

Hanna-Laura

The upper floor of a Väike-Õismäe panel building. A living room flooded by the warm glow of the afternoon. Against the wall, a writing desk made of light wood and held by grey metal legs. Its desktop supports an elbow and a piece of white paper upon which a hand drawn dot is taking shape. The moment the pencil comes into contact with the paper is like a splash on the surface of the water, triggering ripples. The drawing expands, in time, into a digital image, which in turn solidifies into a sculpture and finally blends into the landscape.

This building, the home of the artist, stands side by side with identical ones. The rows of houses are separated from each other by asphalt roads and mowed sidewalk shoulders. Circles of concrete grow outwards from the pond at the centre of Väike-Õismäe, forming a circular city. Here, in the green heart framed by the watchful facades of the buildings, one can hear the sound of children at play. Like sprouts they extend themselves between the kindergarten and schoolyard.

At the edge of an open window, a tender gaze looks downward onto the courtyard. From here a view onto the interplay of a gentle organic quality and a heavy framing reveals itself. "Does the frame support and hold or limit and shackle?" I ask the observant artist. By way of reply, she motions to the piece of paper on the desk. "This is the first delimited area and its orientation affects how the image will begin to grow within it." Indeed, gradually the vegetation proliferating outward from the centre of the city throws itself upon the buildings' concrete walls. Children who used to roam in sandboxes now watch their own children ponder on the sidewalks. And those who ventured onward sometimes return in circular dreams.

Artist:

Rajmööli

Text:

Kaljo

Hanna Larva

The alluring smoke of burning incense swirls gracefully toward the ceiling. "India," discloses the artist. Entranced by the fragrance, body ensconced in the soft couch, my gaze slides onto the windowsill. Delicate, curved glass vases, thin layers of human skin, faint, barely visible entries on the pages of open notebooks. I hear a voice speaking but the shapes and sounds of the words diffuse as they merge with the smoke.

Clink! The fluffy tale of a cat flashes between the vases, her bright coat blazing with the white studio as its backdrop. She jumps off the windowsill, brushes against the legs of the table, rubs the shins of those seated on the floor, and makes her way toward the door to exit. As if hypnotized, I feel myself rise and follow, curiously. Stepping over the threshold into the cold and damp corridor, I catch a glimpse of the cat's tail before it disappears into the stairwell. I pick up my pace.

Outside, the night is falling. Puddles on riddled sidewalks, blurry reflections of streetlights on their surface. In wonderment, I watch the cat's fur glow in the dark as she leads ahead of me. From time to time she turns to look back, her eyes like fireflies. The tarmac road turns into cobblestones, we are passing through deserted back streets. The facades of the houses, haloed by the setting sun, seem unfamiliar. Coming to the edge of the city a well-trodden path takes us across the field. The smell of mud and grass, stalks raking legs. Twilight.

As the woodland thickens, I have to use my hands to push past the tree trunks. Hair entangled with the branches. I slip on mossy stones, sweat beading on my forehead. All of a sudden, a clearing in the forest and a poison-green lake ahead. In awe, I look at the cat who has also come to a halt at a distance. She appears to be standing on the surface of the water, eyes like tiny lights turned toward me. Truly, it seems she is held by the lake without sinking!

The ground beneath my feet softens. To my horror, I notice I am up to my hips in the bog. Then, words which previously had gone unnoticed due to the incense haze, reappear: „...obscured by will-o'-the-wisp, solely fake amber.”

Artist:

Text:

Kaljo

Anna Larva

Anna Larva

Hanna Larva

Silently, an observant eye moves over the *white city*. Minimalist shapes, apparently identical, are reminiscent of the shells of apartment buildings. Placed on two white tabletops, three and three, they are like reflections of each other. The video clip, through which I experience the artwork, includes in its frame the peeling walls of the artist's studio. A multifaceted dynamic of interior and exterior space unfolds.

As a scholar of a miniature model-world, I find myself in a position that emphasizes the extensiveness of my vision. Where am I that the *white city* reveals its facades so readily? In any case, I am a spectator, a witness. From a distance the city appears rather simple and orderly. Its structure comprises cubes and the empty space in between them. Is every world constructed similarly, one block at a time? Blocks being choices which, when repeated a sufficient number of times, create self-evident, seemingly inevitable circumstances?

