I have dreamed of.”

I Prize - ART PLAZA. Authors:  
SEA+EFFEKT, Denmark.  
Project team SEA+EFFEKT:  
Uffe Leth, SEA  
Karsten Gori, SEA  
Tue Hesselberg Foged, EFFEKT  
Sinus Lynge, EFFEKT  
+ Greta Tiedje  
Simon Sørensen  
Lawrence Aeberhard  
Lyndal Brown  
Morgan Jacobsen



The old building of the Estonian Academy of Arts is located in the centre of Tallinn. It is totally out-of-date and unsuitable for a higher art school. In 2007 the Academy announced a competition for a new building. The international competition was a success and several great projects were created, as it was a challenge to produce something in a business centre of the city. The new building was to be established on the present site. The competition was won by the architecture office SEA+EFFEKT (Denmark) and the building was supposed to start soon. Sadly, this is no longer the case. According to the politicians there is no money but many suspect that what is lacking is in fact simply the wish. See more [maja.artun.ee](http://maja.artun.ee)

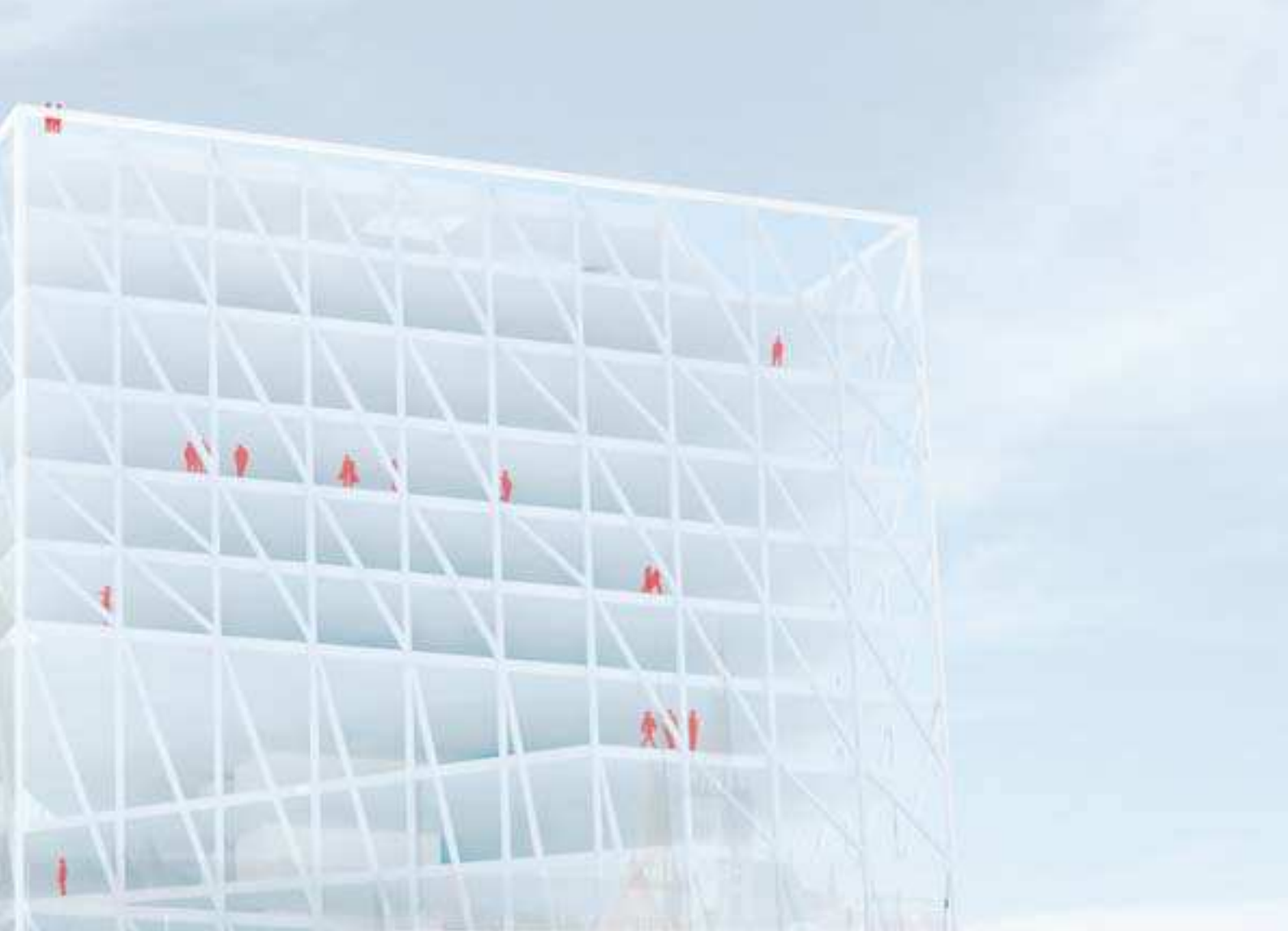
**It has been said that, considering the circumstances in today's Estonia, what was significant was not just the result of the competition of the new Academy of Arts building, but the competition itself. What made it special and what kind of signal did it send to the wider public?**

The competition was impressive. The fact that there were one hundred entries showed that the Estonian Academy of Arts is recognised in Europe and that Estonia is an environment with cultured architecture.

The Estonian image was, of course, greatly enhanced by the building of the Kumu Art Museum according to the design of the Finnish architect Pekka Vapaavuori, the European competitions taking place in Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, etc. The participants knew that the Estonian state as the supporter of the project was also reliable. Secondly, the jury worked against the background of intense debates about the Victory Monument competition [see also pp 3–4]. The latter's jury was, in fact, illegal, as most of the members were political and social figures and not specialists, whereas we did not have a single politician in the jury, which would have regained the creative people's trust in public competitions. The Victory Monument jury failed to stick to the competition conditions stipulating that the solution should be in the contemporary language of art, and we really tried to avoid being accused of the same kind of dirty tricks. Thirdly, I admire the Estonian architects and architectural public who so warmly welcomed the outcome. The Estonians were certainly not happy, because they did not get any awards, but nobody questioned the winning entries. Considering the misunderstandings over the 2006 competition for the new Estonian National Museum, this was a considerable improvement [see also *Estonian Art* 1/2006 – Ed].

## **What were the greatest dangers in undertaking such a building?**

This question seems more suited to the participating architects; what mattered to the jury was that the school would be able to function in the chosen building, which should be economical to build and administer, that the city of Tallinn as our joint living environment and the capital of the Republic of Estonia would benefit from it and of course the fact that a public-law art school must stand out for its high-quality architecture amongst all those ordinary neighbouring offices-hotels-shopping centres. The government already blamed us for choosing too expensive a project, although we promised to increase the Academy's own financial contribution, and not ask for more from the state. Still, we chose a tall box and elementary construction physics tells us that this was the most economical solution of all.



**You will have to work in the same building, thus spending a large part of your life there. Did this make you evaluate the proposed projects any differently?**

An art historian needs more time than architects to come to grips with a project. The fact that I have worked in the current building for over fifteen years has taught me quite well what an educational establishment actually needs and I have a pretty good idea of its requirements. This was an advantage I had not been able to use in previous architectural juries.

**Before the competition, what did you think was essential for the new main building of the Academy, from the point of view of the Academy, the city space and architecture?**

I am particularly fond of the entrance hall of the old Academy building and the way it leads to different rooms: the whole building seems to unfold before you after you have entered. I was looking for something similar in the proposed projects, and found them too, but unfortunately none of those projects made it to the final selection phase, for various reasons.

**Considering all the entries, were there any new trends in contemporary architecture?**

We did not find any works of mad genius amongst the entries. Most professional works presented ideas that would work without fail. People seemed to have taken into consideration the limited resources of a small country. The works of beginners clearly showed the influence of experienced architects, and this always happens, because this is how the world functions.

**It was said after the competition that the decision was unanimous. What made it unanimous?**

The architectural quality of the projects.

**Were there details or ideas in other entries that you wish could have been used?**

Of course, but this happens in any competition where there is more than one entry. I thought for a long time that one of the stronger towers should get the second award, but that the winner should be the horizontal perimeter solution, which more or less follows the recommended envelope mentioned in the conditions. However, they all were dropped in the course of our discussions.







