

Magdalena

With a satisfyingly aesthetic and clean graphic language, Ann Pajuväli has created a microcosm drawing inspiration from an environment dear to her – Õismäe. Everyday items, functionless geometric objects and patches of colour are strewn over an area akin to a miniature golf course. The Õismäe pond has become a refreshing blue eye of butter in the middle of concrete porridge.

The work's pure colours, oval forms and the cheerful playfulness of the environment in a delimited safe space took me back to childhood. I remember pictures that my sister and I were in the habit of drawing on our father's massive desktop computer using Microsoft Paint. I say "in the habit of", because it was on more than just one occasion. We drew our family as bears, experimenting with a circle motif that could be stretched into various ovals for hands, feet, ears and nose. Something like this:



It was easy to fill in the circles with a paint-bucket tool so that nothing spilled over the edges as often happened with felt tips. Choosing shape templates and colours, and putting together nearly identical pictures in the computer program, I felt a different kind of joy than I got from ordinary drawing. It offered complete aesthetic satisfaction, since nothing could go awry. And if it did, it was easy to erase.

Ann, too, puts her pictures together from existing forms and objects (which she has made herself previously, unlike me in my childhood). She keeps them in a folder in her computer, which she "shops" for new works as if in a construction supply store. Drawing inspiration from objects that actually exist, or, conversely, realizing her graphic forms as sculptures later on, a creative and orderly system is born, one chapter of which we see here on the floor.

What speaks to me in this work is the conflict between the two-dimensional colourful oasis and the three-dimensional grey paving stones that frame it. These simple geometric forms are familiar from Ann's graphic world, but in real life, cast as concrete, they take on a more robust dimension. Their weight, quotidian nature and inevitable belonging to the street sphere, are at once a barrier protecting paradise against the outside world and also a cage around that fragile environment. By playing with simple forms in many dimensions, Ann creates a truly dream-like layout of the historical Õismäe as a microcosm enclosed in concrete, and yet so beckoningly green.

Text:

Maavik

Artist:

Pajuväli

Magdalena

Tallinn's Old Town is full of little shops and boutiques that sell gold and silver, amber, Russian dolls, wrought iron and ceramics. For ordinary cruise tourists, it's no difference what souvenir they buy and how much it is actually connected to the local culture. Often, they don't even know exactly what country they're in or that the Baltic states are three separate countries. The cobblestoned fairy-tale city they see is just an introductory stop on the way to the famous St. Petersburg. A tiny Hanseatic town like any other in Germany, where they were during their last cruise. Or was it Latvia? Poland? Is this Riga? *Oh, Tallinn? Or Tälin?* Well anyway, it's just amazing!

But this spring sprang different. Instead of the loyal tourist hordes, there was a gaping void in the Old Town. There were no guides with umbrellas bravely leading the elderly groups of Americans, Japanese, Germans or Chinese. No more did the masses disgorged by cruise ships congest the narrow cobblestoned streets. Even Finnish wasn't heard inside these medieval walls. The blessed peace and quiet was spoiled only by the knowledge that the little souvenir shops and boutiques would probably not survive the drought. And so, one after another, they shuttered. "To Let" reads the sign on almost every window. Only the fancier amber shops are left - like their product, they are capable of lasting millions of years.

The work by Anna Mari Liivrand analyses the flirtatious, inviting nature of advertising. Drawing inspiration from the shops in Tallinn Old Town, she created graceful wrought iron works that, like the mythological will-o'-the-wisp that led unsuspecting travellers deep into the mire, suck clients into their web. Anna Mari's mysteriously glowing twisted metal fingers grow out of the cracks in the grey stone and plaster walls of the city starved for shoppers, reminiscent of the last plea of a desperate addict. They try their luck, fruitlessly, with Tallinners hurrying to and from work, who don't even lift their eyes to the display windows in the Old Town. We are masters at quickly negotiating the obstacle course of touts and advertising signs.

Artist:

Text:

Maarik

Maarik

Liivrand

Magdalena

Looking at that white city, I immediately think of *Frozen City* – one of the most depressing movies on the Finnish cinematic landscape. Since I saw that Aku Louhimies masterpiece in my blissful childhood, I still remember only that oppressively depressive mood and the scene where a man in a white and snowy residential district slams his child's guinea pig against the wall, killing it. Finnish cinema at its angsty best.

Jass's city reminds me of Louhimies's Helsinki, crackling with ice and dark, wind wailing between buildings and only routine and despair behind the windows. I wonder whether anyone could live in that miniature residential district? Might there be, among those repetitive buildings and window squares, some singular apartment full of colour and patterns? Someone's personal and individual space, a home with the face of its occupant? I try hard to imagine it, but can't. *Frozen City* has overshadowed any lightness.

