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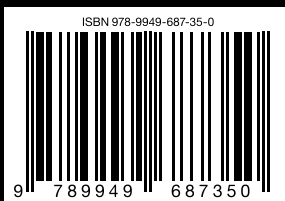
ART MUSEUM OF ESTONIA

KUMU

# Art in the Comfort Zone?

Exhibition at the  
Kumu Art Museum

# The 2000s in Estonian Art



The publication accompanies the exhibition  
*Art in the Comfort Zone? The 2000s in Estonian Art*  
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# Observations on the Art of the Noughties



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The exhibition *Art in the Comfort Zone? The 2000s in Estonian Art* has its primary focus on works and artists. The display represents a wide range of artists who entered the art scene in the 2000s and sheds light on what those who started out in the 1990s were up to a decade later. The exhibition moves in a moderately sociologising manner along generally acknowledged schemas, keeps an eye on things that influenced the visual language of the period, and deals with the most significant historical events of the decade.

We can find points of reference for the noughties among phenomena which are characteristic of the globalisation process: the disappearance of temporal, spatial and cultural borders, and the crossing of personal and state borders in new and unprecedented ways. We can also find points of reference in the critique of attitudes that define globalisation. Confrontation with the Soviet regime, which had been topical in the 1990s, lost its edge in the 2000s. Estonia was internationally still defined as a post-socialist society, which meant that we did not yet fully conform to the demands of the European art

environment. While video art was the pioneering medium of the 90s, the 2000s witnessed a professionalisation of photo art and an emergence of new means of expressing reality. The rise of performance art and the expansion of its possible applications were the most significant factors that influenced video art in the 2000s.

## Shifting the Borders of Body Art

The noughties generation inherited a few unfinished projects from the 90s generation, among them shifting the borders of body art.

Every now and then, performance became a substitute genre for some depleted art form. In the early 2000s, Elo Liiv, who taught sculpture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, organised a course in “living sculptures” in her department. This was the name under which Joseph Beuys’s social sculpture spread in Eastern Europe. According to Beuys, there is no gap between life and art, as everyone is born with a seed of creativity that needs to be put to use so that each person can relate to his or her



own identity. In Beuys's concept, social activities have to be combined with artistic creativity. Social sculpture was comprised of performance, developing a concept, and creating a text and a costume, and carried a social message. Elo Liiv's special course inspired, for example, Flo Kasearu's performance *Estonian Sculpture*<sup>1</sup>, which gained renown at the one-day exhibition *Living Sculptures* (Tallinn Art Hall, 24 October 2005), curated by Anders Härm. Kasearu dressed up as a girl wearing a national costume and carrying a poster with the text "I am dead". Her work was intended as a comment on the situation in Estonian sculpture at the time, but other artists offered different interpretations. A few of Kasearu's following projects also applied the strategy of social sculpture.

Digging more deeply into the essence of their field of activity was characteristic not only of young artists. One of Jaan Toomik's most complicated works, the video installation *Untitled*<sup>2</sup>, was created in 2001, and it certainly is a piece not easily open to verbal symbolisation. You can find both sadism and empathy in this video installation; the trudging man in Toomik's video is not messing around in a modern environment, but in an archaic fallow field. The video ushered in other new approaches to the notion of space in the culture of the 2000s.

#### New Practices of Self-Assertiveness. Interventional Public Art

The decade was characterised by changes in the social status of artists

## A significant prerequisite for an event to attract public attention is a spatial conflict preceding the artistic intervention.

and art practices that altered how subjectivity and authorship were perceived. Interventional public art is a notion that belongs to the fashionable jargon of the noughties: it triggered a new type of global movement that combined art, activism and the media, with the purpose of fending off totalitarianism and colonisation. The new art strategy soon evolved into a means of developing novel forms of cooperation. Interventional art fought against stable identities. Group initiatives did not aspire to inner articulation but focussed on observing what was outside a work of art, thus relating to space, too. In Estonia, the idea of interventional art was analysed and spread by Margus Tamm, one of the leaders of the Avangard group. The unrest that flared up around the removal of the *Bronze Soldier* statue actualised the notion of spatial conflict in Estonia, which Tamm analysed with reference to Michel de Certeau's and Henri Lefebvre's ideas and Yuri Lotman's discussions of space. Tamm concluded: ".../ A significant prerequisite for an event to attract public attention is a spatial conflict preceding the artistic intervention. /.../ The deeper the spatial

conflict in the background and the more ambiguous the intervention that relates to it, the more telling is the artistic intervention."<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tammtamm.net/text/estonian/2014/koht-ja-sekkuv-kunst> According to Tamm, the location- and community-specific nature of art, as well as the defining role of the community, are often emphasised in discussions of interventional art actions in public space.

#### Re-Coding of the Notion of Space

The forsaking of the illusion of a neutral, transparent, clean space by the art of the nineties led to complexity in the notion of space in the noughties, which meant going beyond the sphere of mental abstractions and showing how

space was linked to specific ways of being. In Estonia and elsewhere, one of the most popular theoreticians of the 2000s was Henri Lefebvre, with his work *The Production of Space*, in which he touches upon issues of re-coding, enciphering and codes used in discussions of the notion of space.

Marco Laimre's *The Portative Corner of Hate*<sup>3</sup> is based on a mature approach to spatial conflict: with its image of a corner between two walls it captures the polarisation of the Estonian population in relation to the *Bronze Soldier* saga and the alienation between the ethnic groups. Laimre's goal – depicting the conflict of national symbols without a literary narrative – forces him to use spatial categories, turning his object into a corner where people may gather if they want to. *The Portative Corner of Hate* refers to the Song Festival grounds not as a generator of a sense of unity but as a space that creates tensions in society, a space where those inhabitants of Estonia who speak a different language or represent a different culture are not welcome. Through complex metaphorisation,



he has created a visual overview of the spatial conflict within the society and has provided a picture of the positioning of the fields of power and animosity and of the confrontation of communities in the unrest of the Bronze Night.

#### Urban Space

Tõnis Saadoja's series of 93 paintings, *Hometown Tallinn*<sup>4</sup> (2007–2008), created quite a stir in Estonian art circles when it was first exhibited. The success of the series bears witness to the old rule that major urban reconstruction schemes are often accompanied by attempts to record the city under reconstruction. A classic example is Baron Haussmann, who reconstructed Paris and commissioned the city photographer to draw up the documentation for the parts of Paris that were to be destroyed as well as to

record the modernisation of the city. Critics immediately regarded Saadoja's series as a critique of the construction boom in Tallinn in the 2000s, when real estate developers interfered with the established traditions of dealing with Tallinn's genius loci in a rather heedless manner. Saadoja himself approached his subject matter from the position of a neutral, documenting artist. His extensive series was inspired by local souvenir vendors, who had found a suitable format for depicting the architectural heritage of Tallinn: watercolour paintings.

Two works from Jaanus Samma's *Pools*<sup>5</sup> series depict the old pool complex in Kadriorg. The pools were constructed towards the end of the first Republic of Estonia, commissioned by President Konstantin Päts. The artist provided an overview of the pool area through a consistent serial narrative, thus refreshing viewers' memory of changes



that had taken place in the city. Samma employed the concept of contradictory space, but his approach was different from Laimre's. Space does not subject itself to contradictions in a self-evident manner. The dialectical dimension of space is related to temporality and conflicts with established power relations. Samma added the temporal dimension to his photo series by meticulously recording traces left on the empty pools by time: graffiti that led the way out of a pure, abstract spatial category.

#### Socio-Critical Feminism

Crossing old aesthetic boundaries in the nineties and noughties forced artists to redefine themselves: beyond the aesthetic borders there was an unoccupied social and political territory. Art trends of the noughties were open to new identities and to the new globalised policies of cultural presentation. For example, the division between East and West lost its edge in the united Europe. Nowadays, it is the question of how many works by female artists are displayed in art institutions that





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draws the dividing lines. The notion of authorship has changed many times throughout history. In the 2000s, artists were no longer presented through the mythology of genius, but were seen as people who worked and hence had to be remunerated accordingly.

Marge Monko addressed the subject of womanhood through survival strategies. In the wake of her works, artists in Estonia came to be seen as objects of the economic exploitation that characterises neoliberal structures. It turned out that artists' incomes were below the minimum wage established by the government, and that they lacked social protections, their lack of health insurance being the most acute issue. With the witty slogan "I do not eat flowers!",<sup>6</sup> Monko managed to draw public attention to the core of the problem. In the ensuing fight for economic guarantees for artists, the first victory was a regulation making artists economically equal to ordinary employees. In that context the museum also became an employer, entering into contracts with artists as

employees and remunerating their performances.

Artists did not overlook the fact that poverty increased among certain groups of the population in the 1990s. This phenomenon was most consistently interpreted by the Estonian-French video artist Éléonore De Montesquiou<sup>7</sup> and the circle of activists who gathered around her and addressed the traumatic nature of social transformations through the example of the female workers of Narva. By observing "right" and "wrong" attitudes and the moral self-evaluation of those who had dropped out of social life, Monko introduced problems related to the transition period to Estonian contemporary art, drawing attention to something that the success-oriented society wanted to ignore.

### Institutional Critique

Institutional critique emerged as a significant point in intersections of artistic and political practices in the noughties. At the centre of this movement dating back to the 1970s in the US was the conflict between contemporary art and institutions, because the latter were still following the modernist art paradigm and tended to treat the entire contemporary art discourse as something worthless and insignificant, although a noteworthy



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portion of the American art elite was involved in creating it. One of the underlying principles of institutional critique was defined in the wake of this conflict: art must never trail behind short-sighted and uninspired art institutions. That confrontation soon evolved into discussions of the relationship between art and democracy. The economic crisis of the 2000s exacerbated the opposition, which turned into an irreconcilable conflict between underpaid artists and the art institutions that commissioned their works. This movement was wittily represented in Estonian art by The Elfriede Jelinek School of English Language, whose action *Produce or Die*<sup>8</sup> juxtaposed the artist working for free in a neoliberal society with institutions and their ever-increasing budgets.