### What special architectural conditions exist in the case of a 'public' building?

A good architect is a socially-minded creature who does not promote his client but instead tries to improve the whole environment by means of his building task. In a situation where the town had unwisely crammed Viru Square with buildings, or in other words had stolen a chunk of public space from us all, it is an especially nice gesture on the part of the Academy of Arts to give up half its plot of land for the benefit of the town, as the winning entry recommended.

It has now become clear that the project will not be realised in the near future, maybe never. The primary excuse is lack of money.

### Do you feel that that decision was inevitable and that you understand it, or does the refusal reflect some wider decision patterns that are beyond your grasp?

Politicians feel triumphant because they managed to eliminate the art intelligentsia and its conscience as an obstacle to manipulating the people. In the saga of the Victory Monument, the opinions of the Estonian art world were completely crushed, which shows that to politicians artists are such a marginal sector of society that it does not pay to give artists any money. Erecting the artistically modest Victory Monument and refusing to fund the new building of the Academy of Arts both demonstrate how strong in Estonian culture is the Lutheran thinking, which always values the word over the picture.

### What do you feel about all this?

It's trivial, but true – this is not the Republic of Estonia I have dreamed of.

### Mart Kalm

(1961), historian of art and architecture, PhD (1998). Since 2007 Dean of the Faculty of Art and Culture at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Main area of research: history of the Estonian architecture in 20th century.



II Prize – TLN 247.  
Authors: NAT  
Architecten bv,  
The Netherlands



III Prize – ARTS  
FACTORY.  
Authors:  
NERALP –  
ARQUITECTURA  
ENHENHARIA  
E CONSTRUÇÕES  
LDA, Portugal



Purchase Prize –  
SASHIMI.  
Author: Francois  
Blanciak, Japan





## Triin Ojari:

### New 'warm' brick, 'worn' metal, 'honest' concrete etc in Rotermann quarter

**New developments in the Rotermann quarter have attracted a lot of positive response. In your opinion, are the reasons only the architectural and urban solutions, or is the quarter made special in today's Tallinn by something else as well?**

After the Fahle House, this is the second remarkable and architecturally well-thought through solution in Tallinn on how to renovate an old factory environment. In the case of Rotermann, the keys are having one owner, the carefully considered structure of the surroundings, a fixed business plan, calculated target groups, and an unwavering desire to achieve architectural and functional diversity. All this constitutes an 'addition' to the architectural solutions – the choice of shops and their specificity (expensive brands and fashionable goods), connecting the existing industrial environment with the new environment, and the latest design in urban furniture and lightning (designers Tarmo Luisk and Margus Triibmann). I have no information about the occupants of the new buildings; I'm afraid the invasion of the 'culture-related people' into this type of development is over-romanticised, and in fact the inhabitants are a cross-section of people primarily from the commercial fields.

**The quarter is historically quite dignified, with numerous buildings that required special care. How has the current solution considered and interpreted the history of the quarter and its previous buildings?**

It is an old factory complex, where development and endless reconstruction have never been dictated by the 'public interest' or planning requirements obligatory for a residential area. Compared to the average development, everything here is either too dense or too spacious. The appearance of the buildings corresponds to their function and the technological possibilities of the era (eg a windowless grain elevator with metal rods and anchors), and not to historicist style textbooks. Since the design by the former Alver Trummal office [architecture office led by Andres Alver and Tiit Trummal – Ed], subsequent additions or re-workings have followed the principle of density, and its creation or increase if necessary. The times and needs since the old bread and pasta product industries have naturally radically changed; dark archways and floor heights are now curtailed by norms and standards, but by certain spatial tricks the sense of density can still be achieved. In the skyscraper-dense area in the Tallinn business centre, in the Maakri quarter, the streets are empty and there is not much to do; in the Rotermann quarter, the density should contain much more. A significant point in all similar developments is avoiding mono-functionalism and monotony. The other, more specific level is material – in the new buildings in the Rotermann area, we see 'warm' brick, 'worn' metal, 'honest' concrete etc. All that, of course, derives from the old and rough factory environment.







Rotermann Quarter.  
Stage II.  
To be completed in 2008–2012

**Several architectural offices worked on the quarter. Is the general outlook diverse or uniform? For what reasons?**

Until recently, the whole construction relied on the 2005 draft by Alver Trummal Architects, and thus the new environment was spatially surrendered to this scheme and thus it is uniform. The uniformity also contains non-uniformity – the houses should be quite different in form, reflect the layers of history and various eras, and the space between the buildings should permit a bit more spacious squares, as well as nooks and crannies. The old environment obviously remains the foundation here. The Alver Trummal plans stipulate, for example, that one of the essential identity-creating elements was that the ends of gabled buildings would stand next to one another – both on the side of Ahtri Street and opposite the *Coca-Cola Plaza* Cinema. Unfortunately the last

developments in the area have shown that the original planning solution is simplified and re-worked by other architects.

To understand this kind of spatial density, we are well advised to recall how the French philosopher Henri Bergson determined quality – for him it was continuity, a temporal category, which means multiplicity that cannot be divided into parts. His famous example is the ticking of clocks, which can be counted individually, but they are still perceived as a compact series. The idea of seeing a whole that does not consist of individual elements in space but rather of qualities coinciding in time should also be valid in determining the density of the Rotermann quarter, as well as a general impression of it. Individual objects and their shape are not in fact that significant from the point of view of unity.



**At different times, people have wished to see the Rotermann quarter developed differently: as a pedestrian boulevard, a SOHO-type environment, a historically authentic residential district etc. Now it is going to have buildings with various functions, so what do you think the identity of the quarter will be?**

Indeed, it seems that many of the old ideas have been realised here: a boulevard (in the given context this word is perhaps a bit too grand, let us say pedestrian streets) with nice shops, a historically restored environment and a spatial mixture of galleries-studios, hopefully completed in the near future. Compared with New York's SOHO, the process here is the other way round – 'cultural capital' arising from a historical and diverse environment has today become the aim of property development, a part of the profit machine; romantic, semi-bohemian naturalness has been replaced by conscious efforts to establish a theme for an urban area. There have never been squatters or artists living rough in their studios here; the only place-specific and often mentioned story is about the Rotermann quarter as the shooting environment for *Stalker*, a film by the Soviet cult director Andrei Tarkovsky.

It is still difficult to determine the identity of the quarter as a whole; the plans and designs are all fine, but labile times continue in the construction and development activities in Tallinn, and plans change fast. The city municipality, for example, does not seem keen on any of the areas or activities in this quarter and, cynically put, in a project that totally relies on private capital the identity is shaped according to the price of a square metre. If there are expensive shops and offices on one side of the area, would anyone dare install cheap studios or places for rent on the other side? The business plan is understandably quite cautious at the moment and the existing historical milieu is a sales argument, and not a living and developing organism.

**The architects have emphasised 'humanity'. Is that being reflected, and if so, how?**

The architects of the Rotermann quadruple house, Villem Tomiste, Mihkel Tüür and Ott Kadarik [from *Kosmos* architecture office], have indeed talked about the relationship between town and man: a human dimension in spatial scale, in the details of buildings and in street life. An attempt has been made to achieve all that on the fairly small plot of this apartment house – handmade bricks, unique patterns, rough pavement slabs, peculiar nooks and crannies, and unexpected views. There are opportunities for outdoor cafes, and entrances and exits on various levels. In Tallinn, the yardstick of human urban environment has always been the Old Town, and Rotermann's houses refer to the density and spatial singularity of the Old Town quite openly, down to the uncomfortable cobblestones.