For whom is the *white city*? In close-up, the surfaces of the models are textured, irregular. Details reveal a human touch, approximation, defect. These are forms made as a collaboration between the human hand and time. Peeking through frames, which may be windows, an emptiness, a hollow feeling arises.

Haunting. This is a miniature reference to a world, but which one? Where, what and who is the original whose presence is ungraspable yet inevitable? Does this world already exist, is it due to be built, or are such temporal categories inappropriate? The artist does not offer answers to such questions, but points to the fact that an inter-scale, inter-world creation indeed takes place.

Artist:

Text:

Kaljo

Hanna Larva

ku 'kui; nagu; et'; *kus* 'kus'; *kunā* 'millal'; *kui* 'kuidas; kuigi'

ku 'kui'; *kuza* 'kus', *kumpa* 'kumb'

kuiin, *kun* 'kui'; *kuka* 'kes', *kuten* 'nagu', *kumpi* 'kumb'

ku, *kui* 'kui', *kus* 'kus', *kumba* 'kumb; kes, mis'

kui 'kuidas; kui, nagu'ku, *kun* 'kui'; *kui* 'kui, nagu'; *kus* 'kus'

ku 'kui'; *kus* 'kus', *kut* 'kuidas'

go 'kui; nagu'

koda 'kuidas; kui'

koda 'kuidas'

kuže 'kuidas'; *kuš* 'kuhu'

ku 'kui'

kod, *koda* 'kuidas'

χōj 'kes'; χon 'millal'

χōηka 'kes'; χūn 'kui; millal'; χot 'kuskil; kuidagi; midagi'

hogy 'kuidas'; *hol* 'kus'

χúna 'kus'; χúrka 'kes, milline'

kuna 'millal'

kuniə 'mis, milline, kes'; *kuo* 'kui'; *kuni* 'kuhu'

kun 'kui'; *kuti* 'kes'; *kū* 'kuhu'

kojət 'milline'; *kāda* 'kuidas'; *kāmən* 'millal'

kuj 'kust'¹

¹ The Estonian word for "if", *kui*, comes from a Uralic root. Here we see its variations in 22 different Uralic languages, among them Votic, Udmurt, Komi, Nenets and Kamassian, together with a translation into Estonian. The text is an extension of Joana Chicau's self-copying work, which plays on the word "if". The above makes reference to the process of autopoiesis that shapes language.

Text:

Kaljo

Artist:

Chicau

Hanna Laura

*Brother, you bring the flax to me spun,
who will braid it for me?**

Where flax roots coil,
ancestors braided
with soil, there
the toil of untangling,
one fiber at a time,
the grain of living
passed down.

Sister, I bring it to you braided.

*Brother, you bring the flax to me braided,
who will warp it for me?*

There, warm glow
of the garret.
Mother, hands
on the loom,
thins out wounds,
each yarn in tune.

Sister, I bring it to you warped.

*Brother, you bring the flax to me warped,
who will weave it for me.*

There, tender body
unhesitantly
heart to heart.
How many mother's
heartbeats
to weave
the child onto earth?

Sister, I bring it to you woven.

In italics Sumerian Song, 1750 BC.

Text:

Kaljo

Artist:

Chisak

Hanna Larva

Leschelier's work reveals itself as an exquisite duet of brick and word. The more simplified the material and the technique of construction - indeed, the sculptural process resembles that of a playful bricklayer - the more intricate the discourse by which the work is bound. Committed to speaking from the perspective of an architect and in relationship to the discipline of architecture, his words labour to undo all ties to its solid foundation.

Conflict, refusal, removal and resistance are the words and forces at play underneath the work's physical manifestation. The latter may evoke the feel of a construction site, an intermediary space in which notions of *finished* and *unfinished* are made redundant. Leschelier nudges us to take note of the processual, messy and rudimentary phase in architecture, which may otherwise remain unseen by those for whom buildings are, simply, stable structures for inhabitation.

Veering away from the idea of function and use, the artist brings his attention to the bare bone structure of what it means to build. *Direct construction*, the name by which he calls the making, entails a series of solitary procedural actions. Spotlight falls on the physical energy of the body, a performative moment for which there may be no other witness than the artist himself. As words wither away so does the struggle to uphold. Now form finds its seeker.

