

# Vitamiin

Lilian Hiob:

For Artishok Biennale, Koit and Kaisa are building a playground that will challenge the typical mass produced out of a catalogue playground model. They have the complete right to do so in the sense that in Estonia, there are no officially certified playground fitters.

Siim Preiman:

Weird to think that's even possible. You need to get a permission to build a playground, negotiate the project with various stakeholders, put together a bunch of planning documents. And then once that paperwork is drawn up and approved, the playground will be built by a company that officially doesn't have the competence to do so.

LH:

Play is intertwined with all aspects of life from politics to architecture and sports, but adults tend to forget that. The mini architecture of playgrounds still reproduces houses with gable roofs and princess castles. Kids could use something much more creative and unique, but for some reason we are stuck with imitating adult fantasies.

SP:

Imitating adult behaviour is a crucial part of play and children's development. Think how much children like to play shop, or school, or police and robbers. Kaisa and Koit want to create a playground that could be used by children as well as parents. Thinking of a typical playground ritual, I see children in the middle playing and parents around the edges reading or scrolling.

LH:

At present, unfortunately, adults can't really use playgrounds together with their child. The slides are narrow, the swings are low - they're simply not meant for people of our size. Now when I think of Kaisa's and Koit's proposed double tiered table... Do you, for instance, think that you could work at a table with kids playing underneath?

SP:

I deeply question that. What do you think, are the residents of Tallinn social enough to spend time around this round table?

LH:

I guess not.

SP:

That's why this project is cool. Perhaps if we had more public space that brought us together, after a while people would start talking to each other more.

*Text:*

Artist:

Kaisa Koit

Koit Koit

Joanna

When presenting their work, Randmäe and Sööt talked about most playgrounds being constructed according to specific standards. Three-dimensional objects have been put together from two-dimensional pieces and wherever you go, a predictable and familiar environment awaits. Sööt and Randmäe create a different, multi-layered playground for the Artishok Biennale, where they have thought of children and parents, as well as rain not ending play.

Children with unspoilt imagination can give entirely new value and meaning to the simplest of objects. But of course they can value an exciting and different kind of environment too. Everything new cultivates cleverness, playfulness and develops creative thinking. And that's why this project is commendable.

I've always been interested in museums' and galleries' educational areas, where children are given a chance to play, craft and create something by themselves. Often, adults can take part too - I have a vivid memory of enthusiastically building tiny sculptures at the Manchester Art Museum's children's area in 2019. I'd like to do that again and again.

That's why I'm especially fond of Randmäe and Sööt designing their installation with adults in mind too. Whether consciously or not, but this way, the installation deals with the burning issue of lack of communication between children and their parents, drowning in the virtual and the overall scarce contact. Although picking up one's smart phone is possible everywhere, creating environments that support interaction and partaking is definitely more useful than not. All sorts of smartness and augmented reality have been crazy popular recently, it seems like these days nothing can or should be done in any other way. But really, it'd be nice if there were more real people doing real things with their real children.

Artist:

Text:

Hoffmann

Kaisa Sööt

Sööt Randmäe

# 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 Ranzmae

# Bogie

**imitate** *vb* -tating, -tated **1** to copy the manner or style of, or take as a model: *he remains rock's most imitated guitarist* **2** to mimic or impersonate, esp. for amusement **3** to make a copy or reproduction of; duplicate > **imitable** *adj* > **imitator** *n*

**imitate** *vb* **1** = copy, follow, repeat, echo, emulate, ape, simulate, mirror **2** do an impression of, mimic, copy

**imitation** *n* **1** a copy of an original or genuine article **2** an instance of imitating someone: *her Coward imitations were not the best thing she did* **3** behaviour modelled on the behaviour of someone else: *to learn by imitation* > *adj* **4** made to resemble something which is usually superior or more expensive: *imitation leather*

**imitation** *n* **1** = replica, fake, reproduction, sham, forgery, counterfeiting, likeness, duplication **2** = impression, impersonation **3** = copying, resemblance, mimicry > *adj* = artificial, mock, reproduction, dummy, synthetic, man-made, simulated, sham; ≠ real

**imitative** *adj* **1** imitating or tending to copy **2** copying or reproducing an original, esp. in an inferior manner: *imitative painting* **3** onomatopoeic

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

Artist:

Text:

Dracastel

# 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 wellbeing<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> Play favours a messy milieu, wildness!

