



**ENM**



The Estonian National Museum's  
main building at Raadi

An essay on spatial culture

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The Estonian National Museum’s main building at Raadi  
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International architectural design competition  
for the Estonian National Museum from  
15 June to 10 November 2005

The architectural design for the building was  
completed between 2007 and 2012.

The building opened to the public on 29 September 2016.

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competition to construction 139

Estonian National Museum’s  
new main building at Raadi 255

Photographs by Paul Kuimet.  
Taken between 11 January  
and 17 May 2016 339

Dorell. Ghotmeh. Tane / Architects 427

*As architects, we only provoke situations.  
Uncertainty and doubt remain our most important design tools.*

– Dorell. Ghotmeh. Tane / Architects, 2005<sup>1</sup>

*As a city, Tartu still has the extraordinary aptitude for stumbling over itself  
with each boost it makes.*

– Berk Vaher, 2010<sup>2</sup>

*Each culture defines its paradigm of what must be remembered (that is, preserved)  
and what must fall into oblivion. The latter is cast out of the collective memory and,  
in a way, 'ceases to exist'. But with the change of time, of the system of cultural  
codes, the paradigm of memory and oblivion changes, too. That which had been  
declared 'really existent' may turn out to be 'as though non-existent' and doomed  
to oblivion, whereas the non-existent may become existent and meaningful.*

– Juri Lotman, 1985<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

From the explanatory statement of the entry “Memory field” by Dorell, Ghotmeh, Tane / Architects in the Estonian National Museum architectural competition.

<sup>2</sup>

Berk Vaher's comment to Aare Pilv's blog post on a new office building on Ülikooli Street. A. Pilv, Sein. – Pilve koht, 20 April 2010 (<http://aaree.blogspot.com/ee/2010/04/sein.html>) Accessed on 15 May 2016).

<sup>3</sup>

J. Lotman, The Concept of Memory in Cultural Perspective. – *Akadeemia*, 2013, nr 10, p 1731–1735.

# The museum and spatial culture

## Introduction

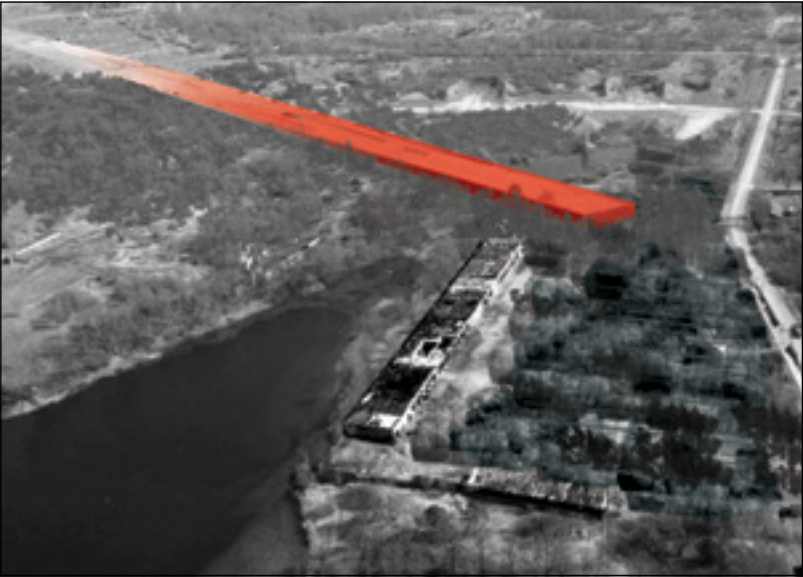
The new building of the Estonian National Museum (ENM) at Raadi on the north-eastern border of Tartu is simple in form and concept. Situated along the axis of the runway of a former Soviet military airbase, it literally emerges from its surface and figuratively takes to the air, like the museum and the Estonian nation itself, as also commented by the architects about the building. This essay, then, will also treat this as a take-off point that inspires discussion on issues related to the museum, memory, identity and spatial culture. We will try to find an answer to the question of what role museum architecture, and the creation of public space more broadly, plays in local, national and international contexts.

Estonian author Valdur Mikita has said that Estonia is the only country in the world where a mushroom exhibition draws more visitors than large sports competitions do spectators. Indeed, Estonia has the largest number of museum visits per inhabitant in Europe.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, museums rarely catch the attention of cultural critics.

The museums that enjoy great public trust, on the other hand, tend towards complacency and fail to take an active part in debates on social developments. The ENM is a gratifying example in this respect. Established in 1909, the institution has in recent years organised fascinating exhibitions, and as its controversial new building in combination with the intriguing exhibitions is far from a safe bet, it deserves heightened attention from the critics.

The museum building, a piece of conceptual architecture designed by an international architectural firm, performs the function of cooling the nationalism that tends to overflow, bringing the extremes – unavoidable when talking about a national museum – together in the middle ground. The striking minimalism of the building is intellectually cool and speaks in the universal, big-city language of the International Style, rather than the local vernacular.

Raadi in April 2005. Lake Raadi and the remains of the old distillery can be seen in the bottom left corner, with a second-hand car dealership in the background and disintegrating service buildings from the former Soviet military airbase to the right.



The placement of the museum building as proposed by DGT.







The book

It is uncommon to publish studies on new buildings. At the same time, a boom in art museum construction has brought about a proliferation of bad architecture books. They are descriptive in content and veer towards marketing. They contain explanatory statements by the architects along with their drawings and plans, and views of empty exhibition halls. Unfortunately, neither the global publishers of architecture books nor small independent publishers have offered an exciting alternative to publications of this kind.

In Estonia, where only two purpose-built museum buildings had been designed before the National Museum – the Museum of Occupations (by Kavakava and Head Arhitektid, 2003) and Kumu (by Pekka Vapaavuori, 2006) – such publications have not emerged. One exception is the architecturally and historically important seaplane hangar in Tallinn (by Christiani & Nielsen, 1916–1917; reconstruction design by KOKO Architects, 2011), which was reconstructed and opened as a branch of the Maritime Museum, and led to the publication of a hefty volume.<sup>5</sup> Looking at other types of new buildings, we see that only one has had a book dedicated to it in the last two decades, the Narva College of the University of Tartu (by Kavakava Architects, 2012).<sup>6</sup> Symptomatically, that volume mainly discusses the history of the institution, while the chapter on the architecture of the new building summarises what the architects have already said.

At the same time, Estonian architecture historians have been productively publishing accounts of individual buildings from earlier periods. The per capita ratio is probably among the highest in the world. Studies on churches and manor houses are particularly numerous.

I do not mean to claim that a book on a building is essentially more valuable than a single article – the opposite is often the case – the main point is, instead, to ask whether it is possible at all to write a monograph on a brand new building. After all, approaching architecture with a method that proceeds from particular instances to generalisations is theoretically questionable. As a rule, cultural critics and historians treat their subject deductively, retrospectively and with hindsight. If, however, a researcher sets out to reflect upon a building that is not even completed at the time of writing and draws broader conclusions about architectural culture on that basis, the result may be necessarily mythical, perhaps even a form of wishful thinking.

A temporal and spatial distance from the building being studied is fundamental to writing on architecture. If an author is unable to detach from that environment, they may end up treating the everyday elements as natural and irrelevant and focus on the ideas that seem relevant to them. That would be a failure, however, as pragmatic

<sup>5</sup> *Vesilennukite angaar. Lennukuurist muuseumiks.* Ed. Mihkel Karu. Tallinn: Eesti Meremuuseum, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Uus maja vana kohal. Tartu Ülikooli Narva Kolledži õppehoone lugu. A new house in an old place. The story of the new building of the Narva College of the University of Tartu.* Ed. Kaarel Vanamõlder. Narva: Tartu Ülikooli Narva Kolledž, 2012.



Ediciones Poligrafa, a tiny publisher in Barcelona, commendably publishes a series on new museum buildings, but the pocket-size paperback volumes bolster the anonymous format of architecture blogs.

[edicionespoligrafa.com](http://edicionespoligrafa.com)





Tastefully renovated and transformed into a museum, the historic seaplane hangar has emerged as a Tallinn landmark.

routine decisions (political agreements regarding financing, detailed plans, public procurements, design work, budgeting and much else) often play a more significant role than the original intention of the architect in shaping the end result.

On the other hand, architecture criticism is aimed at a broader public who may not care about urban planning at all and wants precisely to read about what ideas the architecture conveys. In the end, the National Museum building is also meant for ordinary people, for whom the museum is a symbolic structure. I believe that to some extent myth-creation is justified in an architecture book.

I wrote this book in Viljandi, where I have settled after living in Tallinn and Tartu. This small town has proven a favourable “no man’s land” for contemplating Tartu as the small big city or big small town that it is in the Estonian context. Viljandi also provided an impartial point of view on the fundamental disagreements between Tallinn and Tartu, which could not be completely avoided in this book either.

Looking towards Tartu from the keyhole perspective provided by Viljandi, along the way lies a glacial melt water valley – the Loire of Estonia as it has been described by architect Ülo Stöör – deep forests, fertile fields, the dwindling Lake Võrtsjärv and Emajõgi River, a one-time conduit of trade, which today has lost its significance as a commercial artery. In any case, a river – always flowing and never the same – has been the source and assurance of creativity in Tartu as in many other artistic and literary cities. In some respects, DGT’s point of view on Tartu from Paris was similar to mine, although on another scale. It is precisely the gaze of the onlooker, naive and free of background noise, that helped to create the National Museum building as it stands today.

This book is divided into five volumes, which generally present events in chronological order. In the first volume, I introduce the reader to the history of the ENM and talk about architecture in Estonia in recent decades. I discuss Tartu at length, describing the changes that the National Museum building may bring about in the city as a whole.

In the second volume, I focus on the international architectural design competition organised in 2005 and the subsequent design and construction process. I also provide a short overview of the 1993 design competition, whose winning entry was never realised. The period between 1993 and 2013, when the government decided to fund the construction of the National Museum, I will call a period of cultural explosion, following Tartu semiotician Juri Lotman. Within this period, we can see cultural, social, political and economic aspects that may, but need not, have given birth to the National Museum building. Retrospectively, we have a “pre-disposition” to regard turns of events that happen by chance as necessary, although

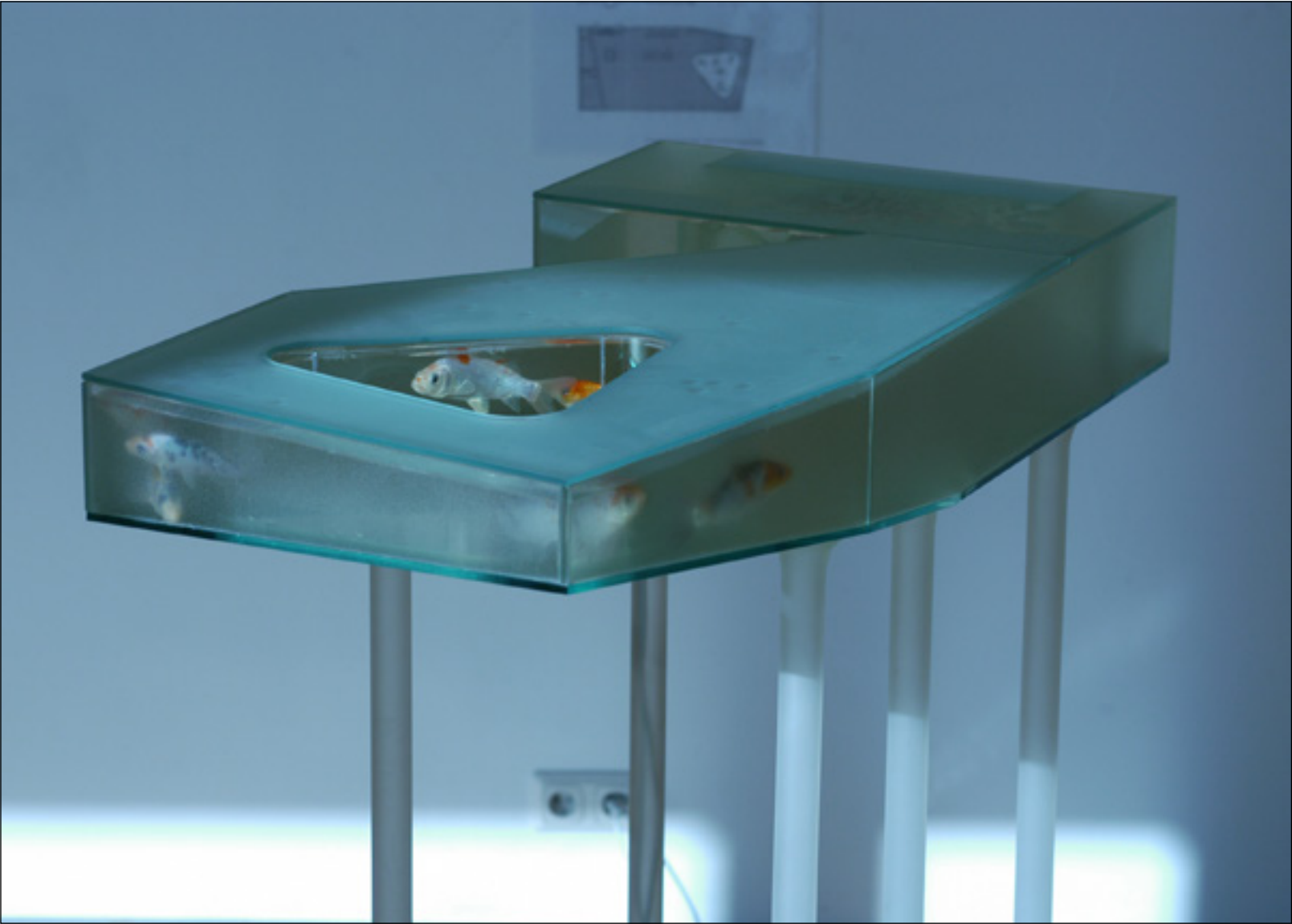


history could have developed differently. The researcher must find the golden mean between their own perceptions and the adaptation of reality within the confines of existing knowledge. In the final stage of the explosion, the indefinite range of possible scenarios rapidly transforms into a temporal flow with limited options. Such “moments” are the most difficult for historians in explicating cultural phenomena, for they require the suppression of fantasy, delving into the facts and relying on persuasive skills. Figuratively speaking, the researcher must identify the event that “decided everything”. These are the events that made subsequent developments inevitable. In the case of the National Museum building, I will point out two key moments: first, the political resolution in 2003 to locate the museum building at Raadi and, second, the appointment of Veljo Kaasik to lay down the initial criteria for the design competition. Although it must be said that the decisions I have chosen to emphasise represent but one possible view on potential key moments. All history writers have their own attitudes, and other versions of the pivotal points in the genesis of the building admittedly circle both within the National Museum and around it.<sup>7</sup>

In the third volume I describe the finished building. First, I give an overview of the structural aspect of the building and then discuss the built environment from the perspective of an architecture critic. I highlight the aspects of the building that have excited me the most and, equally subjectively, leave out some other nuances.

The forth volume is a photographic essay of Raadi and the museum building by Paul Kuimet, shot in the spring of 2016.

The fifth volume describes Dorell Ghotmeh Tane Architects. DGT came together in 2005, precisely to take part in the ENM architectural design competition. Over the course of ten years they have created very different and successful designs across the world, but the opening of the ENM will probably really put them on the global architecture map.



A model of the Museum of Occupations, which now stands at the foot of Toompea in Tallinn. The museum was completed in 2003 as a cooperative effort between Kava-kava Architects and Head Arhitektid.

<sup>7</sup> Many have told me that the museum was completed thanks to politician Rein Lang (Minister of Culture from 2011 to 2013). He was the one that pushed the funding decision through in the cabinet. Although Lang’s contribution was undoubtedly important, in this essay I am more interested in the more abstract developments that determined the birth of concrete architecture.

A map of Estonia, Livonia and Courland from 1910.





Estonian National Museum

The Estonian National Museum was established in Tartu in 1909 by Estonian intellectuals who aimed to preserve their cultural heritage and support the national identity.<sup>8</sup> Officially, Estonians were at the time divided into residents of the provinces of Estonia and Livonia within the Russian Empire, which means that the Estonian museum established in the city of Tartu, Livonia, essentially existed outside the political reality of the time. Notwithstanding the fact that they had no independent country of their own, there was not even any indication of when such a thing might come into being. The official establishment of the National Museum (which was preceded by a number of “proto-museums” over the course of half a century<sup>9</sup>), however, fell in a period known as the “Renaissance of Tartu” (1895–1905). This was a time when ethnic Estonian intellectuals and merchants began to use the Estonian language instead of German when doing business with each other. In contrast to the national awakening in the mid-19th century, intellectual pursuits were now being backed by the Estonian capital both in rural areas and towns, where various societies were formed, usually on the outskirts of town, as the Germans controlled the town centres. A fundamental change occurred with the opening of the building of the Vanemuine Choral and Theatrical Society in the centre of Tartu in 1906; this was the first time Estonians asserted themselves spatially in the centre of the university town. The “tribal art nouveau” building designed by Finnish architect Armas Lindgren would come to be seen as the progenitor of Estonian architecture in the 1920s. Following this example, Estonian societies also began to erect their buildings in other town centres: the Estonia Society in Tallinn, Endla in Pärnu, Säde in Valga and others.<sup>10</sup>

Despite national museums already being established in neighbouring countries – 1873 in Stockholm, 1876 in Helsinki, 1879 in Copenhagen and 1894 in Oslo – time was not yet ripe for it here. The fact that collecting artefact seemed strange to the first generation of Estonians to live in towns – as the folk culture in the form of peasant life was still very much alive – has been cited as a reason for this. Folk costumes were worn in many places and a large number of Estonians in fact lived “like in a museum”. Young intellectuals, however, tried as best they could to shed this image. Therefore, instead of collecting antiquities, they preferred the printed word in the Estonian language and pertaining to Estonia; something that had been



Retrospectively it may seem to Estonians that the early 20th century was all about fighting for independence, but the reality was much more diverse: there were proponents of radical socialism, world revolution, democratic Russia and much more. The general understanding of this time of turmoil among Estonians mainly comes from the third book in Anton Hansen Tammsaare’s epic novel “Truth and Justice”.

<sup>8</sup> My account of the history of the Estonian National Museum is based on the following sources: *Eesti Rahva Muuseumi 100 aastat*. Ed. P. Õunapuu. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2009; *Raadi raamat: pildid sündinud asjadest. The Raadi Book : Pictures of Things Gone By*. Ed. Ü. Siimets, S. Madisson, J. Liiv. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2010; *Unistuste Raadi. Liphartide kunstikogu Eestis. Raadi of Our Dreams. The Liphart Family and their Art Collection in Estonia*. Ed. J. Keevallik. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2015; *Etteaste. ERMi näitusemaja 1994–2015*. Ed. A. Aljas, J. Liiv, K. Raba. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> On the concept of proto-museums, see: Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World*. London and New York: Routledge Press, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Mart Kalm, *Eesti 20. sajandi arhitektuur. Estonian 20th Century Architecture*. Tallinn: Prisma Prindi Kirjastus, 2001, p. 26.



Although known as theatres today, these society buildings once used to function as centres of public enlightenment, where edifying courses of lectures, speeches and many other events were organised. Perhaps today it is museums that have taken over as multifunctional community centres of this kind, and the ENM building, too, is likely to emerge as the most important meeting place in the city. Inevitably so for the cultural circles, as it has the best facilities at hand, but it is equally important that southern Estonian entrepreneurs met here, organised banquets, conferences and so on, for neither the museum nor the city of Tartu can go a long way without them. And this does indeed seem to be happening, for the temporary exhibitions hall, which will not have a museum display during the first year, is booked for the widest possible variety of events in this period. In order to develop its programme, the museum will need to generate revenue, which is absolutely laudable.

<sup>11</sup> Piret Õunapuu, *Mõte sai teoks. – Eesti Rahva Muuseumi 100 aastat*. Ed. Piret Õunapuu. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2009, p. 41.