Artist:

Text:

Kaljo

Movic

Leschelier

Hanna Larva

The artistic method employed by Ginckels evokes that of a participant observer: a technique of insertion and immersion over an extended period of time, thus gaining an intimate familiarity with those studied. Swiftly, he slips between disguises: an artist, a researcher of neoliberal culture and a brand manager for an energy drink. Who or what is being observed?

“In the neoliberal city, our senses are constantly captured, used, attracted, wanted. We are to ‘experience’ culture and a certain lifestyle. Everyone ought to function like one’s own one person company, always appearing attractive, strong, healthy and sorted.”¹ An energy drink is the fuel of choice for a body pursuing, willingly or unwillingly, to keep up with the pace of this demand. “Attractive, strong, healthy and sorted” are not only characteristics of preferred individual skin, indeed they also capture the desired appearance of brands backing shiny sustainability goals in a world rapidly becoming undone.

The subject under observation is a late capitalist, caffeinated identity. Specifically, the process through which this identity perpetually recreates and recollects itself by using the means of visual-, verbal- and body language. Participatory observation unfolds as a total “surrender to the surface”. The artist and those with whom he collaborates dissolve themselves in a collective body and prefabricated value system, inhabiting and amplifying the very phenomena silently criticised.

Artist:

¹ the nanopolitics group (2016), “Nanopolitics: Collectively Undoing Our Swallowed No’s” in “Slow Reader: A Resource for Design Thinking and Practice”, Ed. Ana Paula Pais, Carolyn F. Strauss. Amsterdam: Valiz. p183.

Text:

Kaljo

Victorian

Ginckels

Hanna Larro

The human body is a miraculous, dynamic and open form. Consistently, on the border of perception and creativity, it improvises its relationship to the moving lifeworld. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology describes perception as participation, through which the playful *environment* extends itself into contact with the human sense organs.¹ An interwoven worldview alone, however, does not ensure a harmonious existence for its participants.

Karro is interested in the fact that, directed by the intellect alone, we tend to design and build stagnant habitats. As sensuous beings in constant transformation, these artificial settings blunt us.² Not to mention the way these prohibit the life of other species. A body abiding to artificial, unnatural standards is a reflection of a synthetic mindset and vice versa. Anxious mind, bored by repetition. Constricted feeling.

The artist draws our attention to the relative nature of standards and proposes a flexible, individual-specific measurement unit. This new unit is based on the physical proportions of a given human; a cube is fashioned from the artist's body. A multifunctional piece of furniture. Karro's artwork emphasises the human as a dominator on the pathway to emancipation from external influences and expectations.

Scientific studies have found that exposure to scenes of grandeur, whether they are of a breathtaking natural phenomena or a human-built artefact, evoke a certain presence in the observer, in turn bringing forth the feeling of an abundance of time, thus decreasing impatience.³ In the aftermath of such exposure, the participants of the study were more willing to donate their time to charitable causes and preferred experiences over material goods. What kind of an internal climate, then, may we expect to be evoked by a man-made world, designed to our own scale and image? Anxious mind, bored by repetition? Constricted feeling.

1 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Press, 1997, p. 57.

2 Siim Karro, "Tajuline lootusetus pinnapealsuse ajastul," *Sirp*, 26 July 2019.

3 Melanie Rudd, "Awe Expands People's Perception of Time, Alters Decision-Making, and Enhances Well-Being," *Psychological Sciences*, 2012, vol. 23(10), pp. 1130-1136. Thank you to Marianne Jõgi, whose doctoral thesis in progress led me to this source.

Text:

Kaljo

Artist:

Karro

Siim

Hanna Larwa

DO CHILDREN'S INTERNAL LANDSCAPES DETERIORATE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE *EROSION OF PLAY*?

Neuroscientists, social psychologists and human rights advocates affirm that free-form play sets the foundation for children's mental wellbeing² and development. Yet time and space devoted to it are under the axe both in schools and extracurricular settings. Play in the curiosity-evoking natural world is in danger of going extinct.³ Urban playgrounds – often copies of each other – seem like adults' comical vision of the needs of children in the context of the aforementioned processes.