Erosion limits, yet play, ambivalent by nature,<sup>7</sup> 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

# 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

# Maria

Under the table is a forest of legs. I am under the table, too, but only because I am small. Almost as tall as a leg. I can barely reach the tabletop. It's not my place up there, anyway. There are only adults and their things up there. I'm all about play and play things. My things are more or less the same but a little softer and simpler. And they don't work in real life. No, actually, if you play with them, they work even better. You just have to give them a little push to get going. It's hard to explain.

Incidentally, those legs I mentioned belong to my parents. They have four legs like me, but they aren't very good at playing. And the table has a good many legs as well, many more than I have. The table isn't a toy or a real thing, I don't think. The table is just a table. The adults have a bigger table. I am under the big table with my small table. Strange, I know. But actually, it's very nice down here. I like being small, by the way. And here, underneath the table, I feel especially small. Besides legs, there's also sand under the table. Sand is just sand, I think - neither real nor make-believe - but what's interesting is that you can play with it in every way. Maybe because of that, parents don't really think too highly of sand, they just say, "sand gets everywhere." But I think sand stays pretty much in one place. I have watched it.

In the big table there are holes for peeking. I think they're there so that father or mother could keep an eye on me but they are so busy that sometimes I look at them myself so that the holes don't feel totally lonely. I don't have the energy to watch them for long. Then I retreat under my table again, because the real world seems pretty dull. And a bit too big. And it's so nice here under the table in the sand.

Artist:

Text:

# Luisa

Kaisa Sööt and Koit Randmäe create objects and environments and dream of a more inspiring public space and living environment. Getting their inspiration from the under-table worlds experienced in childhood, they created a playground called *Board Game* for Artishok. It brings different generations and their ways of spending time to and under the same multi-level table.

Playgrounds are places where creativity and control, art and architecture meet. They have an extremely important place in child development, offering a possibility of meeting other kids and to “practise” freedom, albeit generally under the vigilant supervision of a parent. Set inside a sandbox, *Board Game* requires a creative approach and requires both kids and parents to leave their usual comfort zone. Turning hierarchies partially on their head offers the youngsters a hiding place away from constant parental care and supervision, while parents can rest momentarily from meeting the child’s needs and enjoy socializing with other parents.

Through abstract elements, openings and other connections, the table surface offers different alternatives for potential contact between the two worlds. Any sort of room is practised through the activities that take place there; on a playground, connection and disconnection are closely intertwined with the nature of play and imagination. In a story in *One-Way Street*, Walter Benjamin astutely describes how in children’s imaginations, all sorts of oppositions disappear and boundaries blur: “Standing behind the doorway curtain, the child becomes himself something floating and white, a ghost. The dining table under which he is crouching turns him into the wooden idol in a temple whose four pillars are the carved legs.”

But how to avoid the potential risk that the parents will be working at their laptops behind the table and the children begin imitating that situation at their own table?

Artist:

Text:

# Säde

Kaisa Sööt

Koit Randmäe



*me*

## TABLE FOR TWO

One beautiful morning, Koit woke up and brewed himself some coffee. Nothing unusual, just brewed coffee, got a sweet curd snack from the fridge to accompany the coffee and consumed both slowly, gazing out the window. Behind the window was a) a birch that partially blocked the view; b) old pipes meant for drying the washing; c) other things that can be seen from an apartment window in Lasnamäe, including grass, asphalt and two men with plastic bags walking quickly toward the Araxes liquor store. It was 9:45, which meant that the alcohol sales would soon begin and the men's gait was fast, cheerful, they even made little happy hops like boys when lessons were over and they finally were on their way out from school to play and mess around in the alleys and stairwells. The best place to play was an abandoned construction site, but an old Caucasian Shepherd dog and watchman kept guard there and if they caught you, oh boy.

