

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

Vitamiin

Siim Preiman:
Standards and spatial problems again...

Lilian Hiob:
Yes. People's wish to measure their surroundings and to map, frame and subject it to their reading is an Enlightenment way of thinking that was passed down to us from the 18th century. There is no other way of making sense of one's surroundings anymore. But the desire to standardise, to follow and to set standards comes with colonisation - everything that doesn't match the standard or doesn't fit the canon is other, alien, unknown, abnormal; typically it gets degraded, conquered or left aside. Thus, standards are fundamentally problematic.

SP:
Siim Karro's work deals with revealing structural hierarchy and turning it on its head. Even smart devices are designed using the human psychological characteristics to become indispensable without us even noticing. Humans are a resource to push and pull. Same in the construction sector: the aim is not to create a space that is specifically suited for someone, it is to create a space that suits as many as possible, one that can quickly be reproduced and copied.

LH:
Karro comes up with an alternative unit that originates from a specific subject's interaction with it. The size and shape of the unit can change, it can be folded and unfolded in many different ways.

SP:
He mentioned aluminium as one of the good materials alongside wood. Mostly because it is easy to re-work. I have always found that material to be cold, sharp and to taste bad.

LH:
Indeed, the choice of material is intriguing. Especially as Siim Karro in his earlier work has used alternative construction materials, such as myco foam (organic construction material containing mycelium). If adjusting standards to specific users is possible by using mycelium, then using aluminium to bend standards seems like a more complicated task. Let's see if Siim Karro will succeed in re-coding aluminium on a cellular level.

Text:

Artist:

Siim

Karro

Arno

YARDSTICK

Order is being processed. Siim clicked on the tracking number again. The same, cold and indifferent English-language message popped up. Fuck, why did I pay extra for next day delivery. They're sitting there in Sweden with their COVID and national holiday, can't be bothered to send boots to someone.

Siim was really looking forward to those boots. A lot. No, Siim isn't too vain, no, just an average ultrahipster, who might even be the butt of the old "hipster or homeless" joke from some less-hipster hipster. But in any case, his wardrobe has many cool jackets (bombers mainly but also some 1990s leather jackets), trousers always the ideal length and wearing, not seldom, a billed cap with an ironic meaning. Luckily Siim was tall and thin, some would say a model's proportions, a clothes horse really. Siim makes a point for everything to fit well, be the right size and go together well.

A couple days passed. It was three days later. Waking up Friday morning – and that evening a special event was taking place, the one he ordered the boots for – drowsy Siim picked up the phone, having lost hope, already preparing for legal battle with Eytys. But no. There was good news on the screen. "Your parcel XXXX will be carbon neutrally delivered to the DPD parcel locker at Tallinn Viru Terminal between 15:00 and 16:00." Siim was supposed to meet Margit at Argo Bar at 18:00.

Getting home from Viru Centre, Siim didn't even take off his jacket but started tearing open the box: one box, another, then silk paper, then a textile bag – for 314 euros, would you expect anything less! – and then the boots. Boots. Aha. Hmm. "Well, they're almost exactly like on the picture," Siim said to himself, but he suddenly had goosebumps on his arms. Black colour, slight platform sole, modern version of the classic Chelsea boot, a little like Mad Max or something, they have to look that big, the apocalypse is cool. "I have to try them on," Siim decided and started pulling them on. The boots weren't very compliant, they were heavy and uncomfortable. Once he finally got them on, Siim walked stumbling, because the long metal toe got in the way, to the mirror. "Well, exactly what I imagined," Siim said to himself again after staring at himself in the mirror for a minute. He turned his other side to the mirror and struck his signature pose. A little out of proportion somehow. "But that's how it's supposed to be, oversize is in. Yes, these really ARE good boots," said Siim to himself a third time.

He got to Argo just after after 18:00 and Margit was already sitting at the table, saw him from far away and smiled an odd smile. They drank Saperavi wine and made small talk. The conversation was a little stilted somehow, Margit checked her phone a lot. Siim kept on thinking about the boots that were at the same table, or, more precisely, under the table and were increasingly annoying him.

Margit said she wasn't up for going to Sveta, said she had to write an article at home. When they left Argo, in silence, Siim accidentally stepped on her foot. Margit yelped. Siim stumbled home alone and felt disillusioned with life. The boots seemed loose and unstable and the heels made a stupid sound.

