

EESTI KUNSTIMUUSEUM



Valve Janov

**From the Beginnings
to the Avant-Garde 1942–1965**

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**A collaborative exhibition *Valve Janov: From the Beginnings to the Avant-Garde 1942-1965*
organised by the Art Museum of Estonia and the Pallas Art Society**



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On the front cover: Valve Janov (1921–2003). Lüüdi on Haapsalu Beach. 1957
Oil on paperboard. Enn Lillemets's collection

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THE KARLOVA AVANT-GARDE: THE CASE OF VALVE JANOV

Valve Janov's early work – especially after 1957 – was remarkably varied in terms of themes and motifs, as well as in the techniques employed and her use of colour. She painted still lifes and flowers in the manner of Dutch Old Masters, landscapes and townscapes, but also abstract colour compositions and surrealist fish and moon motifs. Her fantastic flower compositions and metaphysical (moon) landscapes, which came to full fruition some time later, evaded Soviet censorship somewhat more easily than other works and were sometimes even admitted to exhibitions.

The display in this exhibition represents a selection of her work, created, for the most part, in 1942–1965, emphasising Janov's contribution to the artistic vanguard of the day as a member of the 1960 Group. This first non-conformist art group in Soviet Estonia emerged in Tartu after 1956. The members of the group remained loyal to the Pallas School, with its focus on the delicate use of colour, and enriched Estonian art with elements of abstractionism and surrealism, thus synthesising memories of independent Estonia with flashes of the art scene in the free world on the other side of the Iron Curtain, despite the prevailing doctrine of Socialist Realism.

The eye that sees and creates

The three main formative influences on Janov's development as an artist were all from the Pallas Art School: her teacher Ado Vabbe (1892–1961), a well-travelled and knowledgeable artist who provided his students with a thorough foundation in painting from life, Janov's older colleague Endel Kõks (1912–1983), admired for his refined style and independent artistic mind, and Janov's fellow student and friend Ülo Sooster (1924–1970), with his avant-gardist joy of play and experimentation. Vabbe, who at different times taught Kõks, as well as Janov and Sooster, was also a connecting link between the three.



Self-Portrait
1944. Watercolour on paper
Tartu Art Museum



Night
1964. Mixed media and collage on cardboard
Enn Lillemets's collection

Janov's intuition in keeping up with changes in the language of art, despite the restrictions imposed by the closed society, and her skill in employing a variety of techniques are truly impressive. The world she secretly created is surprisingly rich, delicate and joyful, but one can also sense a certain metaphysical anxiety seeping through. Her moon affects tides and her fish grow. Erotic undercurrents emerge from surreal labyrinths (e.g. *Still Life: Going Forward*, mixed media and collage, 1961; *Lüüdi on Haapsalu Beach*, oil, 1957).

And it all begins with the power of colour: from Fauvist abstraction to the evocations of Abstract Expressionism. It is the colours in their shades and nuances that first catch our attention, and in a way motivate the existence of forms and images, turning them into signs and symbols. All sorts of techniques have been put in the service of colour: gluing, flowing, spraying, dripping, scraping, rubbing, printing, plastering and pasting, and even using a hair to trace patterns, and spreading pearl barley.

While "official" art was trapped in verbal clichés and narrative, a dominant motif in Janov's work was the eye: the eye that can see, represent, create, explain, and wake up other senses, sensations and perceptions. Janov was skilled at creating colour harmonies in the manner of Paul Klee (e.g. *Composition in Blue*, watercolour, pastel and collage, 1958; *Through Blue*, tempera on paste, 1959; *Moon and Karlova*, pastel, 1962). These harmonies progress in exciting ways and multiply in collages and monotypes, or emerge from surreal representations (e.g. *Under the Net*, mixed media and collage, 1959;



Lüüdi on Haapsalu Beach
1957. Oil on paperboard
Enn Lillemets's collection



Still Life: Going Forward
1961. Mixed media and collage on paperboard
Margus Punab's collection



Fish: Going Forward
1961. Oil and oil pastel on cardboard
Tartu Art Museum

Fish: Going Forward, oil and oil pastel, 1961; *Black Mess*, collage, oil, pastel and graphite, 1960).