### New Forms of Cooperation

The activist movements and interventionist art practices of the noughties created a backdrop for new forms of cooperation. Artists began to organise themselves in brand new ways, and

discussions about these developments characterised the whole decade. The free associations and groups of artists that the Russian art theorist Viktor Misiano calls "Tusovka" (borrowed from Russian criminal jargon) were beleaguered by the rigid corporate frameworks of institutions. In the Estonian context, an example of a Tusovka-like organisation was the Non Grata group. The word more often used in the local context was "scene", a place of social and mutual communication, characterised according to Pascal Gielen by peculiar attention to creativity, hyper-communication and diffuseness of time limits. See: P. Gielen, *The*

*Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and*

*Post-Fordism*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015. Through these

qualities, a scene assumes the format of a functional social organisation. That is where the term "alternative" becomes a desirable brand. The art scene offers a collective identity that professional subgroups cannot provide. Relationships between its members are free from obligations, and norms that need to be followed collectively are not strictly defined. However, the scene format also raises questions. For example, how is it

different from a subculture? It is easy to switch between scenes because they lack the inflexible identity forms of subcultures. A scene is public and international, but it also establishes an intimate environment that is ideal for creating social conditions conducive to an efficient exchange of ideas.



# Introduction

The exhibition *Art in the Comfort Zone? The 2000s in Estonian Art* is part of a series of exhibitions at the Kumu Art Museum dedicated to contemporary art from different decades. The series started off with the project *The X-files [Registry of the Nineties]* in 2018 (curated by Eha Komissarov and Anders Härm). The current exhibition, based primarily on the contemporary art collections of the Art Museum of Estonia and Tartu Art Museum, offers insights into the art of the noughties, draws attention to a few less-known works, and presents ideas that were fully manifested only in the following decade. The provocative question about art in the comfort zone refers to a catch phrase of the noughties and to the lack of a radical quality that the art of the decade was often accused of and that has, in hindsight, been interpreted as boredom or normalisation. See: *Normaalseid nullindad: Vaateid 2000. aastate Eesti kunstielule [The Normal Noughties. Observations on the Art Life of Estonia in the 2000s]*. Texts by: A. Allas, M. Ektermann, E. Epner et al. Ed. R. Artel, designer J. Evert. Tallinn: Kaasaegse Kunsti Eesti Keskus, 2019. The title may also reflect an idealising and somewhat nostalgic view of the active art life and open world of the 2000s in the context of the current Covid pandemic.

On the broadest social and political plane, this was a decade that greatly shaped the world we are living in now. Neoliberalism, the rise of China, ultrafast developments in (digital) technologies and an altered media sphere: all these keywords refer to processes that started or intensified in the noughties and continue to be of consequence today. Considering all of the above, what can we say about the art of the noughties? The decade that was ushered in as a hangover of the tumultuous art life of the nineties and that ended with a truly varied art scene is not easily characterised by a common denominator. The art of the noughties evolved in every possible direction in both content and form, and although it largely elaborated on the topics and

developments of the previous decade, it manifested an altered sensibility, which is what the works selected for this exhibition seem to highlight. In their discussions of metamodernism, Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker describe the changes that took place in culture at the time in terms of a fluctuation between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony, hope and melancholia, naivete and awareness, empathy and apathy, uniformity and plurality, totality and fragmentation. T. Vermeulen, R. van den Akker, "Märkmeid metamodernismist [Notes on Metamodernism]," *Methis. Studia humaniora Estonica*, No 11, 2013, pp. 135–136; DOI:10.7592/methis.v8i11.1007. This in-betweenness that attempts to cope with the past and is at the same time hopeful about finding new or more adequate ways of interpreting the world characterises most of the art of the 2000s.

The above-described new approach or sensibility has been mainly attributed to the emerging young artists of the decade. Several artists who are now in their prime emerged in the noughties with powerful debuts and a new type of artistic position. Young artists who no longer regarded the radical quality of the previous decade as desirable brought new topics and a new vocabulary into art, including the techniques of relational aesthetics, queer art and the concept of art as a form of research. Young artists were increasingly characterised by having a conscious artistic position, an ability to articulate their ideas clearly, and a good education acquired both in Estonia and abroad, which provided them with a wide network of contacts. All this means that they had everything we nowadays regard as normal indicators of an artist's professionalism.

The strong presence of young artists is evident from the onset of the decade, when traditional art curricula were complemented by new ones focusing on contemporary art. The large number of emerging young artists embodied

a visible shift in art and generated awareness of the need to map the new generation through publications and exhibitions. In hindsight, the fundamental changes of the decade were not elicited solely by those who began their art studies in the early 2000s, but the developments that defined the decade were also triggered by their dialogue with the 90s generation, many of whom were in their absolute creative prime at the time, shaping the art scene with their solo works, as well as through tutoring. Several artists from the generation known for dislocating everything and crossing borders, whose art was characterised in the 1990s by affectivity, physicality, transgression and a focus on imagery, in the 2000s moved towards socio-critical art and documentary techniques, while remaining essentially true to a narrative style based on personal experience.

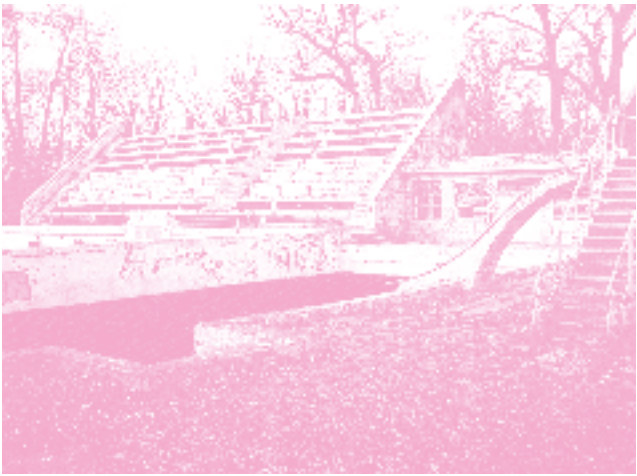
In addition to the dialogue between the two generations, the noughties witnessed the normalisation of the situation in which most artists did not confine their practices exclusively to one or two media but moved freely between different means of expression. The development was closely intertwined with the eventual naturalisation of conceptualism in the local art scene, which primarily meant focusing on the contents of a work of art, rendering the issues of form secondary or addressing them from a completely new position. As a parallel development, there was a change in attitude towards traditional media that had remained in the background in the 1990s. That was particularly true of painting, to which quite a few artists returned who had dealt with new media in the 1990s. The same process happened among newcomers in the early noughties, who no longer regarded abandoning old techniques as inevitable and saw painting as an adequate means of realising their ideas.

The display is laid out in the form of dialogues between different topics, keywords and motifs, with the purpose of conveying the sensibilities, artistic positions and viewpoints characteristic of the art of the decade.



**Welcome to Estonia**

The consumerist brand-centred culture model of the 2000s affected Estonia, too. Herkki-Erich Merila and Arbo Tammiksaar's cooperative photo series *Welcome to Estonia*<sup>1</sup> is an ironic retort to the grand marketing campaign project of the republic. However, presenting oneself was not the only important aspect. Cheap flights and increasingly easier travel meant an upsurge in artists' biennial tourism, residencies abroad and Erasmus exchanges for younger people. Works by Sandra Jõgeva, Dénes Farkas, Minna Hint, Flo Kasearu and Tanya Muravskaya deal – from different viewpoints – with experiences of young artists in unfamiliar environments, marking different strategies of dealing with issues of their origin and identity.





Politics of the Gaze

Influenced by semiotics and critical theory, artists became interested in the theory of the gaze and its political potential. The theory is directly related to viewing and creating art. In Yevgeni Zolotko's installation *Grey Signal*,<sup>4</sup> the viewer enters a room containing screens, cameras and a watchtower, immediately feeling objectified by an unidentified person or system. Alice Kask's drawings based on newspaper photos<sup>5</sup> deprive figures of their backgrounds, leaving them contextually "naked" in front of the gaze of the artist and the viewer. Sigrid Viir deals with the naked body and taboos related to presenting it in her *Nude with Parents*<sup>6</sup>, which puts the viewer consciously in the position of a peeper. The documentations in Andres Lõo's *Mime Score*<sup>7</sup> and Mark Raidpere's *Ten Men*<sup>8</sup> both focus on what is visible on the screen and in the communication taking place behind it. In Lõo's work the gaze at the viewer is converted into improvised sounds, whereas the gaze at the prisoners in Raidpere's work is totally humanising and empathic.

Taavi Piibemann's *Untitled*<sup>9</sup> assumes a political position by refusing any gaze or information, whereas Ene-Liis Semper's<sup>10</sup> and Karel Koplimets's<sup>11</sup> works deal with the violent nature of the gaze: Semper through the dominant male gaze, partly through the experience of camera-based media, and Koplimets through the role of photography in the context of forensics and detective work.



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Made in China

The noughties were also a decade of online shopping and cheap Chinese goods. Saadoja's series addressing the commodification of his home-town ushered in Kaisa Eiche and Taavi Piibemann's series *Would You Buy It?*<sup>12</sup>, which criticises consumerism and a superficial mentality, posing provocative questions about where such an attitude might lead us in the future. The Elfriede Jelinek School of English Language<sup>13</sup> adds to the discussion the condition of an artist working in a neoliberal society, drawing attention to the abyss between institutions with their ever-increasing budgets and artists mostly spending more than they earn or simply working for free. In the centre of Johnson and Johnson's *Paldiski project*<sup>14</sup> was the port town Paldiski, where the mostly Russian-speaking population had become completely alienated from politics by the mid-2000s. By giving people a reason to get together and express their wishes, the project provided them with an experience of unity, which enabled them to express their desires and discontentment on the municipal policy level.