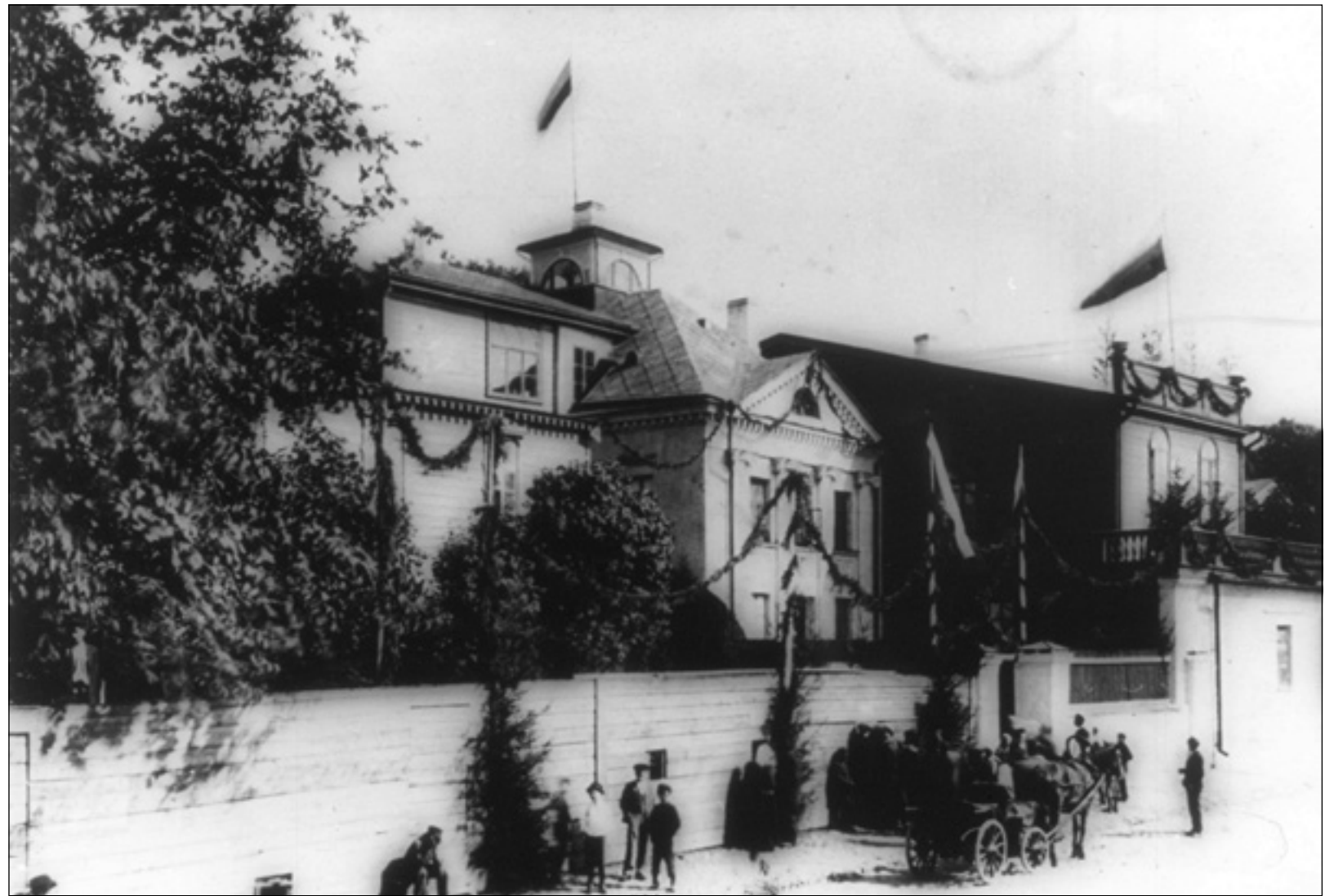
pursued by both private individuals and associations since the early 19th century. The Estonian National Museum was also born on the back of collecting folk songs and literature, although it subsequently emerged mainly as a collection of ethnographic artefacts.

The idea of a national museum was finally realised after the death of Jakob Hurt, an important collector of folklore, in 1907. On the day of his funeral, Estonia’s intellectual elite gathered in the Vanemuine Society building and initiated the decision to establish a museum, which on the one hand would prevent Hurt’s impressive archives from being dispersed, and on the other, would serve as a basis for a constantly growing collection to bringing together a whole nation. On 14 April 1909, the first statutory meeting of active members was held in the premises of the Estonian Students’ Society (Eesti Üliõpilaste Selts, EÜS) and lay down the range of objects that the collection effort was to be aimed at: “all manner of verbal and material memories, folklore, place names, linguistic material, folk music, folk songs, folk art, folk costumes, jewellery, tools, everyday implements.”<sup>11</sup> At first, the museum had neither premises to operate in and start building its collection nor the possibility to hire someone to dedicate themselves to museum work. There was, though, plenty of commitment and enthusiasm: field shows and parties for the benefit of the museum were organised and rallying speeches given. Expeditions to collect items were started, and the artefacts were first



An important contribution to the discussion of the “indigenous” and “foreign” in Estonian architecture came from Hanno Kompus in the 1920, as he declared that what ought to be described as Estonian architecture are those buildings in particular that spring from “the needs and wants of the Estonian people, Estonian society and the members thereof”. In his view, what was important was not the ethnicity of the architect, but the social initiative that got the building erected: “The new building of the Vanemuine Society, as if an embodiment of the economic wealth that has recently accumulated, the

national self-awareness that has risen and the will for cultural representation that has erupted. /.../ In one fell swoop, the formal will of the Estonian community steps out of the habits and formal conventions of the past, even outright brutally emphasising its difference and uniqueness with full self-awareness.” *Eesti ehituskunsti teed. – Eesti Kunsti Aastaraamat II.* (Edited by Märt Laarmann). Tallinn: Eesti Kultuurkapitaali kujutavate kunstide sihtkapitaali väljaanne, 1927. Quoted from Hanno Kompus. *Maailm on sündinud tantsust.* (Edited by Hando Runnel.) Tartu: Ilmamaa, 1996, pp. 420–421.



The only neoclassical building in the Ülejõe district across the river, at 14 Jaama tänav. Dating back to 1834, the building housed the Vanemuine Choral and Theatrical Society between 1869 and 1903. In 2007, the Tartu Song Festival Museum, a branch of the Tartu City Museum, moved into the building. Today, the building is also home to the Vanemuine Society.





Here the reader can imagine the shabby little wooden houses so typical of Tartu, where young intellectuals used to live. To this day, this atmosphere survives here and there in the city, for example on Emajõe Street that runs by the river in Supilinn. Fortunately, a contemporary photograph of Emajõe Street found its way onto the desk of the architects of “Memory field” as they were working on their draft design in autumn 2005. This

panoramic view of an untidy but well preserved and vibrant slum in many ways came to serve as the model for the museum’s floor plan; keep this in mind as you enter the building and see a long street in front of you, lined with “bustling street life” on both sides. This slum-like confusion is particularly graphic in the models of the building, which the architects relied on heavily when developing the floor plan in cooperation with the museum

staff. The exhibition halls and other functional spaces were moved around like woodsheds, laundry rooms, garages and glasshouses in backyards. The street itself, a “time path” running through the permanent exhibition, remained in place throughout the process, just like ancient street networks all over the world survive wars and fires.





stored at the apartments of artist Kristjan Raud and folklorist Oskar Kallas among other temporary locations.

Already at the second meeting of the ENM, the issue of erecting a building of its own was addressed, but for now they still had to be grateful for the permission to use two rooms on the second floor of the Vanemuine Society building. In 1911, the first exhibition was opened in those rooms and remained open to visitors on a daily basis. In 1912, the museum turned to the city government of Tartu with a request for a plot of land free of charge, hoping they might be able to construct a building with the help of donations. Unfortunately, the city had no plot to offer, but did grant the museum free use of an apartment in a town house at 8 Gildi tänav.

Despite the shortage of space, in a couple of years the idea of a museum was successfully brought to the awareness of thousands of Estonians and the systematic collection of artefacts began on a large scale. Over the first nine years, hundreds of people signed up as members of the ENM (membership fees were an important source of income for the museum); thousands donated artefacts or money. While according to calculations made in 1915, a fully furnished museum building would cost about 200,000 roubles, the museum managed to raise 60,000 roubles from gatherings, exhibition ticket sales, publishing, rallying speeches, fund raising and donations in 1917 alone – the museum was rapidly gaining in importance and reputation as well as increasing its collection.

In 1921, after Estonia had gained its independence, the government of the new republic agreed to support the National Museum in acquiring the German farmers' fairground at the corner of Saint Petersburg maantee (present-day Narva maantee) and Puiestee tänav, but the plan was forsaken for various reasons. The sights were now set on Raadi manor on the outskirts of Tartu. The building was more or less in good condition, with central heating and vaulted cellars suitable as depositories. Like today, the concern was that the museum might be too far away from the city centre, but it was suggested that a railway line might resolve this difficulty in the future. After being nationalised, the manor house was allocated to the agricultural department



A striking example of the Finnish National Romantic style, the building of the Kansallismuseo, or the National Museum of Finland, opened in 1916 (designed by Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen). In 1928, Akseli Gallén-Kallala painted ceiling frescoes based on the national epic Kalevala in the museum's entrance hall.



In 1924, the ENM purchased a building on Aia tänav (now Vanemuine tänav) with support from the state; the Archival Library and the Bibliography Foundation were moved into the building and the Estonian Folklore Archive was subsequently allocated premises there. Today, the building houses the Estonian Literary Museum, which was separated from the ENM during the Soviet period.

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In the fledgling republic, it was not uncommon for foreign experts, especially those from among the kinsfolk in Finland, to be invited to fill positions of leadership, because the country was short of top specialists; there was no shame in this, as the important thing was to learn fast. Commissioning the buildings of the Vanemuine Society and St Paul's Church from Finnish architects Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen, respectively, was perceived as a good opportunity to provide an example all over Estonia. When the 2006 National Museum design competition was won by foreign architects, there was some complaining from the older generation of Estonian architects to the effect that a building of such stature ought to be designed by local architects. Estonian architects who worked during the Soviet era are rightly proud of the fact that despite the occupation few centrally located buildings designed by Soviet Russian architects were erected in Estonia. Everything was done locally and now that independence has been regained it may therefore seem unfair when major projects go to foreign architects. This situation is probably characteristic of the cultural sphere as a whole.

of the University of Tartu, which set up its experimental stations there. As the university was prepared to give up half of the property, the museum was given use of the single-storey wing of the building in early 1922 and remained there until 1944. In 1922, Ilmari Manninen was invited from Finland to start work as the first director; under his leadership the ENM emerged as a modern memory and exhibition institution: an Estonian exhibition was opened in 1923 and a Finno-Ugric exhibition in 1928. Manninen also lay the foundations for the training of ethnographers at the University of Tartu.<sup>12</sup>

Given the National Museum's collection policy, one might have expected the exhibition at Raadi to be ethnographic in nature, when in reality it turned out to be similar to the exhibitions of the great national museums of Europe, which were dominated by fine art. The ethnographic part of the permanent exhibition was divided between three rooms and a hallway, while art was exhibited in seven rooms, where a chronological overview of Western art history was provided, starting with 41 plaster copies of Ancient Greek sculpture followed by 36 copies of Renaissance sculpture, then 17th and 18th century European painting and prints, crowned with a rococo room in the form of a study furnished in the style of Louis XV and walls adorned with decorative paintings. Classicist art

In the summer of 1913, there were discussions in Tartu to the effect that collection expeditions should also head out to towns, manors and churches, where pictures, sculptures, church records, archives and so on could be found. For logistical reasons, this never happened. At the same time, the question of collecting recent Estonian art also came up for discussion, but as the circles surrounding the Postimees newspaper, which were tightly connected with the ENM, regarded contemporary art with hostility, the idea was dismissed. This can be seen as one reason why in 1919 the Tallinn department, having been established a few years earlier, broke away from the ENM, becoming the Art Museum of Estonia in 1925.

The photograph shows the Tallinn Museum of Estonia being moved from the Estonian Knighthood House on Toompea to Kadriorg Palace in 1921.







was shown in the library, Baltic art in the white hall and the collection of faience and porcelain in the red hall. The works of art came from the collection of the former owners of the manor, the Baltic German family of the von Lipharts. The manor house itself along with the works of art had been transferred into state ownership after Estonia gained independence, as social estates were abolished and the property of the manor nationalised. The last estate owner at Raadi managed to secure a deal with the Estonian state, so that the cream of his collection was transported to Tallinn in 11 wagons and on to Denmark by sea. The fragile plaster copies and less valuable items in the art collection were donated to the University of Tartu, which in turn consigned them to the National Museum.

Although the interior of the manor house and the sumptuous art collection came to be the main attractions of the museum during the 1920s, this was not seen as a conflict. There was a sense of pride in the fact that antiquities with emotional value for Estonians had made their way into a lordly mansion. The press still talked about the ethnographic collection and quite indifferently dismissed the art historical display, which was seen as being of mainly pedagogic value.

As to the former Tallinn branch of the ENM, which had been transformed into the Tallinn Museum of Estonia in 1919, it largely duplicated the work of the ENM in the early years of the republic.<sup>13</sup>

Raadi manor in 1922. The museum was allocated the single-storey wing left of the dome.



The exhibition of Estonian art in the yellow marble hall in 1932. In the foreground, Anton Starkopf's 1927 work 'Devotion' in wood.

In 1925, an attempt was made at state level to separate the roles of the two museums: the Tallinn institution was to be an art museum and the Tartu institution an ethnography museum. The plan to hand their art collection over to Tallinn outraged the Tartu camp, and the faculty and students at the Pallas art school in particular; at the initiative of the eponymous Pallas Society, a "counter-propaganda" campaign was launched to assert the Tartu museum's status as a universal national museum focused on both folk culture and professional art. As a reaction, its exhibition was redesigned, leaving out Baltic German art and aiming at consistently increasing the importance of contemporary Estonian art. For example, the Estonian artist Eduard Viiralt was represented by 11 works in 1932 and 24 works two years later. This was because of a determination, following the example of Europe, to value visual art in the context of local culture and because of the support that the museum received from the Pallas art school, for without a proper art historical exhibition, teaching art in Tartu seemed futile.

<sup>13</sup>

Similar to the National Museum, the Tallinn Museum of Estonia was housed in the most opulent building in town, the Kadriorg Palace, entrusted to it by the state in 1921.





The photographs at the top show the classical sculpture hall in 1932. The lower photograph shows the interior of the red marble hall in 1937.

The war years had a devastating effect on the museum. In 1940, the National Museum was nationalised by the Soviet occupation powers and divided in two: the State Ethnography Museum of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic and the State Literature Museum of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, the latter specialising on written texts. For the Soviet authorities, museums were key centres of ideological education, which meant that they had to be restructured according to a specific plan.<sup>14</sup> As the ENM was seen as a centre for ethnography,



<sup>14</sup>

See Mariann Raisma, *Võim ja mälu. Muuseumi rolli muutumine Eesti NSV-s 1940.–1950. aastate esimesel poolel. – Maastik ja mälu. Pärandilooma arengujooni Eestis*. Ed. L. Kaljundi, H. Sooväli-Sepping. Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2014, pp. 314–348.



The former courthouse at 32 Veski tänav was home to the museum for over half a century after World War II.

its art collection was divided between the State Art Museum of the ESSR and the newly created Tartu State Art Museum of the ESSR. In 1943, German soldiers were stationed at Raadi manor, the collections were packed up and dispatched to various locations in the countryside for storage. In 1944, Raadi manor was destroyed in a fire.

For a time after the war, the museum found shelter in a former courthouse at 32 Veski tänav. In 1946, the museum was integrated into the structure of the Academy of Sciences, as a result of which research became its main function.<sup>15</sup> During the 1940s, plans were made for a complex museum incorporating several memory institutions to be established in Tartu. Consequently, in 1945, the city architect Arnold Matteus drew up a draft design that envisaged a neoclassicist building with 24,058 square metres of total floor area between Tiigi tänav and Vallikraavi tänav, which was to house an archaeology museum as well as the ethnography and literature museums. However, as the reconstruction of Tartu began to drag out, these plans were given up.<sup>16</sup> From 1968, the collection was stored in St Paul's Church and from 1984 also in St Alexander's Church. These premises were vacated in the early 2000s and returned to the congregations as new storage facilities were completed at Raadi. During the Soviet period, the National Museum did not have a permanent exhibition; the museum building

<sup>15</sup>

It was only after Estonia had regained its independence that the museum was able to return to its traditional role, which includes exhibitions, cultural education, communicating with the visitors and so on. Because of the negative impact of the Soviet era, the museum is to this day pejoratively referred to as a storeroom of mittens and beer mugs, despite having in recent decades decisively tied itself to a broader cultural sphere through curated exhibitions, publications, film festivals and other activities.

<sup>16</sup>

Mariann Raisma, *Võim ja mälu*, pp. 328–329. For more details, see AM, f 149, n 1, s. 60, l 78–94.

on Veski tänav had a 100-square metre hall for temporary exhibitions. The museum organised travelling exhibitions in Estonia and many cities across the Soviet Union, mostly in other Finno-Ugric countries.

Today, ethnography continues to be the ENM's main area of activity, but in a more inclusive sense than during the Soviet period. Most of the artefacts in the museum's collection, 87 per cent, come from Estonia; the rest are mostly items from other Finno-Ugric peoples. In addition to the collection of artefacts, the museum also has a manuscript archive, which includes ethnographic descriptions, expedition journals and correspondents' responses to the museum's questionnaires. The museum also has a separate photography archive, film archive and a collection of drawings and art. Specialist literature is collected in the museum's library.

St Alexander's Church, a Russian orthodox shrine in the Karlova district of Tartu, was used to store the ENM collection towards the end of the Soviet period.



An exhibition of wooden vessels and utensils. The temporary exhibition between 1923 and 1926.





## Raadi

Raadi manor (*Ratshof* in German) dates back to the Middle Ages, when it was owned by the Tartu town council (*Rat*). In 1584, the estate became a royal table land under the Kingdom of Poland. When southern Estonia was incorporated into the Kingdom of Sweden in the 1620s, the manor went to the Oxenstierna family. In the 17th century, it belonged to the von Fersen family and after the Great Northern War Catherine I of Russia gave it to General Bibikov. From 1751 to its expropriation in 1919, the manor belonged to the von Liphart family. The von Lipharts were the largest manor holders in the Baltic Provinces of the Russian Empire, owning a couple of dozen estates. Roela manor remained in their possession the longest and was run by the family until 1939. As with many other Baltic German families, their wealth was built on distilling.

The first stately manor house at Raadi was built by the von Lipharts in the 18th century. The earliest parts of the new house were erected in the 1840s; subsequent extensions and improvements were added at different times until 1905. The house was a rare example of a splendid long manor house, partly one-storey and partly two-storey. Italian-style neo-renaissance and neo-baroque dominated the decoration and an imposing dome towered over the centre of the house. In its time, the grandiose mansion of the von Lipharts struck one as a real show of power: as Tartu lies in a river valley, the hilltop mansion must have seemed like a kind of acropolis. Special emphasis in the lavish interior of the mansion was placed on the valuable art collection. The uniqueness of Raadi is underscored by the fact that in 1830 Karl Gotthard von Liphart hosted Russian Emperor Nicholas I and the Empress during their two-day visit to Tartu.

