

Vitamiin

Lilian Hiob:

As printmaking is reproducible and Ann Pajuväli studied graphic arts at The Estonian Academy of Arts, she must feel right at home with the theme of this edition of Artishok Biennale. Over time, Ann has created a unique catalogue of reusable motifs in Adobe Illustrator. It correlates clearly with the principles of building Väike-Õismäe. Dormitory neighbourhoods have been constructed from standard materials and their parts originate from catalogues.

By the way, in 1974, when the construction of Väike-Õismäe started, the district's architects Mart Port and Malle Meelak initiated some changes in the "building catalogue": 10 new serial numbers (111-121) were introduced with project updates that allowed for larger kitchens and hallways, and the flats were to be grouped in pairs with a shared lobby. I read that Väike-Õismäe was planned based on the Golden Section. In a way, Ann's work is a micro version of Väike-Õismäe. I often recognise a search for balance and harmony in her body of work in general.

Siim Preiman:

The funny thing is that Ann herself said her piece was not necessarily relating to Väike-Õismäe, although it springs from there. When I heard that, I wrote down in my notebook that I should ignore that comment.

LH:

Let's ignore it!

SP:

The drawing that is likely to change by the time she presents the work, reminded me a bit of an oasis. I can't remember where I read this from, but I'm sure that in literature, the 9-storey houses lining the Õismäe circular road have been called the Great Wall of China. When I saw her latest design for the drawing, I felt a bit of an Asian vibe. Not everything she does is like that, but this piece sure is. And so she surrounds this oriental oasis with a concrete wall, that is clearly inspired by Õismäe's concrete, which is or might be called the Great Wall of China and which also has an oasis in the middle of it. Beautiful!

LH:

The hemline and chocolate-bar-like balcony balustrades characteristic to Väike-Õismäe could easily come from Ann's elements catalogue. When planning the neighbourhood, an aim was to create bright impassable landscaped yards that would aid the cultivation of community feeling. Cars weren't going to be a part of the area.

SP:

The neighbourhood is filled with cars now.

LH:

I don't think Ann is telling the story of the Õismäe we know today. She shows us the designers' idea from when the ideal version of Väike-Õismäe was only just being drawn up.

Text:

Artist:

Pajuväli

Vitamiin

Siim Preiman:

Have you ever even been to an amber shop in Tallinn?

Lilian Hiob:

Nope.

SP:

Me neither. I don't think they're very good seducers.

LH:

I guess not. But maybe these amber shops don't really matter. What I think is important is advertisement as will-o'-the-wisp that draws you somewhere you have great expectations for, that instills something good and beautiful, but the ad itself ends up being the best part of the promised product. A will-o'-the-wisp is such that as you get closer, it just about escapes you and doesn't hand itself over. I have a feeling that Anna Mari's delicate sculptures work in a similarly inviting way. You don't necessarily want to hold them, rather just to admire them. She's installed her aesthetic sculptures in places where there is nothing other than the seducer itself. Like next to closed shops or on empty side streets. The will-o'-the-wisp is like that - when you get to it, there is nothing there.

SP:

Nightlife is filled with such ghost lights. Getting back home from a party can be all about following mirages and the city centre is the most dangerous area for pickpocketing and violent crime.

Currently, the bells are being tolled for nightlife in the Old Town. Anna Mari's sculptures are like reminders of the will-o'-the-wisps that once had a place in the Old Town, but no longer do. I'm not sure how long it will take for nightlife to be killed off there but it is a clearly set goal. Soon the Old Town will become a quiet and peaceful residential neighbourhood with a few amber shops here and there.

LH:

Same with the dwindling occurrence of will-o'-the-wisps in nature as marshes are drained and land is repurposed for agriculture and forestry. What's happening in nature and in the cities is somehow aligned here, which is why it makes total sense that we meet Anna Mari's will-o'-the-wisps during a dark and wet period.

Text:

Artist:

Anna Mari

Lilian Hiob



Vitamiin

Siim Preiman:

What came to my mind in the case of Jass Kaselaan was that he is the perfect artist for this exhibition. That's because he is a mould maker and a replicator. For example, at *Still-life*, an exhibition at Hobusepea Gallery, he showed earth-coloured epoxy bones and gearwheels. At the exhibition *Sheep* at Tartu Art House, he showed one hundred human heads. He is a sculptor, of course, and mould making is a craft that comes with the discipline. He has used this craft to produce several of his important works. I especially liked how he humbly mentioned a work called *The Square of Dolls* that he'd once made. Of course we know the work that he won the Köler Prize for and that is now exhibited in the courtyard of Kumu Art Museum! Anyway, an interesting shift happens here. To create a copy, you need a mould, which is the negative of what you want to produce. In the case of *The Square of Dolls*, the dolls stand in the middle surrounded by photos of prefab houses, but now he creates an ensemble of prefab houses... how many of them were there again? Two? Four?

