

# How

When I'm at home, it seems to me that this space is my original creation. I was the one who chose the vases on the shelf, curtains for the windows and pattern of the carpet. Well, my wife co-chose it, or to be accurate, she was the one who mostly chose them, and the choice could only be made from among the products that were available, but sitting in an armchair it feels that things are in a unique configuration and under control and I'm not just a little piece in some puzzle with a shape I can't grasp.

There's a big home improvement supply centre near my home. It carries many things from all over the world. Shower systems with spray modes. Eyelet screws. Glue trowels. I go there often to walk the aisles with my son, like at an art exhibition and explain to him what's what. It's interesting for me, too - you look at all of the products from all over the world, with an innocent, purely formal eye. All sorts of thoughts occur to you. You feel at ease.

My son's favourite toy is a brush for spreading glue. I bought it from that same place. I told him it's a brush for glue, but it seems that is not its only meaning for my son. Once it was a helicopter. Pretty often it has been just a pruu-pruu, the meaning of which I couldn't grasp but it seems he's in a good place when he says that.

In her work, Pajuväli also creates certain powerful objects and performs a reductive act on the room. She has taken elements from reality and reduces them to lines and colours. Spaceless space. Behind these elements, the even more elemental objects that inspired her can be gleaned but art or the love of the game or something else inexpressible has made them something much more abstract. Even with the work's strongest element - the concrete paving stones - Pajuväli says overtly that it was ordered from the catalogue of Kiili Betoon OÜ and the shape made up of these elements is based in some ways on Õismäe's circular layout (she currently lives in a prefabricated building in that district) but there is still the feeling that the clarity is illusory. The nucleus and object of the work is the possibility of finding freedom in the context of preset elements, preset restrictions, in a world made up of copies. Pajuväli is a utopian realist.

Artist:

Pajuväli

Text:

Kaunistava

# How

Late one evening, standing on a soggy street corner to take our leave, a communication manager acquaintance of mine said that modern politics is marketing. Marketing of ideas and emotions. Belief in a better future, a better past, an unchanging present – whatever you like. And no doubt he was in the know – at the time, he was in charge of communication, i.e. marketing, for an Estonian political party.

Look at Trump. Pure and, truth be told, brilliant marketing. “The political programme is completely arbitrary,” as my colleague Epner wrote for the *Unified Estonia Assembly* (a Theatre N099 production about an eponymous fictitious political party) brochure for the Prague Quadrennial, which provided instructions on how to grab power. A brilliant tactician, a merciless strategist. *Carpe diem.*

Liivrand’s work also tempts, aimlessly. No one wants you to visit their store or sales table. *What you see is what you see.* As with a successful flirtation – the main point is suggesting the possibility of something big happening. As to whether something is genuinely happening and what it is, that is secondary or at least that’s so for the time being, at the instant of the enticement.

The state of the world surrounding Liivrand’s laconic and sensuous work is reflected in that aimless enticement, transposed to the heart of the concept. Who among us really knows for sure which way they are headed? An artwork is always bigger than itself. In some ways, it is a copy of its era one way or another, even if it doesn’t want to be, if it’s apolitical. Liivrand’s work is hardly meant to be political, the meeting with the artist certainly didn’t leave that impression, and yet that layer of meaning, X, can clearly and poetically be read that way.

Artist:

Text:

# Kaunistoru

Maar

Liivrand

It is statistically likely that if you're Estonian, you have lived in a Soviet-era prefabricated concrete building. Myself, I grew up in a five-storey prefab in Tartu. The most typical kind. A normal building, from the mid-1980s. Hundreds of other people lived there besides me, like sports reporter Anu Säärits, if I wanted to drop a name to make my childhood more special than it was. The neighbouring buildings were of the same type. Tartu had and has a population of about 100,000 people, and most of the inhabitants lived in similar kinds of prefabricated panel buildings. But tourist brochures usually use a photo of the Old Town.

In the evenings, I watch the news. I still have that habit. In the news, I see prefabs pictured very rarely. I usually see them if there's a segment on unresolved problems with insulation or someone has built a bomb in the basement or fallen off a balcony. When I see homes in the news, they are usually detached private homes. Or if they're apartment buildings, they are timber ones, smaller in size with a few dozen people, not built of prefab panels. Whereupon I always remember the statistics that most of the Estonian population lives in prefabs. Soviet-era prefabricated buildings, which aren't seen on the news. What does non-reproduction of prefabs reproduce?