**It has been suggested that the quarter, especially the work of *Kosmos*, could in a sense be regarded as a return of**

**post-modernist architecture, because of the use of many quotations, small forms without clear functions, as a rule the plans of the flats seem to have no logic, etc. Are these suggestions important and correct?**

The forms here naturally contain a lot of romantic 'reading of the town', mystification, interpreting the *genius loci* etc. The same human dimension, too, is the epic of good old post-modernism. All that is on the side of the 'form world'. However, a significant nuance in post-modernism has always been critical practice, analysing relations with the environment, the existing power spheres, and everyday life. In the Estonian context, incidentally, this is perfectly shown in the current exhibition, at the nearby Rotermann Salt Storage, of the Tallinn School of architects – the playful, paranoiac, aesthetic and primarily critical subconscious of our architectural world in the 1970s–1980s. [The exhibition *Tallinn School* took place in summer 2008 in the Museum of the Estonian Architecture. See more in the next issue – Ed] The *Kosmos* apartment houses contain madness in a good sense, a non-capitulation to standard commerce – all the houses are connected by a large department store, but (probably to the annoyance of the tenants) it has been enclosed in darkened glass in a dark cave, it is not visually promoted, pedestrians must move along steep slopes, etc. In the winter, the sloping paths, in fact, sported signs forbidding passage! These houses are not earnest copying or imitation, as was done 25 years ago. For example, houses are not made of bricks but covered by panels and thus a row of bricks runs vertically, instead of horizontally, as with 'real' bricks.

**What could make the Rotermann quarter stand out not only in the Estonian, but also in the European context?**

An occasional turning away from the chosen path, due to the long planning period, and several changes in ownership and ideas, twists and turns that might irritate, and opportunities that sometimes lead to remarkable achievements, and sometimes fail. In a word – a laboratory of planning chaos. One Estonian peculiarity is naturally our faith in young architectural offices.

**What kind of shift could the Rotermann quarter mark in the Tallinn urban space and in the planning of this space?**

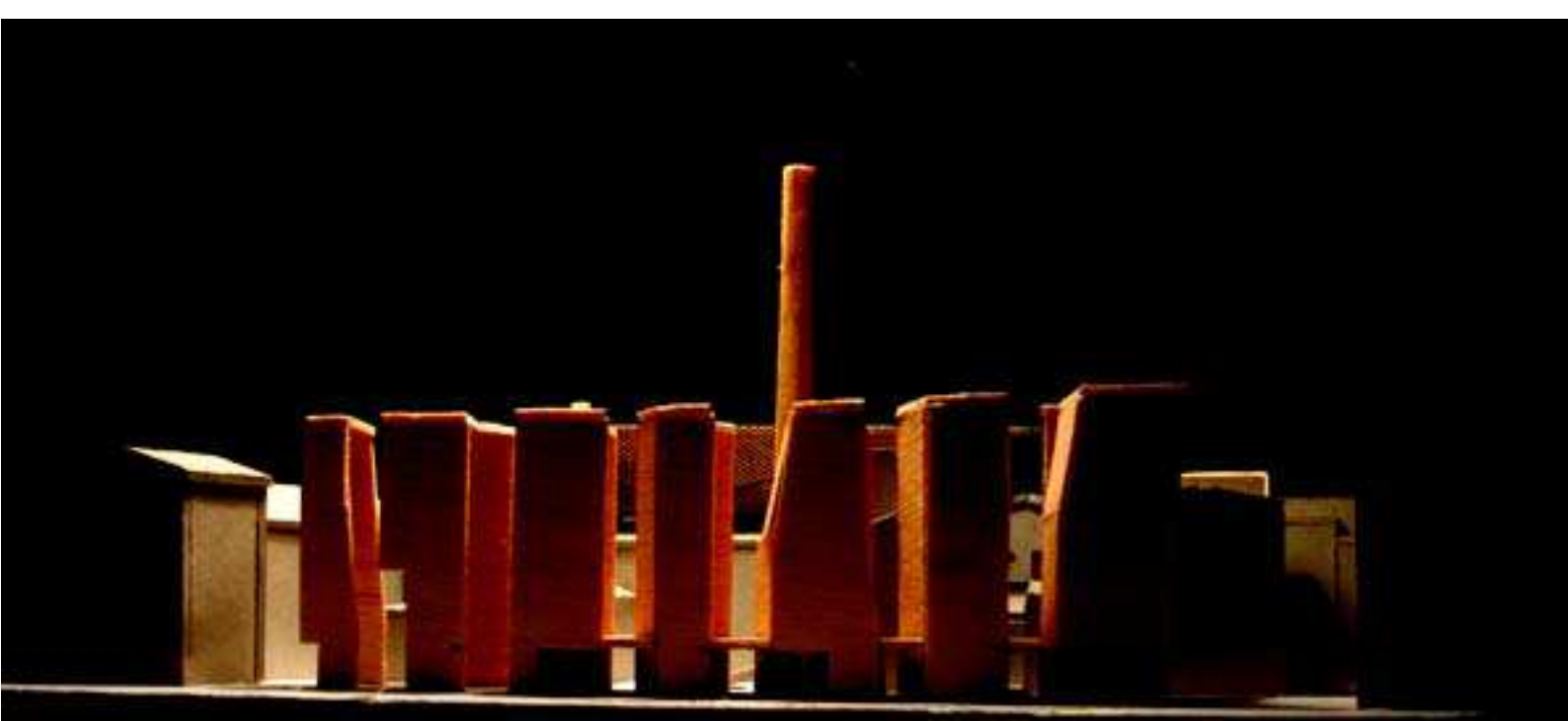
A shift in quality after the property boom, and naturally also people's attitude towards the historical environment and its regeneration; a playing with opportunities in the diverse spatial and functional environment. How we can orchestrate the solo efforts by vastly different architects into one uniform whole, and how we can produce qualitative multiplicity. Time will show whether the quarter manages to break out from behind the hopelessly failed *Coca-Cola Plaza* building, how it connects with the harbour area and, most importantly, how the area will function as a continuous, pulsating and urban public space.

## The historic Rotermann Quarter

is situated in the heart of Tallinn, in the area between the Old Town, the port and Viru Square. There will be (already are) offices, residential buildings, large department stores, small boutiques, cafés etc. There are also buildings for galleries and cultural centre. See more [www.rotermannikvartal.ee/eng](http://www.rotermannikvartal.ee/eng).

## Triin Ojari

(1974), architectural historian, since 2000 editor in chief of magazine *Maja*. Mostly writes about modern architecture and urban building in numerous publications at home and abroad.



# Maarja Kask, Ralf Lööke, Neeme Külm and Ingrid Ruudi: *Gas Pipe*

Estonian Exhibition at the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale  
11 September–23 November, 2008

Authors: Maarja Kask and Ralf Lööke,  
architects, Salto AB;  
Neeme Külm, sculptor  
Curator: Ingrid Ruudi,  
editor-in-chief of the Estonian  
Architectural Review *Ehituskunst*  
See more: [biennaal.arhliit.ee](http://biennaal.arhliit.ee)

## *Gas Pipe?*

**From the press release:** *Gas Pipe* is a large-scale site specific installation in the public space of Giardini Park, along the Viale Trento, comprised of an elevated section of real-scale 63 m long gas pipe. The pipe runs at 60 cm above the ground. It is located between the pavilions of Russia and Germany, constituting an act of critical art and architecture. The project is inspired by a controversial enterprise of Nord Stream, an initiative to build a direct gas pipe from Russia to Germany. The initial project of Nord Stream to run the pipeline under the Baltic Sea has been widely contested from ecological as well as geopolitical positions. The pipe has a special position and effect in the Baltic Sea region, as well as being part of an omnipresent, ever-expanding network of gas pipes and other infrastructure objects – the border-transgressing power lines of the contemporary world.

**Ralf Lööke, architect:** At first, there was the idea of a gas pipe, then we tried to think how to go about it. The Biennale topic encouraged this idea.

**Ingrid Ruudi, curator:** This year's topic suggested by the Biennale curator Aaron Betsky is *Out There: Architecture Beyond Building*. He did not actually want recently completed buildings, but called for manifestos, installations, statements, environments and spaces in film or landscapes. The competition for the Estonian display was in March 2008, when Betsky's concept had already been announced – the *Gas Pipe* project thus tries to directly rely on the general topic.

**Maarja Kask, architect:** Any gas pipe on the ground with its large service area in various countries ruins the landscape. We did not at first know exactly where the Russian and German

pavilions in Giardini Park were situated. It was a pleasant surprise to see that their distance and location in relation to the main roads suited our idea.