As Janov herself described her work: "I did what was in my blood and as much as I could. I did not worry or feel hurt at all. There was simply no way these works could be displayed in public. I never even thought about it. I knowingly did them for myself, to be shut away in a drawer. Even in the 1960s there was nothing else I could do with these small pictures." It was not until 1965 that abstract art was first admitted to exhibitions in Soviet Estonia, in the wake of the Khrushchev thaw.



Black Mess
1960. Collage, oil, pastel and graphite on paper
Art Museum of Estonia

Contours - posters or paintings?

A unique painting practice in Estonian art is represented by Janov's work featuring contours: linear shapes born out of concreteness but creating abstractions (e.g. *Jug and the Moon*, oil, 1950; *Lüüdi on Haapsalu Beach*, *Marked Trees*, *Crayfish and Fish*, all oil, all 1957). Some of the paintings of the period were destroyed by the artist, with details used in other works as parts of collages (e.g. *Through a Window*, oil, tempera and collage, 1959/1960). In some cases, a contour took on a life of its own, and become part of a new network, along the lines of Art Informel (e.g. *Experimenting with Red*, mixed media and collage, 1961; *Winter Fish*, mixed media, 1963).

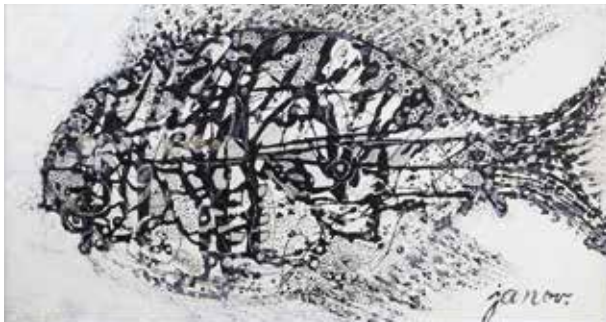
These "contour paintings", too, are rooted in colour. Janov's elegant aesthetic was backed by a good deal of wit. In these pictures, space does not cease to exist but is created through different means, such as the relationship between cold and warm shades and play with surfaces. The style was inspired first and foremost by French art, from Matisse to Dufy, and represented an approach quite different from the "rough style" that emerged under the influence of the GDR magazine *Bildende Kunst*. The latter was, in a way, a version of poster art, and provided an opportunity for artists to



Small Arabesque on Red
1958. Watercolour on paper
Private collection

bring about a change by pushing the boundaries of Socialist Realism. It was even included in official exhibitions, whereas Janov's works would have been immediately excluded as "formalist" and "primitive":

These experiments bear a fascinating resemblance to the poetic portraits and stylised landscapes by Aleksander Suuman (1927–2003), who began his studies at the Tartu State Art Institute slightly before Janov was forced to break off hers.



Winter Fish
1963. Mixed media on cardboard
Enn Lillemets's collection



Through a Window
1959/1960. Oil and collage on paper
Tartu Art Museum

Karlova: the Spirit of Place

Valve Janov lived in the Karlova neighbourhood in Tartu for over 60 years, from the war years, when she was still a student at the Pallas Art School, until her death in 2003. Her home at the corner of Salme and Tolstoy Streets was an important meeting place for several generations of artists over the decades: from Hans Mets, Herman Aunapuu, Varmo Pirk and Olev Mikiver to Indrek Hirv, Külli Muna, Margus Meinart and Andres Rõhu.

Endel Kõks, himself a graduate of Pallas and one of the idols of the art students of the time, lived close by. Younger artists used to go to his house to explore pictures and art books even after Kõks himself fled to the West in 1944.

For the members of the 1960 Group, Janov's home was particularly significant. Kaja Kärner actually lived in Janov's flat for several years in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and she, in turn, shared it with Heldur Viires. Later they moved next door. Silvia Jõgever also lived nearby. After Ülo Sooster was released from a labour



Fish Above Karlova
1960. Collage and oil on paper
Art Museum of Estonia

camp and moved to Moscow in 1957, he used to visit his former fellow students and friends in Karlova, to “stir them up” and inspire them with new creative ideas.