The prototype for Kaselaan's work is a nine-storey prefabricated building. He has made it abstract, reduced its form, removed references to people's existence and so we see space in its pure form. "Here we can accommodate hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands of people," Soviet-era urban planners thought, and so do current ones and so will future ones, probably. Prefabricated panel buildings have come to stay. It's also said that it is much less polluting to live in a panel building than a private house. Economy of scale, or something like that, Lasnamäe and Annelinn districts are the future of humankind.

Of course, Soviet panel buildings are nothing original, but copies of a global trend. Go away from the old towns, stray to places where tourists don't go, and you will see the true Paris, Rome and Florence, the panelled version of those cities. You'll see what doesn't fit on to the picture. Soviet construction quality left something to be desired, of course, but Kaselaan, too, who brings the form of prefabricated panel buildings to the centre of attention of the art audiences, the avant-garde of visual perception, appears to be conceptually interested by human error.

*Text:*

*Artist:*

# How

Outside it was a grey 1990s November. The curtains on the windows were beige, perhaps from the Brezhnev era. Of course, the sun – what little of it there was – didn't shine into the classroom. And it wasn't necessary, for the computer screens gave off more light and hope for the future than anyone could have hoped for. In the first programming lesson, we were taught how to draw a circle – I mean, write – with Turbo Pascal. In the second lesson, we learned how to make the circle move around on the screen. Simple pleasures. I remember there was a lot of sitting. My body memory doesn't remember anything more about programming. Already then, I decided I would remain a spectator.

Joana Chicau connects two things that at first glance might seem unconnectable – choreography and programming. This unconnectability is deceptive, though – both disciplines are, at their core, languages, and philological terminology could freely be used to describe them. Semantic, morphological, or lexical terms all have counterparts in the world of programming commands.

Chicau's focus on freeware makes her artistic approach particularly exciting. As the opposite of copyright, she uses the term copyleft, a utopian movement uniting users all over the world.

Joining choreography and programming, two-dimensional screens and three-dimensional space into an integral artwork is undoubtedly a very original approach. The artist's solitude can be sensed in it, it can be felt that she is proceeding from a very personal instinct, dream or artistic vision. Even though the viewer sees elements that have a clear cultural meaning, Chicau's work, born of something like mathematical passion, leads one to ponder what is behind the algorithms and intervals brought out by the formal technique of copying. Enjoyment, energy, what else. That is why Chicau's work can be seen as far more than just an intellectual game.

Artist:

Text:

# Kaunisare

# How

My father spends half of his days on Geni. He digs through digitized church record books, chases down connections and evidence, which he then carefully adds to what he has already found. He has got as far back as someone born in 1707 named Jaan. It isn't completely certain, but better than nothing, because at some point back in the past, it becomes untraceable.

I am simultaneously an original and a copy. Being born is the supreme form of reproduction. I was born after someone's face and someone will be born after my face and who knows maybe someone will be born after their face and at some point in the future, it becomes untraceable.

This gives rise to some head-spinning feelings, if you stop to think about it. But generally, I don't stop to think about it seriously, none of us do. We play in life's surface layer and we try not to fall through. *Homo ludens*.

Some lines from Alliksaar come to mind when I think of this Johanna Ulfsak work, which unites traditional handicraft with contemporary art: "the tapestries of feelings are woven awkwardly, long and wrong." The slowness of the weaving itself contains some poetic generalization that is hard to put into words. The generalization isn't associated with the specific artist, although she repeatedly emphasizes the importance of slowness. Is the completely technical and practical slowness of handicraft a symbol of the biological slowness of the passage of human generations? Slowness that always remains slow no matter how fast the world has become? Is the physical game here a symbol of human life vanishing without a trace, like the positions of the volleyball players' bodies are not recorded in the air, leaving the viewer with only a momentary sense of the possibility of a life force bridging the abyss of time? And why volleyball? Why, why volleyball? Yes, there are a good many unanswered questions in life and the truth may not necessarily be revealed now. Maybe in a few hundred years or when the yarn runs out.