In the latter half of the 19th century, Tartu's developing industry caught up with the manor, which had hitherto remained outside the city limits. Factories and residential buildings were erected along the Tartu – St Petersburg road. An increasing number of Estonians came to live in the city. The areas of Ülejõe and Raadi on the outskirts of town emerged as the centres of the national awakening movement – this is where Estonia's first national song festival was held in 1869 and in 1870 the Vanemuine Choral and Theatrical Society (established in 1865) moved into a building on Jaama tänav. From as early as the end of the 18th century, members of the Estonian congregation had been buried at Raadi cemetery and those living along Puiestee tänav. In 1884, the congregation of St Peter, which brought together burghers of Estonian ethnicity, completed a church building (designed by Viktor Schröter) on Puiestee tänav. Due to activities during the period of national awakening, that part of town carried a positive meaning for Estonians and it therefore seemed a natural location for the national museum. In pre-war Estonia, Raadi came to be a well-loved landscape<sup>17</sup> where people

17

Remarkably, it was the Finnish geography professor Johannes Gabriel Granö working in the University of Tartu, who in the 1920s introduced into academic usage the concept of landscape, something that geographers consider their specific object of study. For him, landscape was inseparable from humans, who have been designing it and at the same time themselves shaped by it throughout the centuries. See Hannes Palang, *Sajand maastikus – maastik sajandis. – Kümme. Koos kogutud maastikud. 1997–2007*. Tartu: Argo, 2008, pp. 49–54.



The interior of Raadi manor at the outset of the 20th century.



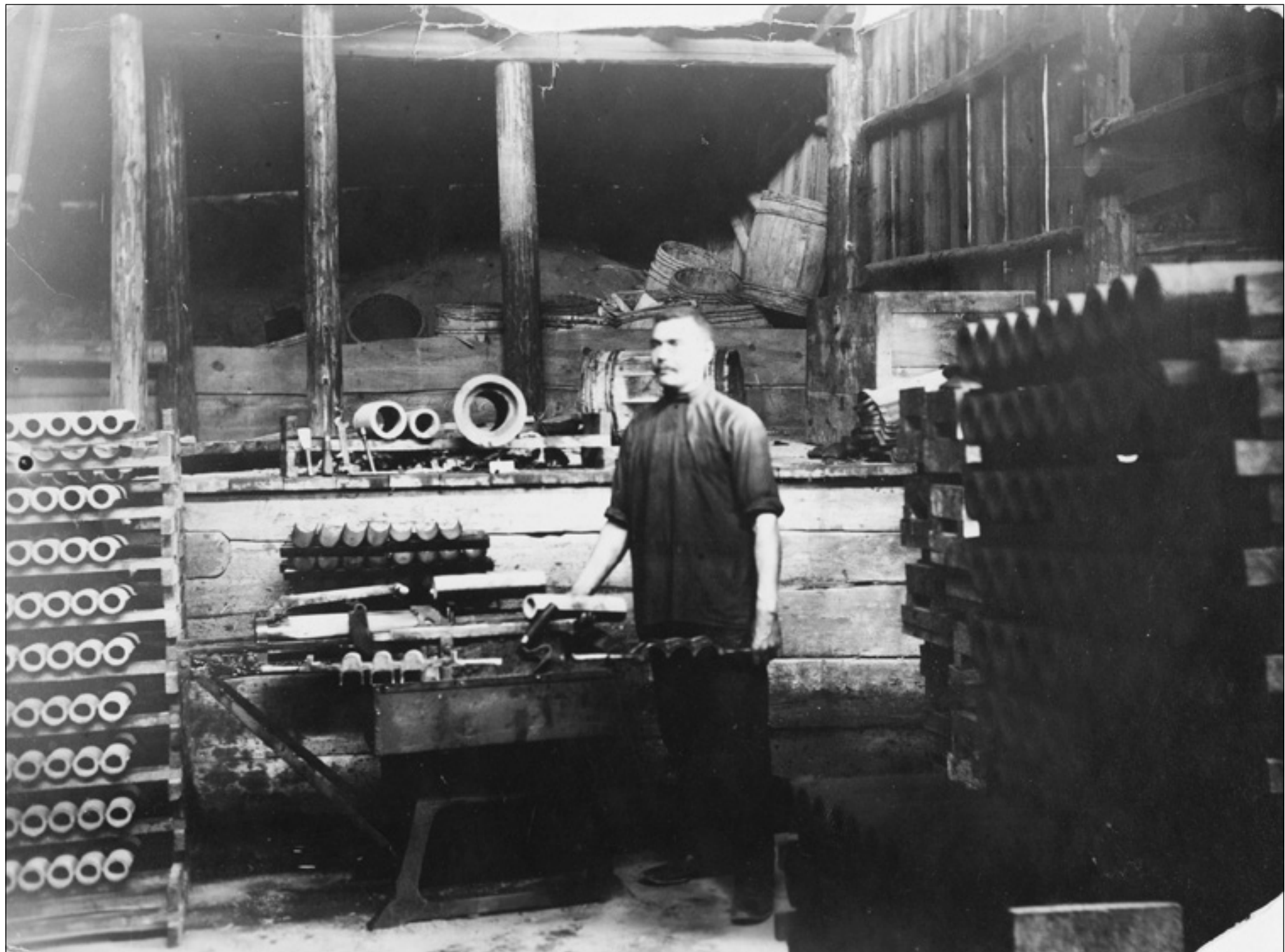
went to enjoy leisure activities both in the summer and the winter. Today, many Estonians have photo albums from their great-grandparents with pictures of joyful ancestors posing against the background of Raadi manor.

Historically, Tartu residents have associated Raadi not only with the national awakening and the manor but also industry, for already under the Russian Empire, a cement works was set up in a gravel quarry here, and was subsequently transformed into a large bitumen plant during the Soviet period. However, the most important innovation of the early 20th century, and one that proved a trigger for various developments, was the arrival of aeronautics at Raadi, which was ideally suited to it in terms of its natural features (the highest fog-free hilltop in Tartu) and the social conditions (the wealth of the von Lipharts and their close ties with the strategic leaders of the empire).



Ten-year-old Jakob Kaplan enjoying a summer's day at Raadi in 1937.





A concrete pipe factory in the gravel quarry of Raadi manor in 1911. Photograph by Johannes Pääsuke, an Estonian photography and cinematography pioneer.

A view from the tower of St Peter's Church looking onto the boulevard leading to Raadi manor (1923).





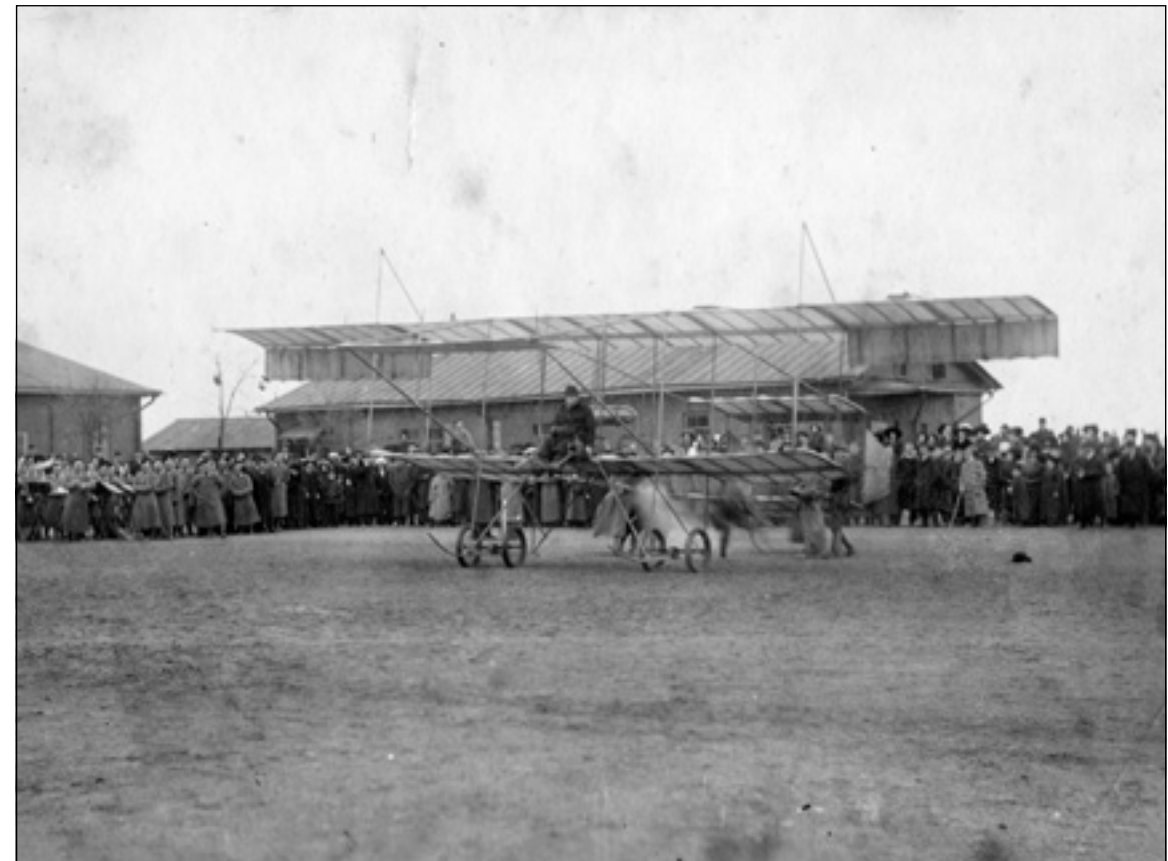


## Raadi airport

The first motorised flight over the fields of Raadi manor was made in 1912. In 1914, Baron von Liphart had one of his fields levelled in order to allow ten aircraft of the aviation squadron of the St Petersburg military district to make a stopover at Raadi. After Estonia gained independence, an Estonian Air Force squadron was based at Raadi. In the early 1920s, the temporary seaplane hangars at the mouth of the Pirita River in Tallinn were moved to Raadi, where on Rooski tänav they still stand today as a heritage conservation site, awaiting renovation and a new function. Between 1942 and 1944, the occupying German forces built the first concrete runway at Raadi, the same one that the new ENM building is attached to. After the war, the Soviet authorities built a new military airbase north of the German landing strip; the territory of the base also encompassed the core of the manor, which lay in ruins. The remains of the manor house were covered with a simple roof structure and converted into a warehouse. In the 1950s and 1960s, Raadi became a long-range bomber base and Tartu itself a closed city forbidden to foreign visitors.

Raadi was among the largest military airports in Eastern Europe and the US ranked it number 13 in importance out of the 1,100 airports in the Soviet Union. As a result, Tartu was included in its nuclear target list.<sup>18</sup> The military equipment at Raadi probably also included nuclear weapons, although there are no written records to confirm this. In any case, the Soviet military airport at Raadi was one of the ugliest institutions in the history of Tartu,

Russian test pilot Sergei Utochkin's with his biplane in Tartu on 14 April 1912.



<sup>18</sup>

V. Koorits, Külma sõja aegne USA sõjaplaan nägi ette Tartu tuumarelvaga hävitamise.  
– *Eesti Ekspress*, 23. XII 2015.

and one that was capable of threatening the lives of large populations in central Europe. At the same time, it would be unfair to demonise Raadi airport in particular, because during the Cold War, when all humanity lived in fear of a global catastrophe, any radical political statement was, in principle, indirectly linked to the atom bomb. In that horrific year of 1940, a few months before he had to take his own life for fear of falling prisoner to the Nazis in Spain, the German Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote that there is no document of culture that is not at the same time a document of barbarism.<sup>19</sup>

The armed forces of the Russian Federation, as the successor of the Soviet Union, left Raadi in 1992, and the airport went into private ownership. For a time, opening an international airport was contemplated, but no great progress was made. The aeroplane of the Polish president Lech Walesa visiting Tartu landed at Raadi in 1994. The last landing was in 1999. Since then, the 698-hectare concrete-paved airport has been used for the sale of second-hand cars, drag races, driving lessons and waste storage.

And as if the gigantic airport alone were not sufficient in establishing Soviet power, a monument to World War II casualties was erected on the shore of Lake Raadi on the side of the city in 1975, commemorating the Soviet fighters who fell in the battles for Tartu fought in 1941 and 1944. The monument holds a particularly painful significance for Estonian nationalists, as it marks the site of a 1945 monument to Red Army soldiers, which was blown up by Tartu school children on 6 November 1949 in retaliation for the mass deportation in March of that year and the destruction of the Estonian War of Independence monuments by the Soviet occupation powers. Repressions followed.

In contrast to Tallinn, where it was decided about ten years ago to remove the most important World War II monument for the Russian community from the city centre, the Tartu city council has taken the position that the memorial must remain in place as a historical and artistic monument. For the purposes of re-interpretation, introductory texts have been placed around the memorial. Such solidarity with the local Russian community ties in well with the efforts of the National Museum at Raadi, where it stresses the importance of interpreting cultural memory.

In the latter half of the 1980s, restoring the museum at Raadi was put on the agenda. In March 1988, the museum was again renamed as the Estonian National Museum and Raadi became a central venue for the independence movement when, as part of the celebration of Heritage Conservation Days, a crowd marched towards the pre-war location of the museum under the national colours and a banner that read “Free Raadi!”. In July, a petition with 5,000 signatures was handed over to the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Moscow, supporting the construction of a building for the ENM at Raadi. The collection of monetary donations

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Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. – Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm> (accessed on 27 February 2016)



The memorial was created by sculptor Ants Mölder and architect Rein Luup. At the centre of the grey granite monument, between the stepped vertical slabs that taper towards the top, resembling a gateway, a bronze figure of a soldier is struggling to heave himself out of Lake Raadi as if emerging from battlefield trenches.



A 1945 monument to Red Army soldiers, which was blown up by Tartu school children in 1949.



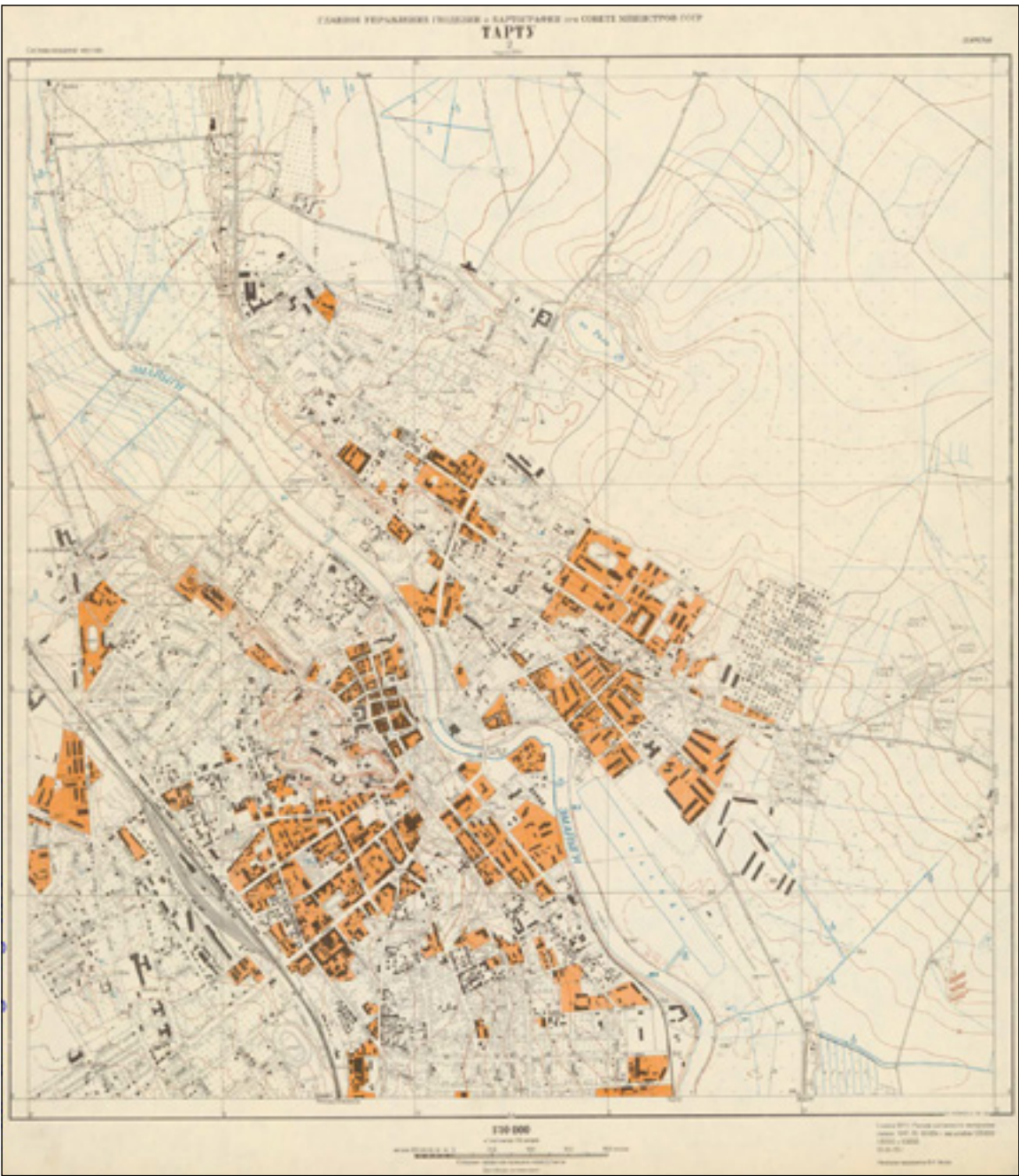


to restore the museum began and a plan for the restoration of the mansion was drawn up with the help of Polish restorers; soon, however, the Polish builders who started work at Raadi were forced to abandon the project, as the roubles that were quickly losing value by the early 1990s were not enough to pay their wages.

In 1992, the museum's management decided that, instead of Raadi, the main building could be situated on the side of Toome Hill in the city centre. Raadi was not forgotten, however, and a design contest to find possible future scenarios for the core of the manor was organised in 1993. This produced, among others, proposals for a Baltic German museum and cultural centre, an Estonian biographical museum, a residence museum and also a production-oriented manor museum. None of the plans materialised. Today, the remains of the manor house have undergone conservation and the National Museum has no plans for restoring the building.

By 2003, when the decision was made to erect a new building for the museum there, Raadi had become a controversial location. It was a place that had been, on the one hand, valued historically, while on the other, tainted by occupation. Raadi appeared to people as a wasteland, but the wilderness was illusory, for hidden from view beneath the undergrowth lay the highly developed infrastructure of the former airport. Over-development and under-development clashed between the Raadi of dreams and the Raadi of the Cold War era, and the city and its outskirts.

From 1987 to 1990 the airbase was led by heavy bomber aviation division commander Dzhokhar Dudayev, later the first president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, who was favourably disposed towards the Singing Revolution, since as a representative of a small nation himself, he sympathised with Estonian aspirations for freedom. Today, a memorial plaque hangs outside the entrance to his former office in Tartu city centre. Dudayev is respected in many places across Eastern Europe, with streets named after him in Riga, Vilnius, Warsaw, Lviv and Tbilisi. To this day, Chechens unofficially call their capital Dzhokhar. In the photograph shown here, Dudayev (right) and the then director of the ENM Aleksei Peterson (centre) discuss the restoration of the Raadi manor complex in 1988.



In the Soviet Union, people required a special permit in order to visit closed cities and no foreign nationals were allowed. These were places where weapons of mass destruction or radioactive substances were produced, stored or disposed of. The closed cities in the Estonian SSR also

included Paldiski (a Soviet Navy nuclear submarine training centre) and Sillamäe (the location of a uranium processing plant). The Raadi airbase was not shown on Soviet-era maps, as can be seen from this 1978 map of Tartu.



The ruined Raadi manor  
after a fire in October 1945.



In post-Soviet urban folklore, Raadi is primarily associated with environmental, spatial and mental pollution. Over the decades, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fuel was leaked into the soil and a number of unsightly military installations were erected on the territory; these became the most hideous abandoned buildings in the city after independence was regained. A closed territory during the Soviet period, Raadi still remains a space that many are suspicious or not even conscious of. For decades, the people living around the airbase also suffered from the noise pollution caused by the bombers taking off and landing.













Ruins of a technical building on the western side of the military airport (2008).

































Imagine a first-time visitor to the city standing on Town Hall Square, facing the river, and seeing this suspiciously run down drab old bridge, which looks like a stifling bottleneck compared to the square and the broad pedestrian crossing that serves as a continuation of it. Tall trees are visible on the other side, as if the city ended with a forest right there. Not exactly a view that invites the visitor to cross the river. But let us suppose that for some reason the curious traveller decides to walk over the bridge and through the park only to be stopped by a four-lane river of cars with a petrol station slouching on a little island midstream. If not before, then surely now, the visitor would decide to head back to the city centre.