“The tentacles of the decadent Western art” reached from Tartu not only to Tallinn and Moscow, but also to Haapsalu on the west coast of Estonia. This can be seen in the frequent visits of Janov, Jõgever and Lүүdia Vallimäe-Mark to Haapsalu during this period, and in their letters, as well as in the artworks of their friend and fellow student Helju Sarnet Zauram (1922–2017), who worked there as an art teacher. A few extracts from these letters will suffice to give us the colours and shades of the time, and shed some light on the Soviet art scene.

Janov wrote from Tartu to Sarnet Zauram in Haapsalu on 12 December 1959:

“As far as paintings go, I have recently done next to nothing, but I have worked on quite a few small pieces in all manner of techniques: Indian ink, candle wax, gouache, watercolour etc. I do at least one every evening, and sometimes as many as five or six. I do not feel up to anything more substantial yet.// According to my friends, the thematic exhibition [an official Soviet art display] was a load of muck from one end to the other.”

From Haapsalu to Moscow: the Spirit of Cosmopolitanism

Janov in Moscow to Sarnet Zauram in Haapsalu on 3 November 1960: “First of all, I spent the whole month of September in Moscow. Bear [Valve Janov’s husband Leonid Janov] was there on business, and the costs were covered, so our stay was not that expensive. The plan was for me to stay for two weeks and then return home, but we had such a nice time in Moscow and there was so much to see that I ended up staying for a whole month.

I saw many lovely paintings and spent a lot of time with Ülo. His pictures are divine. I must say that the way Ülo advocated a certain type of art has had a huge impact on me, and so, since I returned from Moscow, I have been



Moon and Karlova
1962. Pastel on paperboard
Enn Lillemets's collection



Three-Dimensional Segments
1959. Mixed media and pastel on paper
Private collection

working on my art from morning until the middle of the night, and I am not exaggerating. And so far it is just my pieces and nothing else. // Today it is exactly a week since I last went to town. I do not even bother to dress in the mornings: I just throw a robe over my nightgown and start working at once. In short, I do not waste time on anything else. We'll see what comes out of all this. // The exhibition that Silvi organised in her school was a true delight, and it was the most beautiful exhibition I have ever seen. // But some people could not stand it and reported us, and it was not just a complaint but they actually wanted to ruin our lives. It was such a drama that it cannot be described in just a few words. The whole thing was blown way out of proportion but those who informed on us did not manage to carry it off as wickedly as they had planned. // And really, human wickedness knows no limits. Indeed, this scandal made quite a few things very clear. For the record, this had nothing to do with abstractionism, as it was rumoured in Tallinn. It was a lucky chance that your work was not on display. I know for sure that Silvi had planned to have it there but something must have stopped her."



Composition for an Old Frame
1962. Collage on paper
Tartu Art Museum

Janov in Moscow to Sarnet Zauram in Haapsalu on 1 November 1961: "[---] I am still hunting for art books, but have found just two so far: about Oskar Kokoschka and Henry Moore (an English sculptor), who creates very beautiful sculptures. // I have not been to the theatre since I last wrote, but we have tickets for a Russian ice ballet during the holidays.

I have seen the all-Soviet art exhibition (an awful experience indeed): in an exhibition that big, there were only two good pieces, by Lithuanians, and nothing more. The works from Belarus and Ukraine were the worst of all. Estonia's display was very small, Latvia's was twice the size, and Lithuania also had more works on display. From Estonia, there were mainly men from Tallinn: Pihelga, Alas, Mildeberg, Linnat, Einmann and so on. It was a sad and dull affair. I have been to each and every museum in Moscow, including the museum of zoology, where I saw many fish and a lot of molluscs from various seas with their shells, which looked like true artworks, and many other things. Now Ülo and Heldur have arranged for me to have access to the library, and I spend whole days there. The last book I saw was all about Miró and there was another large book full of coloured pictures by Paul Klee: just awesome!// Today Bear and I are going again: we have ordered several books. I have a French art magazine, L'ŒIL, all of the 1960 issues, filled with French and Italian contemporary art.// I suppose now you want to know why Heldur is in Moscow. He is here because Ülo has loads to do at the moment – he is doing illustrations for several books at once – so Heldur came to help him and will probably stay until the end of the year. They are both very busy now and do not have much time for me, as they need to do a whole book within a week. But after that things will calm down a bit for them again, I hope.[---] I have also done a few small pieces because when you see all these