**Ralf Lööke:** The gas pipe uses the area of the main road and square without directly blocking them.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** In cooperation with the curator and the Biennale's management, we consulted all the surrounding pavilions. Some advised altering a curve, making it higher or lower, as it would suit them better. We did our best to consider all these wishes.

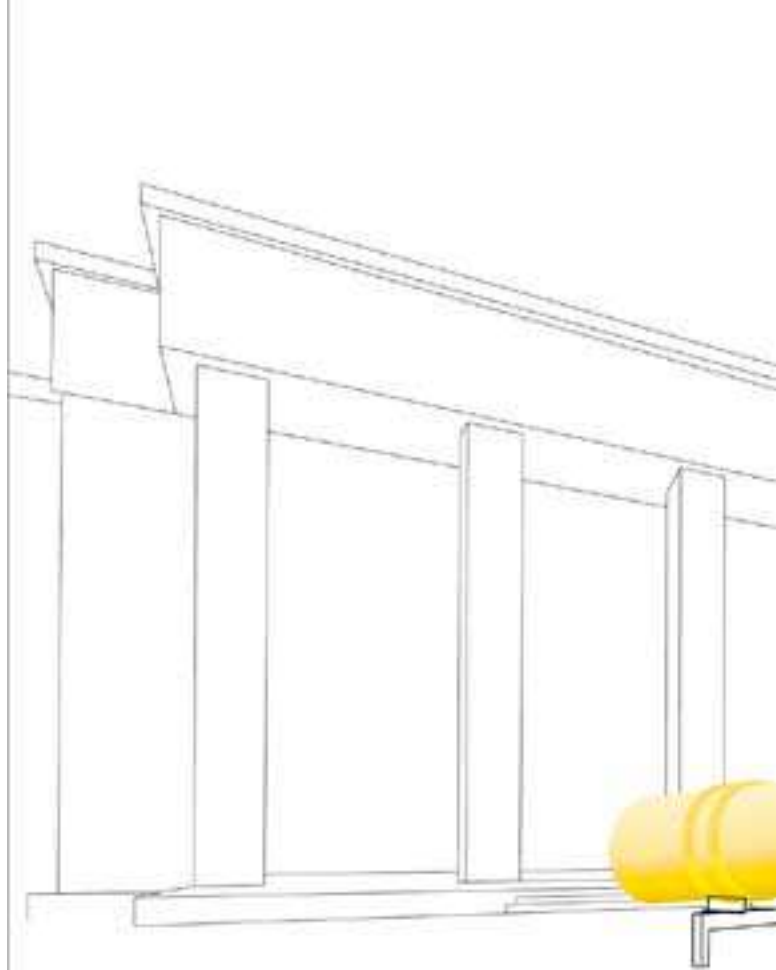
**Maarja Kask:** The time to complete such an installation was incredibly short. That's why the consulting process seemed so complicated. In a sense, Giardini Park is the area of the pavilions it contains. The fact that some other country might want to produce something in that public space made the situation even more complicated. In hindsight, it is remarkable that, in the context of the Venice Biennale, we are able to display our work in that park.

**Ralf Lööke:** On the whole, I occasionally feel that it was really very obliging of the Biennale to allow us to use the park. And we are grateful to all the parties for agreeing to it. We also thank all our supporters and sponsors.

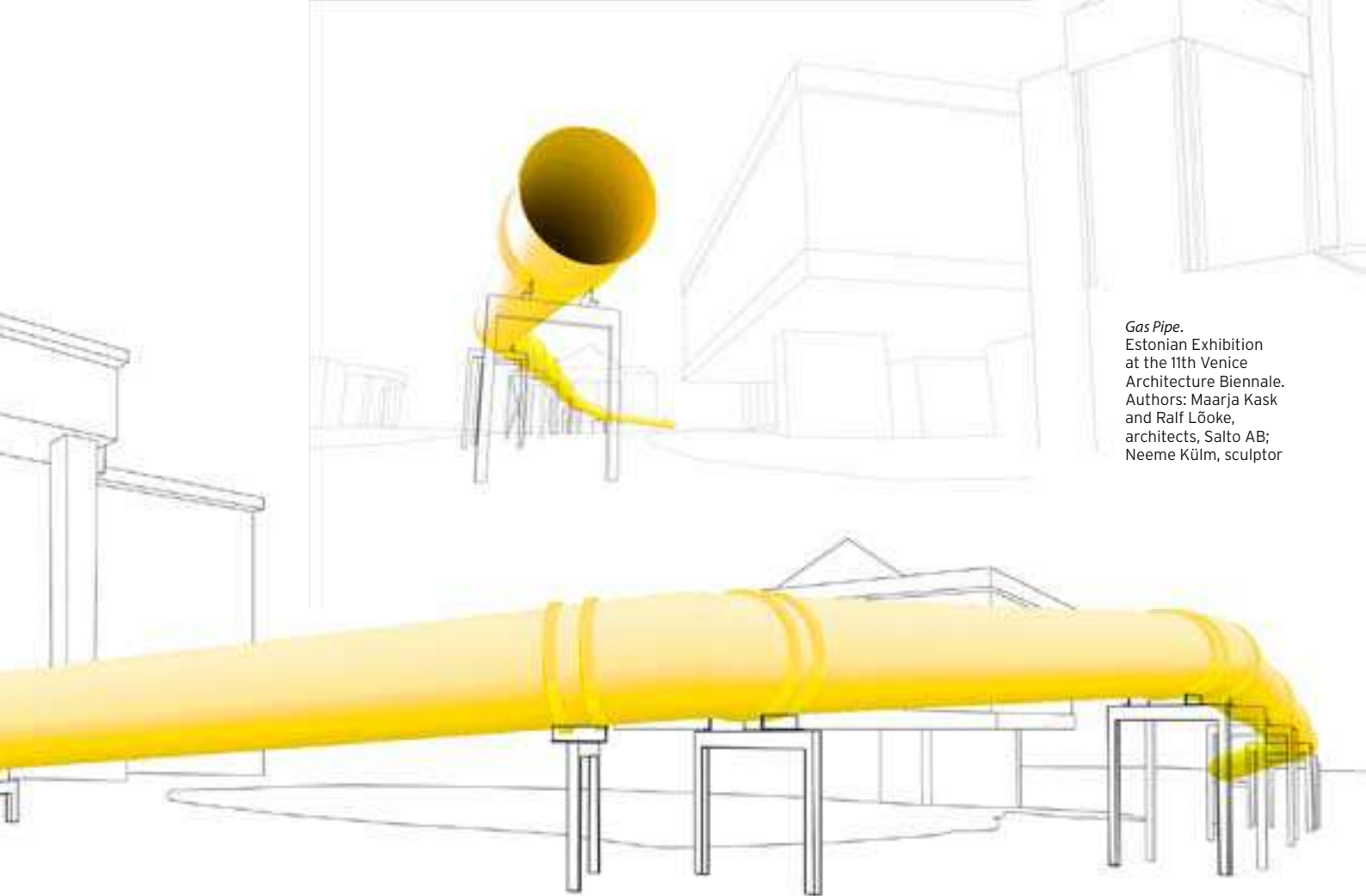
**Neeme Külm, sculptor:** Both the current and the future ones.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** Especially Aaron Betsky, who has helped us far more than he would have had to.

**Maarja Kask:** Communicating with other pavilions, it turned out that quite a few of them are tackling energy problems. This clearly shows that the world is reacting to the rhythm of energy.







*Gas Pipe.*  
Estonian Exhibition  
at the 11th Venice  
Architecture Biennale.  
Authors: Maarja Kask  
and Ralf Lõoke,  
architects, Salto AB;  
Neeme Kõlm, sculptor

### Political Architecture/Effective Idea?

**Ingrid Ruudi:** Regarding this topic, our project asks whether an architect should only deal with spatial problems and how he should relate to politics.