## Urban space in Tartu in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century

Although Raadi is less than two kilometres from the Town Hall Square; that is, a 20-minute walk or 10-minute cycle away, psycho-geographical obstacles have immeasurably magnified this distance during recent decades. Probably not many people in Tartu have just taken a walk to Raadi. What should be done to change this situation?

The most conspicuous if not the most in-depth solution would be to replace the pedestrian bridge downtown. In fact, this is inevitable, as the Arch Bridge (Kaarsild) installed in 1959 does not meet today's basic accessibility requirements. Well known for their conservative views, Tartu residents have many times brought up the idea of rebuilding the Stone Bridge (Kivisild), which stood in its place for 160 years and was destroyed in World War II, having been one of the architectural symbols of the city.<sup>20</sup> To the disappointment of many Tartu residents, the established practice in Western heritage conservation is not to rebuild historical structures as copies. Regardless of the appearance of the new bridge, it would be nice if the Arch Bridge were installed at a different location on the river, perhaps somewhere more out of the way. On the one hand, it is a piece of spatial memory from its time, and on the other, Tartu is in desperate need of additional connections across the river. For example, Tiit Sild, who served as Tartu's city architect from 2005 to 2012, has noticed that the Roosi tänav axis is superbly suited to a bridge, which would then connect the Tartu Art Museum and the National Museum.



While it has been unable to find funding for the refurbishment of the pedestrian bridge for two decades, the city has instead been building and renovating road bridges. The winning design competition entry for the Freedom Bridge (Vabadussild) was realised in 2009 (9 million euros), the Friendship Bridge (Sõpruse sild) was repaired in 2013 (760,000 euros), the Victory Bridge (Võidu sild) finished in 1957 was renovated in 2014 (800,000 euros) and the Ihaste Bridge, which cost just under 9 million euros and forms part of the Tartu ring road, was completed in 2015. Although the projects were not financed from the city budget alone, these examples clearly show how car-centred the city government is in its investment and planning decisions. The city's decisions reflect the interests and ideals of its citizens: in the 2014 Deed of the Year Competition, organised by the Postimees daily newspaper and the Tartu city government, the renovation of the Võidu Bridge won based on votes from Tartu residents; a year later, the same title went to the construction of the Ihaste Bridge.<sup>21</sup> Car-centred thinking points to systematic suburbanisation, which is supported by the prestige that the American suburb enjoys in the value system of Estonians, and is further encouraged by the low land prices in the municipalities around

Landscape architect Karin Bachmann has appositely written that the beautiful graphic pattern of the Ihaste Bridge as seen in drone photographs is just that, beautiful in images taken from a flight altitude, but someone moving at the human level is forced to contend with staring at a technocratic concrete wall instead of enjoying a view of the landscape. See K. Bachmann, Tiimiis näeb monda ehk Tiikävijäl on ütesa tiid. – *Sirp*, 27. V 2016.

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The most recent such appeal came from a city council member in the spring of 2015. See J. Saar, Linnavolinik ärgitab Kivisilda taastama. – *Tartu Postimees*, 14. IV 2015.

21

J. Saar, Tartu aasta tegu on Ihaste sild ja idaringtee teine ehitusala. – *Tartu Postimees*, 29. XII 2015.



Top, the site of the former Holm quarter in Ülejõe, destroyed in World War II. Bottom, the Tartu Hotel.



Tartu's Stone Bridge in the 1930s with the Bellevue Hotel in the background.



A view from the hillside along Vanemuise tänav looking onto Tartu Market. Late 1950s.







A demonstration march in downtown Tartu, where the Kaubamaja shopping centre now stands, with the remains of the Vanemuine Society building towering in the background. Probably late 1940s.



Tartu centre in 1964.



A view from the ruins of Vanemuine towards Poe tänav in the mid-1950s.



A view from the left bank of Emajõgi River towards the city centre with the former Raatuse and Kalda streets in the foreground. Late 1950s.





Tartu, as well as the ability of the officials there to process area plans, design projects and other documents more efficiently than the city of Tartu does. Generally speaking, the preferential development of suburbs correlates with the stagnation of the city centre. The ENM cooperates closely with the city of Tartu to get people to come to the museum at Raadi, either on foot or by bike, and that way to enliven the Ülejõe district that borders the city centre across the river. I will return to this at some length below.

In World War II, hundreds of buildings were destroyed in the Tartu city centre, as many as 3,419 of the 5,217 buildings in the city were damaged. Arnold Matteus<sup>22</sup> fight against the hasty redevelopment of the empty plots in the city centre after the war has become the stuff of legend. First he succeeded in avoiding the pomposity of Stalinist neoclassicism, and then in diverting the so-called khrushchyovkas, or standardised silicate brick apartment buildings. Although highly praised for having prevented Soviet-era excesses, Matteus would hardly be happy with the current situation. The thing is that the empty plots, which have developed into green areas with tall trees during the course of these 70 years, still remain in Tartu's city centre and green-minded citizens seek to preserve them at all costs.<sup>23</sup>

Tartu has become a city of green tree tops, although it used to be a dense urban environment before the war. The legacy of Matteus can, therefore, also be seen from another perspective, a negative one – perhaps it is precisely because Tartu's dense housing was not restored that it has lost its fabled spirit? To draw a comparison with Tallinn's old town, it was debated for over half a century whether housing should be restored on Tallinn's Harju tänav, which was devastated during the war. Finally, it was decided to fill the ruins up with sand and transform the entire block into a public open space with a skate rink in the winter and seating in the summer. Many experts tried to explain to the city government that the densely built up old town of Tallinn is in itself the best possible public space, where people feel excited and good, and that Harju tänav should therefore definitely be reconstructed. Essentially, Tallinn's cultural and night life is to this day concentrated in its old town; no other area measures up. The expansive public space created there now in fact lowers the quality of the public space in Tallinn's old town.

On the other hand, Tartu residents have grown accustomed to the post-war urban situation and the existing urban space has found a place in contemporary art and literature. The empty clearings, shadowy parks, irregular

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Arnold Matteus (1897–1986) was a legendary city architect of Tartu, who worked in that position in the pre-war Republic of Estonia from 1926 to 1935 as well as during the German and Soviet occupations from 1941 to 1960. Psychiatrist and author Vaino Vahing has called Matteus Tartu's citizen of the century. See V. Vahing, Film Arnold Matteusest. – V. Vahing. *Vaimuhaiguse müüt*. Ed. U. Tõnisson. Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2005, pp. 208–209.

23

The Tartu author Sven Vabar has written about these empty spaces in his short story "Tartu kaks lagendikku" ("The two clearings of Tartu"): "Older people remember; the rest have seen numerous photographs. I look at these pictures and what startles me most are not the ruined city blocks, one after another, the destroyed Vanemuine Theatre and Stone Bridge, or the little grey people gathered in packs, petrified of shock. Far more horrifying for me are the pictures taken a few years after the war, when the "restoration of Tartu" had already powerfully asserted itself in the cityscape. In officialese, the restoration of Tartu meant tearing down the ruins (often whole buildings) and burying the foundations under earth and grass. Vast empty lawned squares covering several blocks, in the city centre, along the river and Aleksandri and Riia streets, on Tähe tänav... The squares were divided into geometrical sections by arrow-straight footpaths lined with weak little trees at regular intervals. A few tiny people standing on these pathlines like black and white pieces on a board game. I am in no hurry to all-out condemn these clearings, but the grip of the abstract clearings makes its presence felt in many of the bad things in Tartu. Perhaps the much talked about small pond atmosphere, the corporate in-crowd mind set and the rampant bourgeois mentality are a product of the clearings. Sometimes being in Tartu feels like it does not let go of you. "Killing Tartu". Perhaps it is these abstract clearings that sometimes so murderously suffocate you. I walk around in Tartu, I look at the Courthouse, I look at the university's new developments out on Maarjamõisa field, I look at the new SEB Bank building on the corner of Vanemuise and Ülikooli Streets, I look at the field full of new single-storey homes – perfect cuboids – near the Kivilinna supermarket next to Hiinalinn, and behind it all I feel the firm pressure of the abstract clearings." S. Vabar, Tartu kaks lagendikku. – *Mitte-Tartu*. Ed. S. Vabar. Tartu: Topofon, 2012, p. 200.



The Maarjamõisa campus of the University of Tartu. The empty field would fit a campus the size of the whole city centre.

river banks and alluvial meadows along the river, the light emanating from Luunja, the railway tracks bisecting the city and other tropes that have developed a unique consonance with the mental landscapes of Tartu's creatives, which in turn reflect back into the urban space, producing a specific phenomenological framework.

But something is changing. In 2010, preparations for a new zoning plan for Tartu's city centre began, triggering discussions about how and to what extent the empty plots and river banks in the city centre should be redeveloped.<sup>24</sup> In some respects, this discussion was initiated too late, for during the last decade the University of Tartu – the source of the city's identity and vibrancy – has moved several of its institutes of technical disciplines to Maarjamõisa on the outskirts of the city, where a separate science campus is being developed. The university's Biomedicum, Institute of Technology, Chemicum, Physicum and Centre for Translational Medicine have all moved to the "meadows" of Maarjamõisa. For financial reasons, the university has sold all its old buildings in the city centre and built new ones, allegedly more energy-efficient and multi-functional, on plots on the outskirts of the city. It has received a lot of criticism as a result, and perhaps learned a lesson: in 2015 the university decided that its new IT building would be built by the river in the city centre instead of Maarjamõisa.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, within the space of a few years, the city centre has lost 7,000 students, teachers and researchers, who now commute between Maarjamõisa and the city every morning and evening by bus or car (and there is no decent cycleway either). Unfortunately, financial difficulties are a global characteristic of universities, and building campuses on the outskirts of cities is the most widely used measure in trying to cut costs. Nevertheless, teaching and research are inextricably linked with communication, which, as we know, is most highly concentrated in the cafés of the city centres. Many theories of creativity state that innovation takes place where culturally valued information and that which is considered culturally insignificant, or the so-called sphere of the profane, collide. It is crucial for the normal functioning of a university that it be located in a space where the political, economic, intellectual as well as the everyday, filthy and other kinds of views, lives, desires, languages and differences of numerous people collide.<sup>26</sup>

Despite Tartu having run into a cul-de-sac because of the university, notable individual buildings have been erected in the city in the last few years: the university's physics building (by Ott Kadarik, Mihkel Tüür and Villem Tomiste, 2014), the Snail Tower (by Vilen Künnapu, Ain Padrik, 2006), the Tartu Environmental Education Centre (by Karisma

24

The Tartu Postimees newspaper invited people to speak out on this issue in opinion pieces. In total, more than 40 articles were published, most of them supporting moderate construction activity. A list of the published articles and news stories on this topic can be found on the city's website at: [http://www.tartu.ee/index.php?lang\\_id=1&menu\\_id=2&page\\_id=25290](http://www.tartu.ee/index.php?lang_id=1&menu_id=2&page_id=25290) (accessed on 27 February 2016).

25

Heiki Pagel, head of the Estates Office of the University of Tartu, has countered the criticism aimed against the university as follows: "It has been mainly new, world-class and large-scale centres of excellence in research that have been built and developed on the Maarjamõisa field. Such centres are not open schoolhouses in the generally recognised sense of the term, but largely closed research facilities, which are unsuitable (excessive noise, vibration, safety issues, etc.) or physically do not fit in the city centre due to their nature. The concentration of medical education in the Maarjamõisa area is closely connected with the development of the nearby Tartu University Hospital. /.../ All these facilities – the Institute of Technology, the chemistry building, the physics building, the Centre of Translational Medicine and the Biomedicum – require large, specialised laboratories, research and testing centres as well as other special facilities and conditions. Furthermore, these disciplines are tightly intertwined and mutually supportive. The university does, however, cover many other areas where teaching and research does not require such a specific environment: philosophy, pedagogy, law, natural science, sports science, social sciences and so on. All these are located in the city centre and I see no reason to relocate them somewhere else." V. Valk, *Kompaktne Tartu versus hajus ülikool*. – *Sirp*, 3. X 2014.

26

See e.g. B. Groys, *On the New*. London, New York: Verso, 2014.



The Snail Tower, a residential building where all apartments have a curved wall. As the tallest building in Tartu, it features in unexpected views opening up from all over the city. Vaguely Asian in appearance, the boat harbour along Rebase tänav strikes a particularly interesting contrast to the Snail Tower.

Architects, 2013), the extension of the Tartu Health Care College (by Kavakava, 2011), the Lotte kindergarten in Hiinalinn (by Kavakava, 2008), the extension of the Tartu City Centre School (by Salto, 2007), the apartment buildings on Siili tänav (by Thomas Pucher and Alfred Bramberger, 2008 and 2015), the sports hall of the University of Life Sciences (by Salto, 2009) and the office building on Ülikooli tänav (Emil Urbel and Andrus Mark, 2010), to name those that have attracted the most attention. The majority have been built as a result of an architectural design competition.

What will become of the city in the future? Looking at the current property developments, we can say that there will be more buildings, especially along Riia tänav. Perhaps, then, it could become the city's main street, lined with various public functions on both sides over several kilometres. In fact, it already has shops, book stores, cinemas, restaurants, a theatre, a church, an art gallery, a cultural centre, the house museum of a famous writer and a lot more; it is just that these should be stitched together with a pedestrian- and cycle-friendly avenue, so that people could comfortably bounce from one side to the other along the entire length of the street.



A 1930s aerial photograph of  
the neoclassical urban fabric.







It has been suggested that Tartu could become a city of museums. The idea has merit, for all the prerequisites are there. By a city of museums, I mean intriguing exhibitions, an art museum with an international programme, fresh museum architecture and events in the urban space, all of which should prevent the city itself from turning into a museum, which is probably the worst scenario for what can happen to a city. Strangely enough, Tartu has increasingly been playing on the image of a Hanseatic city, despite this being a hopeless effort compared to that of Tallinn.<sup>27</sup> The uniqueness of Tartu's city centre lies in the classicist orderedness of a university town, which it acquired during the 19th century, and the unwavering rhythm of the facades of whitewashed buildings painted in muted colours. Encircling the rigorously structured city centre and contrasting with it are the revelling bohemian slums of Supilinn, Karlova and Ülejõe, as well as the intellectual enclave of the garden city-like suburb of Tähtvere.<sup>28</sup>

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For a discussion, see: A. Pilv, Sein. – Pilve koht, 20 April 2010 <http://aaree.blogspot.com/2010/04/sein.html> (accessed on 15 May 2016).

28

The description of Tähtvere is borrowed from Lauri Sommer. See L. Sommer, Tapa Tapa and Martell. – *Vikerkaar* 2016, Nos 1-2, p. 188.

As a hub for motor traffic, the junction of Riia, Turu and Vabaduse streets is a pedestrian nightmare, surrounded by a foursome of shopping centres that come across as something of a parody. Tartu Market and the shopping centres Kaubamaja, Tasku and Kvartal all in their own way embody the values that are represented in and reflected by such places of consumerism. The photograph illustrates former Tartu city architect Tiit Sild's idea of "a gigantic zebra" (2012), or an omnidirectional pedestrian crossing to make the car-centred area pedestrian-friendly. See T. Remm, Kas Kvartal ongi Tartu uus keskus? – *Sirp*, 1. VII 2016 and T. Sild, Emajõgi, vanalinn ja city. – *Tartu Postimees*, 1. XI 2012.

Preventing the museumisation, suburbanisation and unsystematic development of the city is a big challenge and standard solutions will not help here. In terms of traffic management, it seems that radically restricting the rights of drivers would be justified in the new city centre in the area around Riia and Turu streets and along the entire length of Riia tänav, with a view to saving the downtown area for pedestrians. The old town, in contrast, should not be made completely car-free, as that way all the restaurants, cafés and other businesses operating there might completely lose their clientele. While the cluster of university buildings at Maarjamõisa has had a predatory effect on the urban fabric, the National Museum building erected on the other side of town seems to have a positive influence on the city centre, for it tightens the connection between the two banks of the Emajõgi River and brings activity to the entire area stretching from the centre to Raadi.



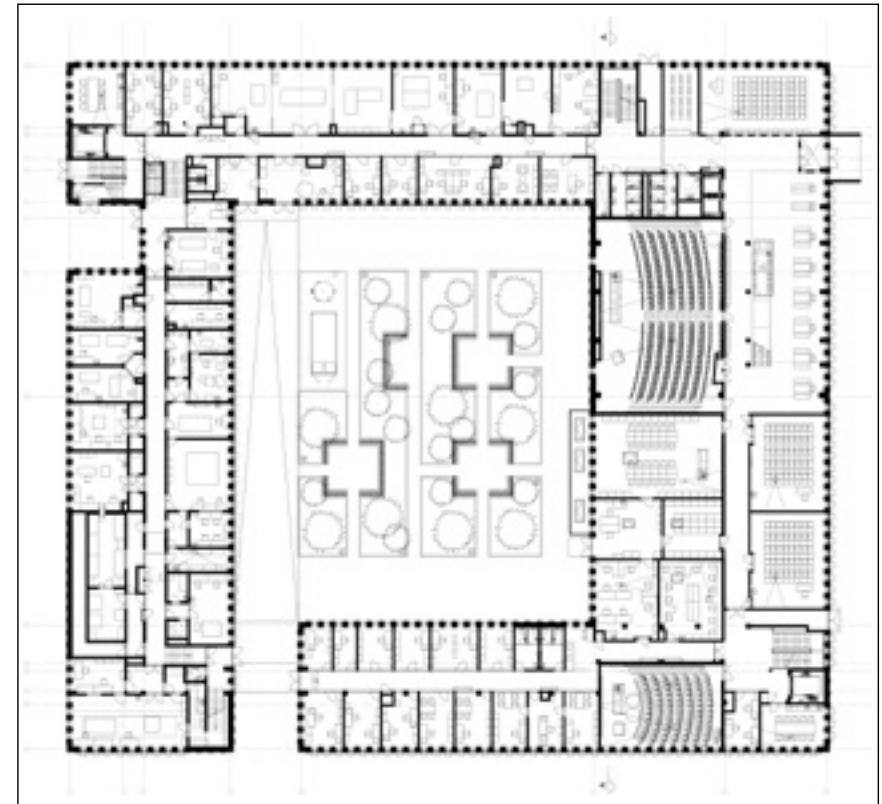


The Tartu Environmental Education Centre (2013) is a particularly showy little gem, even bordering on kitsch, straddled between the city centre and Karlova. The building speaks of a university town's characteristic appreciation for soft values and, similarly of a Scandinavian spatial ideal. The drawing shows the site plan of the building within a playful landscape. Architects Martin Kinks, Risto Parve, Kai Süda, Margit Valma and Diana Taalfeld; interior architect Tõnis Kalve.