Lilian Hiob:

More! A whole load.

SP:

He then also said there might be drawings on the walls too. I'm not sure it is essential for viewing the work as the mould or as the negative for *The Square of Dolls*, with the symbols having been swapped.

LH:

An interesting thing about sculpture is that even though it is production based on copying, then unlike in printmaking, where you could be replicating a lithography in hundreds, in sculpture you don't exercise the full potential of copying. The aim is still to create unique objects.

SP:

Yes, well replicating bronze for example...

LH: .

..must require a lot of resource! But the interesting thing is that we can tell from Jass' models that human hand is not capable of creating exact copies. People seem to aspire to the perfect copy - it has an otherworldly character. But there will always be human mistakes involved.

Artist:

Kaselaan

Text:

Vitamin

Siim Preiman:

How smart is Joana's code? Is it a process that's capable of learning, or can the code only repeat itself?

Lilian Hiob:

The nature of coding seems to be that you give it a framework and within that framework, by freely doing its own thing, the code renews itself through pre-existing elements.

Just like people in capitalistic systems - there is an illusion of freedom, but it only applies in given limits. That's why Joana's code originates from the 'copyleft movement' - it is freeware that everyone can contribute to. You can take the code someone else has written and develop it. But the developed version will have to remain freeware too. Nothing is behind a paywall.

SP:

I think of programming as writing, as design. Code always follows grammar, it has syntax. There are rules one needs to follow to communicate something. But I've never thought that code could be a script for dancing.

LH:

At the same time, even the more traditional choreography scripts, guidelines for dancers, are such that you wouldn't understand them without being a dancer yourself. It's the same thing with computer code but its level of abstraction is greater. I think one could approach it as a kind of a semiotic sign system or like a foreign language. Considering the influence the digital sphere exercises in the contemporary society, it would make sense to teach coding at school in the same way as German or Russian are currently taught.

SP:

Yes, you have a tactical advantage if you know the language.

LH:

Exactly. Knowing computer code is liberating - you may be in the US, India, Finland or Ukraine, code is a means of communication that goes beyond national languages. And not only! By mastering it, one can aid political revolution (Belarus), affect political regime (Russia, the US) and alter society's opinions.

Artist:

Text:

Vitamiin

Lilian Hiob:

Johanna Ulfsak is weaving a 9x2m volleyball net featuring oversized babies and scar tissue. When I saw her presentation, I thought the image was very baby-hostile. Humongous babies and volleyball players - seems like someone might hit the babies with a ball. As a parent, what do you think of the balls and the babies?

Siim Preiman:

That's a cool idea that the babies might be hit when someone plays ball on that court. It brings in a new association to violence. I think she said what's happening to these children is a spectacle. It reminds me of how I was searching for birth videos on Youtube before my son was born. I found some Youtuber couples who had been broadcasting together for years and now that they were having a baby, they would

be broadcasting that too. So you get a 25-minute programme of how they're giving birth at home and then finally the baby is shown to the camera. I remember thinking, "Wow, now this is *The Truman Show*." It is the fortune or misfortune of the baby that

he was born to a Youtuber family. His first steps, words etc are for millions to see.

No one will ask his permission. This too is a violent spectacle of the child.

LH:

I was also thinking about how parents often make their child do a particular sport. They want him to be the best at it. They're living their own dreams through their child.

SP:

I had to sell my saxophone to feed you, so now you must become the best jazz musician in Estonia!

LH:

Exactly! I used to be a swimmer and would encounter parents who were absolutely obsessed with their child's training and with her becoming the best at it, they would be buying her the best swimsuits etc. Philosopher Donna Haraway who's known for her quote "Make kin not babies!" thinks, for example, that instead of having babies, we should be rethinking the family model: live together with our closest ones in groups going beyond the heteronormative family model. According to Haraway, communities that aren't based on blood relations, gender, race or religious beliefs, or even species, offer an opportunity for moving forward from the destructive anthropocentric era.

Text:

Artist:

Ulfsak

Vitamin

Lilian Hiob:

Not that I feel at home in architectural history, but Marc's work made me think of Mies van der Rohe and his 'skin and bones architecture'. Marc speaks of deconstructing architecture and revealing the skeletons of buildings. It also seems to me that he is critical of architecture as a culture of copies. He tries to give each of his edifices its own face and identity and reveal something about the materials used in construction. Today's architecture is clinical and slick, but his works are like piles of architecture. They make me think of wartime ruins or that they have got on in years. Even as new, his objects look very old.