Text:

Vetik

Artist:

Kano

Siim

Hanna Larva

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

Using the universal body as yardstick in everyday practice is not only uncomfortable, it is also traumatising. Not only is our environment designed to the standards subservient to the average, but so are our expectations towards our abilities and skills.

Attending Physical Education was amongst my biggest childhood traumas. I ran the slowest, I jumped the least, and when I needed to throw a tennis ball over a 15 metre marker for a 'C', then however much effort I put into it, I wasn't able to throw the ball further than 12.5 metres. I felt especially lousy in relay or ball games where the rest of the team was upset due to my poor performance. But I wasn't unsporty - for seven years I practised competitive ballroom dancing, attending training about five times a week. I was simply exceptionally untalented in track and ball games. In other words, in exactly what I was given grades for at school.

By the way, I wasn't aware I didn't meet standards until I went to school. As a kid, I often rode my bicycle at my auntie's summer house, I played Cops and Robbers and Tag with the other children. I liked to move myself, to spend time outside and to go swimming. Later that changed - when I found out about the limitations of my physical parameters and all sorts of affiliated numbers, I lost the courage to run and throw or catch the ball in front of others. What if they find out I'm weird...

Once, during my BA studies I was on my way to Toompea carrying a canvas. I must have been huffing and puffing as the burden was heavy and I was walking uphill. Halfway, I met my high school PE teacher along with her students. She proclaimed loudly, "Nice to see you exercising!" In response, I think I said something like, "Yes, well, I actually take Pilates classes too." To which the experienced pedagogue stated, that Pilates wasn't real workout.

Artist:

Text:

Hoffmann

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:

Kaunisare

Siim

Karro

Architecture has always sought universal solutions for the creation of an ideal space. An ideal space requires an ideal person, re-designing its user and dictating which activities can be practised in a space in the first place.

Siim Karro has created a multifunctional aluminium cube that is as big as he is and which when unfolded can be used as furniture, a place for storing things, a platform for working out, or other purposes. Going against the standard, he has proceeded from his own measurements, but still, in the miniature environment of his devising in the spacious new development project, he is literally forced into a corner.

It seems that Siim Karro wishes to spotlight the conflicts prevalent in contemporary architecture. On one hand, modern design is moving toward a “custom-made” world – in other words, if you have resources, you can create your own system of measurements going by your foot, instep and elbow. If you don’t have resources, you have to settle for smaller volumes: a mini-house, container, tent or, as Karro proposes with a touch of irony, a fold-up cube.

So what is the absolute minimum for a person? It’s something we’ve all probably thought about during the coronavirus pandemic. At a time when our homes became our workplace and gym, school and extracurricular activity zone for our kids, the home interior had to be reorganized into mini-environments that could be rolled out and folded up, allowing all of the necessary activities to be continued on limited floorspace.

Siim Karro doesn’t give up. Through the cube he created, he enters an apartment in a new development during move-in phase. As his own measurement unit, he performs self-measurement as some hard to define move-in ritual and strains to get a workout that would stand in for physical labour, as if asking, are you satisfied with your place, your cube?

Artist:

Text:

Bogie

standard *n* **1** a level of quality: *cuisine of a high standard* **2** an accepted example of something against which others are judged or measured: *the work was good by any standard* **3** a moral principle of behaviour **4** a flag of a nation or cause **5** an upright pole or a beam used as a support: *a lamp standard* **6** a song that has remained popular for many years > *adj* **7** of a usual, medium, or accepted kind: *a standard cost* **8** of recognized authority: *a standard reference book* **9** denoting pronunciations or grammar regarded as correct and acceptable by native speakers

standard *n* **1** = level, grade **2** = criterion, measure, guideline, example, model, average, norm, gauge **3** = principles, ideals, morals, ethics **4** = flag, banner, ensign > *adj* **7** = usual, normal, customary, average, basic, regular, typical, orthodox; ≠ unusual **8** accepted, official, established, approved, recognized, definitive, authoritative; ≠ unofficial

standardize *or* **-dise** *vb* **-dizing, -dized** *or* **-dising, -dised** to make (things) standard: *to standardize the preparation process*
> **standardization** *or* **-disation** *n*