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Monuments and the National Narrative

One of the topics that shaped the decade was re-emerging nationalism, revolving mainly around issues related to the survival of a nation in a globalised world and to national perceptions of history. The latter was closely associated with monuments, the removal and erection of which caused several polarising arguments. At the centre of Kristina Norman's *After-War*<sup>15</sup> was the *Bronze Soldier* monument, which was originally located in Tõnismäe. It proved that not everyone living in Estonia had the right to carry out their rituals in the city centre. Marco Laimre's *The Portative Corner of Hate*<sup>16</sup> deals with a similar kind of exclusiveness, referring to the Song Festival grounds not as a generator of a sense of unity but as a space that creates tensions in society, a space where those inhabitants of Estonia who speak a different language or represent a different culture are not welcome. National core texts are shifted in Jass Kaselaan's *Stay Free, Estonian Breast!*<sup>17</sup> and Toomas Thetloff's *Truth and Juicest. I–V*<sup>18</sup>. They deconstruct solemnity with humour and the notion of error. Flo Kasearu's *Estonian Sculpture*<sup>19</sup> and Neeme Külm's *Fountain*<sup>20</sup> constitute a separate sub-chapter of tradition critique. Kasearu's work was meant as a commentary on sculpture as a medium in Estonian art in the mid-2000s, but because of the use of national costume it also served as a critique of nationalism. Külm's *Fountain* reflects more clearly the personal issues of an artist trying to navigate between the fields of sculpture and installation.



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From Feminism to Feminisms

Feminist art in the early 2000s was still closely linked to the stereotype criticism and performance art traditions that had prevailed in the 1990s. The period is represented by the punk anti-advertisements of the group Puhas Rõõm (Sheer Joy)<sup>21</sup>, which exaggerate absurd advertisements targeted at women and, on a broader scale, the social expectations placed on women. The second half of the decade was characterised by two parallel tendencies. The first one dealt with the issue of women's historical and social position, important issues here being the Narva Kreenholm Factory and the stories of women associated with it. This tendency is represented at the exhibition by Marge Monko<sup>22</sup> and Eléonore de Montesquiou<sup>23</sup>. The second tendency dealt with identity politics, represented by Anna-Stina Treumund's<sup>24</sup> queer-feminist art, which consciously looked for new ways of perceiving and presenting the self. Edith Karlson's *Peeing Woman*<sup>25</sup> combines explorations in sculpture with a feminist approach to subject matter and grotesque physicality.



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Physicality in the Art of the Noughties

Although the noughties have acquired the image of a decade of conceptualism and socio-critical art, the first half of the decade was characterised by a strong tradition of performance art and an interest in physicality, which it shared with the nineties. Jaan Toomik and the Department of Interdisciplinary Art that he was the head of played a significant role here. Sandra Jõgeva<sup>26</sup> and Neeme Kõlm<sup>27</sup>, among others, graduated from that department. Unlike Kõlm and Jõgeva, whose art focuses on their own bodies, the characters in Alice Kask's<sup>28</sup> paintings are emphatically anonymous, allowing the tense poses of the figures to convey what the artist wants to say.



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There will be Blood

The last room of the exhibition is not a summary of the art of the noughties, but rather a condensed image of the euphoria that characterised the decade and the tensions that brewed under the surface. Johnson and Johnson's *You See ... Everyone Has a Theory about the Way Things Are in the World*,<sup>29</sup> depicting the business newspaper *Äripäev* in 2006, and Marko Mäetamm's *Bloody Houses*<sup>30</sup> were created specifically in the context of the economic boom and the crisis that ensued, yet they come across as frighteningly topical even today. The overview is rounded off by Kaido Ole's<sup>31</sup> motif of cutting off his own fingers and Kiwa's<sup>32</sup> robotic dissolution into emptiness.

- Kaisa Eiche  
The Elfriede Jelinek School of English Language  
Dénes Farkas  
Minna Hint  
Villu Jaanisoo  
Sandra Jõgeva  
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Toomas Thetloff  
Jaan Toomik  
Anna-Stina Treumund  
Sigrid Viir  
Jevgeni Zolotko



**Herkki-Erich Merila (1964)**  
**Arbo Tammiksaar (1971)**

Welcome to Estonia  
2002. Photo  
Tartu Art Museum

Herkki-Erich Merila, a member of DeStudio in the 1990s, focused on his solo career in the 2000s. At the centre of the photo series co-created with Arbo Tammiksaar is the “Welcome to Estonia” sign that was designed by the British company Interbrand Newell and Sorrell Ltd in 2002 to promote Estonia internationally. The advertising campaign presented Estonia as a nature-loving, Nordic and fast-developing country, creating a myth that to some extent still holds sway. Merila and Tammiksaar’s photo series turns that unambiguously idyllic strategy upside down by juxtaposing the essentially vacuous sign with criminal-looking male figures, creating associations with how the West stereotypically viewed Estonians in the 1990s: as East European criminals. (TT)





Tanja Muravskaja (1978)

W2 L0: Welcome to London  
2005. Diasac photo  
Courtesy of the artist

Tanja Muravskaja studied journalism at Tallinn University, and photography at the Estonian Academy of Arts and the University of Westminster. The latter is important as she created the series *W2 L0: Welcome to London* while studying in England. Her main media are photography, video and installation, which she uses to deal with questions of identity and social inequality. Muravskaja is particularly interested in the relationship between the familiar and the unfamiliar. She usually deals with this topic in the Estonian context, whereas in this work she emphasises the universality of the issue.

The series of fourteen photos is founded on juxtaposition: (artificial) landscapes on one side, portraits of Londoners photographed against a neutral background on the other. Nearly all of those portrayed were born elsewhere, not in London. The artist selected the landscapes after interviewing the people portrayed and made choices based on the interviewees' wishes and aspirations. Muravskaja added an area code next to each photo: a combination of letters and numbers that can be read as an indication of the position of each person in the social hierarchy of London. Through this juxtaposition, Muravskaja attempted to find traits that people and landscapes had in common, and to give the people portrayed something that was difficult to achieve in real life: a place in their chosen environment or, vice versa, release from an environment forced on them. (TS)



Minna Hint (1981)

Three Pictures of Life and Time  
2006. Video, 32 min 23 sec  
Tartu Art Museum

Minna Hint studied painting and interdisciplinary arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her works are based on documentary material. Living as an exchange student in England, Hint created a video in which she discussed subsistence problems she experienced in the noughties as a foreign worker rattled by the economic crisis. She worked in a café, washing dishes, and her aim was to take advantage of the big income gap between Estonia and the UK to earn the capital necessary to function as an artist in Estonia. The harsh truth revealed by the video is that if someone wants to be an artist in Estonia they must find other means to support themselves, because the state takes no interest in their production. Minna Hint's video documentary of life in the UK is very critical and sheds light on the sore points of the art culture of the decade. The decades that followed witnessed a movement in Estonian art that drew attention to the social rights and welfare of artists. (EK)





# Sandra Jõgeva

Eastern European  
2001. Recording of the performance, 1 min 52 sec  
Courtesy of the artists

The art group Avangard was active in 2001–2006 and consisted of Sandra Jõgeva and Margus Tamm (1977). The keywords used to describe their art are attitude, image, postmodern irony and provocativeness, and they used references to pop culture and advertising.

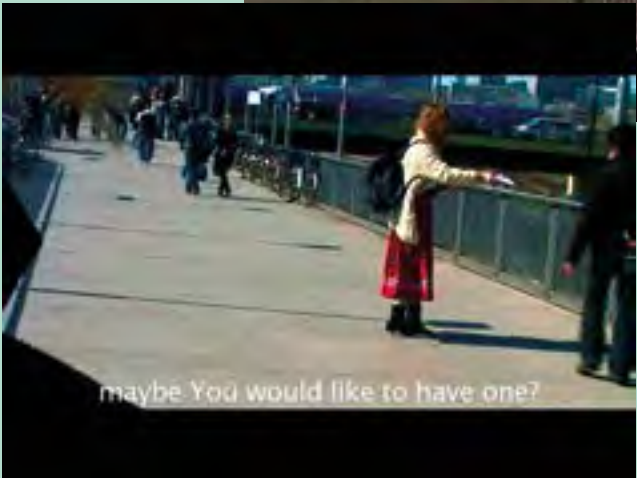
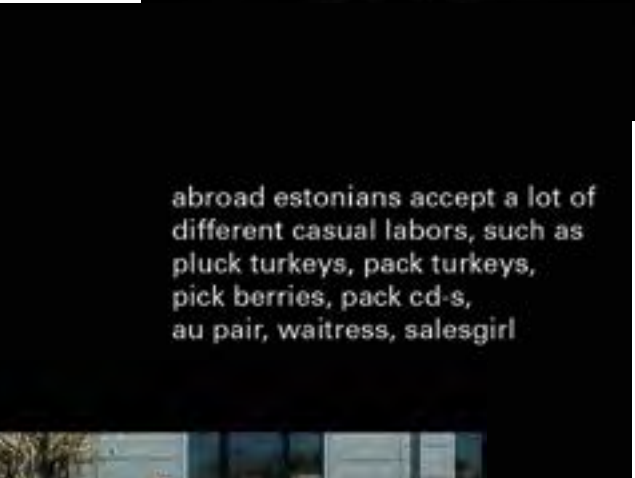
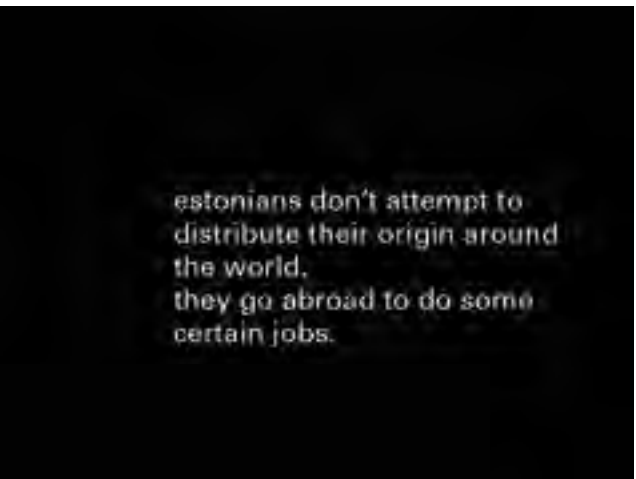
In the video *Eastern European*, Sandra Jõgeva can be seen standing on the streets of Turku, holding a sign reading “I am from Eastern Europe, and I need 490 Finnish markkas for the hairdresser, because my hair roots have grown out” or “I am from Eastern Europe, and I need 195 Finnish markkas to buy a new watch”. By asking for money primarily for luxury services or products, the artist is exploiting the dominant 1990s stereotype of Estonians as poor East Europeans, as well as the broader image of East European women, while upending the humble act of begging and adopting a cynical and arrogant stance instead. (TT)

# Flo Kasearu (1985)

Multi Travels  
2007. Video, 8 min  
Courtesy of the artist

Flo Kasearu emerged as an artist in the mid-2000s, while she was still studying painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her actions, videos and paintings were closely associated with the wave of socio-critical art, but she also created works based on poetic images.