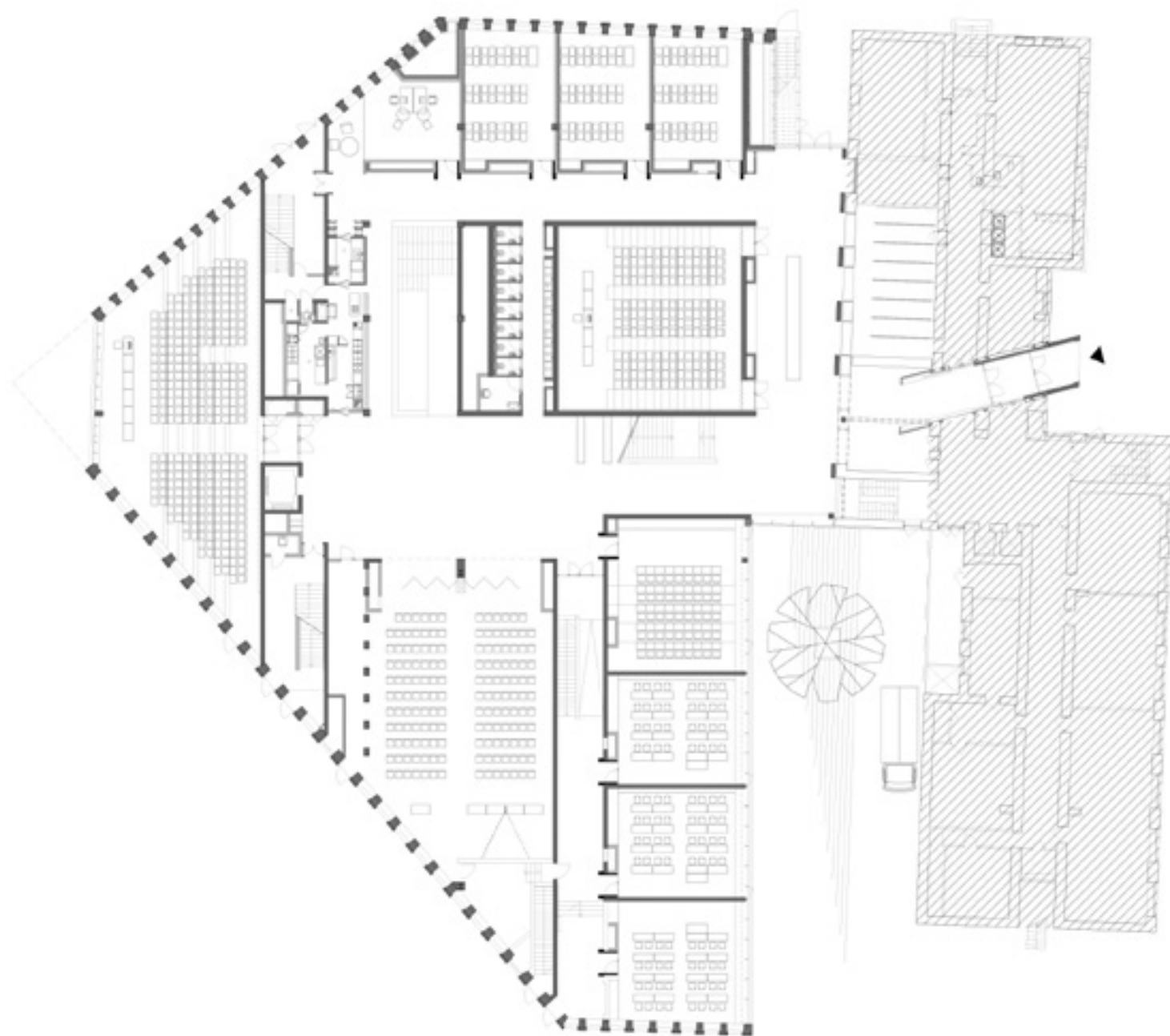
The University of Tartu Physicum appears evocative in the photograph. On closer inspection, however, the building turns out to be so calculated and rational as to resemble a lemon squeezed dry. The photograph shows the north wing of the building, which corresponds to the left side of the ground-level floor plan. Completed in 2014, the building was designed by architects Ott Kadarik, Mihkel Tüür and Villem Tomiste as well as interior architect Kadri Tamme.





The extension of the Tartu Health Care College is perhaps the best of the development projects in Maarjamõisa. It is an inventive and joyful school building that radiates light and health. Another strong point is that the architects have taken the somewhat bleak location and soulless tower block (the dormitory to which the school building attaches as an extension) and made them work in their favour for the benefit of the whole area. Red brick is a local building material with a long tradition in Tartu and the preference for wood also strikes an appealing note given the proximity of the suburban homes in Tammelinn. The building was designed by architects Indrek Peil and Siiri Vallner with Johannes Feld, Andro Mänd, Sten-Mark Mändmaa and Ragnar Põllukivi, and interior architect Tarmo Piirmets.





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The Lotte kindergarten (2008) in the dormitory district of Hiinalinn. The photograph shows the central play area inside the building, where children of various age groups meet. Architects Indrek Peil, Siiri Vallner and Sten Mark Mändmaa; interior architects Tea Tammelaan, Malle Jürgenson, Krista Lepland and Sirli Ehari.



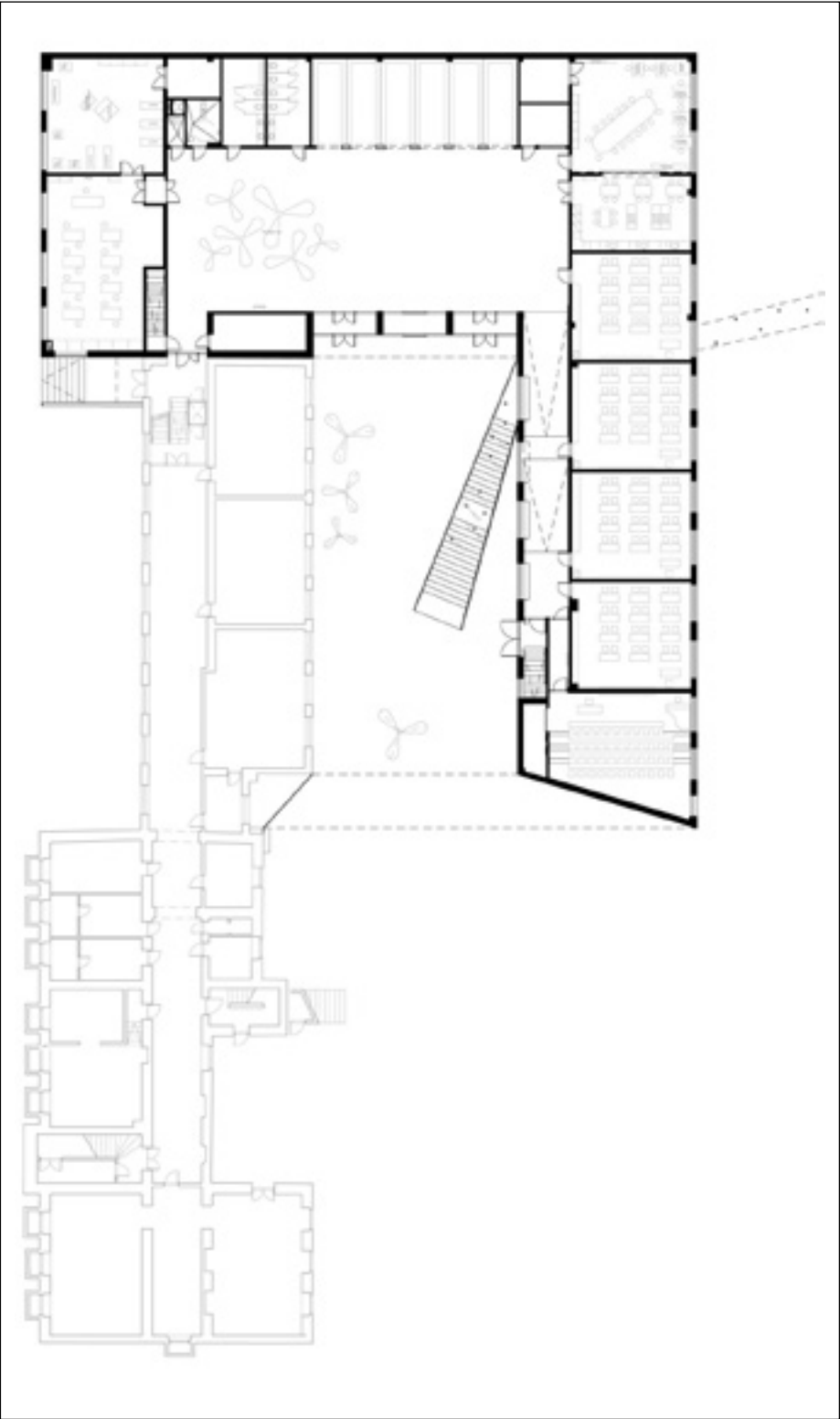
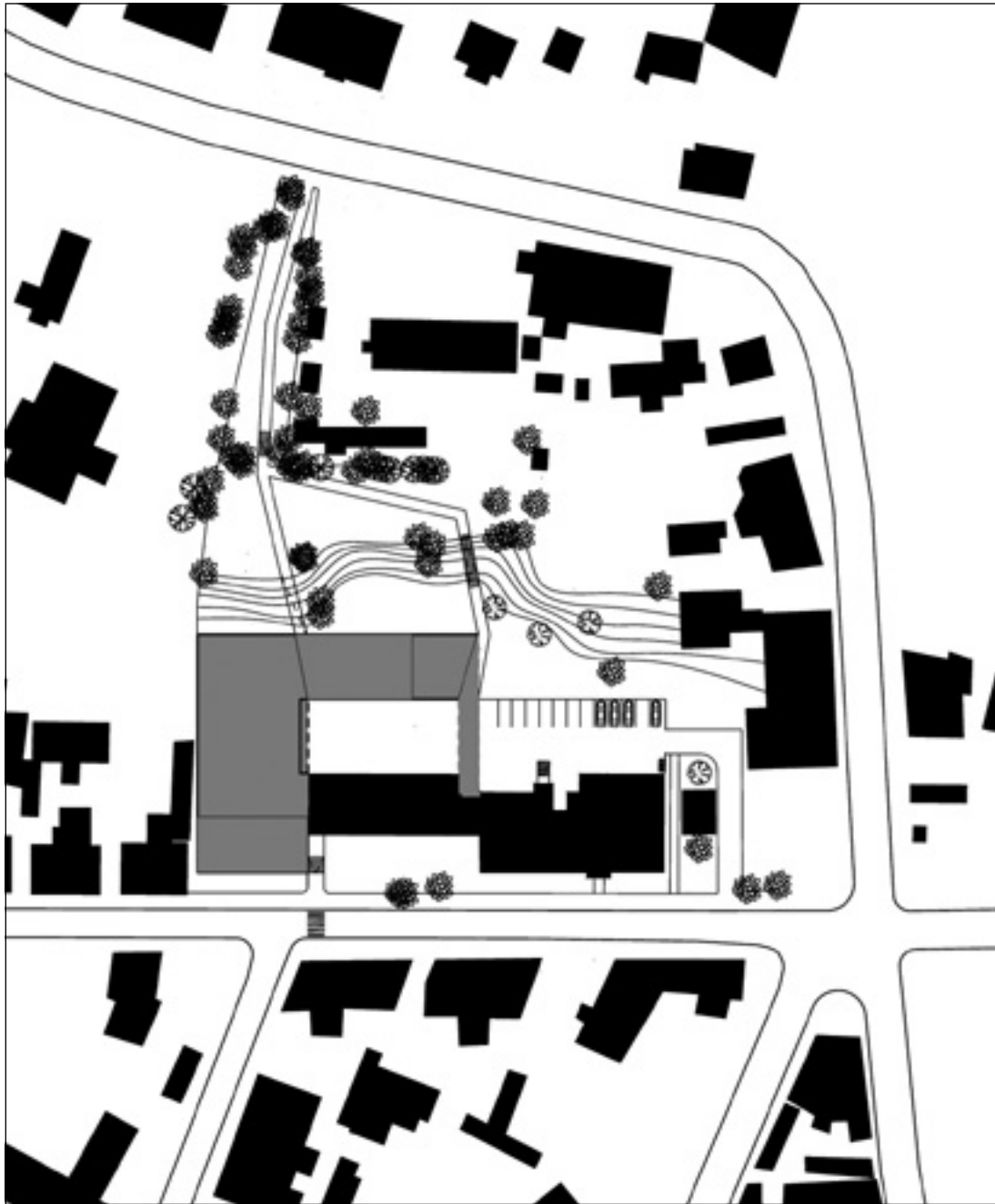






The extension of the Tartu City Central School (2007). Architects Maarja Kask, Karli Luik and Ralf Lõoke. The pattern with blueberry leaves is by Martin Rästa, whose original posters for cultural events on Tartu's fences have become an integral part of the cityscape.

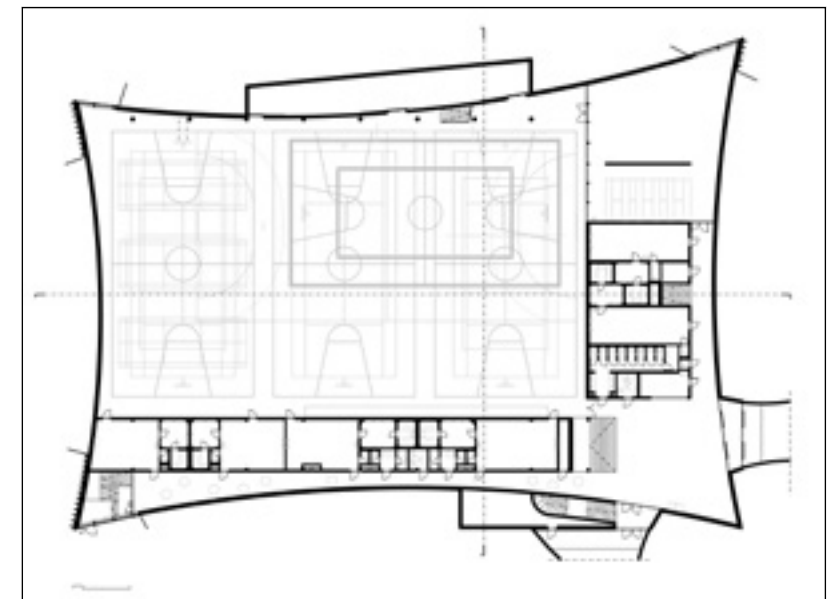
Site plan. A multi-level courtyard keeps the children away from the busy street of Kroonuaia, which passes in front of the schoolhouse. The drawing on the right shows the ground floor plan.







The sports hall of the University of Life Sciences in 2013. The design by Salto Architects probably won the architecture competition back in 2007 because it was best suited to play the role of representing the city – the building is among the first to come into view when driving into the city from the direction of Tallinn. Architects Maarja Kask, Karli Luik and Ralf Lööke; interior architects Katrin Kaevats and Jaan Port. On the right, the ground floor plan.







A residential and office building at 2 Soola tänav, completed in 2016 (designed by Uko Künnap). Slowly but steadily, an increasing number of large residential and office buildings are making an appearance in Tartu.



The ENM architectural design competition was held in 2005, when Europe was a more optimistic place than it is today. Although al-Qaeda had attacked the United States a few years before, it still felt like the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq could finish the terrorist organisation off. This was a time of global economic growth and a hopeful period of eastward expansion for old Europe. It was also a pre-Facebook era, when the world could feel much more fragmented than it does today. While mass immigration was also a draining problem in the third world countries back then, the conflicts over there rarely made it to the news in the European media.<sup>29</sup>

Inspired by this economic and cultural optimism, many enthusiastic visions of what the refreshingly vigorous museum architecture of the New Europe (Estonia and other Eastern European countries joined the European Union in 2004) might look like were submitted for the ENM design competition. Based largely on a striking play of forms, this architecture was further stimulated by the then global boom in the building of art museums and efforts to imitate the work of star architects, or starchitects. In its initial form, finished entirely in glass, DGT's competition entry "Memory field" was also highly aestheticized, even naive, characteristically of the zeitgeist springing from the illusion of an unlimited budget. In contrast to the other entries, however, it did come tethered to a historical burden in the shape of the airport – a slogan of sorts, which seemed to say that all was not roses, despite appearances at the time.

Economic growth and the accompanying housing boom lasted until 2008 or 2009. In Estonian architecture, international design competitions for several public buildings of national importance were a corollary of the optimism of the time: the Estonian Public Broadcasting building (competition held in 2007), a new building for the Academy of Arts (2008), a new Tallinn town hall (2009) and, already in the wake of the crisis, a joint music and ballet school building in Tallinn (2011) and one for the Tartu Art Museum and City Library (2011–2012). All except the ENM project have been shelved; in the case of the music and ballet school in Tallinn, the construction of a new building remains a possibility.

The competition for a new town hall in Tallinn was won by the Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), which provided an opportunity for starchitecture mania to find its way to Estonia. This global tendency had manifested itself previously in Lithuania, where the invited competition for the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum in Vilnius was won by Zaha Hadid Architects, and in Latvia, where the city government of Riga contracted Rem Koolhaas' firm to regenerate the harbour

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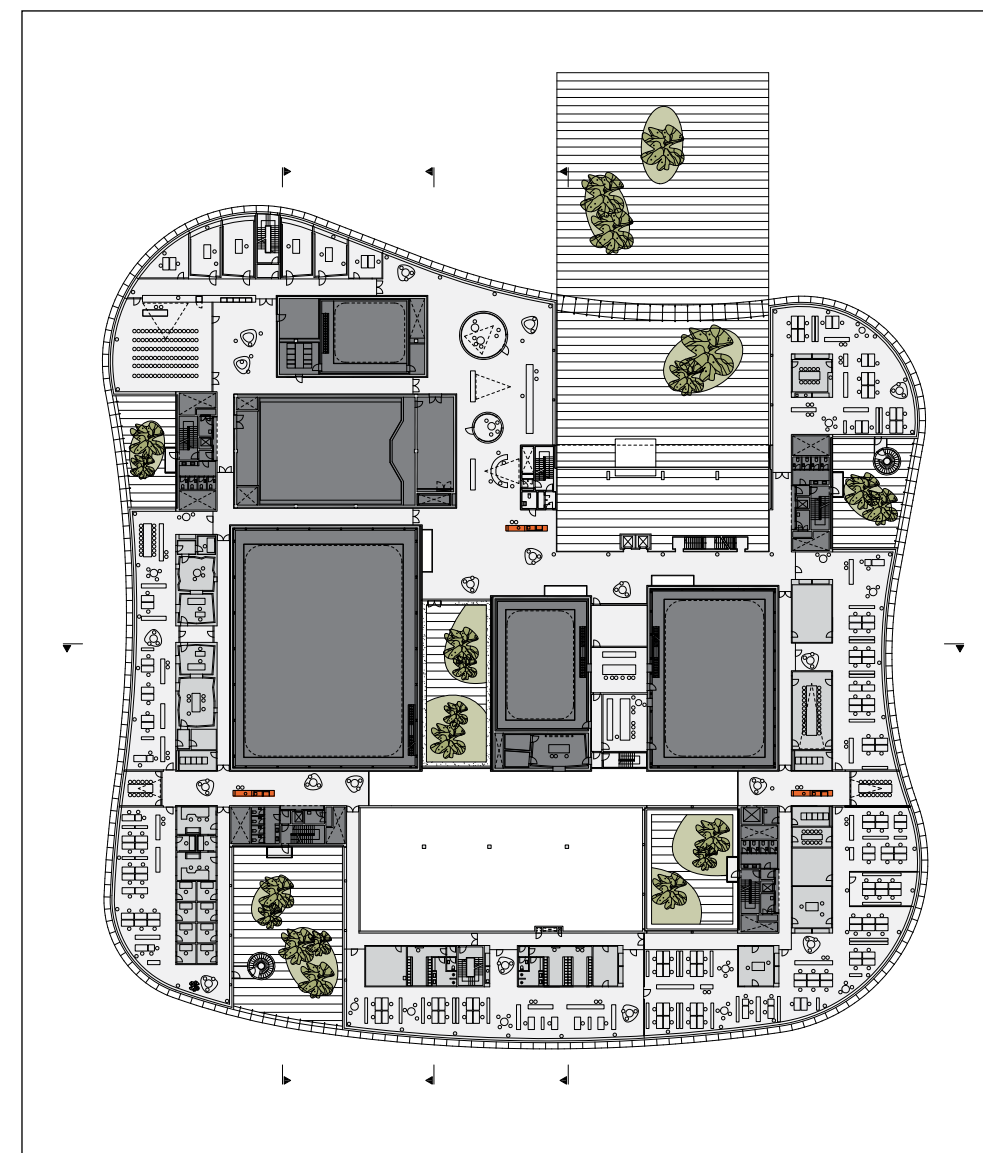
The world population will reach about 9.6 billion by 2050. The number of climate migrants is predicted to rise to 150 million by that time. We can imagine how many war refugees there will be should the flood of climate migrants trigger economically or ethnically motivated conflicts. All these people not only need temporary shelter but also a sense of safety and home. In a situation where the Earth's population will rise by 2.5 billion in 35 years, an estimated 700 million new households will have to be built. It has therefore been said that we live in a period that represents the swansong of architecture: architecture that relies on established methods (a long planning process, profit-oriented real estate development, expensive construction, European directives on safety, hygiene etc.) becomes practically impossible in such a context. In regard to this, the German architecture critic Niklas Maak has said that architecture will then have to be replaced with infrastructure. Figuratively speaking, this means that a concrete frame would be erected instead of a complete house, connected to a sewage system and power supply and handed over to the users, who would complete the process by whatever means available. Niklas Maak, *The Dispersal of Architecture*. – *e-flux*, 2015, No 66 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-dispersal-of-architecture/> (accessed on 27 February 2016). See also *Native Land. Stop Eject*. Ed. Paul Virilio et al. Arles: Actes Sud, 2009.