In the tens of eye sockets of the nine-storey prefabricated buildings, there is only bleak emptiness. No one lives in this city. It is possible to exist only anonymously and wait for time to pass. Window upon window, storey upon storey, house upon house. The window squares and wall panels forming multi-level geometric landscape and clinical monochrome views for no one.

The triple towers balancing on the boundary of a boring new development and an abandoned bedroom community appear to be hovering on a narrow rectangular island that one can't leave. The straight streets between buildings only lead to the edge of the island. In my thoughts, I walk around the buildings, up and down along the stairwells. Silence. No one home. Heavy mood descends over the city like November snow. Slightly uneven walls make cracking sounds in the icy grip of frost.

Standing at the edge of the island, I notice the same kind of city on the other side of the water. Like a mirror reflection. The same lifeless buildings, the same empty windows and the same repetitions of forms.

Although it seems to be so close, it is not possible to get to the other side. At least not now. The islands on which the cities were built are separated by a deep chasm. In their shared solitude they reflect each other's silent existence. It seems the architect has watched many Finnish films.

Text:

Maavik

Artist:

Kasper Vanhanen

Magdalena

In a “phy-gital” performance, IT artist Joana combines poetry, coding and choreography, exploring the meaning of copying in the context of freeware culture. The website she has developed produces text, which, copying itself endlessly, keeps on spinning and spinning. The more it copies, the more it has to copy. Every row starts with the word “if”. They’re conditions. Conditions for copying. Joana has put together a collection of copyleft, freeware and open-source software movements’ conditions that must be followed when using and copying freeware. The existence of endless conditions attached to principles of free culture may at first seem contradictory, but it becomes more understandable as you get into it. Unconditional freedom is not freedom for everyone.

Joana has interspersed rows and words of her own creation into the dry language of the techno-legal documents. The additions make the flowing text more poetic, turning it into a kind of manifesto of conditional freedom. Text and code moving to the rhythm of copying and spooling in the information landscape makes up a dynamic dance that is performed by program and the human together. To make things even more “meta”, Joana also gives away, sets free her own code during her performance, making it available and copyable by anyone.

Artist:

Text:

Maasik

Magdalena

In the middle of the court is a fabric, pulled taut, splitting the spectators into two camps.

Strange and formless larger-than-life babies are painted on the fabric.

Fragile, transparent, spreading out.

The fabric is in turn divided in half along its full length by a long, almost healed-over wound, which seems to be covered by a protective scab.

Someone says the babies on the fabric symbolize the start of life - *tabula rasa* - from which we all begin our journey before we choose a side on the playing field. People become anxious.

"Thus, the wound denotes the unhealable rift between the two sides?" someone asks.

A silent understanding dawns on those on the playing field.

Someone suggests, optimistically, that perhaps they symbolize childlike joy and simplicity instead? Because the love of the game is what's important, not the winning.

The others nod at that, smiling, but actually they all know already that it is a competition where there can be only one winner.

At first moving around hesitantly, looking for a place that feels right, people finally start choosing a side. Looking carefully at who is on what side and whom it would be worth playing with on the same team.

People examine the people on the other side of the field, looking at their tense faces through the thin fabric. The players on both teams think nervous thoughts.

Are they really adversaries? Or are they downright enemies? Perhaps it would be better if they were just playmates? Will the wound heal completely during the game? What are they playing for, anyway? Life and death? The future of the children hovering above the court who are divided into two sides by the scarred wound? Are there any winners in this game at all? Or will it last forever, with players only substituted during the game?

Will I play in this game until the end?

No one in the spectators dares to be the first to throw the ball. No one wants to hit the first serve. Maybe no one has a ball. The players become anxious. And where is the referee?

The first serve.

The ball whistles through the air. A cry, contact, whistle. Shoes squeaking on the boards.

A flurry of steps, drops of sweat, thumps, whistle.

Pause. Whistle. Repeat.

The game is full of suspense and the sides are equal. No one gives up. Serve, volley, another one, whistle.

The players are tired and commit many errors. Serve, volley, another one, whistle.

No one knows the score.

A heavy serve, a volley, the ball whizzes through the air, frightened looks in the eyes, a shout and...

The ball hits the net. The middle of the net.

The wound tears.

The colourless threads flow across the floor in full sight of the silent players.

The final whistle sounds.