*Multi Travels* is an elaboration on the theme Kasearu dealt with in her performance *Estonian Sculpture* (2005), with a popular Soviet souvenir doll clad in a national costume in the leading role. In the video, we see a young woman in a national costume giving out information about Estonia on the streets of Berlin and on public transport. She looks like a missionary or a Jehovah’s Witness. The work is a mixture of the artist’s first experience of living in an unfamiliar environment for a long time, a critique of nationalism reminiscent of religious fanaticism, and references to the numerous Estonians who left the country in the noughties to work or study abroad. (TT)







## Tõnis Saadoja (1980)

Hometown Tallinn  
2007–2008. Watercolour on paper, 1 ready-made  
Art Museum of Estonia

Tõnis Saadoja is a conceptual painter whose works from the 2000s are typically large-scale series in a photorealistic manner. The series *Hometown Tallinn*, made up of ninety-two small water colours and one ready-made digital print, strikes the viewer with its massiveness. The series is based on watercolours of Tallinn's iconic buildings sold on the streets of Old Town as souvenirs. Saadoja's work presents the city to us in all its variety, documenting the surrounding turmoil and the speed at which the city changed in one decade. Three significant aspects can be highlighted regarding the series. As the title suggests, there is the autobiographical aspect (including the houses where the artist himself had lived). Secondly, the artist observed the chaos of the building boom of the 2000s. Thirdly, Saadoja engaged in a dialogue with his own manner of painting: he wished to find a substitute for hyperrealism, a manner synthesising photography and painting that would emanate from a different source than the American high-modernist view of an organised, progress-oriented urban environment, dating back to the 1960s. Particularly visible are the numerous links to the building boom: the series includes several images of boom-era buildings, from blocks of flats to massive banks. These buildings, often dedicated to the worship of power, make descriptions of the nostalgic appeal of old buildings inconsequential. Saadoja's work presents the trendy new buildings as strangers in a city that has nothing in common with the influx of cheap loan money into the markets. (EK)



## Dénes Farkas (1974)

15 Portraits  
2004. C-print  
Courtesy of the artist, private collection

Dénes Farkas is a post-conceptual photography and installation artist who studied graphic art (BA) and photography (MA) at the Estonian Academy of Arts. While he was taking photographs for his MA graduation work *Portraits of Women*, Farkas decided to also capture the contents of the fridges of the people he was portraying. That whim evolved into a systematic process that lasted for two years, during which he secretly took pictures of the contents of his friends and acquaintances' fridges in Estonia, Finland and Hungary. Many of them had no idea that Farkas had taken pictures of their fridges until the works were displayed. The series has parallels with the series *Hotel* (1981) by Sophie Calle, who worked as a maid in a hotel in Venice and took pictures of the rooms without the guests knowing about it.

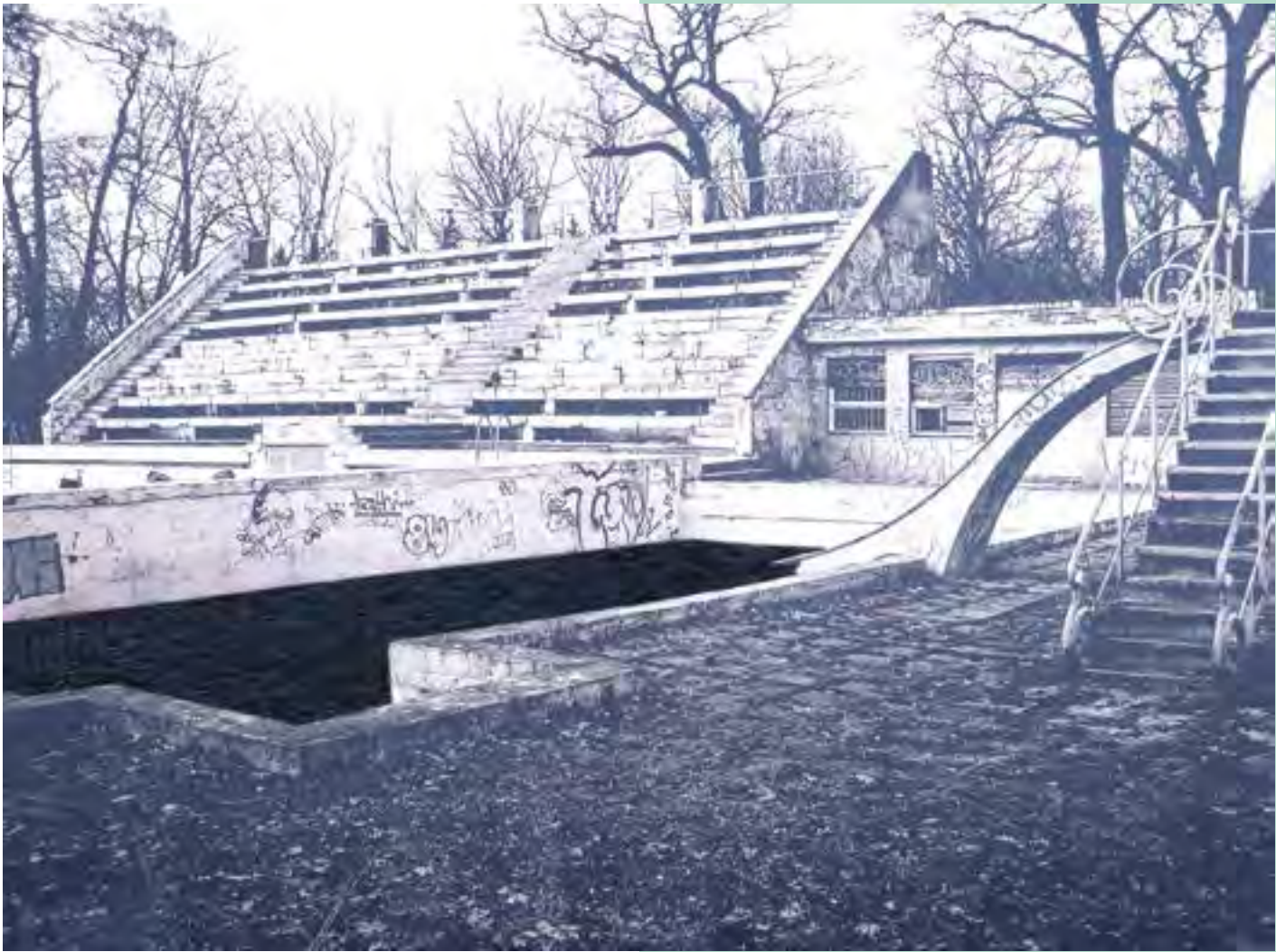
Although there are no people visible in *15 Portraits*, their presence is perceptible. There is a strange intimacy to those pictures, with new microworlds unfolding. The series can be regarded as a prologue to the photos of paper models of human-made objects and environments that Farkas has been working on since 2006. (TS)



Jaanus Samma (1982)

Pool 1  
**Pool 7**  
2005. Digital prints and stitching  
Art Museum of Estonia

Jaanus Samma entered the art scene in the middle of the 2000s and immediately caught the public's attention with his distinctive aesthetics and imagery. By the end of the decade, he had arrived at a clearly queer-exploratory artistic position. His early works are a fascinating example of a young artist's photographic attempts to test the limits of documentality and to combine autobiography with an environmental experience. *Pools* was Samma's graduation piece for the Graphic Arts Department of the Estonian Academy of Arts. Altogether, the work consists of photos found on the Internet, printed on silk and on cardboard. The objects in Samma's snapshots of areas around Kadriorg Park can no longer be explored because they no longer exist. Instead of the old, destroyed objects, we now have Samma's hallucinatory inner experience, records related to another consciousness. A hedonistic society urges people to experience everything: from travel to exotic countries to sexual liberties. Life itself is turned into an endless spectacle, which doesn't end even with an individual's death. Samma's interpretations of ruins can be associated with theatrically interpreted narratives of danger and crime, and the pools with eroticism and conception. (EK)



Alice Kask (1976)

Untitled II–III  
2005. Pencil and Indian ink  
Tartu Art Museum

Alice Kask's drawings in this series are based on pictures found in newspapers. She has manipulated the images by keeping the figure in the photo but discarding the background or a significant detail. For example, she has removed the trademark bow tie from a picture of the future president Toomas Hendrik Ilves, thus turning him into a typical yuppie. But as figures are removed from the background, the habitual context of the body is also lost, and they remain floating on an empty sheet of paper, as if cut out from the material world. It is now up to the viewer to provide the circumstances to place the characters alienated from reality in. (TS)

Jevgeni Zolotko (1983)

Grey Signal  
2010/2021. Spatial and sound installation  
Courtesy of the artist

The installations by Jevgeni Zolotko, who entered the art scene at the end of the 2000s, cannot be subjected to unequivocal definitions: his works embody such notions as silence, loneliness and matter, without moulding them into clear-cut narratives or references to certain contexts. *Grey Signal* is Zolotko's first large-scale installation, and was originally created for the Vaal Gallery in Tallinn. The viewing tower at the centre of the installation and the accompanying cameras and screens clearly suggest parallels with the notion of a surveillance society, yet strangely there are no signs of human presence in the installation, apart from the replicas of everyday objects and the human-scale architecture of the tower. As in Zolotko's subsequent installations, the central character here is matter in various forms and meanings which cannot be subjected to verbal communication. (TT)





Andres Lõo (1978)

Mime Score. Documentation  
2005. Video, 5 min 42 sec  
Art Museum of Estonia

The musician and sound and conceptual artist Andres Lõo focused on sound art in the noughties.