The educational psychologist Francesco Tonucci (*The City of Children*) has called out playgrounds as places that were built when children could no longer move freely outside. According to Tonucci, every game arises from its own specific location and these sites cannot be chosen by adults.⁴ Questioning why cities are no longer considered safe opens into further topics, but in the context of this text we may observe the consequences: children are deprived of freedom to discover on their own. Restricting independent spontaneity, however, comes at the expense of children's inner lives as they become adults.⁵

Erosion may also manifest as the standardisation of playgrounds, which is the thematic starting point for this artist tandem's artwork. Scientists have studied the post-WWII playgrounds of the Dutch Structuralist architect Aldo Van Eyck and the influence of their minimalist and symmetrical design on children's creativity: it turns out that abstract, sculptural shapes indeed encourage creativity. Yet their standardisation – the equal distance between modules and pipes – inversely curtails playfulness.⁶ Play favours a messy milieu, wildness!

Erosion limits, yet play, ambivalent by nature,⁷ cannot be fenced in. It tends to wander, even if secretly, to the wide world, which it perpetually re-imagines and takes apart. Under and around playgrounds, too, are vast fields that reveal themselves when approached with playful curiosity. This process is the birthplace of children's perception of themselves, their inner world.

- 1 Patrick J. Lewis, "The Erosion of Play," *International Journal of Play*, 2017, vol. 6(1), pp. 1-14.
- 2 Peter Gray, "The Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents," *American Journal of Play*, 2011, vol. 3(4), pp. 443-463.
- 3 Nor Fadzila Aziz and Ismail Said, "Outdoor Environments as Children's Play Spaces: Playground Affordances," *Play, Recreation, Health and Well Being. Geographies of Children and Young People*. Eds. B. Evans, J. Horton, T. Skelton. Singapore: Springer, 2015, pp. 1-22.
- 4 Tania Alonso, "Francesco Tonucci, creator of The City of Children: 'Cities must choose between improving or disappearing,'" *Tomorrow.Mag*, 15 Nov 2019.
- 5 Jess Row, "How to grant your child an inner life," *The New Yorker*, 18 Feb 2019.
- 6 Rob Withagen and Simone R Caljouw, "Aldo van Eyck's Playgrounds: Aesthetics, Affordances, and Creativity," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2017, vol. 8; Douwe Jongeneel, Rob Withagen and Frank T. J. M. Zaal, "Do children create standardized playgrounds? A study on the gap crossing affordances of jumping stones," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 2015, vol. 44, pp. 45-52.
- 7 Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Text:

Kaljo

Artist:

Kaljo Larwa

Kaljo Larwa

Hanna Larva

Running my hands over the rugged surface of the cold boulder, the fingertips distinguish depressions and ridges. Here, over the course of millennia, rainwater has etched deep trenches into the stone. Here, the deceptively soft breeze has filed away the surface, shaping its expression. Fingers are unable to penetrate the stone and the rock is difficult to grasp for the short-lived human mind. Yet over time, behind closed eyes an internal image, though unstable, takes form.

The boulder is in itself an interweaving of multiple generations. As an amalgamation of species it represents unison between minerals and once living organisms, in which an individual life cannot be differentiated from the collective. Shift in weather, that which is experienced, is imprinted into the body on the threshold of form and formlessness as impressions. Erosion is a force that creates by way of destruction. That, which destruction brings to life, lacks lexical bridges, is absent-minded. Those who remember do not commemorate. Those who cannot remember *postremember*.

Gradually, out of geological abstraction, an anthropomorphic image begins to come forth. Ancient riverbeds suddenly appear as wrinkles of a tired face. Eye sockets and cheekbones emerge from the curves of the stone. Each line is interwoven with ancestral rage and fear, feelings which have, like crutches, carried indigestible pain. Now - one hand on the painbody frozen as stone, the other on your forehead brimming with life - listen and imagine.

Afterword

Marianne Hirsch, professor of Columbia University, has coined the term *postmemory* referring to the process by which the younger generations relate to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of previous generations. Here, connection to the past is not created through the act of memory but rather the imagination. For the "generation after", trauma that defies comprehension appears indirectly, through the vessel of stories, images and behavioural patterns; the events of the past echo, as a copy, in the present through its descendants. *Postmemory* is a deliberate desire to embrace the pain of the past.

1 www.postmemory.net

Text:

Kaljo

Artist:

Szymon Kula