Artist:

Ulfsak

Text:

Kaunistoore

Johanna

# How

Architecture is usually considered to be buildings or structures that are completed. In completion, they are what they were meant to be. The process of birthing architecture from developing a vision to handing over the keys is considered technical preparation. That's the case with life in general, too. Whatever might be said about "the journey, not the destination" and how feelings and aspirations, instincts and opinions are values in their own right, it's usually the opposite - the end result is what matters.

There's a certain conflict in the fact that on one hand, Leschelier wants to highlight space-creating selfless processes, the chaotic natural forces and their effects, but on the other hand his work is quite self-aware, strictly thought out and admirably purely conceptual and the author as creator is far from dead. The contrast is stark but dialectic: without guiding clarity of thought, the natural forces would not be observable, without the natural forces, the concept would be muted, anaemic.

Leschelier deliberately uses the most banal construction element - the brick. In its banality, the brick is the most accessible and the least expensive resource; it makes it possible to be liberated from the influence of market forces on an architect's work and deal in depth with materiality, the meta-level. This voluntary asceticism signals great artistic ambitions.

Leschelier says he is looking for something that is between architecture, sculpture and actionism and he convincingly gets very close to it, too. He wants to show how the world is formed out of its basic building blocks. He's a demiurge. What is beautiful and frightening at the same time is that there doesn't seem to be a gram of irony in Leschelier's works. Understandable: irony is a weapon for the weak. However, Leschelier takes himself and the world extremely seriously. He doesn't look at his and his colleagues' buildings with jaded eyes or accept human imperfection. He demands the original, not a copy. He asks, what else is architecture capable of? It's people like him who change the world.

Artist:

Text:

# Kaunistava

How

Leschelier

# How

I've tried to leave social media many times, but unsuccessfully, or it's more that the air has fizzled out of those attempts even before they started. It's a failing of my personality, I guess. But maybe precisely because of that lasting dysfunctional relationship, I've become more and more interested in situations where there's no escape.

Ginckels' job is to create a brand that acts as a sponsor of the Artishok Biennale. The desire of a sponsor - especially a powerful one that makes the rules - isn't limited to the dream of having a banner in the back corner of the parking lot, of course. A powerful sponsor wants to be on the front cover. What they really want is for the sponsoree to seem like part of its brand, not the other way around. The sponsoring brand wants to be like mist - diffuse and be everywhere. Become a platform that makes everything that is happening possible in the first place. Not that this should come as a surprise for anyone, but unicorns rule the world.

How do you get the better of them? Or do you have to be able to get the better of them, because the right question is how do you exist with a purpose in this age at all? How to be in an environment where market forces are all-powerful and criticism of them is at best hypocritical, because the criticizer comes from the same environment. This is what Ginckels' work deals with. Maybe a conceptual cheat is the only possibility?

Baudrillard wrote years ago that Disneyland is presented as imaginary to make us believe everything else is real, even though all of Los Angeles and surrounding America have long ceased to be real but rather exist in the domain of hyperreality and simulation. The situation has not become much more real in the years that have passed since then. Now we have before us an energy drink that was inspired by Red Bull and sponsors an art event. While Baudrillard lamented the lack of exits, today the only hope at all of reaching some original perception is to copy reality itself until it becomes a dystopia. In any case, a smirk isn't enough.

*Text:*

Kaunissare

*Artist:*

Ginckels

Victorian

# How

Travelling in China, the subject of the famous ghost towns came up in conversation with locals. A hill is cleared with bulldozers and tens, hundreds, thousands of high-rise buildings are built on the resulting gravelly plain for future inhabitants – but then they don't move in. For a while, there are no bus lines or even roads. Some 20-storey buildings are home to three families. Another one has maybe 15 or so. The wind moans between the facades. I was sceptical, but one local inhabitant gave me a reality check. He said he'd lived for several years in that kind of development. The first year it was on the empty side, considering that the district was built for 100,000 people. But the next year, the buses started running and a couple of years later, demographics had won. It's said that the planners of that given city never visited that neighbourhood. All they needed was a computer program to draw the buildings – they already had the official parameters and human icons, after all.

There is some unaccountable charm in brand-new, still empty apartments. Of course, an expert can take one look and immediately point out that the ventilation system used is going to have a lot of quirks or that the homeowner will keep on bumping themselves against the doorframe for years. But still – the main thing that lives here is the future. A dream of the future.