*Mime Score* is the artist’s expansion on the idea of a graphic score, in which music has been written down using visual images, and the traditional musical notation has been replaced by a moving picture. The work was created for the Estonian Music Days in 2005 in cooperation with the band U (line-up: Tarmo Johannes: flute, Merje Roomere: violin; Levi-Danel Mägila: cello, Meelis Vind: clarinet, Vambola Krigul: percussion and Taavi Kerikmäe: piano), who play music to accompany Lõo’s facial mimicry. Lõo’s black and white face and the band reacting to it create a narcissistic image, adding the element of body art to the work. *Mime Score* is an exceptional work in Estonian art, as it combines various aspects of video, sound, music, action, body and interactive art, allowing for a very broad scope of interpretation. (TT)



Sigrid Viir (1979)

Nude with Parents  
2009. Installation, 35 mm photo slide  
Courtesy of the artist

Sigrid Viir is a photography and installation artist. She is also a member of the art project OÜ Visible Solutions (with Karel Koplimets and Taaniel Raudsepp), which functions in the intersection between art and economics. Her solo works from the second half of the 2000s primarily dealt with personal and family issues and evolved into playful photo installations by the end of the decade.

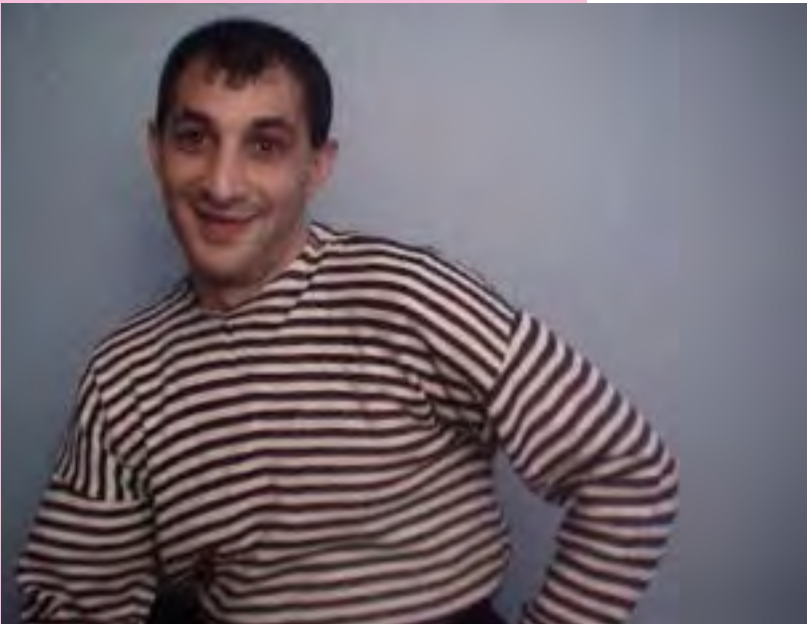
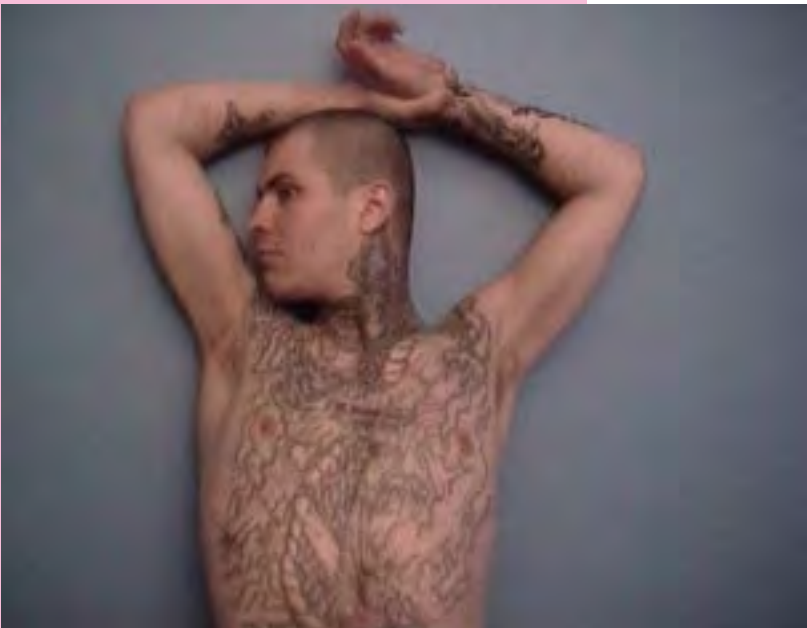
*Nude with Parents* was triggered by the artist’s interest in social agreements and mores which we hardly ever think of questioning. For example, why does it feel normal to be naked with one’s parents as a child, but uncomfortable as a young adult? (TT)

Mark Raidpere (1975)

Ten Men  
2003. Video, 7 min 54 sec  
Tartu Art Museum

Mark Raidpere, who started out as a photographer in the 1990s, focused on video art in the 2000s. His videos can be divided into two major categories: intimate or even confessional portrayals of his relationship with his parents, and portraits of different social groups, triggered mainly by an interest in sociology.

*Ten Men* falls into the latter category. It gives the viewer a chance to look closely at ten men serving prison sentences: stigmatised “Others”. Observing those men with sentimental music in the background and not knowing the specific circumstances of their convictions, the focus of the work is on each man’s individual character, his body language, and his relationship with the artist behind the camera. (TT)





Karel Koplimets (1986)

Vilde Road Case  
2010/2021. Spatial installation  
Courtesy of the artist

Karel Koplimets is an artist who works with photography, video and installations, and who is also a member of the art project OÜ Visible Solutions (with Sigrid Viir and Taaniel Raudsepp), which functions in the intersection between art and economics.

The keywords characterising his earlier works are urban space, especially its associations with crime and inexplicable phenomena, and narrativity, in which facts (even evidence) blend with fiction.

*Vilde Road Case* was inspired by a real-life event: a murder was committed in Vilde Road in Tallinn on 21 June 2010, and it was widely covered by the media. Koplimets has furnished a detective's office in the style of film noir: it is filled with newspaper clippings, pieces of evidence and photos of the suspects. The viewer can assume the role of a detective and make their own deductions about the case using the methods of Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton. (TT)



Ene-Liis Semper (1969)

Beautiful  
2006. Video, 2 min 55 sec  
Courtesy of the artist

Video, performance and theatre artist Ene-Liis Semper entered the art scene in the 1990s and achieved considerable international recognition and success in the noughties after her performance at the main exhibition of the Venice Biennale curated by Harald Szeemann. Her short videos are based on a single powerful image conveying an emotion or a state of being.

In the video *Beautiful*, we see the artist posing in front of a camera and adjusting her appearance according to the suggestions of the man behind the camera, repeatedly asking whether she is now beautiful. The work is a painful summary of what is expected of women, which often adds up to simply being beautiful, and of the tragic price women pay for adapting to these expectations. (TT)



Taavi Piibemann (1977)

Untitled  
2003. Photo installation  
Art Museum of Estonia

Taavi Piibemann graduated from the Department of English of the University of Tartu in 2002 and went on to study photography at the Tartu Art College.

*Untitled* consists of two large light boxes. In the first one, we see a sharply focused photo of a boy wearing dark glasses meant for the partially sighted. This portrait photo pointedly brings out details, creating a rhythm that enlivens the image. The white surface of the second photo is presumably meant by the artist to convey what the partially sighted boy is seeing. We do not know what was on the poster that the boy was looking at, because the photo only depicts large indistinct surfaces. The work attempts to answer the question of what the reality was like that left a mark on the picture and that the machine recorded without the participation of human vision. The work was nominated to the Hansabank Art Award in 2003. (EK)



## Kaisa Eiche (1982) Taavi Piibemann (1977)

Would you buy it?  
2006/2021. Photo installation  
Courtesy of the artists

In the middle of the 2000s, Kaisa Eiche and Taavi Piibemann both studied at the Tartu Art College in the Department of Photography, headed by Peeter Linnap from 2001 onwards.

Photos displayed in the shop windows of an old department store in Tartu under the common title *Would you buy it?* had originally been made for Toomas Kalve's course on nudes. The display, which criticised easily consumable solutions and identities, referred to the situation where everything, including God and intimate relationships, had become commodities.

Taavi Piibemann's series discusses three main issues: religion, which has changed from its original idea, the pornography industry, and issues related to the fashion business, urging the viewer to deal with problems that exist in society instead of resorting to convenient consumption solutions.

Approaching shop windows as distribution channels and referring to the spread of e-commerce in the 2000s, Eiche's series of photos asks what the product catalogue of a future cyborg-manufacturing corporation would look like: would we be willing to allow the purchase of a mother for orphans or children for those who have none?

The exhibition was temporarily shut down due to protests by the Orthodox church of Tartu. Media coverage, which among other things related the display to the scandalous Mohammed comic strips published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in 2005, only focused on the images in Piibemann's photos and ignored the essential issues raised by the exhibition. (TT)







## Johnson and Johnson

The Paldiski Project  
2006–2013. Video installation  
Courtesy of the artists

The Paldiski Project / Eastern Breeze  
2012. Polyresin  
Made in China, at the Quanzhou factory. Amount 2000 pcs  
Courtesy of the artists

The art group Johnson and Johnson, founded in 2005, is comprised of the artists Indrek Köster (1970) and Taavi Talve (1970). Most of their short films, videos, spatial installations, sculptures, objects and context-specific actions deal with institution and media criticism.