awesome books, your mind starts galloping like mad, and your hand itches to start work on something. I can see many new buildings and construction sites from my window on the third floor, with many charming tower cranes which just ask to be depicted. So I have pictures with cranes again. This is turning out to be a really long letter. You must be exhausted by now."

The circle that came to be known as the 1960 Group formed in Tartu after the men in the group had been released from soviet prison camps – gulags. The only public display of the works of the Group members took place in 1960 at the Tartu 8th Secondary School, where Silvia Jõgever worked as an art teacher. This informal and uncensored exhibition was followed by a scathing attack on the Group in newspapers and in the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR.

Janov's *Jug and the Moon* (oil) and *Fish Grow* (gouache, both 1950) are quite astonishing in the context of Estonian art history. These small pieces, created in secret during the most oppressive period of Stalin's reign, are like early glimpses of the full-blown fantasies in her later work. They carry the same message as the prediction expressed at the end of Ülo Sooster's letter to Lүүdia Vallimäe-Mark on 21 October 1955, a couple of months before his release from the gulag:

"Any serious work can of course be undertaken only in freedom, which is why I crave freedom in the same way as a starving dog craves a bone. All signs indicate that I will soon be on my way to Tartu to gnaw at that bone. I believe this will be a wonderful feeling, although I would not wish what I have lived through on anyone, not even my worst enemy. // I look forward to your reply, in which I hope to find all sorts of news about your life and art. Judging from the newspapers, there seems to be a bit of a fresh wind blowing: is that really so or is everything just going along the same as before? Abstract painting is, of course, still light years away, but there will be no escape from it. I for one feel a very strong attraction. // Greetings to all my friends, girls and boys."

The Karlova art colony, which thrived for over 60 years, has ceased to exist. The lilac bushes around Valve Janov's house, which once bloomed in a variety of colours, have been uprooted, while the juniper tree brought from Ülo Sooster's home village of Ühtri on the island of Hiiumaa stands proudly, towering over the two-storey house next door.

The reputation of the "Karlova avant-garde" has stood the test of time even better than the juniper in Janov's back garden, growing into a rich and exciting part of Estonian art history.



Ball Game
1963. Collage, watercolour and
graphite on paper
Private collection



Impressions of Samarkand
1964. Tempera on canvas
Private collection

VALVE JANOV'S RECOLLECTIONS OF HER STUDIES

At Pallas, [Aleksander] Vardi was our teacher in the foundation class. With him, we did only still lifes in charcoal. Our classroom was on the first floor. [Alfred] Kongo always walked across the room on his way to his atelier next door. My place was beside the door. When Kongo was in a good mood, he used to pick me up in his arms, walk with me to his door and put me down there. La Bayadère [Magda Beck, a well-known model at Pallas] did not like him for some reason.



*Valve Moss as an art student in Tartu
Photo: courtesy of the artist's family*

Next came the nude drawing class, where we did nudes in charcoal. It was taught by [Kaarel] Liimand, as far as I remember. When the Russians came in 1940, the new authorities tried to turn everything upside down but, for all that, things remained as they were.

I knew [Ado] Vabbe long before I was admitted to his atelier. He had something of a crush on me: he got all nervous around me and often approached me for a chat during breaks. I felt very embarrassed as everyone knew about it. I believe it was then that Kaja [Kärner] once said: "All of us have our own Vabbes."

I vividly remember [Villem] Ormisson's funeral. It was held in the main exhibition hall on the first floor. His coffin was surrounded by chrysanthemums. I was one of the students in the guard of honour at the coffin.