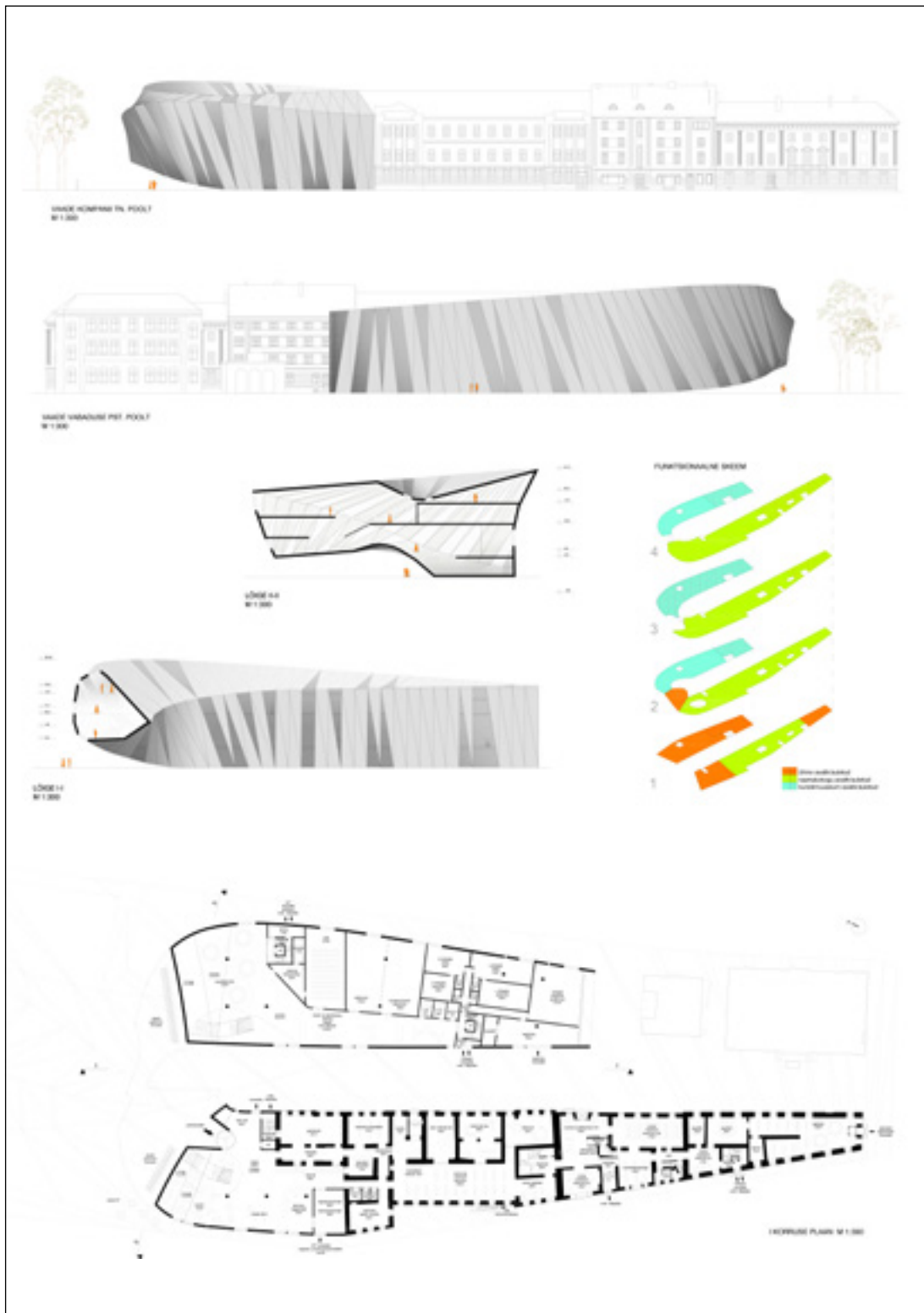
"Art Plaza", the winning entry in the 2008 international architectural design competition organised by the Estonian Academy of Arts and the Union of Estonian Architects, was designed by Danish architectural practices SEA and EFFEKT, led by Karsten Gori, Uffe Leth, Tue Hesselberg Foged and Sinus Lyng. In 2013, the Academy finally decided to cancel the project.



The 2007 architectural design competition for the Estonian Public Broadcasting building was won by Danish architect Erik Nobel of Nobel Arkitekter. In 2012, the government finally decided to abandon the project. Over the course two decades, Erik Nobel has won high places in almost ten open architectural competitions in Estonia. The illustrations show a concept model and the ground floor plan.







Drawings and a model of the winning entry in the international architectural design competition for the joint building of the Oskar Luts Tartu City Library and Tartu Art Museum, designed by architects Tõnu Laigu, Koit Ojaliiv, Elo Kiivet, Mari Rass, Holden Vides and Asko Uukado.



area (including an art museum). Both developments ground to a halt during the economic crisis. The manner in which designs were commissioned from starchitects and the projects then suspended is a textbook example of how post-socialist countries in boom-time Eastern Europe were trying to use Western architecture to compensate for what they had missed out on during the Cold War. The fact that these exorbitant projects were never realised shows that the region was not yet ready and not wealthy enough.<sup>30</sup> Instead of costly projects by starchitects, we should perhaps delight in the fact that architectural design competitions in the Baltic states have begun to receive entries from less well known, but perhaps all the more sensitive, young European architectural firms.

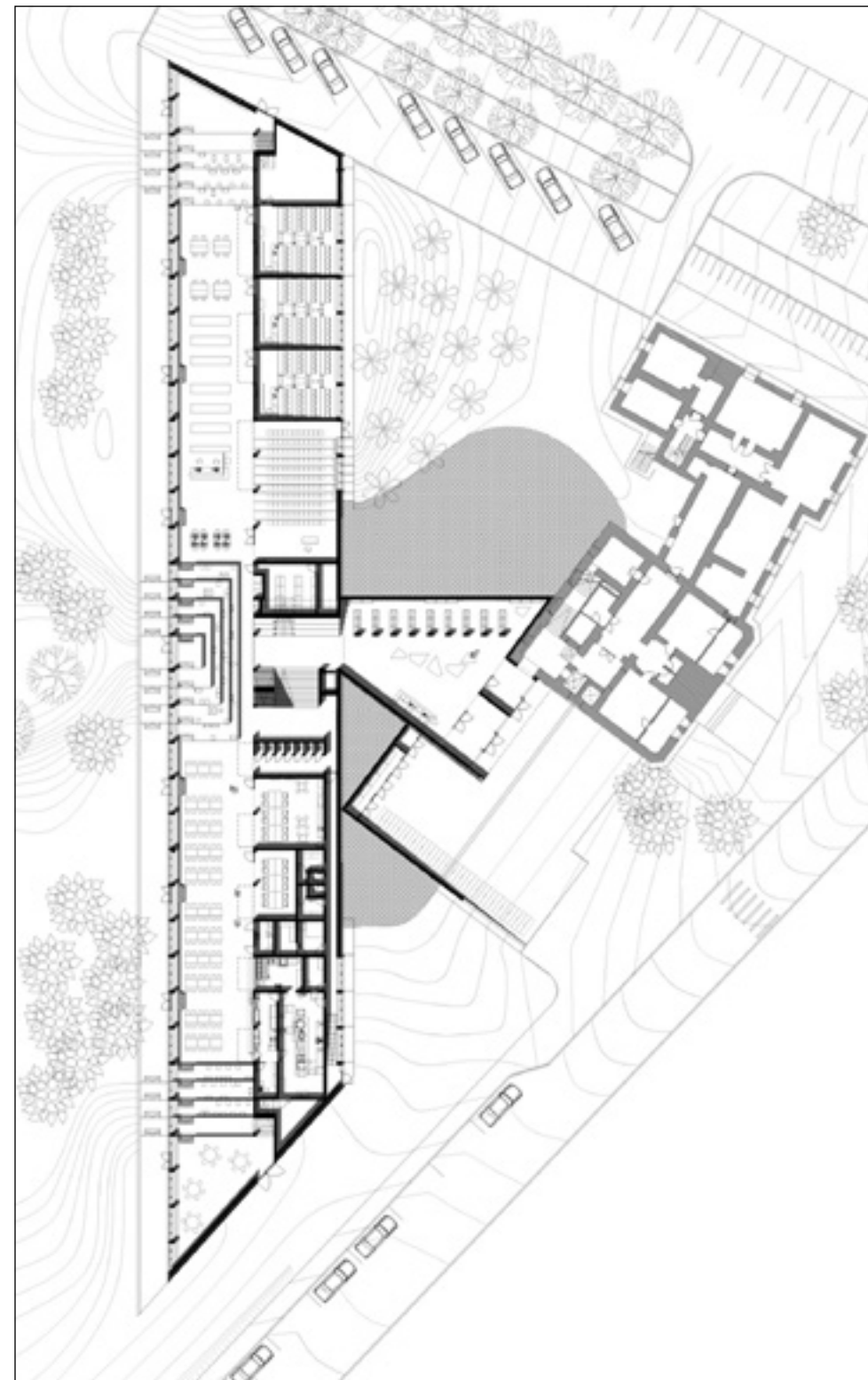
While historically architecture has been protectionist by nature – that is, local masters have been preferred – closing a national construction market to the architects of other EU member states is not justified and often not even possible in a Europe without boundaries. If the open borders support the practices of such small firms as DGT, which aim to operate locally rather than globally, then this might, in my opinion, lead to positive changes. What is something of a pity, though, is the fact that architectural communication within Europe mainly happens along the east-west axis. Just as low-cost airlines carry the Eastern European workforce cheaply to hundreds of destinations in Western Europe but do not fly between Eastern European cities, other information and capital also moves between



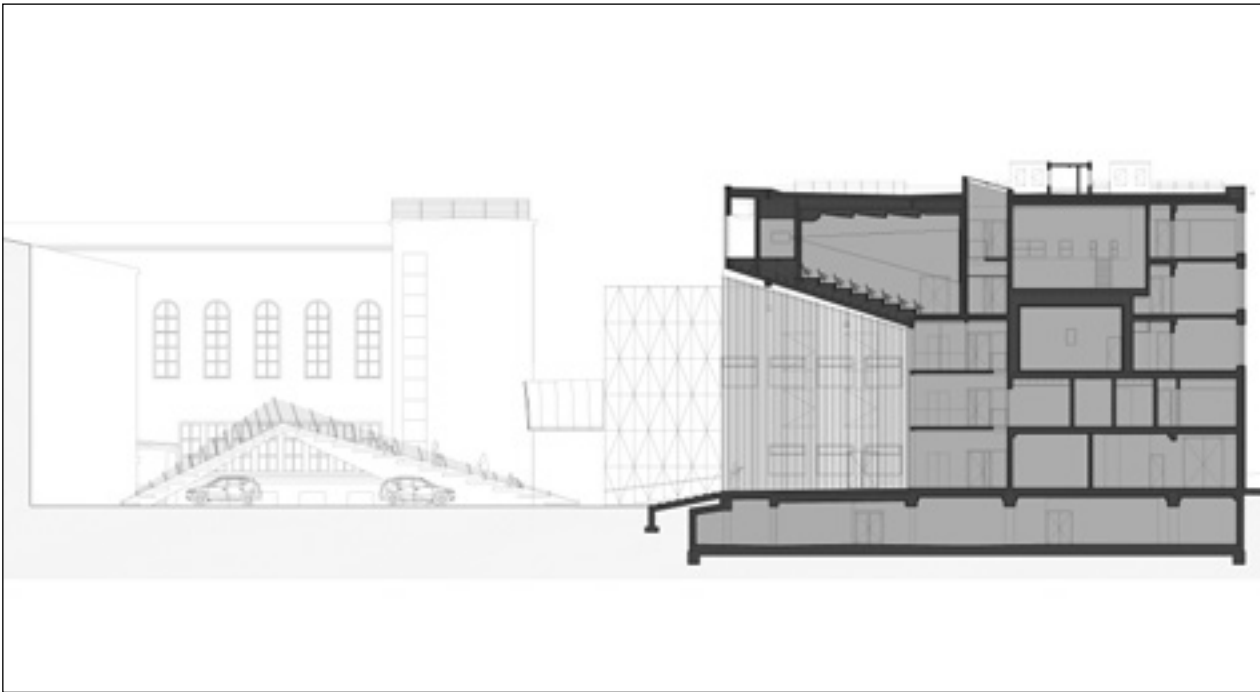
The Viljandi State Secondary School (2013). The rest area with its stepped surfaces is in tasteful dialogue with the ziggurat-shaped stage house of the Ugala Theatre outside. Architects Maarja Kask, Karli Luik, Ralf Lõoke, Andro Mänd, Margus Tamm and Eva Laarmann. Interior design by Pille Lausmäe Sisearhitektuuri Büroo. The figure shows the ground floor plan.

<sup>30</sup>

By the beginning of 2016, however, this cycle seems to have come full circle: in 2015, Lithuanian private collectors commissioned Daniel Libeskind to design the Modern Art Centre in Vilnius and construction work should commence in 2017.







the old and new Europe following the east-west direction. Indeed, architectural links between Eastern European cities themselves currently seem to be restricted to cases where one country builds an embassy in another's capital, using its own architects. In reality, there are many more occasions to engage in cultural exchange with other post-communist countries.

When a Russian jet with 224 passengers on board was shot down over Sinai in 2015, it did not attract half the attention paid to the Parisians who died in attacks two week later or the Europeans who were killed in the Malaysia Airlines passenger plane that was shot down over eastern Ukraine a year before. Culture critic Johannes Saar described the situation as follows: "Although civilians dying under similar circumstances in Beirut, Jerusalem or Zaria make it to the headlines here, their deaths do not have the ability to wrap the Estonian government building in their national colours. Neither does their tragedy cloak our Facebook profile photos in mourning clothes nor inspire displays of solidarity like "Je suis Charlie".<sup>31</sup>

Saar brought up the topic of solidarity in connection with a study that looked at the Estonian cultural press. The analysis showed that three quarters of the articles published in 2014 and 2015 discussed cultural phenomena in Estonia (a third of them in Tallinn). The largest share, more than a tenth, of the texts that focused on other countries were about cultural life in North America (film reviews),

The Baltic Film and Media School (2012) in Tallinn. Designed by architects Maarja Kask, Karli Luik, Ralf Lööke, Pelle-Sten Viiburg, Kristiina Arusoo and VLS Interior Architecture. The drawing shows a section view from the side of the Mare Building.



31

Johannes Saar, Ruum ja ruumitaju Eesti kultuuriajakirjanduses. – *Sirp*, 11. XII 2015.



seven per cent were overviews of culture in Russia. The third largest region to capture the attention of the cultural media was Eastern Europe and the fourth were Northern European countries, which otherwise represent a cultural policy ideal for Estonians, in architecture, design, literature and education. These were followed by the United Kingdom, Germany and finally the other Baltic states, whose cultural life received as little coverage as that of Asian countries. These statistics forced Saar to draw the cynical conclusion that air tragedies involving Latvians or Lithuanians would hardly give occasion for nationwide mourning in Estonia. In an era of global capitalism, it is not really up to us to choose whom we want as our role models or with whom we want to manifest national solidarity in their grief.

If the goings-on in the United States get most of the attention that the Estonian cultural media pays to the outside world, one might ask how much American (or some other) culture influences Estonian architecture. It is difficult to offer an objective answer to this question, and moreover, it seems not to be a central topic in architecture criticism. Perhaps the best idea of spatial culture in Estonia can be gleaned from contemporary fiction, which maps and analyses the territory, as it were.<sup>32</sup>

I would like to point out three aspects that might help architecture critics to reflect on the Estonian concept of space. First, Estonians have never started a war to fight for grand ideas. Although people have been dragged into conflicts, these have served a very earthly purpose (of ensuring the survival of the country).<sup>33</sup> Neither have our houses been built on grand ideas; they have rather represented practical considerations. Our perception of space relies on peasant logic, and therefore, all too often veers into kitsch.

Second, there are only two nations with languages spoken by fewer than a million native speakers that can afford a university education in their own language: Iceland and Estonia.<sup>34</sup> The preservation and development of cultural and linguistic diversity is crucial for the diversity and survival of human culture. Looking at the alarming speed at which the Estonian population is dwindling, it is somewhat surprising how little the government investments,



On the left University of Tartu Narva College (architects Siiri Vallner, Indrek Peil, Katrin Koov, 2012), on the right Narva Town Hall. Finished in 1671 it was one of the few buildings in Narva to survive the World War II.

32

Here are a few examples of Estonian prose from recent years where the interpretation of (urban) space has a central role: J. Kaus, *Koju*. Tallinn: Tuum, 2012; J. Kaus, *Tallinna kaart. Miniatuurid*. Tallinn: Kultuurileht, 2014; *Mitte-Tartu*. Ed. S. Vabar. Tartu: Topofon, 2012; L. Sommer, *Räestu raamat*. Tallinn: Menu, 2012–2013; L. Sommer, *Sealpool sood*. 2006–2014. Tallinn: Menu, 2014; P. Matsin, *Gogoli disko*. Viljandi: Lepp ja Nagel, 2015.

33

See J. Undusk, *Ideetud eestlased: Eesti sõjakirjandust lugedes*. – *Vikerkaar* 2000, No 8–9, pp. 105–115.

34

While there are fewer than a million ethnic Estonians in Estonia, the total number of Estonian speakers is approximately 1.2 million.

planning decisions and so on are harnessed to support the preservation of the language and the nation. Given the gravity of the situation, it seems to me that architecture critics should exercise nothing less than neurotic persistence in sharply condemning all developments that compromise on education or culture. Although a few outstanding school and university buildings have been constructed in Estonia over the last 20 years – the Tallinn 21st School (designed by Raul Järg, 2003), the Viljandi State Secondary School (Salto, 2013), the Baltic Film and Media School (Salto, 2012) and the Narva College of the University of Tartu – most investments have produced frustratingly mediocre environments that do not support the valuing of education. It can therefore be said that, in terms of culture politics, the ENM architectural design competition was held in a terra incognita, for Estonia's only understanding of museum construction after the regaining of independence came from the Kumu experience.



Third, Estonia is a relatively small and compact country, where on the one hand, it is easy to push through fundamental changes, while on the other, there is no room for massive errors. Architecture criticism should help a small country to resolve a big question: for what purpose do we use and need architecture and spatial thinking more broadly? Does architecture merely reduce to construction or does it involve self-critical reflection on administrative capacity? Smart Alecks say that the cheapest option would be not to maintain an independent state at all and offer it to be governed by another more powerful state. In principle, a small state should provide the best possibilities for creating a flexible government structure. What kind of idea can serve as the basis for planning our administration, transport, energy, education and other systems, our e-government, jurisdiction, integration and agriculture? Is the general network that we inevitably weave from day to day sustainable in principle, self-regenerating and self-purifying? What kind of ecosystem is it? Might it not resemble fallow ground, which is kept at its best when cut once a year? Or are we cultivating a unique ecosystem that requires constant care?