Their most monumental undertaking so far is *The Paldiski Project*. At the centre of the installation is the specific socio-political situation of the city of Paldiski, with all of the money passing through it and never ending up in any projects of improving local life, and with the Russian-speaking population alienated from politics. On the other hand, one of the first professional artists of Estonia, the sculptor Amandus Adamson, was born in Paldiski. With the purpose of creating a situation in which the local inhabitants would experience first-hand collective self-organising, the artists carried out a survey at the end of 2006 asking the people of Paldiski which sculpture by Amandus Adamson they would like to have in their town. They were given a choice of five sculptures. The winner was the 1899 sculpture *The Last Sigh of the Ship*, depicting a female nude surrounded by waves. Although the sculpture was in the initially chosen location for only a few months, the project generated discussions among the local population as to what kind of public space they wanted, and what the role of the town should be in shaping the living environment of its inhabitants. (TT)

## The Elfriede Jelinek School of English Language

Produce or Die  
2007. Digital print  
Art Museum of Estonia

The feminist literature reading group The Elfriede Jelinek School of English Language was active in 2007–2012. Among the founding members of the group were the artists Kadi Estland (1973), Helen Lehismets (1975), Helena Palm (1973) and Killu Sukmit (1975).

The institution-critical action *Produce or Die* is an exceptional landmark phenomenon in the context of Estonian culture. The work was inspired by the sponsorship agreement between the Kumu Art Museum and Hansabank, which was a typical example of how in the 2000s cultural institutions were increasingly expected to fund their activities from their own revenues and resources acquired from sponsors. As an outcome of this cooperation between the bank and the museum, the word KUNST (art) appeared in large metal letters in front of Kumu in 2007, and Hansabank's logo was printed on Kumu's exhibition tickets. It was Hansabank's logo on the tickets (round stickers) of the clearly political exhibition *Biennial of Dissidence* that triggered the work.

The poster action took place from 9 November to 11 November 2007 in parallel locations all over Tallinn, including the window of the Hobusepea Gallery and the outer wall of Kumu Art Museum. By hijacking several techniques from the advertising industry (the provocative naked female body to attract attention and a recording of the performance *Genitalpanik* by the well-known Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT from 1969), the action raised the issue of hijacking an artist's work and public space. (TT)





Kristina Norman (1979)

After-War  
2009. Video- and spatial installation  
Courtesy of the artist

Team: Art Allmägi, Andres Amos,  
Andris Brinkmanis, Edith Karlson,  
Jass Kaselaan, Raul Keller,  
Meelis Muhu, Erik Norkroos, Jaak Soans,  
Taivo Timmusk, Reimo Vösa-Tangsoo

The Central Golden Object  
Glass fibre, resin

Kinetics of Power. The Bronze Soldier's  
Three Spatial Relationships  
Video loop, 24 min

Rituals  
Two-channel video installation  
I Celebration of Victory Day at Tõnismäe  
1992–2006. Video projection,  
14 min 19 sec  
II Celebration of Victory Day at Tõnismäe,  
1947–1990. Video on LCD screen,  
6 min 45 sec

Aimless Violence  
Video, 8 min 56 sec

The artist's action at Tõnismäe on  
9 May, two years after the removal  
of the monument  
Video, 10 min 6 sec



The central axis of Kristina Norman's works from the 2000s was built on the co-existence of different memory communities and the tensions between them. In a situation where choosing sides seems inevitable, her works attempt to find new ways of dealing with the topic and with overcoming old contradictions, using humour and absurdity, among other tools.

*After-War* (curated by Marco Laimre), which represented Estonia at the 2009 Venice Biennale, is possibly one of the most scandalous works from the noughties, as it deals with the official memory policy of Estonia, the different approach to history that the Russian-speaking Estonians have, and the topic of the representation of various groups in the public sphere. The work combines different ritual activities that were practised at different times in connection with the Bronze Soldier statue in Tõnismäe, records of the street unrest that followed the removal of the statue, and the action carried out on 9 May 2009, in which the artist installed a golden replica of the statue in its original location. The replica was quickly removed by the police. In a situation where neither community wishes to improve their understanding of the other's behaviour, the artist assumes the role of the code generator, programming errors in the code that make automatic understanding impossible for both sides. (TT)



Marco Laimre (1968)

Fuck off with Your Safety Pins or  
F.O.W.Y.S.P.  
2004/2021. Diasac photo  
Courtesy of the artist

Marco Laimre is a conceptual artist who entered the art scene in the 1990s. His art is characterised by a critical and anarchist stance. The term that best defines his works from the first half of the 2000s is experimental semiotics, at the centre of which is manipulation of the existing systems of symbols and a cognitive combining of seemingly random images.

*Fuck off with Your Safety Pins or F.O.W.Y.S.P.* is a laconic photo of a safety pin, which automatically triggers a range of associations: the first layer is the subcultural semantic field that relates to shock, leftist world views, the working class and aggression. Aggression is emphasised by the open, sharp-pointed position of the pin. On the other hand, the work wittily hints at the innumerable state awards handed out during the presidency of Arnold Rüütel, referring to the safety pin as the most trivial element of a medal of honour. (TT)

Marco Laimre (1968)

The Portative Corner of Hate  
2005/2021. Spatial installation  
Courtesy of the artist

Marco Laimre's *The Portative Corner of Hate* characteristically revolves around a central image or topic, combining personal and cultural meanings related to the motif. Forming the background of the installation is the wave of nationalism that re-emerged in the noughties and manifested itself in confrontations with the Russian-speaking population, as well as in anxiety about the survival of the nation and the preservation of the national culture. The artist turned the arched building of the Song Festival Ground into a "product" that allows anyone anytime and anywhere to hate in peace, inevitably looking like a child who has naughty and has been sat in a corner. (TT)







## Jass Kaselaan (1981)

Stay Free, Estonian Breast  
2007. Sound sculpture  
Tartu Art Museum

Jass Kaselaan is known for his total spatial installations, in which sound and light play equally important roles as form and material.

*Stay Free, Estonian Breast* was made during Kaselaan's MA studies at the Estonian Academy of Arts. It is a landmark among the artist's works as it introduces a series of installations which all follow a similar formal structure: a sound installation centred around a group of white sculptures. Grotesque figures modelled after the artist's face are first and foremost a witty comment on the "New Nationalism" of the decade, characterised by debates on national history and a nostalgic yearning for the unity experienced at the time Estonia regained its independence. (TT)



## Toomas Thetloff (1984)

Truth and Juicest. I–V  
2007. Installation  
Tartu Art Museum

Toomas Thetloff studied psychology at the University of Tartu and photography at the Tartu Art College. The post-conceptual works of several artists from Tartu, including Thetloff, were influenced by semiotics, which gained popularity in the 2000s: works of art were primarily viewed as texts and carriers of information.

Thetloff's *Truth and Juicest* is a flawed copy created by an anagram converter of one of the core texts of Estonian culture: Anton Hansen Tammsaare's five-volume novel *Truth and Justice* (*Tõde ja õigus* in Estonian). By shifting the text so that it is clearly flawed as you read it, yet at least partially intelligible, Thetloff suggests that even texts that are significant for the national identity are essentially just sign systems that can be manipulated. (TT)



## Flo Kasearu (1985)

Estonian Sculpture  
2005/2021. Documentation of  
the performance, photo  
Courtesy of the artist

Flo Kasearu emerged as an artist in the mid-2000s, while she was still studying painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her actions, videos and paintings were closely associated with the wave of socio-critical art, but she also created works based on poetic images.

*Estonian Sculpture* is a recording of Kasearu's performance at the 2005 exhibition *Living Sculptures* (curator Anders Härm). It was also the first work by Kasearu that immediately attracted wider attention. Although the initial purpose of the performance was to address the lethargy of Estonian sculpture, it was also seen as a comment on Estonian nationalism due to the use of national costumes. The artist herself, however, was referring to a Soviet souvenir doll dressed in national costume, which was very popular in those days. It could be found in every home and was essentially a miniature sculpture. (TT)

## Neeme Külm (1974)

Fountain  
2006. Video installation  
Courtesy of the artist

Neeme Külm studied sculpture at the Estonian Academy of Arts and graduated from the Department of Interdisciplinary Arts (MA) in 2003. Külm is mainly known for minimalist location-specific installations. He was one of the founders of the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, with Marco Laimre, Anders Härm and Elin Kard.

*Fountain* summarises the tensions of the mid-2000s regarding the role of sculpture in the context of contemporary art: a naked artist is holding a typical example of a classic sculpture and is not willing to give it up, yet he does not know what to do with it either. (TT)







## The Song and Play Society of Female Artists Sheer Joy Anu Vahtra (1982)

Punk. Fem. CollectionN.  
2003–2004. Video, 21 min 57 sec  
Art Museum of Estonia

One of the biggest surprises of the eventful feminist art scene of the noughties was the song and play society of the female artists Sheer Joy, which consisted of the artists Piret Rääni (1974), Kristel Sibul (1971), Hello Upan (1977), Eve Kiiler (1960), Jane Suviste (1979) and Ivika Kivi (1973). Their mottos were “Laugh sorrow into the corner!”, “Joy for all, all for joy!” and “No to happychondria!”.