*Ado Vabbe teaching at the Pallas Art School during the
Second World War. Photographer: Karl Hintzer
Photo: private collection*

Vabbe was very kind to me. By 1942, if I remember correctly, I was training in his atelier. He taught portraiture, and everyone was keen to join his class. We painted not only portraits but everything there. I, for one, was not at all good at portraits. But as I had already been taught by Vabbe, I did not think about choosing any other option, like joining Vardi's atelier. I do not know if it was Vabbe's reputation as a good teacher, or what, but I never thought of going elsewhere.

Lüüdi [Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark] says that some of my portraits did not look at all like the models. Yet Vabbe never criticised them. I am not good at capturing likenesses, which is why I have enjoyed doing abstract art. Vabbe may have thought: all right, let her do as she likes, and perhaps something will come out of this. Vabbe let us choose what we wanted to do: a head,

or a half-length portrait, or a full-length portrait. I went for a full-length portrait, set against the backdrop of a bluish curtain with small flowers. I worked very hard, eager to capture all of the fine details in the pattern. Even students from other ateliers came to look, interested in what I was doing. [Johannes] Vöerahansu wanted me to get rid of this habit: to stop fussing with details and focus on larger surfaces. Vilma Tugi learned from him to do very nice large surfaces. But that was how far it got.



*Christmas party at the Pallas Art School. 1941
From the left: Varmo Pirk, Valve Moss, Johannes Saal,
Lembit Rull and Voldemar Väli; at the right, Magda
Beek (La Bayadere). Photo: private collection*

Looking back at it now, I see how good it was that Vabbe let me do what I wanted. At the time, I did not understand it.

So with my work, Vabbe did not intervene much, but he did fall out with some other students, such as Herman Aunapuu. He was awfully talented, but there was something about his work that Vabbe did not like.

Years later, when we were all scattered about, and I worked at a laboratory, I saw Vabbe quite often. He was always most gallant when Paul [Ado Vabbe's son Paul Vabbe] was at home but when Paul was not there, it was better to find an excuse to leave. Sometimes we talked about art at the Cafe Werner.

This painting with a fat woman comes from this time. Vabbe showed me his paintings and let me choose what I liked. I picked four. Two of them are in museum collections now.

Vabbe advised us to look at our pictures. "Put it aside if you feel it is not turning out the way you want, but take it out again after a while. Look at your pictures and compare them all the time," he said. But no matter what teachers say, it is only once you are an artist yourself and deeply involved in it all that you start to understand things.

For the most part Vabbe liked to keep his distance and did not reveal whether he had any favourites among his students. I believe he thought quite highly of Ülo [Sooster].

[---]

As for the other teachers, Vöerahansu was on friendly terms with us, especially with the boys. He sometimes had a drink with us during the war years. So did Vardi.

I remember one occasion in the yard of the Pallas building. That was where the sculpture studios were and the Pallas Art Society had rooms there downstairs. [Karl] Pärsimägi once painted those rooms – the painting with the mirror – and so did Ilse [Leetjärv].

We were all there: [Varmo] Pirk, Kudi Tuul [August Tuul] and Toomas [Lembit Toom]. La Bayadère lived in the Pallas building. My sister Laine was there that day. Kaja was certainly there, perhaps even Ülo Kärner, who was recruited by the German army. Vardi was there. I can still see him now: he got terribly drunk. [Richard] Kaljo was there. I did not like him at all: he was always trying to put his hand on your knee. Hans Mets was one who would never miss a party, the more so as fears were growing that the Russian army would return. He was in the German army, stationed at a food store in Tartu. He wrote us a letter urging us to leave and on no account stay here when the Russians came.

In 1943, many men were already gone and there was not much going on any more.

On 20–21 January 1996 in Tartu, written down by Enn Lillemets.