If we draw a figurative comparison between the bureaucratic side of the construction of the ENM building on the one hand, and Estonia's state-building on the other, we see that the only discernible idea in the government's spatial policy is that of austerity, tempting though it would be to say that things are getting better with time. At first a foundation for the construction of the ENM (ERMi Ehitamise Sihtasutus, ERMES) was set up under the museum but then dissolved in 2011 as its functions were assigned to State Real Estate Ltd (Riigi Kinnisvara AS, RKAS) instead. Established in 2001, the latter is a real estate development and management company owned by the Estonian state; its function is the effective management of the state's real property.<sup>35</sup> Although its establishment was financially beneficial for the state, it is worth pointing out that the company's 250 strong staff does not include a single architect, save one board member. Directly responsible for the living environment of the country, the company has produced an abundance of mediocre "cowshed architecture" during its short life.<sup>36</sup> The institution, which for all intents and purposes performs the role of a state architect (though currently reduced to little more than a construction department within the Ministry of Finance), is not operating in the name of high-quality architecture or a meaningful living environment; it is merely seeing to it that the state's construction and renovation efforts are "legally correct" and carried out as economically as possible.

35

For details, see <http://rkas.ee/riigi-kinnisvarast> (accessed on 15 May 2016).

36

In criticising the organisation of the construction of the so-called super-ministry building in Tallinn, which has attracted a lot of attention, architect Margit Mutso has said: "Looking at the overall picture of the buildings commissioned by the state shows that one cannot, unfortunately, rely on the taste of the chief specialists. Schoolhouses that reflect an aesthetic of cowshed architecture and the altogether unstylish government buildings are, alas, what first comes to mind in connection with the public procurements of the RKAS. The few beautiful buildings commissioned by the state that have been erected have not been completed thanks to the cultured construction practice of the state representatives, but rather in spite of their opposition, at the initiative of a local government or an authority that contracts for the construction of a specific building." M. Mutso, *Esmalt projekteerime, siis ignoreerime*. – *Eesti Päevaleht*, 18. III 2015.

# From the architectural design competition to construction

## Architectural design competition in 1993

Before we come to the 2005 competition, which is important to us, I will say a few words about the competition held in the early 1990s. At the end of the Soviet period, Raadi was caught up in a nationalist movement that aimed at restoring the museum in the manor house. After Estonia regained independence, Raadi took on an overly politicised significance unsuitable for a national museum. A difficult plot on the side of Toome Hill in the city centre came to be seen as a possible new location.<sup>1</sup>

The architectural design competition sought the best solution for a building with a total floor area of 29,000 square metres, including 5,450 square metres of exhibition space.<sup>2</sup>

Architects living and working in Estonia were invited to participate in the competition. The jury included director of the ENM Tõnis Lukas (Chairman), acting executive director of ERMi maja PLC Matti Maasikas, Tartu city architect Martti Preem, architect Raul Levroiti-Kivi, architect Margus Koot, Pärnu city architect Maie Kais and interior architect Vello Asi, as well as architect Uudo Tiirmaa and acting head of the department of ethnology at the National Museum Vaike Reemann. A total of 30 entries were received and the project "Põhja Konn" by Pärnu architects Tanel Tuhala and Ra Luhse was selected as the winner.<sup>3</sup>

1

In what follows, I am relying on the initial criteria laid down for the 1993 design competition: EAM f 5, s 32.

2

By comparison, the new National Museum building has a total floor area of 34,347 square metres.

3

Architecture historian Ingrid Ruudi has commented on the entries as follows: "Many of the competition entries were plagued by a post-modernist overflowing storytelling quality, striving to use architectural form to reference the contour of the map of Estonia, a tee-pee or the mythical axis mundi. However, the jury was searching for some kind of architectural language that was the museum's "very own", on equal footing with its symbolic role, referencing the yielding neo-functional and neo-constructivist designs as interpreters of "fashion"." I. Ruudi. *Unbuilt. Visions for a New Society. 1986–1994*. Tallinn: Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum, 2015, p. 29.

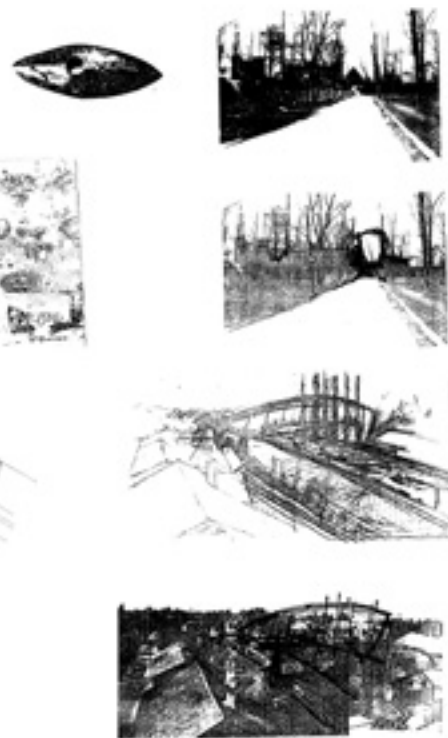
Given the circumstances, it was an appealing design, based on the shape of a hand axe – a symbol of Estonian doggedness and courage, thought Raul-Levroiti-Kivi. Vello Asi commended the winning design for its clear mythological purport and thought that the building could become a symbol like the Sydney Opera House or Eiffel tower. Then again, the design was too expansive for the chamber-like environment around Toome Hill. This, however, was not the fault of the architects, but the criteria of the competition, which had been prepared hastily and unprofessionally. The organisers had ignored the fact that there were several old wooden houses standing in the way of the envisioned museum building and the National Heritage Board had not given consent to demolish them. Another reason why the project was not realised was that the Riigikogu (Estonian parliament) had decided that the construction of the ENM building would only commence after the completion of the new buildings for the Music Academy and the Art Museum of Estonia, but the construction of both of these was delayed.



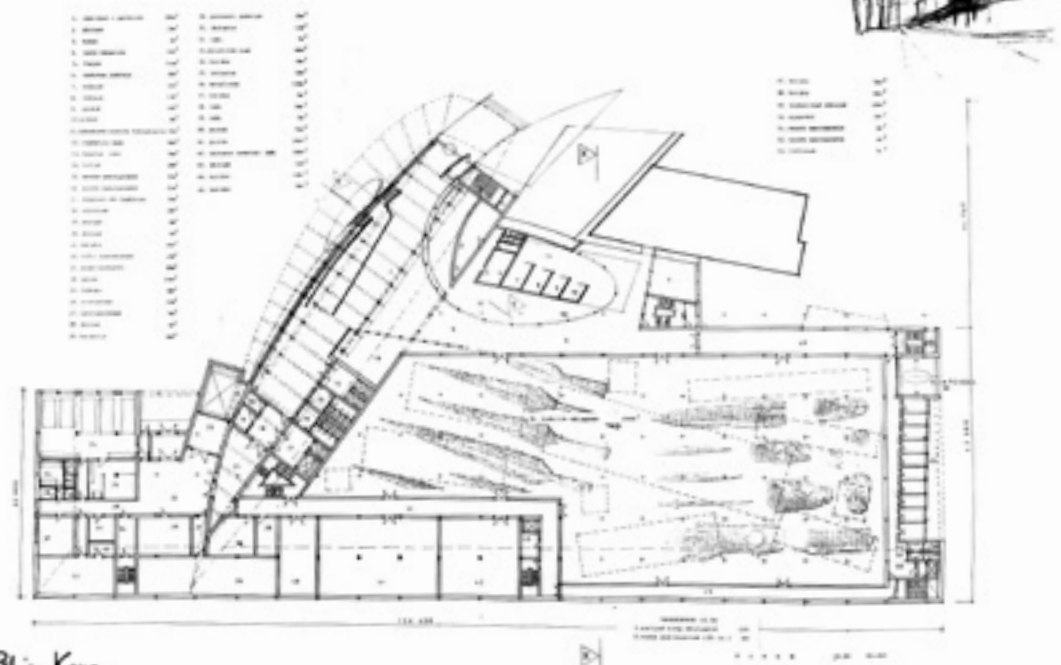
# EESTI RAHVA MUUSEUM



Põhja Kona

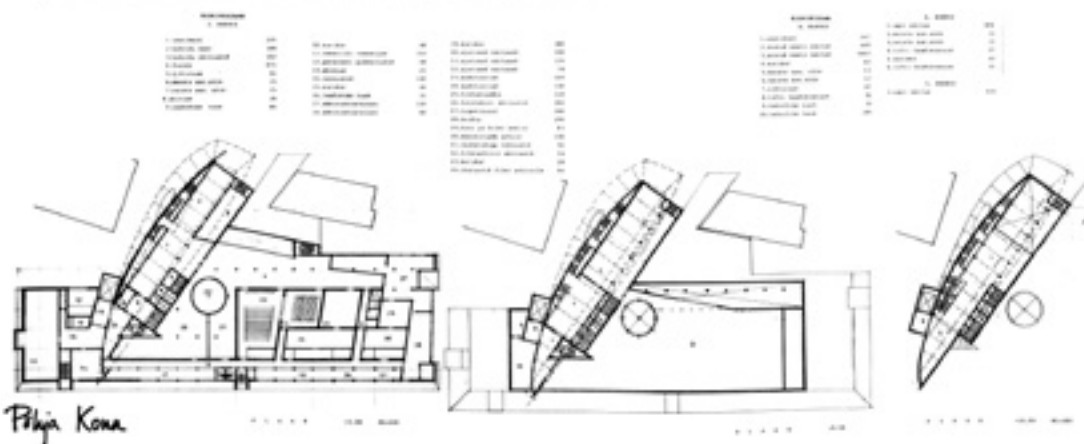


# EESTI RAHVA MUUSEUM

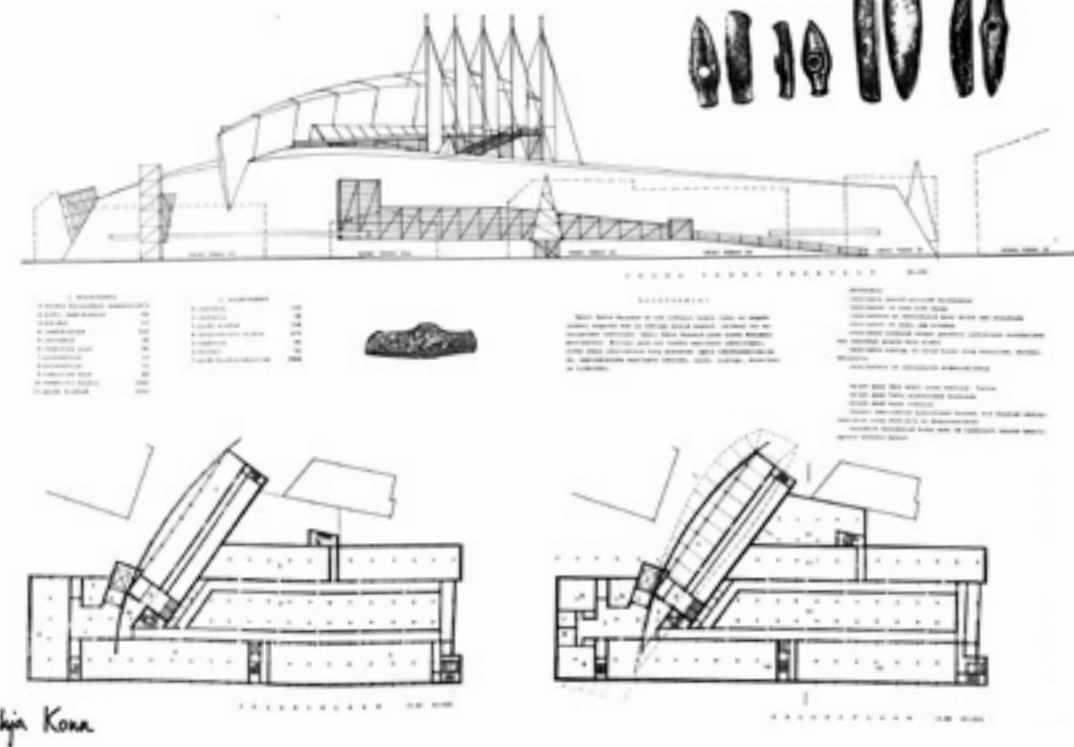


Põhja Kona

## EESTI RAHVA MUUSEUM



## EESTI RAHVA MUUSEUM





Going to Raadi

In June 2003, the museum, architecture and heritage conservation councils advising the Ministry of Culture came to the conclusion that there was not enough space for a large National Museum building in the city centre but Raadi would offer ample space for such a development. This was an opinion shared by the Friends of the National Museum Society and Aleksei Peterson, a long-time head of the museum during the post-war period of Soviet rule. A fact that spoke in favour of Raadi was that by this time an old maintenance building, ice cellar and workers' house had been reconstructed as storage spaces meeting contemporary requirements and with a total floor area of 4,400 square metres.

What also helped sway the decision in favour of Raadi was the hope of funding the construction of the museum from EU Structural Funds, which encouraged the idea of developing the whole area through the construction of this individual building. As it later turned out, a museum complex at Raadi did not convince European funders. It was even recommended that the museum be built in Tallinn instead, to attract more tourists. This kind of pressure to centralise is worrying, all the more so given that Tartu is the only place in Estonia that is at least to some extent able to compete with the greater Tallinn area.

Why build a museum (of that size) at all?

Already long before the winners of the 2005 architecture competition were announced, the estimated price and maintenance costs of the museum were agitating the public.<sup>4</sup> While the outrage among online trolls was not particularly surprising, several cultural figures held the remarkable view that investments should be poured into brains rather than concrete: the money should remain in the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, which would pass it directly on to creative people. To those who still think that the construction of the National Museum was too expensive (75.69 million euros, with the furnishing and everything else included), here are a few figures for comparison: Estonian Air, the national airline that went bankrupt, made a total loss of was 87.6 million euros between 2011 and 2015<sup>5</sup> and the Mäo interchange, which shortened the drive time from Tallinn to Tartu by three minutes, cost the state 40 million euros.



4

An anonymous online commentator expressed their amazement as follows (phrasing unchanged): “God help me, I would like to say to this, paraphrasing a well known fellow countryman... There are no words in fact... Is it going to be made of gold? Is it going to be the new world record for the highest cost of a museum divided by the population of the city? OK, maybe also divided by the population of the whole country... Why don't they restore the beautiful Raadi manor instead of building some kind of a modern box? Why couldn't it be normal size, e.g. the volume of the old Raadi manor house? Why do we always build some contemporary hideousness instead of restoring the old and let the valuable old thing fall apart? Could someone answer me this, honourable cultural bullies?” Imestaja, 22 November 2005. The comment was published in the online environment of the Eesti Päevaleht daily newspaper: [author not noted], Eesti rahva muuseum maksab vähemalt sama palju kui KUMU. – *Eesti Päevaleht*, 22 November 2005.

5

Estonian Airi kahjum oli 41 miljonit krooni. – Reporter.ee, 13 July 2011; Rahvuslennufirma teenis eelmisel aastal 17,3 miljonit eurot kahjumit. – *Ärileht.ee*, 30 March 2012; K. Aasmäe, Estonian Airi puhaskahjum oli eelmisel aastal 49,2 miljonit. – *Postimees*, 21 March 2013; I. Kald, Estonian Air vähendas kahjumit 83%. – *Äripäev*, 14 May 2014; A. Parksepp, Estonian Air teenis üle 10 miljoni kahjumit. – *Postimees*, 30 July 2015.

The Mäo interchange. Bottom left is an anti-noise barrier between the dual carriageway and agricultural land.

The construction cost of the museum (which in European terms is minimal anyway) cannot be of primary importance in the case of a building of such significance. In a situation where an increasing number of young Estonians are going away to live or study abroad, it is precisely a cultural centre of such potential that could prevent bright people from leaving. The ENM building will not only persuade talented university students to come to study in Tartu, but also attract experts from the world over. What is more, the major museums in Estonia have set themselves the objective of requiring that the specialists they employ have a doctoral degree. In order for today's undergraduates to ever bother pursuing a doctorate, motivating opportunities must be created in the labour market.

Open architecture competition

Many of Europe's best examples of contemporary architecture are the result of an open design competition, in which groups of architects from all over the world can participate. With the ENM, too, an international competition was unavoidable. Lately, we see more and more invited competitions being organised for key buildings in major countries, competitions where the main emphasis is on famous architectural firms having it out with each other rather than on the potential for innovative ideas. To an extent, invited competitions are also motivated by protectionism in construction culture, as at least one domestic firm is always included among the competitors. Even if the domestic architects do not win, the public can be appeased with the excuse that everything was organised fairly and the best design won. But as with Kumu and the ENM, there were critical voices in society asking why someone from outside Estonia had to be brought in to build “our museum”, so it is everywhere else in the world that we hear complaining when foreign architects “yet again” win a competition.

With open architectural competitions, the focus is on crazy and unexpected ideas. A classic example of a competition that propelled hitherto unknown architects to the world stage was that of the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1971, which was won by Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers and Gianfranco Franchini. An open architectural competition is in essence an invitation to “think outside the box”, and therefore, often plays into the hands of young architects, who are not plagued by convention or burdened by experience.

I have heard that the ENM competition caused something of a buzz among the younger generation of European architects, in the spirit of “now or never”. First, this was probably because many art museums were being built at the time and a national museum as a more complex spatial task triggered exciting thoughts in the minds of architects. Second, many architectural firms in Europe are international and that

invited architects to reflect on the essence of nationality and how to give it spatial form. The image of the competition was enhanced by an essay on the national museum written by historian Marek Tamm and a gripping overview of Tartu's architecture compiled by architect Veljo Kaasik. The ENM staff, furthermore, did everything they could to circulate the competition announcement all over the world through architecture portals and journals. The staff were passionate about the competition and their efforts paid off.

Well written texts, however, are not all that it takes to organise a successful architecture competition. All too often, laying down the initial criteria for a competition is a bureaucratic process that is carried out on the basis of a detailed site plan requested by a private enterprise. This way, architectural thought can drop out of the process right at the outset. The most important thing in organising a competition is clarity about what is to be built. At this point, the contracting party should consult with architects, urbanists, heritage conservation officials, local community representatives, politicians and donors with a view to arriving at a clear idea and vision together. Once the discussions have got that far, the parties can talk about certain spatial intentions and requirements that bestow an identity on the site.

After a vision of the building has been formulated, the contracting party should proceed to the spatial layout of the building and here too they should have a clear understanding of what it is exactly that they need. When their aspirations and possibilities have been weighed and aligned with each other, all that remains for them to do is to hope that the architects best capable of negotiating the rules laid down will find out about the competition. Ideally, the person who sets out the initial design requirements for an architecture competition will have a good enough idea of the potential of the site to be able to predict, in general terms, what the incoming competition entries will look like.

The next step is to put together a jury, whose “democratic majority” is able to appreciate the spatial intention of the client and the author of the design requirements. When composing a jury, it will help to include some “bait”, or someone to act as a widely respected patron of the competition in order to attract architects to participate.

Veljo Kaasik

The ENM outsourced the organising of the competition to the Estonian Association of Architects, which assigned Veljo Kaasik to draw up the initial design criteria. In teaching young architects at the Estonian Academy of Arts together with Andres Alver, Kaasik has for several decades stressed that architecture must make urban planning with



While working on the ENM, Veljo Kaasik drew inspiration from Korean culture. The photograph shows the National Museum of Korea (Junglim Architects, 2005).