**Ralf Lõoke:** The gas pipe tackles political architecture, the relations between architecture and politics.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** It has many layers of meanings, and that's the strong side of the project. I, as a curator, and the architects had slightly different basic principles: what is the order of importance of these meanings, their hierarchy? From my point of view, the political side is really essential. If an architect only looks at the spatial problem, which of course is also very important (planning the infrastructure is a spatial, architectural issue), then he is assuming that the world in general stays the same as he has accustomed to and an architect has the same area and boundaries within which he is used to operating.

**Ralf Lõoke:** Architects often follow the mainstream, simply stating the fact that everything is as it is.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** It is, however, useful to remember that it is not elementary or guaranteed that his job stays in the same boundaries and has the same freedom of action. Even the current, habitual arrangement is equally politically determined, and in any case it is one of the duties of an architect to ask questions, and to negotiate the boundaries and meanings via his work. The issues of architecture and politics are, for example, topical also in connection with the Beijing Olympic Games. In the spring, Daniel Libeskind

announced that no respectable architect should work in China because it is a totalitarian country. This naturally caused a debate about an architect's ethics. In the same context, the *New York Times* recently published a number of interviews with leading architects about how they should relate to politics. The opinions differed quite a lot. Some claim that they see their role purely in producing architecture and good architecture – in a modernist sense – makes the world a better place, etc. Others say they would never accept a commission indiscriminately, because this would mean compromising their name and because architecture of resistance continues to be crucial. It is always necessary to raise such issues and ponder them.

**Ralf Lõoke:** On the whole, I agree with Ingrid. I would like to explain this matter via something else and not politics. To ignore the relevant terminology – politics can be understood in a narrower or wider sense. The point is the same, but I'd like to get there with the help of other kinds of words.

**Neeme Kõlm:** I am most of all fascinated by the gas pipe's visual side. (General laughter) Politics is a topic where I try to use few words, so as not to ruin or add anything.

**Maarja Kask:** There's been this aspect from the very beginning – whether the whole thing could actually be done at all. I have enjoyed the fact that people have said it is a funny project, even the Union of Estonian Architects, when choosing it.

Location of the  
*Gas Pipe* in Giardini  
Park, Venice



## Architecture/Art?

**Ingrid Ruudi:** On the other hand, it is interesting to see what an effect our work has. Is art in its own bubble or does it manage to reach out?

**Ralf Lööke:** In general, art reaches out quite a bit, whereas architecture is more limited. Architecture has greater opportunities regarding bulk but, at the same time, it is limited. At some point you wonder where the toilet is.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** Art has similar limits but they lie elsewhere. Its limitation means that, however sharp or socially focused your art is, it could easily become padded just because it is art. Tolerating the fools. If art is uncomfortable, it's easy to safely designate it to a sphere of art, disempowering it. This is an old problem of social art.

**Neeme Kõlm:** I think art has this excellent quality that it can go to the end. No need for the toilet, really. Artists have the great chance to see how the whole thing looks in reality and whether it will work, which is wonderful in art. An architect can't have this pleasure. An architect must be much firmer. An artist can be a complete loser who takes the risk and has no responsibilities in the grand plan.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** For architecture, art in that sense is a good symbiosis. It is a place where things can be tested.

**Ralf Lööke:** Sculpture magazines, which are a different context, contain many exciting ideas. An idea is clearly visible. In architecture it is usually more difficult to realise ideas as the foundation of a work. It is fascinating to see how architects make art and how sculptors deal with spatial problems.

**Neeme Kõlm:** An architect can realise an idea in a material which the artist can only dream of.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** And in the scale.

**Neeme Kõlm:** I have never been to the Venice Architecture Biennale, but it seems to me that the architects get too much involved, trying to organise everything around them and concocting various schemes. In that sense, our object is honest because it is placed in one specific environment as something concrete. It can be seen and touched and this provides an enjoyable personal experience at the Biennale. Even if the topic does not matter to you at all, you can still relate to it by, for example, knocking on it or something. It's a real attraction, not plastic.

**Maarja Kask:** It quite often happens at similar biennales that if you really want to understand a work you have to examine, read and reflect for several hours.

**Ralf Lööke:** Our object is covered in that sense as well: if you want to get to the bottom of it you can read for two hours, but at the same time it should offer a visual stimulus to the viewer without any reading. And make you think. It works a bit like a pictograph.

**Ingrid Ruudi:** We present our position and interpretations, but everybody can relate to it the way it speaks to him or her the best.

## PS

**Ingrid Ruudi:** In competing for the Venice Biennale, we thought it could be an enjoyable undertaking in addition to other tasks, a pleasant team work.

**Ralf Lööke:** It was supposed to be a hobby...

**Maarja Kask:** ... something jolly to do after working hours...

**Ingrid Ruudi:** Things turned out another way round. It has become quite a complex undertaking. Nevertheless, it's fascinating.



## NG Art Container: “The Alternativeness is a Way of Thinking”

### What is the NG Art Container?

The Non Grata Art Container is an independent and vital organisation headed by active artists. Being in constant dialogue with what is happening in the rest of the art world, the Art Container presents new interpretations and alternative viewpoints to established understandings and prevailing trends.

### What does the alternative actually mean?

The alternative cannot be defined by a style, range of topics, Zeitgeist or by institutions; the alternativeness is a way of thinking, the courage to question the well-trodden paths, which lead to mediocrity, and to take risks in the name of development and discovery.

### What happens in the Art Container?

The NG Art Container is something more than just a gallery. It is more like a concentrated multi-cultural house, although the emphasis is on displaying high-level contemporary art. In addition to the usual exhibition programme, various events periodically take place in the former factory building: Tanel Saar's video screenings introducing the history of performance art, Mihkel Kleis's evenings of exploitation and cult films, and interdisciplinary synergistic undertakings of music and performance art. Among many other things, creative people from outside the organisation who have their own plan for a specific art event are supported in every possible way. In a sense, the Art Container is a social meeting place, attracting an interesting set of people with innovative ideas. There are few professional performance artists in Estonia, and therefore the Container intensely cooperates with the faculty of Interdisciplinary Arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts and organises student workshops

in order to educate new talented artists who are not afraid of presenting their art directly in front of an audience. With the support of the Estonian Cultural Endowment and the art group Non Grata, it is possible to invite exciting artists from abroad. The aim is to continuously offer live art in an informal atmosphere. Hence the programme is tight, both in terms of time and context.

### Who compiles the Art Container programme?

The programme is mostly compiled by the Art Container team: Ville Karel Viirelaid, Marian Kivila, Remo Randver, Tanel Saar, Sandra Jõgeva and Erik Alalooga. The ideas of Non Grata as a wider institution also play their part. The programme of events is not compiled as a five-year plan, but is, to an extent, quite improvisational, wishing to keep up with the times and the pulse of society. As mentioned above, what matters is a brilliant idea and it is then realised as fast as possible. The exhibition programme is known well in advance, as are Non Grata's annual festivals, such as *Diverse Universe* and the film and video festival. Some events are organised very quickly, depending on the situation and opportunities. Naturally, choices are made, and not everything is accepted. The result is diverse and certainly not directed at certain art circles. The Art Container fan club contains housewives, musicians and star artists, as well as masses of people who cannot be easily classified.

### What events should be pointed out?

One of the most original and popular undertakings so far is the series of events called *Global Container*, which mixes musicians and artists into one 'global art container'. As the name indicates, this is a multicultural undertaking containing work by people of different nationalities, and ways of thinking





Art public in  
NG Art Container



and expressing themselves. The performers may include ageing rock stars, veteran performance artists, young art students still seeking their own paths, or whoever feels that he or she has something to tell the world. The key words are diversity and freedom. Art born within fixed frames and restrictions does not suit the Art Container ideology.

In January 2008, we opened, for one month, the free alternative cinema *Le Cinema Extraordinaire*, with two film sessions a week, showing videos from the classics of kinetic art to domestic student films and Estonian underground cult films.

The pedagogical activity of the Art Container is also expressed in video screenings. Another aim, besides educating students, is to enable everybody to get an overview of the history of performance art and acquire knowledge of performance as a medium. The journey takes viewers from the era of the first performance art groups, Fluxus and the Vienna Actionists, to contemporary days, and the journey is not yet over.