*Valve Moss (right) with her sister Laine during the Second World War
Photo: courtesy of the artist's family*



*Valve Janov. 1960 (?)
Photo: courtesy of the artist's family*

VALVE JANOV (née MOSS)

Born on **31 January 1921** in Tartu

1938–1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944–1948 continued her studies at the Tartu State Art Institute (which replaced Pallas in 1944) but was not allowed to graduate

During her studies at Pallas she formed close friendships with her fellow students Herman Aunapuu, Varmo Pirk, Kaja Otsason (Kärner), Silvia Jöks (Jõgever), Helju-Laine Sarnet (Orlov, Zauram), Helga Imelik (Jõerüüt), Lembit Saarts, Lüüdia Mark (Vallimäe-Mark), Ülo Sooster, Valdur Ohakas, Henn Roode, Heldur Viires and Esther Raudsepp (Potisepp, Roode).

Her main teachers were renowned Estonian artists who had trained in the great art centres of Europe: Ado Vabbe (1892–1961), who was one of the founders of the Pallas school, Aleksander Vardi (1901–1983), Johannes Võerahansu (1900–1980) and Elmar Kits (1913–1972), a younger Pallas graduate.

1948–1956 worked as an accountant at a laboratory in Tartu

1956–1972 worked as a laboratory assistant at a veterinary laboratory

1959 displayed her work at the Tartu annual art exhibition for the first time

1960 participated in the only public exhibition of the 1960 Group in the Tartu 8th Secondary School

1969 became a member of the Artists Union of the Estonian SSR

1971 Janov's and Kaja Kärner's joint exhibition was held at the Tartu Art Museum (the first personal exposition for both artists), with an accompanying catalogue

1988 played an active role in re-establishing the Pallas Art Society (the Tartu Art Association until 1999)

1992 Janov's solo exhibition was held at the Tartu Artists' House, the largest display of her work so far

1992–2003 was a member of the board of the Pallas Art Society

1993 and **1994** participated in the high-profile exhibition "Collage as an Alternative. The 1960s" at the Art Museum of Estonia and the Tartu Art Museum, displaying her early avant-garde work for the first time in Tallinn

2001 was awarded the state decoration Order of the White Star (Fourth Class)

2001 received the Ado Vabbe Prize

Died on **18 September 2003** in Tartu



The Dutch photographer Wim Lamboo has photographed artists in Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall. As part of this project, he has also photographed numerous Estonian artists, starting in 1997. These images have been staged by the artists themselves, captured with a meaningful object or in a place of significance for them.

Valve Janov in her studio. 1997. Photographer: Wim Lamboo. Photo: Art Museum of Estonia

The 1960 Group was the first of the non-conformist art groups in Soviet Estonia. The group made a significant contribution to Estonian artists' opposition to the totalitarian system, rejecting the doctrine of Socialist Realism and advocating aesthetic values in art. The work of the members of the group boldly changed the modes of artistic expression in Estonian art, laying the groundwork for the emergence of the ANK '64 group in Tallinn.

The group emerged in the second half of the 1950s and included Valve Janov, Silvia Jõgever, Kaja Kärner, Lembit Saarts, Ülo Sooster, Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark and Heldur Viires: fellow former students of Pallas and the Tartu State Art Institute, several of whom had only recently been released from prison camps (gulags) or had fallen victim to Stalinist repression in Estonia. Valve Janov's home in the Karlova neighbourhood in Tartu became the main hub where they gathered regularly to discuss modern ways of artistic expression and a broader perspective on art, to share literature and exchange information on the international art scene.

Their meetings were characterised by long and inspiring discussions, which often went on until morning. These conversations created a powerful synergy of ideas that the artists, in the privacy of their homes, transformed into world-class artworks, which, however, could not be exhibited publicly until decades later.

At Sooster's suggestion, an unofficial and uncensored exhibition was held in 1960 at the Tartu 8th Secondary School, where Silvia Jõgever worked as an art teacher, featuring the newest work by all members of the group. The exhibition ended in scandal and sanctions from the authorities. The artists feared new arrests on accusations of forming an anti-Soviet group, as in 1949 and 1950 a group of students of the Tartu State Art Institute, including Lembit Saarts, Ülo Sooster and Heldur Viires, had been arrested and sentenced to imprisonment on similar charges.