The group performed like a girl band and declared that they were motivated by an inner need to turn the world inside people’s heads from a valley of misery into a flower garden and amusement park. They also compared their activities to a revolution. Their orientation towards popular culture and entertainment pointedly set them apart from the mainstream contemporary art of the 2000s. Although the group expressed a number of original viewpoints, their existence was short-lived. (EK)

## Anna-Stina Treumund (1982–2017)

Girls on the Bridge  
2004. Photo  
Private collection

Vormsi / Nettles  
2006/2021. Photo  
Private collection

Net I  
2007/2021. Photo  
Private collection

Kiss  
2007/2021. Photo  
Private collection

Rehearsal for My Wedding  
2009. Photo  
Art Museum of Estonia

Anna-Stina Treumund was a queer-feminist artist educated at the Tartu Art College and the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her art made a significant contribution to increasing the visibility of queer women in Estonian art, as well as in society. In the 2000s, Treumund familiarised herself with the kind of photographic expression that suited her best and applied it to bring about a shift in gender approaches in Estonian visual culture. She studied the issue of gender roles with a very broad focus: she was interested both in the traditional culture-determined differences between the sexes and the reproduction and representations of new gender roles. Treumund’s black-and-white photos were inspired by role play: the artist was in dialogue with an imaginary Other, looking for potential personifications of new roles in herself. In these early photos, Treumund was still under the strong influence of the traditional representations of roles, which gradually gave way to the cultural constructing of differences and the dramatic re-personifications of characters. Anna-Stina Treumund’s art presents us with an authentic record of the self-evaluations and roles that have evolved in this subculture. (EK)





Marge Monko (1976)

Tableaux I  
Tableaux II  
Tableaux III  
Paris. Hospital of Salpêtrière II  
Charcot's Shower II  
From the series *Studies of the Bourgeoisie*  
2006. C-print  
Art Museum of Estonia

In broad terms, Marge Monko's art can be described as conceptual and research based. Monko entered the art scene in the 2000s and stood out with her focus on the history and social position of women.

The topic of the staged photo series *Studies of the Bourgeoisie* is hysteria and the way it was used in constructing the status and role of women in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. The series was created in Vienna and Paris, where the best-known researchers of hysteria, Sigmund Freud and Jean Martin Charcot, worked. The latter has been called the "inventor" of hysteria. The widely accepted notion was that hysteria in women was caused primarily by the conflict between their strictly defined (gender) roles and reality, and it was manifested through ferocious fits of hysteria that seized the entire body. The series consists of 25 photos divided into two groups: documentary photos taken at the Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna and in the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, and staged photos of the "choreography" of hysteria based on Charcot's schemes. (TT)



Marge Monko (1976)

I Don't Eat Flowers  
2009/2011. C-print, poster  
Tartu Art Museum

Marge Monko is a photography, video and installation artist. The central theme of her works is the representation of women in society, which she approaches by applying feminist, psychoanalytical and visual culture theories. Visual culture is also the point of departure for her self-portrait *I Don't Eat Flowers*. The work is based on J. Howard Miller's propaganda poster *We Can Do It!*, which spread in the USA during WWII (1942/1943), and called upon women to work in factories while men were at war. It was designated as a powerful manifestation of patriotism. When the war ended, men returned to the factories and women were once again forced by society to reassume the role of housewife. Monko's work gives a voice and a face to the marginalised woman, in this case in the form of an autobiographical poster. (TS)

Edith Karlson (1983)

Peeing Woman  
2007/2021. Clay  
Courtesy of the artist

Edith Karlson, Jass Kaselaan, Jevgeni Zolotko, Art Allmägi and Eike Eplik belong to the generation of sculptors and installation artists who entered the art scene at the end of the 2000s. Sometimes conditionally referred to as a school (of art), their works are often characterised by unconventional materials, figural depiction, humour and storytelling. *Peeing Woman*, one of Karlson's earlier and less known works, was created in 2007 as an assignment in a workshop held by Jüri Ojaver in the tunnel under the Viru Centre and serves as a comment on the smell of urine common in tunnels and the advantage men have in finding places to urinate in public places.

Due to its location, the work turned into a grotesque parody of the sculpture that had been installed right above the tunnel just a couple of years earlier: Mare Mikof's *Hämarik (Twilight)*, a citation of August Weizenberg's sculpture by the same title. The two sculptures: the idealised smooth female body of *Hämarik* and the roughly detailed figure squatting in the tunnel, are both essentially female nudes, yet they approach that genre from diametrically different perspectives. *Peeing Woman* is an example of the comeback of sculptural traditions dressed in new ideology, outlining a new generation's completely different approach to the body, and their altered understanding of the role of sculpture in general, and specifically in the public space, defined by the "monument wars" of the noughties. (TT)





Eléonore de Montesquiou (1970)

Woman  
2009. Video, 15 min 8 sec  
Art Museum of Estonia

The works of the Estonian-French artist and film maker Eléonore de Montesquiou focus on the transition society and its relationship with issues concerning nationality and history. The artist's short documentaries combine interviews with archival material, and observe the individual as part of a broader historical or social process.

*Woman* portrays a 51-year-old Russian woman living in Ida-Viru County. Her contemplation outlines the insecure position and hopelessness of people living on the border between ages and between countries. Archival frames of gymnasts in complex poses serve as a metaphor for the protagonist's dire situation, symbolising the craved-for carefree life. (TT)



Alice Kask (1976)

Squatting Man  
2003. Oil on canvas  
Art Museum of Estonia

Alice Kask is a painter whose figurative works show influences of abstract art. The human body research plays a significant role in her works, but the manner of depiction usually brings about shifts in the pictures. In the noughties, Kask redefined the discourse of painting and eased the post-1990s identity crisis of painting in Estonia. However, Kask is a painter whose art is not confined to one era. Sensitivity and the ability to create images are values associated with her works, which radiate the wish, even the necessity, to paint or draw.

*Squatting Man* is an exception among Alice Kask's works from that period because the person portrayed is depicted without deformations. Her paintings from the noughties typically depict figures that have been generalised almost to the abstract, with only some parts of the body slightly elaborated. Nevertheless, *Squatting Man* contains the unusual perspective characteristic of Kask's works, a sought-out and uncomfortable viewpoint, as well as the colouring and emptiness typical of her works from that period. (TS)





Jaan Toomik (1961)

Untitled (Man)  
2001. Video, 1 min 42 sec  
Art Museum of Estonia

Jaan Toomik, who earned recognition in the 1990s as a video artist, turned to film in the 2000s. At the beginning of the decade, he still managed to create a few significant video installations. One of the best known is undoubtedly *Untitled (Man)* from 2001. It is a major performance, with the actor Alar Sudak in the leading role. In this work, a man is chained to his genitals in a blood-curdling manner: the man is a prisoner of his penis and uses it in an unforeseen way. As in other works by Toomik, it is difficult to say what the meaning of his video confession is, especially since it was difficult in the hedonistic market-economy society of the 2000s to establish why the body was no longer used to increase the sense of well-being but was instead staged as an object of particularly brutal torture. The man is torn out of the usual EU-standardised hygienic context and transferred into the old peasant culture. An image has been constructed with multiple meanings, in which the man with the clamped penis goes round and round in circles like an ox, reminding one of Sisyphus doomed for eternity to roll a boulder up a hill. (EK)



Sandra Jõgeva (1976)

Guestbook of a Heart  
2005/2021. Digital print  
Art Museum of Estonia

One of the key aspects of the noughties was performance art, presented both in Estonia and abroad. Sandra Jõgeva created her first performance right at the beginning of the decade, while she was still studying at the Department of Interdisciplinary Arts founded by Jaan Toomik.

*Guestbook of a Heart* documents a performance that took place at the Living Art Museum in Reykjavik, during which the form of a blank guestbook waiting to be filled in was tattooed on the left breast of the artist. Jõgeva's point of departure is the idea that significant people and events leave a mark on a person's soul, the tattoo expressively manifesting that otherwise invisible personal experience on the artist's body. The work was created in cooperation with the choreographer Peter Anderson. (TT)



Neeme Külm (1974)

Man in a Box  
2004/2021. Video installation  
Courtesy of the artist

Neeme Külm studied sculpture at the Estonian Academy of Arts and graduated from the Department of Interdisciplinary Arts with an MA in 2003. Külm is mainly known for minimalist location-specific installations. He was one of the founders of the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, with Marco Laimre, Anders Härm and Elin Kard.

The video installation *Man in a Box* was made immediately after graduation, with an MA focused on performance art. The laconic title refers to the artist's wish to spare the work from being loaded with too much meaning, and to force the viewer to actively relate to it, and trust his or her personal viewing experience in that specific space. (TT)



Johnson and Johnson

You See ... Everyone Has a Theory about the Way Things Are in the World  
2010. Installation  
Tartu Art Museum

The art group Johnson and Johnson, founded in 2005, is comprised of the artists Indrek Köster (1970) and Taavi Talve (1970). Most of their short films, videos, spatial installations, sculptures, objects and context specific actions from the noughties deal with institution and media criticism.

*You see...Everyone Has a Theory about the Way Things Are in the World* is a soft sculpture-newspaper depicting the (Estonian financial newspaper) *Äripäev* issue of 6 June 2006. The euphoric articles discussing the unbelievable success story of Estonia and global economic growth, written without any critical viewpoints or hints of threats, seem now, against the backdrop of the soon to follow economic crisis, like a parody of themselves. (TT)



Marko Mäetamm (1965)