Koit started out on his way. He passed Kotka shop, crossed Kotka bridge, stopped for a second to admire Tallinn's most urbanistic view, which unfolded from the first step of the stair leading down to the bus stop. On the bus, Koit was in for a bad surprise - he didn't have his farecard. He otherwise liked riding the bus but this time it was unpleasant, he kept his eyes on the road, worrying about a raid by the inspectors. He wanted to hide away. He already imagined how the municipal police inspectors would discover his crime, haul him away to their cave, demand a letter of explanation and a fine. His palms became moist and his heart started racing.

Kaisa was waiting for Koit in the office. As she had yoga in the morning, she got to work earlier. She liked being in the office by herself, she liked not having to stand by the water cooler and talk about the last episode of Game of Thrones. Kaisa didn't watch GoT, because she had once read the book, before it was cool, and thought it was low quality.

Koit entered the elevator. The bus ride had made his thoughts discombobulated. Anxiety gripped him and set up shop somewhere around his pancreas, deadlines started weighing heavily, today's tasks seemed immeasurably undoable. The lift reached the fourth floor. Suddenly he was walking on legs that had taken on the consistency of cotton. Somehow Koit still got to his desk, all wobbly and paranoid. He looked at the desk. Looked some more. Kaisa looked at Koit from the other end of the office, sensing that something was amiss, because Koit always came by her desk first. He knew that he didn't have to talk about GoT with Kaisa. You didn't have to talk with Kaisa at all, you could just be with her.

Koit laid the laptop on the table. He knelt. Got under the desk. Kaisa quickly walked over to same desk, squatted down. "Hey, what's up?" Kaisa asked Koit sitting under the desk. Koit's face was now calm and cheerful. He looked at Kaisa, made a vague gesture of greeting and then said: "Hey, get down here too. It's great down here." The cosmic emptiness in his eyes sparked Kaisa's curiosity. Kaisa reflected that the last time she hung out under a table, she was about 6. It was a different world under the table. You could play there, think up things, it was safe. Kaisa crouched down and crawled under the table to sit next to Koit. "You know what, it really is - mega," she said in a minute and they laughed in unison. "Let me just get my coffee, as long as no one else is here yet. Let's have a picnic."

Artist:

Text:

*Veetik*

*Kaisa GoT*

*Koit Lasnamäe*

# Naviten

Kaisa Sööt & Koit Randmäe  
*Untitled (Board Game)*

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.

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What constitutes *Untitled (Board Game)*?

It is a playground where thoughts about work, play and imitation convene. It is fairly simple, even though it could have been complicated; it is not easy to be simple; nor is it difficult to seem complicated. The table is round, but unfinished, as these things do not get ready. These are for being, and they have beings within, if there are any around. Only then there can be a thought of it being ready; for something.

What is the recommended dose?

Some above, others below; some bigger, others smaller. Some in-betweeners in-between, somewhere between the second and the third dimension. Who is where, does not play a role here, as roles are here for the taking. And for the sharing. The tendency is still towards the not-meant-for. Or at least it should be. It is recommended. It is also recommended to keep in mind that recommendations (and standards) are recommendatory.

When should you be extra careful while experiencing *Untitled (Board Game)*?

If you are too stuck in your role. If you do not like to play games. If you do not like to sit. If you have an issue with tables inside exhibition spaces. Like with any game, it has its rules, and these rules don't have to be taken seriously, because it is a game.

What happens if I forget my dose?

If you forget to take your dose, remind yourself as soon as you remember. Then go on as before, but slightly more gleefully, please. Forget your age and/or social standing (for some time).

What are the possible side effects of *Untitled (Board Game)*?

[Hurried whispering]  
- Shhh! Wait, hush...  
- What? D'you hear something?  
- Look, it's moving! It moved!  
- What?! Where!?! D'you mean that one there? Black pants and shoes?  
- What? No, most wear black... Look, I meant that one, beside the jeans, there, c'mon...  
- What's with it?  
- It moved, throw some sand, let's see what happens.  
- Ok.

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

*Text:*

Artist:

# Esko