The Art Museum of Estonia and the Tartu Art Museum have added several modernist collages and mixed media artworks of Janov's early period to their collections over the past decades. The bulk of her work, however, is in private collections. In independent Estonia, Valve Janov's work has been rediscovered and displayed at several exhibitions in Tartu. On the initiative of the Pallas Art Society, exhibitions have been held at the Tartu Art House, KÜÜ Gallery, Sebra Gallery and Tartu Art Museum. In Tallinn, this is the largest display of her work so far.

Her works feature in the collections of the Art Museum of Estonia, the Tartu Art Museum, the Haapsalu and Läänemaa Museums, the Estonian Artists' Association and the Zimmerli Art Museum of Rutgers University in the USA (the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Soviet Nonconformist Art) and in dozens of private collections in Estonia, Germany, Norway, Finland, Russia and Australia.



*Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark's birthday party in her studio in Tartu. 1975. From the left: Helga Jõerüüt, Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark, Lembit Saarts and Valve Janov
Photo: private collection*

VALVE JANOV'S FELLOW STUDENTS

Herman Aunapuu

Born on **12 March 1915** in Kokand, in present-day Uzbekistan

1933-1943 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944-1945 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute; did not graduate

His main teachers were Ado Vabbe, Jaan Vahtra, Villem Ormisson and Voldemar Mellik.

1945 was arrested in Tartu on fabricated charges

1945-1953 served a sentence in prison camps (gulags) in the Komi region and Arkhangelsk Oblast

Worked as an artist and decorator for several organisations in the retail and restaurant industries

Died on **29 December 1998** in Tartu

2003 his memorial exhibition was held at the Tartu City Museum, which was also his first solo exhibition

Silvia Jõgever (née Jõks)

Born on **4 November 1924** in the village of Vasula, near Tartu

1942-1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944-1948 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute

1949-1950 worked as an art teacher in Jõgeva

1951-1952 studied at the Tartu branch of the State Art Institute of the Estonian SSR

Her main teachers were Johannes Võerahansu and Elmar Kits.

1957-1961 worked as an art teacher at the Tartu 8th Secondary School

1962 her first solo exhibition was held at the Tartu Literature House

1962-1979 taught at the Tartu Art School for Children

1977 became a member of the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR

2000 became a member of the Pallas Art Society

2001 was awarded the state decoration Order of the White Star (Fifth Class)

Died on **11 January 2005** in Tartu

Kaja Kärner (née **Otsason**)

Born on **3 August 1920** in Tartu

1937–1939 studied at the State School of Arts and Crafts in Tallinn

1940–1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944–1948 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute

Her main teacher was Ado Vabbe.

1948 became a member of the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR

1948–1950 worked as a drawing teacher at the Tartu State Art Institute

1950 was expelled from the Artists' Association

1951–1959 worked for the Tartu Retail Trade Organisation, designing signs and labels for shops

1971 Kärner's and Valve Janov's joint exhibition was held at the Tartu Art Museum (the first personal exposition for both artists)

1984 was re-admitted to the Artists' Association

1989 became a member of the Tartu Art Association

1988–1998 taught at the Tartu Art Association's Studio (Konrad Mägi Studio)

Died on **1 July 1998** in Tartu

Varmo Pirk (born **Valentin Birk**)

Born on **12 October 1913** in the Smolensk Governorate (Russia)

1937–1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944–1945 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute; did not graduate

His main teachers were Aleksander Vardi, Kaarel Liimand and Villem Ormisson.

1945 was arrested in Tartu on fabricated charges

1945–1954 served a sentence in gulags in Arkhangelsk Oblast

1959 became a member of the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR

1963 Pirk's and Leo Leola's joint exhibition was held at the café of the University of Tartu (Pirk's first personal exposition)

Died on **27 February 1980** in Tallinn



Lüüdía Vallimäe-Mark, Valve Janov and Varmo Pirk in Otepää. 1958. Photo: courtesy of the artist's family

Lembit Saarts

Born on **28 September 1924** in the village of Rebase, near Tartu

1942–1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944–1948 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute; did not graduate

His main teachers were Johannes Võerahansu and Aleksander Vardi.