Siim Preiman:

What interests me most is that he is hands on. Architecture seems like a hierarchical discipline to me. You start at an office as a young architect, probably working on competition bids that are checked by someone else before they get submitted. If your project does happen to win, by that time you're likely to already have started on the next bid and the winning entry will be given to the so-called real architects for further development. Or the question of delegation. Even if one of your projects is realised, then it won't be you actually building it. Imagine, you go on site and see beautiful straight pipes coming from the right and from the left, but they meet in an ugly crooked joint. You have drawn a building, imagined how things will work, how they're made, but later it might be thousands of others working on that project. In the case of Marc, it is only him alone. Like he said - he is an architect and a bricklayer, he does everything by himself from start to finish. In the case of architecture, that's not necessarily usual.

LH:

Marc has said that in architecture, material is always subservient to the drawing, the geometry and proportional systems. He opposes to that. He says that he'd like his structures to be more human because contemporary buildings are increasingly colossal and materials are dehumanised, but when looking at his works, are they more human? Do humans want to enter them? Rather, they appear a bit eerie.

SP:

True. Instead, his edifices become a parallel for bleak and drawing-based architecture. It seems like in both cases, be it drawn up first or born in the moment, architecture is only the best of the options at hand. An ideal human-shaped space to use or to live in doesn't exist.

Text:

Artist:

Marc

Leschellia

Vitamin

Lilian Hiob:

How can we criticise the event's main sponsor?

Siim Preiman:

Sponsors need to be thanked and not criticised.

LH:

Absolutely! I'm really excited about this project. I like that it takes place in a mall, in public space. Especially at T1, that weird place that no one really goes to. There have been previous attempts at bringing art there, but maybe Artishok will activate a new crowd.

SP:

I live next to T1 and I can tell you that there are always plenty of people in the supermarket. But yes, conceptually it is a great location, as that mall is a perfect example of the style I like to call 'fake premium'. Usually 'fake premium' means marble or precious wood imitation in laminate, or fake gold. T1 has an enormous atrium, restaurants overlooking Tallinn Old Town, a Ferris wheel... upon opening, the promise of this mall was huge, but it failed. The wonderful shopping paradise didn't materialise. I have a feeling that Pieterjan works with superficialness and I wonder whether it would have been better if his performance took place in a functioning mall, or maybe the figure is more precise now that it takes place in a mall that people just pass on their way to Ülemiste Centre.

LH:

I think the location works well. No Bull Energy Drink is probably also only a shell that contains the same old Red Bull energy drink or a cheaper equivalent. Fake promises, fake promises...

SP:

It is quite telling that Artishok's sponsor is an energy drink. I won't get tired of saying that it seems like a truly back-breaking festival to me - 10 days, 10 artists, 10 writers, 10 locations and then everyone goes huff-puff-puff on a marathon and the sponsor is an energy drink.

LH:

It's perfect!

SP:

I have to admit I don't quite understand whether he is critical... When I look at the material he's submitted, it all looks yummy. When I envisage a Tesla owner drinking Red Bull and taking selfies, then that looks yummy too.

LH:

Well, he did quote Batman in his presentation: "To conquer fear - you must become fear." To see through an ad, to overcome its influence, you must become it.

Text:

Artist:

Pieterjan

Artishok

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:

Karro

Siim

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

Vitamiin

Siim Preiman:

It might be a critical note to start with but to discuss a generation based East vs West topic by putting a 6500 years old rock on the one side and Lenin to the other side... I wonder whether 6500 years ago East and West even existed? That megalithic structure is by no means western. The people who erected it might have been completely unaware that eastwards, there are others living nearby a different rock. But it might well be that you and I still remember that indeed, there was a Lenin, whereas when our children get shown a menhir or a dolmen and then Lenin, they will have no idea what the difference between them is.

Lilian Hiob:

Lenin becomes another symbol from the depths of history, just like the erected rock. It simply takes time for the image of Lenin to reach that point. The format of a transforming picture that Ann Mirjam and Szymon are using, is a figurative attempt to pack Lenin away into the realms of history. To free his image of the emotion that it has always brought about. I was also thinking how after some time, the few remaining monuments will become more significant.

SP:

Yes, we might not agree with these monuments as their purpose is to plant a bygone ideology. We might not be proud of them but if we hide them, then what do we do... deny that what they represent happened altogether? That would totally wipe out our memory! I wonder if someone understands that Lenin is being put back to its original location in Tallinn by some 30-year-olds?

LH:

I mean I don't know. Lenin even gets put onto t-shirts. Only a few years ago, Adidas came out with t-shirts with CCCP written on the front. Distance is key...

SP:

Exactly. It feels like blending Lenin with the monolith could signify some hope for the East. Or fear. It depends on whether you want to forget or whether you are afraid of forgetting. But looking from the West, it is all a historic mish mash and it doesn't matter - you can put Lenin as well as a rock onto a t-shirt.

Text:

Artist:

Ann Mirjam

Szymon