#### **Future plans?**

The Art Container is a continually expanding institution. We are also expanding in the literal sense of the word – in cooperation with the Culture Factory *Polymer* we recently opened a new *white box* gallery in order to include more art and multicultural events. A silk-screen printing facility should be open in the not too distant future and we will organise workshops that introduce this particular technique. In addition, there will be a series of regular literary evenings, *One Worse Than The Other*, which is going to invite influential literary people to talk about their work and views.

#### **How can people get information about the events?**

Art Container's events and exhibitions are displayed on our homepage [www.artcontainer.ee](http://www.artcontainer.ee); it is also possible to register on the email list by sending an application to [artcontainer@artcontainer.ee](mailto:artcontainer@artcontainer.ee).

#### **NG Art Container**

Address: Culture Factory *Polymer*, Madara 22/Ülase 16, Tallinn, Estonia.

August Jakobson

# Northern Lights

Once upon a time there lived a farmhand. Once, during a bitter frost, he went to the forest to find suitable trees for his sledge runners. He knew his way like the back of his hand but, strangely enough, this time he got hopelessly lost!

Try as he might, he couldn't find the right direction. So many times he seemed to have indeed found it, but then it was all totally unfamiliar again, and he was ready to howl in desperation. Finally, after several days of wandering around, a narrow path took him to the centre of the primeval forest and to a large house made of thick logs.

Nobody seemed to be at home, and the grain-threshing room was so warm that he immediately took off his coat, climbed on top of a big furnace and fell into a deep sleep.

Suddenly the door burst open, and several large men came in, and at once began doing something rather weird. A horse was brought in and harnessed to a ploughshare, the floor of the room was ploughed, and nice yellow barley was sown in the soft earth. Lo and behold, the grain sprouted, grew like blazes, blossomed and matured. It was harvested, threshed, winnowed, and ground into groats. The groats were then put into a huge cauldron, and boiled until a sweet-smelling porridge was ready, which made the mouth of the poor farmhand water.

Then the men tied a bunch of splinters around the farmhand's neck, stuck a brand new flax swingle in his belt and stepped to the bubbling cauldron. The splinters were lit from the fire in the stove, and porridge was taken with a large ladle. Each put a ladleful of porridge into his mouth, was immediately dressed in shining and sparkling clothes and lifted off into the air! Lifted off the ground and flew out of the window like a huge beautiful bird.

Without exchanging a single word, as if everything had been arranged before, the men then disappeared, one after the other. When the last man in shining robes had flown away, the farmhand climbed down from the top of the furnace, racked his brains, and was filled with doubt and hesitation. He tied himself to heavy looms with reins and decided: "Right, I will give it a try too!"

He managed to scrape some porridge from the bottom of the cauldron, and suddenly felt a strong wind lift him into the air, together with the looms. Then he was pushed and pulled this way and that. The poor man hit his head against a beam, then against the door. The door flew open, the reins snapped, and he was swept off his feet and flew out at enormous speed, so that his ears rang and sparks burst from his eyes.

He rushed like the wind to the north. On the way, he even managed to overtake some of the big men; one of them approached him and gave him two burning splinters. "What's the point in racing across the sky like this if no-one can see us, either people going about their business, or the migratory birds seeking their route," explained the man.

Finally, the sky was filled with men with small lights in their hands, the clouds sparkled, and the deep and dark heavens glowed; everybody was hopping and whooping and laughing merrily, and they were all waving their bright white flax swingles, as if waging war on each other.

The farmhand, too, twirled among the others like mad, brandishing his burning splinters and a bright light flax swingle that had suddenly appeared in his hand like magic. Finally he could no longer suppress his curiosity and asked someone: "Tell me mate, why on earth are you, grown men, playing around like this, waving your wooden swords like children?"

"We're the escapists, the escapists! How come you don't know that we are the escapists!" replied his kind neighbour, laughing and racing off again.

It was only in the morning that the wind abated and the farmhand floated towards the house in the forest. He landed and stepped into the threshing room. The floor was smooth, as if there had never been a field; there was no trace of a furrow, and not a single speck of barley lying around. Instead, the room was full of big merry men, who welcomed him amiably but asked him to keep quiet about the escapism-ride. They gave him food and provisions to take home, and said: "Farewell to you, and keep to the south, keep to the south!"

The farmhand did as he had been told and got home on the third day. He was an honest man who kept his promises, so he never told anyone about his adventure, except his own dear wife. She was a woman of few words and thus she only told the women in the village. These kept their mouths firmly shut too and only told the women in the neighbouring village. This is how the secret was kept, and is kept to this day.





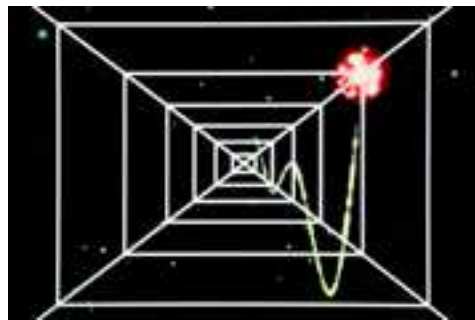
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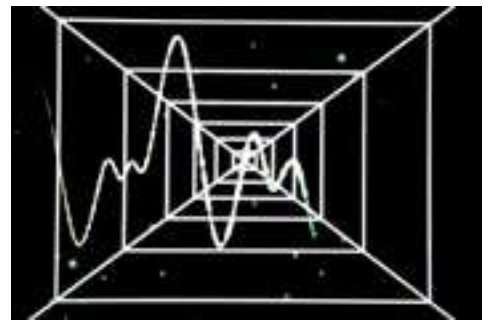
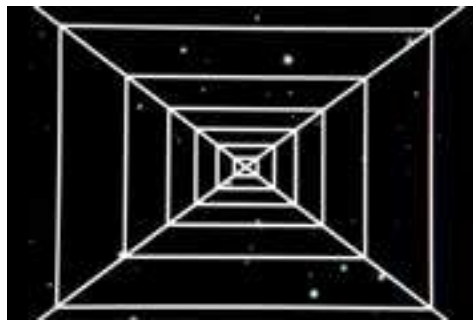


5





3



1. Madis Katz. *Putting in Order*. 2008, 2. Herkki-Erich Merila. *Aurora*. 2008, 3. Peeter Laurits. *Milky Way*. 2008, 4. Toomas Kalve. *Lost Man*. 2008, 5. Arne Maasik. *Sapphire and Steel*, TV intro remix, 2008. Made by Jaanus Meri. Original channel ITV 1979-1983, created by Peter J. Hammond.

# ESCAPISTS!

## Methodical notes

Escapism is usually defined in connection with escaping or fleeing. An escapist is a refugee, withdrawer, avoider, surrenderer, loser and the autistic. Moving from one place to another, turning your back, only means escaping as seen from one side; from the other side it is called approaching or arrival. If we turn our backs on the place that escapists are moving away from, and focus on areas towards which they are moving, we can regard escapism as the avant-garde, the route of the discoverer or pathfinder. After all, the Puritans, Huguenots, Mennonites and Quakers who colonised America were escapists from the viewpoint of their homeland. They fled from persecution and created a New World for themselves on the other side of the ocean. In the context of the official art of their time, many great names from art history, such as van Gogh or Toulouse-Lautrec, were miserable dabblers and losers. Boys with ponytails who know the language of computers and read fractals in the binary system certainly remain outside social life and match the definition of the escapist very well. At the same time, they are much more adept in their field than others, so that any application with exceptional parameters and a record of disrupted education is valuable to Silicon Valley personnel departments, and even the US Department of Defence has abandoned testing the urine of their IT people for psychedelic substances.

The greedier, more intolerant and more mono-cultural the society or interest group surrounding the escapist is, the more an escapist irritates it, even though it is forced to tolerate the irritation. A liberal market fundamentalist, revolutionary sailor or churchwarden hates the sight of an escapist. In the European Union 'success society', to say nothing of right-wing Estonia, 'escapist' tends to be an insult.