Artist:

Utsak

Text:

Maavik

Magdalena

Marc's work fuses performance, video art, architecture, sculpture and construction. He filled us in on his activities and plans via Zoom. Something that will be so palpable, material and in situ is hard to describe in advance. Especially when the process of creating the work is a principal part of the work. On the basis of his earlier works, he can be said to have a very definite style and technique, and when he talks about the pre-architectural sculptural non-design object that he intends to create in Tallinn, some kind of idea takes shape in his listeners' minds. But only the end results of his previous works can be seen on Zoom. It would be exciting to know what his creative action will look like. Will it be fast and unrefined, or deliberated and precise? Will he yell and grunt, all covered with cement, or will we hear only a serious man's breathing and quiet sounds of stones being assembled into a wall? Based on the photo documentation, it could well be both. Some of the structures are massively rough and uneven, as if he did not know at the outset where the bricklaying would end up. But others seem carefully considered and sculptural structures laid according to a model. But even through the screen, all of Marc's buildings emanate massiveness, and raw energy.

I recall Bridget Polk's balance performance seen at this year's Riboca, in which she built, before a live audience, impossible-seeming towers of leftover construction materials and bricks found in the area. The meditative and quiet balancing of stones seems like the total opposite of direct construction action that Marc is involved in, but I see many similarities between them. The word "balance" characterizes both artists. One is quieter and the other perhaps carries more weight, but it is there for both of them as a sensibility. Their free self-definition as not just artist but also balancer of stones and architect gives them the possibility of taking a more expansive view of sculpture as such. Bridget and Marc are both physically present, in the middle of their materials - stones, bricks, mortar and dust. Participating in the creating process with their own body, leaving traces. Looking at the artefacts of both artists' creative process, the creators' presence can still be felt.

Artist:

Text:

Marc

Marc

Magdalena

Magdalena

The T1 mall, a nearly extinct capitalist dinosaur, a monument to Estonians' unbridled consumerism and the glory days of malls, which despite the lit-up Ferris wheel on the roof is slowly becoming devoid of tenants. It's funny yet sad to look at this failing giant and think that just recently there was a plan to build yet another behemoth mall in Lasnamäe district, which would have been the biggest yet in Estonia. The hoary old fact that Estonia has the most malls per capita doesn't seem to faze anyone. Perhaps this is how we compensate for our memories of empty shelves and long lines back in the day...

Absurd as it may seem, a Belgian artist's critique of consumerist culture and brand economy is what gets me to visit T1 for the first time in my life. T1 is of course an ideal location for the NO BULL data centre, which plays with the elements of performance art and a platform created for presenting the latest product. In this slightly quirky showroom, brands, data mining, energy efficiency, tech and social media all mingle. NO BULL Energy, the product being launched, isn't just an energy drink. It's a product as lifestyle, vibe, status - in a word, a ticket to the cool people's club. The boundaries between capitalism and art blur quite quickly. The physical nature of the product being advertised is not that important; it could be a new electric car, telephone or clothes collection. The main thing is the process of advertising and promoting and the techniques used for this.

Using as his tools the qualities the "snowflake" generation is often criticized for - superficiality, social media dependency, cult of technology and a two-faced attitude to environmental topics - Pieterjan calls on everyone to experience a tastefully designed energy drink release event that could appeal to both privileged trendsetters and the most left-leaning art students, without understanding who it is all actually meant for.

The artist himself has said that it is an art project disguised as a commercial or business venture... or vice versa (the product is real and also tastes appropriately disgusting) - it depends on what escape route he would need in a given situation. Waxing ironic about consumerist culture and pop activism, the young artist-athletes taking part in Pieterjan's workshop dive headlong into superficiality and in the course of that adventure, come up with a surprisingly non-superficial end result. Something very annoyingly capitalistic has been deconstructed, stereotypical behavioural patterns reassimilated and repurposed for the work. Being in this room, it does really feel like Tesla and Instagram have vomited here.

Artist:

Text:

Maavik

Pieterjan

Workshops

Magdalena

In the middle of the room is an aluminium box. From out of the box, a man is born like Venus from a seashell. This is Non-Standard Man. In his tiny aluminium world, he is the sole reference measurement unit. His rectilinear world is based on his body. Every side and edge considers the length, width and flexibility of his limbs. This is the individual needs-based environment of the Non-Standard Man. Multifunctional piece of furniture, secure shell or personal measurement instrument. If you use your imagination, even a working treadmill.

On the other hand, the world that lies outside the box is inhabited by Standard Man. He is about 20-30 years old, weighs 70 kg, is 170 cm tall, light complexion, a Western European or North American in good health, and lives in a region where it is an average of 10-20 degrees. The whole rest of the world is designed according to this man.

Living in this world is the most comfortable and secure for Standard Man. He always looks his best. He doesn't have as many back and joint problems. His bed is never too short or too long. His seat belt never scores his flesh. He has the best chance of surviving a car crash. It's always the right temperature in his office. His needs get the most consideration in traffic patterns. He always has access everywhere he needs to go. He's always tall enough to get stuff off a high shelf. His stress level is that much lower. Standard Man stands with his arms at his side and his feet together and then with his arms and legs spread out. He fits precisely into an ideal circle and perfect square. His body can be divided precisely into eight parts, which designers and architects can work with. He's the guy they use to create standards. Standard Man thinks that people like him make up the greatest number of people in the world and that it's all correct. Everything else is a deviation, exception, idiosyncrasy, abnormality, non-standardness.