Siim Karro's works go deep. He is a conceptualist, even a fundamentalist conceptualist. To subject the entire metric system, the basis of the entire global social contract on measuring physical space today, to study and criticism – that takes a sober, headstrong approach, principles. It has always seemed to me that the central question concerning the work of such artists is how they are able to translate intricately executed intellectual research into an aesthetically appealing space, a sensory experience. If they succeed and in addition to timeless questions, the present day is relied on for additional context – the unexpected fall into the abyss after the boom, the faint hope of saving the economy through fast real estate and unchecked virtual money-printing – it is hard to outdo the works of such artists in terms of their precision and influence. There has never been less of the human dimension.

Artist:

Text:

# Kaunistoore

Siim

Karro

# How

In the last few years, I have spent a significant amount of time with my son on playgrounds. They come in all kinds, of course, but for the most part they are copies of each other, without particular inventiveness. Parents are also undemanding and they are glad if the day can be passed without tantrums, tears and getting hurt. The principle behind the creation of playgrounds is above all to be *via negativa* – to avoid injuries, because the local governments are responsible for them and responsibility makes one conservative. An attempt is made to ensure safety by establishing restrictions and conditions for the structure of the elements. Most designers go the path of least resistance and design something illustrative and typical. The procurement conditions are satisfied, and the day is done.

Sööt and Randmäe go a different route, an original route. They try to kill several birds with one stone. On one hand, they bring playground design back into abstraction, don't just spell everything out by making a swing look like a swing and a slide like a slide. They also see the playground as a model that guides society, and in this way they're like activists. Thirdly, they create an artwork, bringing the structure of playgrounds – this being a domain that is practical to its core – into the field of vision of contemporary art. They succeed at killing those birds with apparent ease and they achieve something extraordinary in several areas at once.

Their attitude as artists is congenially low-key. Sööt herself says, wryly, that she considers herself a carpenter above all. In Randmäe, there's also a tinge of a modestly utopian vibe from 1920s Constructivism. Both appear to ask, consciously or subconsciously, what is the function of contemporary art in society more generally, how it might escape the escapist gallery walls? There is a sense of love of the game (a three-dimensional work is clearly compositionally connected to its two-dimensional starting elements) and the belief that an alternative society is a realistic perspective, you just have to do a lot of work to get there. Children do, too.

Artist:

Text:

Kaunistoore

Kaunistoore

Sööt Randmäe

# How

A monument to Lenin once stood here. Lenin was larger than life already in his lifetime, to say nothing about after the fact. The monument and the large white building later erected of concrete panels behind it have been talked about as one of Tallinn's few spatial ensembles that give a truly totalitarian impression.

Then, Lenin was removed. Nothing was supposed to remind us that Lenin was once here. This place was supposed to become a normal space. Normalcy was the primary goal both upon and after dismantling. But the big white building stayed, and then it became a different place and it gradually became normal. The totalitarian space surrounding the building stayed as well, for where else could it go. It stayed as the frame, and the middle of it was emptiness, the potential deliberately left unused.

Now there is a boulder here in which we can discern Lenin. But it is not a monument to Lenin but something else. The megalith was copied from France, from a place where one of the authors of the work, Szymon Kula, lives. Lenin was copied from Narva, where the other author of the work, Ann Mirjam Vaikla, lives, and where for some reason, the Lenin monument survives as a museum exhibit. Working digitally, the artists fused a copy of the monument whose content is remembered (some of it all too well) to a copy of a monument whose content no one remembers to form a history that connects recent history and prehistory and leaves the effect of a boulder. This history started yesterday, or why not today, because after all, morning tooth-brushing, snow from two winters ago and the peak period for crustaceans is all in the past. Vaikla and Kula place this boulder-like history into the middle of a spatial ensemble inherited from totalitarianism - into a frame that has been waiting to realize its potential. They place an original work born of copying into a totalitarian space that was born as an original work, and which is now an unrealized copy of the planned impact of that space. Excalibur into a grey stone. Can a totalitarian space be reused without bringing its original effect back to life?

Artist:

Text:

# Kaunistoore

Ann Mirjam Vaikla

Szymon Kula