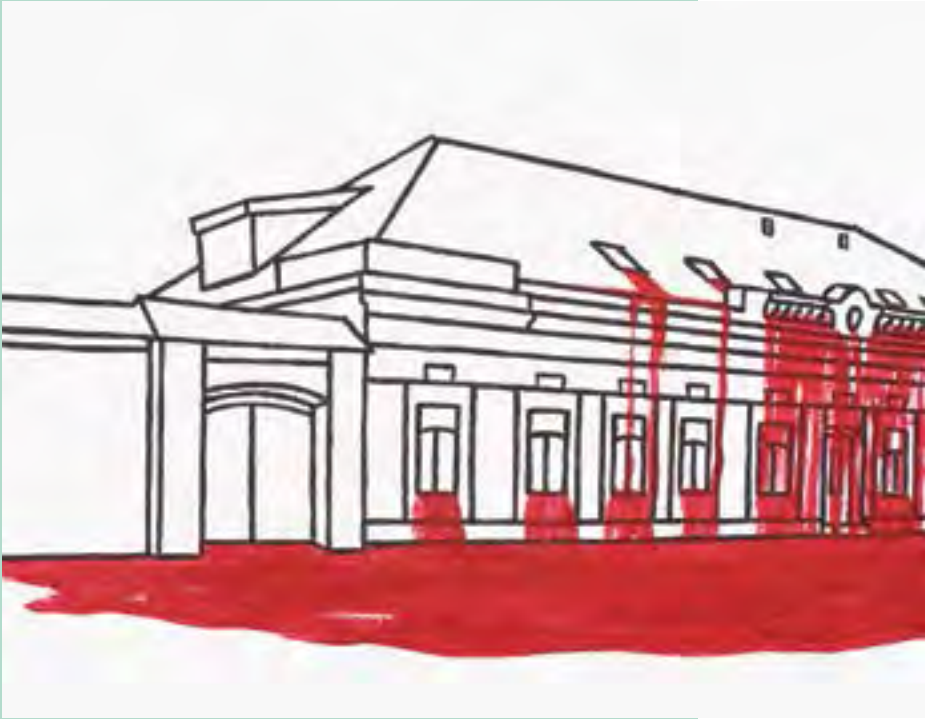
**Bloody House VI**  
Bloody House VII  
**Bloody House XI**  
2004–2005. Oil on canvas  
Art Museum of Estonia

Bloody House 00  
2004/2021. Acrylic  
Courtesy of the artist

Marko Mäetamm's works are characterised by seriality and narrativity. His art derives from the personal and the mundane, but he does not document everyday life. He uses a slight shift to turn everyday situations into grotesque ones. Mäetamm uses prosaic confinements to talk socio-critically about the contemporary world.

Narratives centring around an anxious man and his family emerged when Mäetamm experienced a change in his life: suddenly he had a family, small children and a 25-year home loan. Having to work to pay back the loan meant losing the freedom to create art when he pleased. The artist said that this caused distress: his artistic thoughts disappeared, overwhelmed by the dread that things would remain the same for the next quarter of a century.

Broadly speaking, the *Bloody Houses* series is about the split in Estonian society in the 2000s, haunted by the easy loans flowing out of banks that promised a brighter future. Many people took out bank loans to buy flats or houses that they could not really afford, creating a bubble that burst at the end of the decade with the economic crisis. (TS)





## Kaido Ole (1963)

Speed III  
2004. Oil on canvas  
Private collection

Kaido Ole started out as a painter in the early 1990s, having studied both design and painting in the 1980s. His activities in the noughties were characterised by a number of developments in his solo career, as well as by his cooperation with Marko Mäetamm under the collective pseudonym John Smith. He was also head of the Painting Department of the Estonian Academy of Arts in 2003–2010.

The series *Speed III*, which consists of seven paintings, depicts the artist cutting off the fingers of his right hand with tin snips, symbolising the destruction of the main tool of the painter. However, the format, imitating a video frame, allows for an alternative interpretation: it can be viewed as a comment on Estonian video art in the 1990s and 2000s, which mainly dealt with the body. It can be viewed as Ole’s interpretation of its affective imagery and involvement with the body from the point of view of his profession. (TT)



## Kiwa (1975)

Performing for You is the Band  
Motor Girls  
From the conceptual series  
*High on Nothing*  
2005. Sound installation  
Art Museum of Estonia

Kiwa, who entered the art scene in the 1990s, studied sculpture at the Estonian Academy of Arts, and philosophy at the University of Tartu. Language and identity games played an important role in his early works. The noughties added an interest in conceptual emptiness and sound art.

With this sound installation Kiwa questions his own semiotic system by using the generally accepted understanding of the immaterial nature of music. Many artists for centuries have been interested in the visualisation of music. Their actions have usually been triggered by the question: “What do we see when we hear music?”. Kiwa turns the verbalisation of music into an adventure, he encodes the fabric of music through the sign systems of other languages. (EK)



## Kiwa (1975)

Black Square Fade  
From the conceptual series  
*High on Nothing*  
2008. Installation  
Art Museum of Estonia

In his work *Black Square Fade* Kiwa deconstructs the symbolic code of Kazimir Malevich’s *Black Square*. Approaching the mysterious Black Square as a text, he reprocesses the information related to the work, interprets it through his own semiotic rhetoric and renders the famous image invisible. He makes exactly as many copies of the image with a copying machine as the ink left in the machine allows. The faded images on the last copies are unrecognisable. (EK)





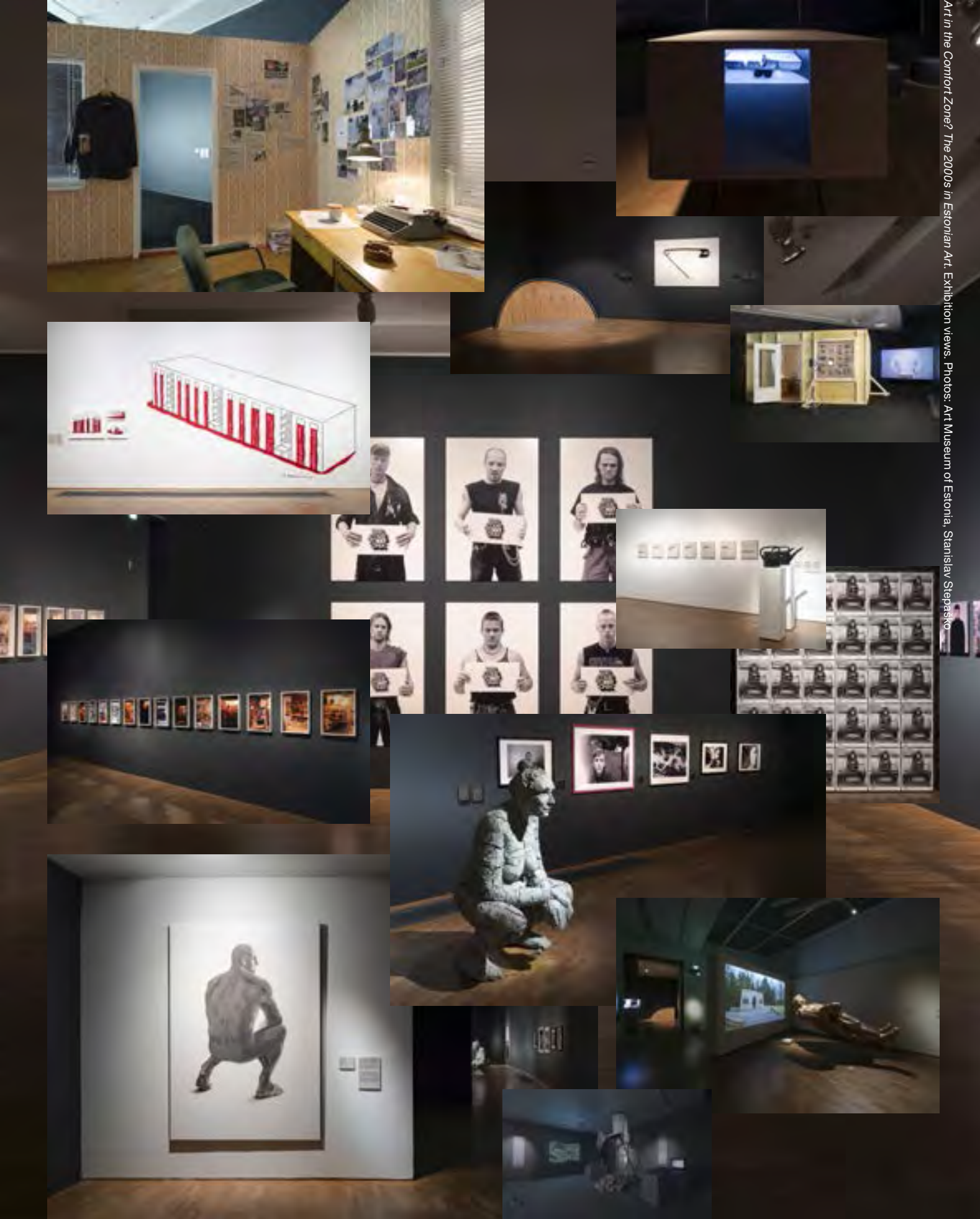
## Villu Jaanisoo (1963)

Chairs I-II  
2001. Sculpture  
Art Museum of Estonia

Villu Jaanisoo graduated as a sculptor from the Estonian Academy of Arts in 1989 and worked as the head of the Department of Sculpture in the 2000s. Jaanisoo is primarily known for large-scale, humorous and labour-intensive works that redefine the tradition of sculpture. He uses rubber, plywood, sound and other materials not traditionally used in sculpture.

*Chairs* is the first example of a large series of sculptures made of car tyres. Jaanisoo's works are often open to the viewer's intervention or participation. The gigantic size of the chair provides the viewer sitting on top of it with a new perspective on himself or herself and on the surrounding space in general.

In addition to *Chairs*, Kumu's third-floor permanent exhibition includes Jaanisoo's location-specific installation *Seagull* (2006), based on works in the sculpture collection of the Art Museum of Estonia. (TT)







## Art Walks: Drop-in guided tours in English

On the last Sunday  
of every month at 3pm;  
check the exact schedule  
at the museum's  
homepage.

Additional information:  
[kumu.ekm.ee](http://kumu.ekm.ee)

## ..... Guided tours of the exhibitions

We offer the opportunity to order  
guided tours of exhibitions in different  
languages.

## Entertainment tours

At Kumu, you can order a programme  
that can be customised to help make  
your event one to remember. Pick  
an exhibition that your group would like  
to visit and choose a workshop that  
inspires you.

## Art workshops

Book an art workshop for your group.  
Workshops run by professional artists  
provide an opportunity to develop your  
creativity. Prior in-depth art experience  
is not necessary.

## Information and booking (tours and workshops)

Mon–Fri 9am–5pm  
Tel. +372 5343 9230  
[kumu@ekm.ee](mailto:kumu@ekm.ee)  
[kumu.ekm.ee](http://kumu.ekm.ee)  
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