So non-standard people deconstructing Standard Man's space have to create their own environment for themselves.

Text:

Maasik

Artist:

Kawa

Sinn

Magdalena

You see before you a playing field, but that's not all! This is an innovative playground that is better than other playgrounds. Or at least more special because it allows the social problems of modern society to be analysed, problems that an ordinary playground simply doesn't focus on. This is a Playground with capital P. At this Playground, where adults have their tabletop world and children have their sub-tabular world, people both big and small can play and spend their precious time. It is a universal piece of equipment that simultaneously heals intergenerational rifts and perpetuates the hierarchical balance of power between them. A piece of furniture that both unites and divides the generations!

By day, the Playground is good for an active leisure time for children of all ages who are experiencing pressure to succeed and school stress. But thanks to the playful elements found in the table surface, which serve as communication channels between the two worlds, whole families can ease the tensions between family members who have become alienated from each other.

In the evening, the Playground becomes an ideal entertainment complex for people out celebrating who want to converse and drink beer in the open air instead of dangerous indoor spaces. Perhaps the Playground could even become a birthday table? Cheerfully, they gather around the table at the start of the evening - women and men, old and young - wearing party attire and bringing bottles with them.

The cake has been consumed and the salad cleared away. Now they play cards, smoke, perhaps someone is at the piano. The young boy whose 3rd birthday they came to celebrate here has already been forgotten. Now it is the adults' time. Shrieks of laughter, triumphant gestures. Oskar frowns at the adults who are behaving like animals. He climbs down under the table in silence, where he still fits well. No longer is he allowed to hide under grandma's thick skirt.

Under the table he looks at the big people's legs. Slippers, moccasins, dress shoes, pressed slacks, stockings, lace. One leg in slacks playing footsie with one in silk. Someone intrusively tapping, another one uncomfortably squirming. Worn heels and sharp toe points talking a foreign and wordless language as if they were playing some suppressed erotic and yet boring game.

The players on top of the table are also in full swing. No one pays attention to Oskar. Disappointed at the adults' noisy bourgeois and incomprehensible table game, he takes his tin drum in his embrace and climbs out from under the table, leaves the adults without being noticed and heads to the open cellar hatch.

...On that day, thinking about the world of adults and my own future, I decided that I had had it - I decided to quit growing then and there and remain a three-year old Tom Thumb - forever!

Artist:

Text:

Maasik

Kaisa Soot

Wolfgang Rindner

Magdalena

My grandmother told me how she had once, in the late Soviet period, walked past the Lenin monument on Lenin Avenue. She had found God and been saved a short time earlier. Standing there by the Lenin monument, she suddenly had an irresistible urge to do something. Some higher power told her to run seven times around the statue and shout: "In God's name, you're coming down!" And although she startled some passersby, she heeded this command.

Under the areligious Soviet regime, such a Biblical Jericho-storming ritual must have looked pretty bizarre, even dangerous if witnessed by the wrong people. But that didn't deter my grandmother. Telling me that story time and again, she always cheerfully and proudly stated how this little old lady with a handbag ran seven times around the statue and called upon God - and see? soon the Soviet Union collapsed. Thank you for that, grandmother.

Monuments are the physical and material realization of our beliefs, values and convictions. They may exist as an object for millennia, but their importance and position in their own contemporary society depends on changing conditions.

Ann Mirjam and Szymon both grew up at a time when the Lenin monument had been removed from Lenin Avenue, when the Lenin images that had been produced en masse all over the USSR had suddenly lost their importance and sacredness, the bronze and stone Vladimirs were all out of a job. Because they don't have any personal association with the statue and didn't experience it in its own times, the status and influence of Lenin has faded to just a washed-out image in a history textbook. It is as emotionally distant for them as some prehistoric megalith. By placing both of these giant cult objects on to a two-dimensional lenticular board, the artists free them completely of the sacredness, turning them into something like a hybrid disco parody - megalenin or lenilite. They don't think twice about the connotations that the work's location could mean for people a generation older or what memories it could engender. And there is no need to think about that: the monument as such is important. And the decline of the monument in history. No matter how robust, gigantic and strong, it is hard for all of them to withstand time. If there are no revolutionaries, rebels or grandmothers to topple them, oblivion will get the better of every monument at some point.

Artist:

Text:

Maasik

Ann Mirjam Szymon

Szymon