1949 was arrested on fabricated charges

1950–1956 served a sentence in a gulag in Karaganda Oblast, Kazakhstan

1959 became a member of the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR

1966–1984 worked as an artist at the Tartu Experimental Engineering Plant

1971 his first solo exhibition was held at the Tallinn Art Gallery

2003 was awarded the Ado Vabbe Prize

2004 was awarded the Konrad Mägi Prize

2009 was appointed an honorary member of the Pallas Art Society

Died on **16 March 2016** in Tartu



Valve Janov, Lembit Saarts and Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark at Otepää hill fort. 1958. Photo: private collection

Ülo Sooster (Ülo Ilmar Sooster)

Born on **17 October 1924** in the village of Ühtri on the island of Hiiumaa

1943–1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944–1949 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute

His main teachers were Ado Vabbe, Elmar Kits and Aleksander Vardi.

1949 was arrested on fabricated charges

1950–1956 served a sentence in a gulag in Karaganda Oblast, Kazakhstan

1957 moved to Moscow with his wife Lidia

1959–1970 worked as an artist and illustrator in Moscow (for the publishing house *Znaniye*, and the popular-science magazine *Znaniye – Sila*), and was involved in the production of several Soyuzmultfilm's animated films

Died **25 October 1970** in Moscow

1971 his memorial exhibition was held at the Tartu Art Museum, which was also his first solo exhibition

As a member of the 1960 Group, Ülo Sooster was a source of encouragement and inspiration for his friends. He visited his former fellow students in Tartu on several occasions. During these gatherings in the artists' homes in the Karlova neighbourhood they talked about the Moscow art scene, and the new avant-garde modes of expression. These discussions inspired new modernist pieces by the members of the group and motivated them to search for individual technical tools to bring their ideas to life. Heldur Viires and Valve Janov spent a lot of time at Sooster's studio in Moscow, where they were able to visit a few exhibitions of US and European artists and read about the newest trends in international art in books and magazines available in Moscow's libraries.

Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark (née Mark)

Born on **10 January 1925** in Tartu

1943–1944 studied at the Higher Art School Pallas

1944–1949 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute

Her main teachers were Elmar Kits and Ado Vabbe.

1949–1950 worked at the University of Tartu as a laboratory assistant

1953–1973 worked as an artist and book illustrator (illustrated several books of Estonian fairy tales, etc.)

1957 became a member of the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR

1975 her first solo exhibition was held at the Tartu Art Museum

1992 became a member of the Tartu Art Association

Died on **15 October 2004** in Tartu

Heldur Viires (Heldur-Jaan Viires, born Heldur-Jaan Veerbaum)

Born on **23 June 1927** in Tallinn

1945–1949 studied at the Tartu State Art Institute

His main teachers were Albert Kesner, Elmar Kits and Johannes Saal.

1949–1950 studied at the Ilya Repin Institute in Leningrad (St Petersburg) on a scholarship

1950 was arrested in Tartu on fabricated charges

1950–1956 served a sentence in a gulag in Vorkuta, Komi region

1956–1959 studied at the State Art Institute of Estonia in Tallinn

From 1960 worked as a book illustrator (illustrated several science books: *Estonian Pomology*, *Field Guide for Butterfly Identification*, *Estonian Rare Plants*, etc.)

1964 became a member of the Artists' Association of the Estonian SSR

1971 his first solo exhibition was held in Gothenburg (Sweden)

1989 became a member of the Tartu Art Association

1989–2016 taught at the Tartu Art Association's Studio (Konrad Mägi Studio, Pallas Art Society Studio); from 1993 was also the head of the studio

2001 was awarded the state decoration Order of the White Star (Fifth Class)

2007 was awarded the Anton Starkopf Award

2009 was named an honorary member of the Pallas Art Society

2019 was awarded the title of Honorary Citizen of Tartu

Died on **23 June 2021** in Lõhavere near Viljandi



On a Haapsalu beach. Seated, from the left: Leonid Janov, Lüüdia Vallimäe-Mark and Valve Janov; standing: Varmo Pirk and Kristjan Zauram. 1958 (?)

Photo: private collection

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Additional information

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