There are, however, subcultures and institutions where escapist attitudes are very much appreciated, for example prisons and hospitals. A prisoner who gets used to his fate and does not dream of escaping would be very strange indeed and rejected by other prisoners. But if there are many of them, they form a separate group and can make their attitude dominant. Frequent criminal offenders in the GULAG camps formed a hegemony of 'professional criminals', where social status largely depended on the number and duration of prison terms. The camp administration used them to repress political prisoners and other escapists, and the ruling ideology created a humorous and romantic aura around such hardened criminals. It is quite ironical that the singer, writer and actor Vladimir Vössotski, one of the most chrestomatic escapists in Soviet cultural history, often found inspiration in criminal poetry.

Social processes are multi-layered and for orientation you have to look in several directions at once. What seems to be escapist from one viewpoint constitutes a fearsome approach from another. Tendencies that appear totally asocial simultaneously constitute a new type of sociality. An escapist is the most unexpected and dynamic figure in a cultural space. An

autistic person who looks elsewhere from where social pressure indicates is an earthworm who prepares manure for a new society to sprout. Living in Harlem, I learned to run in the same direction as black kids in baggy trousers. This greatly increased the chances that a rubbish bin would explode further away behind my back and not in my face.

In this exhibition, I was inspired by August Jakobson's fairy-tale *Northern Lights*. I was thrilled by the prospect of illustrating and making visible some totally imaginary material via the most 'truthful' and 'rational' means of expression – photography. I wished to undermine the legitimacy of photography from the inside and show the quite different, apparitional aspects which photography makes available to us. We could have also tackled escapism as a solo project, but collective diversity and unpredictability seemed a more precise way to realise the idea. The exhibition ESCAPISTS! presents the escapist visions of five rather different photographers, whose handwriting and methods are occasionally even opposite: Toomas Kalve, Madis Katz, Peeter Laurits, Arne Maasik and Herkki E Merila. Madis Palm and Epp Margna Kalve produced the paintings in the picture frames and Jaanus Meri is the author of Maasik's video montage.

There were no set creative, stylistic or ideological limitations except the proposal to illustrate a fairy-tale by using photo-mechanical means. The shortened and slightly adapted version of the fairy-tale by Leelo Laurits was the only exception that was permitted. I also did not do any checking afterwards. Everybody displayed what he or she wanted. We were in constant touch during the preparation process, and introduced our preliminary work to the other members of the group. After the six-month incubation period, everybody started to actually realise his project in the month preceding the exhibition. As a result, nobody's work influenced anybody else's final product, and the chance of in-group synchronisation was avoided. The result was five autonomous interpretations of one short and specific text and one rather vague and contradictory notion.

Our autonomies are, firstly, united by the fact that we are experienced photographers with established world-views and styles. Secondly, there is a certain resignation, because we would all rather live in different worlds from where we were born. Thirdly, we are united by something mighty, as we are building our own different world in which to lead our lives.

Still, much more differentiates our autonomies than unites them, because we are building different worlds. The pictures clearly show that none of us could exist in a world created by someone else. A wealth of species in human society is just as crucial as in living nature. We should not aspire to globalisation but to fragmentation.

Peeter Laurits,  
curator of ESCAPISTS!

## Kumu Art Museum

Weizenbergi 34 / Valge 1, Tallinn

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

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

until 28 Sep	<i>Concept of Play. Archives in Translation</i>
until 12 Oct	Eerik Haamer. <i>On Both Sides of the Sea</i>
5 Sep–23 Nov	<i>Fluxus East.</i> Fluxus networks in central eastern Europe
26 Sep–5 April	<i>Grand Tour.</i> Estonian Artists in Italy
10 Oct–Jan	<i>Utopia of Freedom</i>
31 Oct–11 Jan	<i>Sabotaging Reality.</i> Surrealism in European Photographic Art in 1922–1947
27 Nov–1 Feb	Video installation <i>Elephant Bullet.</i> Urmas Muru and Kaido Ole
5 Dec–15 Feb	Hansabank Art Award
12 Dec–March	<i>Little Spectacle.</i> Video installations by Lauri Astala

## Museum of Estonian Architecture

Ahtri 2, Tallinn

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

Open: 19 May–30 Sept Wed–Fri 12 am–8 pm; Sat–Sun 11 am–6 pm  
1 Oct–18 May Wed–Sun 11 am–6 pm

Permanent exhibition: *Architectural Models from Museum's Collection*  
Exhibitions in drawers:

*Art Nouveau and National Romanticism in Estonia*  
*Eliel Saarinen's Greater-Tallinn project, 1913*  
*Estonian Wooden Architecture*  
*Functionalism in Estonia*  
*Main Squares of Tallinn: Vabaduse and Viru*  
*Estonian Independence Monuments*  
*Exhibition Small History Lesson on Estonian*  
*Architecture from the Middle Ages to the Historicismus*

29 Aug–28 Sep	<i>Living the Modern.</i> Australian Architecture
29 Aug–19 Oct	<i>Estonian architecture in exile: Ernst Kesa (1910–1994)</i>
8 Oct–2 Nov	Annual exhibition of the Union of Estonian Architects
25 Sep–23 Nov	Turkish folk architecture
12 Nov–14 Dec	Finnish Contemporary Architecture 06/07
Dec	<i>Eccentric Art Nouveau: Jacques Rosenbaum 130</i>
Upcoming Jan–Feb 09	Urmas Muru and Peeter Pere. <i>Art and Architecture</i> <i>Expressionist Erich Mendelsohn (1887–1953)</i>

## Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design

Lai 17, Tallinn

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

Open: Wed–Sun 11 am–6 pm

Permanent exhibition: *Patterns of Time 2*  
Survey of Estonian applied art and the development of design

until 12 Oct	<i>Jug</i>
until 12 Oct	<i>Newly New.</i> Textile artist Ene Pars
until 12 Oct	<i>Shade of the Memory.</i> Maiju Altpere-Woodhead
25 Oct–10 Jan	<i>Classics.</i> Metal artist Lilian Linnaks

## Adamson-Eric Museum

Lühike jalg 3, Tallinn

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

Open: Wed–Sun 11 am–6 pm

Permanent exhibition

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

until 23 Nov	Latvian Modernist - Niklavs Strunke (1894–1966)
Dec–Feb	Adamson-Eric Museum 25

## Niguliste Museum

Niguliste 3, Tallinn

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

Open: Wed–Sun 10 am–5 pm

Permanent exhibitions:

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

The exposition comprises ecclesiastical art from 14th–20th centuries, including exquisite altarpieces and sculptures. The high altar (1478–1481) made in the workshop of Hermen Rode, the original fragment of the famous painting *Danse Macabre* by Bernt Notke (end of the 15th c) and many others. The Silver Chamber displays silver treasures of guilds, craft corporations and Brotherhood of the Black Heads.

## Kadriorg Art Museum

Kadriorg Palace, Weizenbergi 37, Tallinn

Mikkel Museum, Weizenbergi 28, Tallinn

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

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

Permanent exhibitions:

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

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

until 5 Oct	<i>Kadriorg and Baroque.</i> <i>Life on the Borders of Dreams</i> (Mikkel Museum)
until Dec	<i>Kadriorg 290. The Palace and its Story</i> (Kadriorg Museum)

## Vaal Gallery

Tartu Road 80d, Tallinn

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

Open: Mon–Fri 12 am–7 pm, Sat 12 am–4 pm

until 27 Sep	Ilmar Kruusamäe
3 Oct–21 Oct	Katrin Rüütli & Herlet Elvisto
23 Oct–11 Nov	Andres Tali
13 Nov–20 Nov	Auction exhibition
25 Nov–13 Dec	Ludmilla Siim
15 Dec–31 Dec	Winter Salon



## Tallinn Art Hall

Vabaduse Sq 8, Tallinn  
[www.kunstihoone.ee](http://www.kunstihoone.ee)  
 Open: Wed-Mon 12 am-6 pm

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| until 12 Oct  | Andrei Monastörski (Moscow),<br>video and installation                |
| 22 Oct-30 Nov | <i>Museum.</i> Ando Keskküla (1950-2008),<br>retrospective exhibition |
| 10 Dec-21 Jan | <i>Women in Israel</i>  |
| from 26 Jan   | <i>The End of Work</i>  |