* *Entries from the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus Essential Edition, Glasgow: Collins, 2020.*

Artist:

Text:

Dracastel

Sim

Kama

Maria

I'm measuring myself. From the top of my head to the soles of my feet. 1840 mm. My head's girth is 500 mm. Half a metre. My foot is 280 mm long. My shin is half a metre long, too, just like my head in 2D projection. Funny to think. To my hipbone it's 1050 mm, to my navel 1150 mm, to my shoulders 1580 mm and to the tip of my nose 1700 mm. When I was a child, I dreamed of being 1580 mm tall, among other things, but then I grew a whole 'nother head, along with the neck. Anyhow. My arm measures 760 mm from the end of my middle finger to shoulder joint, my shoulders are 480 mm wide, my index finger is 90 mm long and it's precisely 200 mm from the tip of my index finger to the end of my thumb. Good to know. Well, enough. Those numbers have now become a room. It fits my body nicely. I sit there and stand and look and think. And then start shifting restlessly for some reason. In spite of it all, something went awry. I check everything again. It should be OK. Those expenses and revenues and all sorts of other measurements and figures. But still restlessness doesn't give me peace. Something is troubling me, something is pounding, wants out. And then it dawns on me: I didn't think to include enough room for my soul! I forgot completely about it, didn't take its measurements or anything. And now it's too late. It slips out the window and is gone. I stand there, looking on helplessly. Of course, at first it feels quiet. But then it gets boring. Bleak and monotonous somehow. I wonder where my spirit went and when it will return. Who knows where it might be by this time? On happier hunting grounds. Under some colonnade in the right kind of dim light, sitting legs crossed and ruminating as it looks up at the arches. A place with enough room to stretch out, and breathe easily. Where an air of blissful irresponsibility can be sensed, where one can just be an onlooker to the game of chance. "I want to be there, too," I sigh sorrowfully. What is a body without a soul? In my longing, I call out for it. Quietly at first, then louder. But no answer comes. Only the wind howls between the buildings as if someone were weeping for it. I have to find my soul! Getting up in a hurry, I bump my head. Looks like I measured things too precisely. No room for growth.

Artist:

Text:

Luiga

Written

Siim Karro

I Am the Measure of All Things

Please read this text carefully before you start your experience. If you have any questions or are not sure about anything, ask someone.

Keep this text in a safe place, you may want to read it again.

What constitutes *I Am the Measure of All Things*?

Standardising, standards and standardisation. How standards dictate and direct the way we do something, and how we evaluate the quality of both the actions and the outcomes of that doing-something. It's a matter of measuring, as the specialist Witold Kula argues that the right to determine measures is an attribute of authority. Then again it is a matter of taste, as the specialist Susan Sontag has noted that rules of taste enforce structures of power.

What is the recommended dose?

One unit, which is idiosyncratically humane and rational. In case that unit and other supporting logic is lacking, take a 175cm tall (white) man as the basis for the dose, or rely on the 1/8-metric system and the ideal idealistic human.

When should you be extra careful while experiencing *I Am the Measure of All Things*?

If you think that everything should be organised and standardised. If you are not sure about the meaning of the abbreviation ISO or what exactly is anthropocentrism. If you are too rational and/or not mediocre enough. If you think you are the pinnacle of nature and not at all a creature. If you don't have any taste, or have too much of it.

What happens if I forget my dose?

If you forget to take your dose, remind yourself as soon as you remember. You might think that instead of taking another dose it is easier to deal with the consequences of forgetting it, but it isn't. No. It isn't. Then go on as before.

What are the possible side effects of *I Am the Measure of All Things*?

You might think that instead of doing something in a way it has been done before - because that is how it is done - you could do it in a way that is actually, depending on the situation - depending on the thoughtful outcome of thinking about the situation - necessary and reasonable to do. In *The Standard Book of Noun-Verb Exhibition Grammar*, the specialist Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk writes that "the "exhibitionary complex" as we understand it today is still firmly embedded within the regime of "matters of fact" - the human as the measure of all things - and should instead be actualised to cope with the "matters of concern" we are currently facing."

If you are concerned about these or any other side effects, talk to someone.

Text:

Esko

Artist:

Karro

Siim