## Tallinn Art Hall Gallery

Vabaduse Sq 6, Tallinn  
[www.kunstihoone.ee](http://www.kunstihoone.ee)  
 Open: Wed-Mon 12 am-6 pm

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| until 21 Sep  | 1001. Lillian Meister's textile objects       |
| 26 Sep-19 Oct | <i>Museumlaboratory.</i> Eve Kiiler's project |
| 24 Oct-16 Nov | Ed McGowin (USA)                              |
| 21 Nov-14 Dec | Mare Mikoff                                   |
| 19 Dec-11 Jan | Villu Plink and Silja Saarepuu                |
| from 16 Jan   | Raivo Kelomees                                |

## Tallinn City Gallery

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

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| until 21 Sep  | Kozek-Hörlönski (AUT-HUN)               |
| 25 Sep-12 Oct | Pam Skelton (UK)                        |
| 16 Oct-2 Nov  | Mare Tralla and Olga Jürgenson (EST-UK) |
| 6 Nov-23 Nov  | Ana Sluga (SLO)                         |
| 27 Nov-14 Dec | Soans, Zoova, Kiwa, Pedanik, Lõo        |
| 18 Dec-4 Jan  | Tõnis Saadoja and Flo Kasearu           |

## Hobusepea Gallery

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

- |               |                                 |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 17 Sep-29 Sep | Reimo Vösa-Tangsoo              |
| 1 Oct-20 Oct  | Kaarel Eelma                    |
| 22 Oct-10 Nov | Küllil Suitso                   |
| 12 Nov-1 Dec  | <i>Monument</i>                 |
| 3 Dec-15 Dec  | Tarmo Salin & Siiri Minka       |
| 17 Dec-5 Jan  | Maris Palgi                     |
| 7 Jan-19 Jan  | Maria Arusoo & Herlet Elvisto   |
| 21 Jan-2 Feb  | <i>Checking IN-Pointing OUT</i> |

## ArtDepoo Gallery

Jahu 12, Tallinn  
[www.artdepoo.com](http://www.artdepoo.com)  
 Open: Tue-Fri 10 am-6 pm  
 Sat 11 am-4 pm

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| until 20 Sep  | Eve Kask       |
| 24 Sep-11 Oct | Paul Allik     |
| 15 Oct-1 Nov  | Toomas Kuusing |
| 5 Nov-22 Nov  | Jaan Toomik    |
| 25 Nov-20 Dec | Jaan Elken     |

## Draakon Gallery

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

- |               |                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| until 27 Sep  | Merike Estna                   |
| 29 Sep-11 Oct | Mirja-Mari Smidt               |
| 13 Oct-25 Oct | Eveli Varik                    |
| 27 Oct-8 Nov  | Ivi Arrak                      |
| 10 Nov-22 Nov | Jaana Jüris                    |
| 24 Nov-6 Dec  | Lembe Ruben                    |
| 8 Dec-20 Dec  | Dove Allouche (FRA)            |
| 22 Dec-10 Jan | Andres Sütevaka                |
| 12 Jan-24 Jan | <i>Painting/Deconstruction</i> |
| 26 Jan-7 Feb  | Liisi Joala                    |

## HOP Gallery

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

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 4 Sep-23 Sep  | Monika Järg  |
| 25 Sep-14 Oct | Ketli Tiitsar. <i>Anonymous Motives</i>                          |
| 16 Oct-4 Nov  | Tiina Puhkan, Piret Valk. <i>Portraitscapes</i>                  |
| 6 Nov-25 Nov  | Liina Siib. <i>Happy Hunting Grounds</i>                         |
| 27 Nov-16 Dec | Kristi Paap. <i>Bio</i>  |
| 18 Dec-3 Jan  | Krõõt Nõmmela, Tuuli Silber, Anu Rajamäe.<br><i>Mad Elephant</i> |

## Vabaduse Gallery

Vabaduse Square 6, Tallinn  
 Open: Mon-Fri 10 am-6 pm, Sat 11 am-3 pm

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 28 Aug-17 Sep | Tiia Elken  |
| 18 Sep-8 Oct  | Juta Kübarsepp <i>Hope</i>                        |
| 9 Oct-29 Oct  | Wim Lamboo <i>Estonian Artists</i>                |
| 30 Oct-19 Nov | Inna Grinchel                                     |
| 20 Nov-10 Dec | Ehalill Halliste <i>Blossoming</i>                |
| 11 Dec-7 Jan  | Melanie Kaarma<br>Fashion drawings from 1950s-60s |

## SooSoo Gallery

Soo 4, Tallinn  
 Open: Mon-Fri 11 am-6 pm, Sat 11 am-3 pm

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 5 Sep-24 Sep  | <i>Energy.</i><br>International exhibition of graphic design                                      |
| 26 Sep-16 Oct | Contemporary Polish Design  |
| 17 Oct-5 Nov  | <i>Light. Things.</i><br>Presentation-exhibition of Lumos brand<br>Tõnis Vellama, Merike Rehepapp |
| 7 Nov-25 Nov  | Kärt Ojavee & Aadam Kaarma  |
| 27 Nov-23 Dec | Mare Kelpman. Textiles  |

## Tartu Art Museum

Raekoja Sq 18, Tartu

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

Open: Wed-Sun 11 am–6 pm

until 14 Dec	Jaan Koort
19 Dec–22 Feb	Ants Laikmaa
until 1 Feb	Works from the collections of Mart Lepp and Rene Kuulmann

## Art sites

[www.cca.ee/?lang=en](http://www.cca.ee/?lang=en) True Guardian – The official blog of the Center

for Contemporary Arts, Estonia

[ekkm-came.blogspot.com](http://ekkm-came.blogspot.com) The Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia

[www.arhitektuuriaasta.ee/eng/page/kalender](http://www.arhitektuuriaasta.ee/eng/page/kalender) Year of Architecture

## new books



Katrin Kivimaa.  
*Kinnitused ja vastuväited.*  
*Tekste kunstist, pildikultuurist ja kirjutamisest 1995–2007.*  
Agreements and Arguments.  
Texts on art, visual culture  
and writing 1995–2007  
Edited by Heie Treier  
Design and layout Tõnu Kaalep &  
Ande Kaalep  
Cover photos Justin Ions  
212 pages, in Estonian  
[kunst.ee](http://kunst.ee) raamat, 2008  
Supported by Estonian Academy  
of Arts, Institute of Art History  
at EAA and Estonian Artists'  
Association

The book by art historian and critic Katrin Kivimaa contains collected articles on Estonian art in the 1990s, characterized by the emergence of identity-politics and critical practices. Included are also discussions about art history and visual culture, interviews and book reviews. The author has paid special attention to body art and feminist works, but more generally she is interested in contemporary art practices that adopt a critical look at social issues and the formation of subjectivity. The examined artists include Mare Tralla, Raoul Kurvitz, Marco Laimre, Alice Kask, Andrus Joonas, Marko Mäetamm, Kai Kaljo, David Bate, Elin Kard and Helena Hage, Tiia Johannson, Liina Siib and others.



so communication...  
translating each other's  
words  
Edited by Clare Charnley  
and Katrin Kivimaa  
90 pages, in English  
Estonian Academy of Arts,  
B. Press (UK), 2007

In a foreign country, a woman steps onto a stage and delivers a coherent speech in the audience's mother-tongue – but the woman does not understand a single word; a poet relates the 'honeyed and alchemical' process of his translations; Narcissus berates Echo for her perceived misunderstanding of his words – subsequently he conceives a suicidal vengeance upon fickle communication; an analogue-radio enthusiast dials into ghostly voices and the enigmatic transmissions of the secret 'numbers stations'; an oppressed population achieve solidarity under the banner of their distinct national language; a teacher of 'China English' argues for its acceptance among the standard variations of the English language; a disturbing fact is revealed about the postman. In a series of performances across the globe, the artist Clare Charnley has attempted to communicate speeches written by local collaborators and utilising a diverse range of languages, from Chinese to Estonian, none of which she understands. So communication... collects works, many newly commissioned for the book, by an international selection of academics, visual artists, photographers and writers illuminating themes drawn from Charnley's performances, in essays, polemics, photography, and short-fiction.