6  
In his own words, “The world over, urban planning is a field of mass activities for architects. I am convinced that architecture is a profession based on achievement. I am also convinced that planning should also belong in this sphere, where some people for some reason do a better job than others. Even if the possibilities for uniqueness become narrower in spatial architecture, there is still a chance to transfer them into architectural planning, which functions through a dimension of abstraction. Analysis of the place and functions is an ultimately creative and cognitive process, which, except for everything objective, leaves room for the indistinct, the flickering, the metaphysical, and the irrational. It creates possibilities for life, which is greater than style.” V. Kaasik, *Architecture and the end of the century. – Over the buildings and beyond: Urban projects & articles 1994–1998* Ed. M. Peil. Tallinn: Alver ja Trummal Arhitektuuribüroo, 1999, pp. 6–8.

social depth and guiding broader processes its mission; he relied on the same ideology in his approach to the ENM building.<sup>6</sup>

Kaasik wanted the competition not only to seek out a building that looks striking, but to give meaning to the Raadi area as a whole. At first, the construction site allocated to the museum was a lot smaller. Kaasik proposed that the competition entries interpret a larger area, which happened to extend beyond the ENM's property as well as the city limits of Tartu and qualified as “unreformed state land” at the time. Various parties objected to this, as there was no guarantee that the piece of land specified in the competition criteria would simply be handed over to the museum by the state. Kaasik suggested that since it was a remote location with no other buildings, an extended competition site would help



architects to adopt a more nonconformist attitude towards it. Furthermore, it was argued that the museum building could in the future become the centre of a new city district at Raadi, surrounded by buildings fulfilling other functions. The extended competition site invited architects to reflect on what the spatial idea of the district could be as a whole. In this way, DGT were able to come up with an idea that no one could have foreseen. Lying largely outside the city limits, their winning design even went beyond the competition site proposed by Kaasik. DGT gave the best solution to the problem of how to incorporate the surrounding environment at Raadi as well as history and culture.

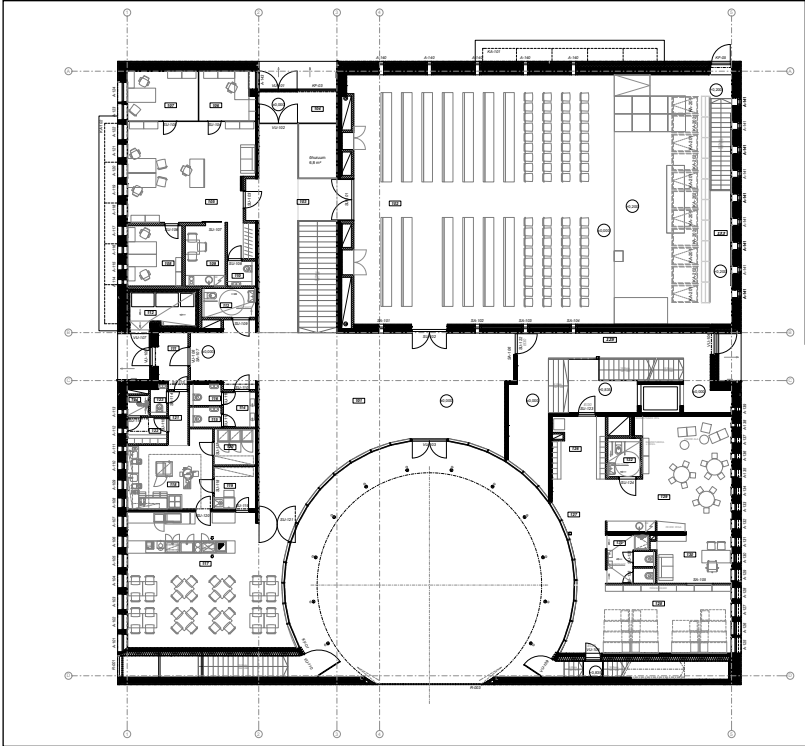
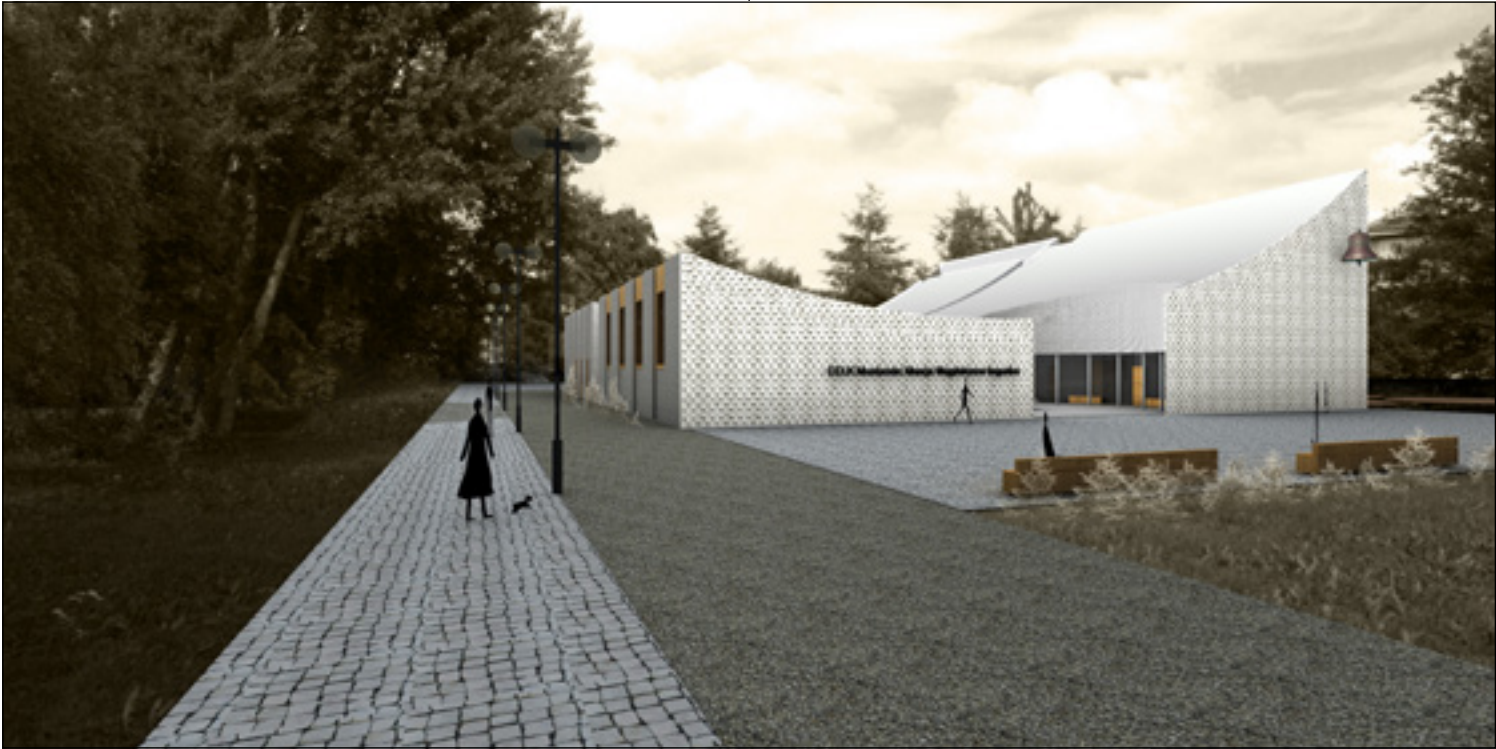
Kaasik has admitted that when he started preparing the competition criteria, his attitude towards the national museum was quite indifferent, even arrogant: beer mugs, spoons and spinning wheels – let them do what they want. Building a national museum at the outset of the 21st century seemed an exercise in hyper-nationalism anyway. Thanks to the affable staff at the ENM, with whom he went about to address the questions raised by the design competition, however, both the point of the museum and the question of nationality opened up from a different perspective for him. Acquainting himself with the building of the National Museum of Korea (Junglim Architects), which opened in the city centre of Seoul in 2005, was a particularly inspiring influence, according to Kaasik.<sup>7</sup> If a powerful and dynamic nation that has created trademarks such as Hyundai, Samsung and LG builds a national museum at the beginning of the 21st century, why should anyone anywhere in the world be embarrassed about building one of their own? It is a cultural matter specific to these nations, which it is useless to justify academically within the “post” systems (postmodernism, post colonialism, etc.) of the western world.

State architect

Evaluating the work of Veljo Kaasik and his team in retrospect, it can be said that they represented in the best possible sense the institution of state architect, the need for which has been discussed for quite some time in Estonia. They brought together urbanism, planning, architecture and historical knowledge. A case in point was the “elimination” of the border between the city and the neighbouring rural municipality, for it is precisely the formal boundaries that often get in the way of great ideas materialising. In order to achieve the desired result, someone has to take responsibility and that is why we need the institution of state architect, led by an authoritative figure who stands above the ordinary bureaucratic network and is generally accepted as having influence

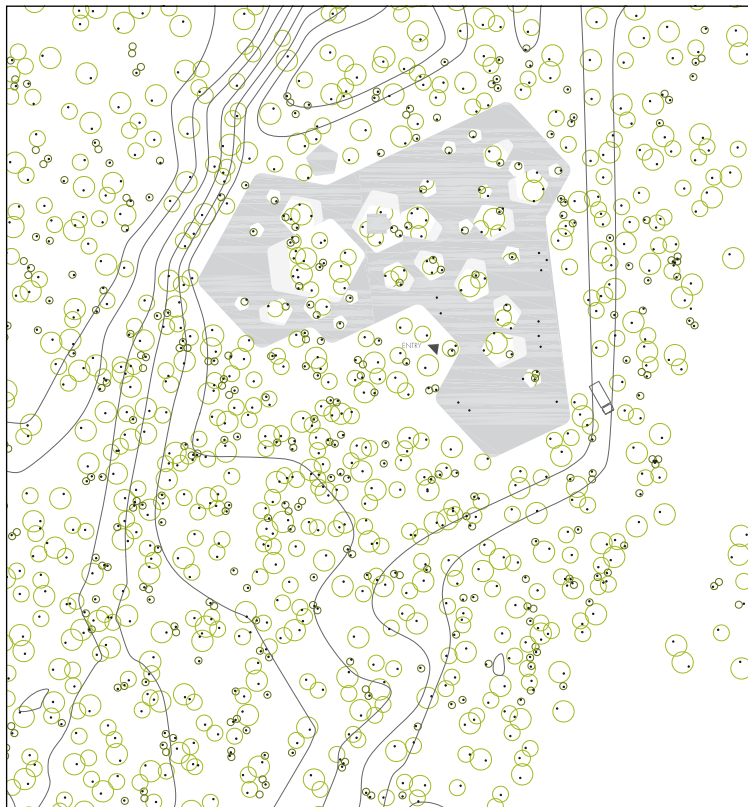
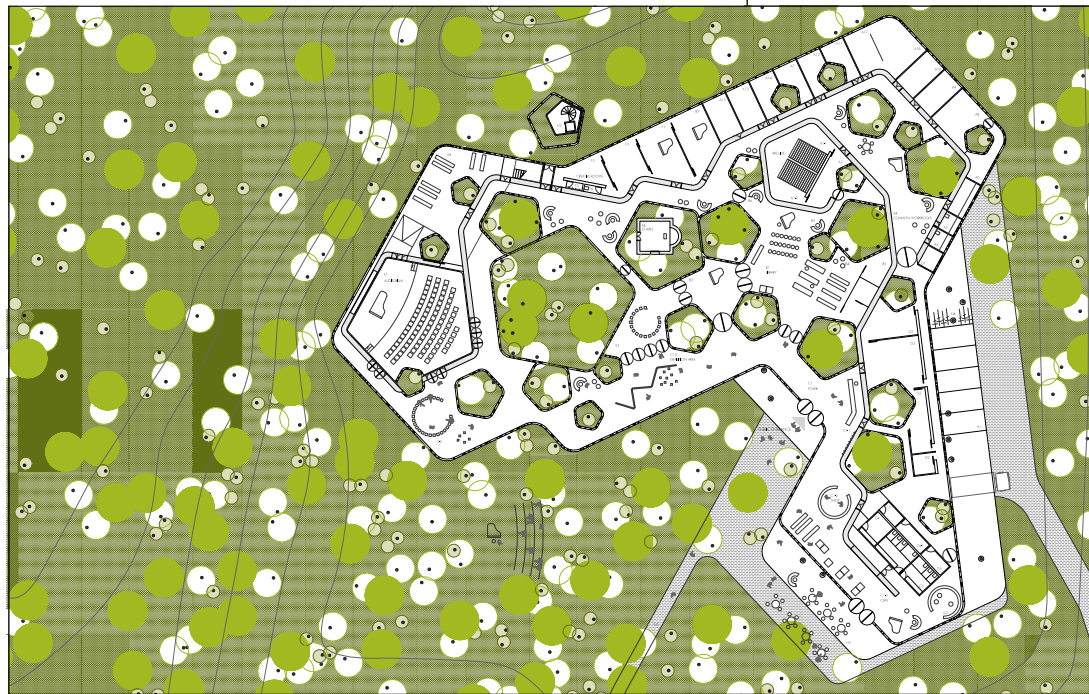
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Kaasik stumbled upon a selection of Korean poetry with a beautiful afterword by Andres Ehin published in a 1998 issue of the *Vikerkaar* literary magazine, where Ehin explains the common ancestry of the Estonian and Korean languages (Estonian as a Finno-Ugric language belongs in the Uralic language family, which in turn is part of the broader Ural-Altaic family, which also includes Korean as a member of the Tungusic language family) and similarities in history, three tragic occupations during the 20th century and much more. See A. Ehin, Korea. Kas kauged pilusilmseid sugulased? – *Vikerkaar*, 1998, No 3.



The winning entry in the design competition for the Mary Magdalene Church at Mustamäe, Tallinn. Designed by architects Risto Parve, Kai Süda, Martin Kinks, Margit Valma and architecture historian Mait Väljas. The figure shows the ground floor plan.

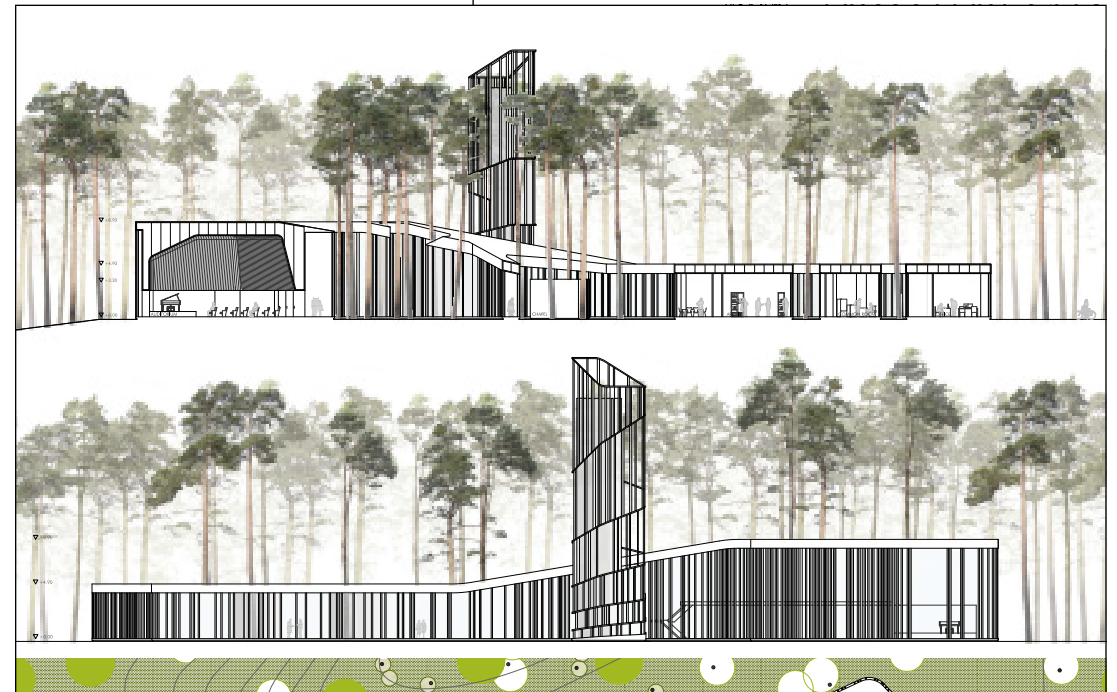




“Tabula”, the winning entry in the architectural design competition for the Arvo Pärt Centre. Designed by Spanish architects Fuensanta Nieto and Enrique Sobejano of Nieto Sobejano Arquitectos SLP.

and decision-making power. By the way, Kaasik himself has noted that for him in Estonia the role of a “self-appointed” state architect is laudably fulfilled by Kalle Vellevoog, who initiated the “Good public space” mission project, which was then jointly launched by the Association of Architects and the organising committee for the anniversary celebrations of the Republic of Estonia. The project is aimed at redeveloping Estonian city centres for the country’s centenary in 2018.<sup>8</sup>

It should also be pointed out that, since the ENM project, Kaasik has also prepared the design criteria of the architecture competitions for the Mary Magdalene Church in Tallinn (2013) and the Arvo Pärt Centre (2014); the organisation and results of both competitions have been highly praised.<sup>9</sup> In 2016, Veljo Kaasik received a state award for lifetime achievement in culture.



<sup>8</sup>

For details, see: [http://www.arhliit.ee/EV100\\_arhitektuur/](http://www.arhliit.ee/EV100_arhitektuur/) (accessed on 16 May 2016).

<sup>9</sup>

See P. Epner, Mustamäe Maarja Magdaleena kiriku arhitektuurivõistlus. – *Maja*, 2013, No 4 and E. Komp, Mõtlevad käed. – *Maja*, 2015, No 2



Design criteria

The introduction to the single-stage architectural design competition stated as its objective seeking a contemporary architectural complex that meets the spatial needs of the museum and fits well into the landscape of the competition site. As well as having to accommodate the entire collection of the ENM and allow for the necessary functionalities within the building, the design was also required to be functionally and visually compatible with the rest of the Raadi complex.

The territory of the Tartu rural municipality adjacent to the ENM was to be developed so as to allow the ENM to expand in the future. The architecture competition was expected to result in a clear definition of the area where the ENM and the territory developed by the rural municipality would possibly overlap.<sup>10</sup> The description of the prospective city district said that the rural municipality was interested in keeping the area immediately surrounding the ENM free of buildings (a recreational area and green area with a golf course were planned). Outside this area, the construction of hotels, sports centres, shopping centres and so on was allowed. It was stated in the competition brief that the ENM was to be the heart of the area.<sup>11</sup> The winning entry particularly stood out due to the fact that it resolved the planning assignment with utmost deference: a grand main entrance was envisaged facing the city of Tartu, while a second entrance, no less important conceptually, faces the new urban district planned by the rural municipality of Tartu; in the future, the latter could then open onto the district’s main square, a local town hall square. DGT’s winning design treated the artificial landscape with respect, which in turn convinced the rural municipality that the airport should remain the spatial foundation of the district.

Alongside the planning requirements laid down for the design competition, the appendices to the document also deserve to be praised – both Veljo Kaasik’s description of Tartu and historian Marek Tamm’s reflection on the significance of the national museum in Estonian culture were a great inspiration to the architects behind the winning entry.<sup>12</sup>

10

In February 2016, the city council of Tartu made a proposal to the six surrounding rural municipalities to merge into one large municipality with over 120,000 residents. See J. Saar, Tartu volikogu andis Suur-Tartu plaanile rohelise tule. – *Tartu Postimees*, 18 February 2016.

11

An extract from the design criteria: “The structures planned in the eastern part of the city could be characterised using the word ‘largeness’, in the context of Tartu. There is no doubt that the concentration of large structures, the ENM in particular, on the eastern bank of the city, will provide new momentum to the development of the entire city district and impact the development of Tartu as a whole. This thinking has its proponents and opponents in Tartu. The city is old; it has been invaded, destroyed and built up again. But Tartu is also a chamber-like city; the locals enjoy this chamber-like feel, and while they obviously need new large structures, they hope that these will fit in with the existing urban environment.” General Conditions of the International Architecture Competition of the Estonian National Museum. 15 June to 10 November 2015. Appendix 2, p. 33.

12

Tamm concluded his essay as follows: “In planning the future of the ENM, one cannot ignore its past. The ENM is not just a place where Estonian culture is displayed, but rather is itself one of the most important displays of Estonian culture. It is clear that today the golden age of nationalism is now behind us, and that a museum dedicated to displaying objects from a single nationality (and other Finno-Ugric nations) does not fit in with the terrain of other European museums. The ENM’s future should be, before all else, to operate as an ethnological museum with an open spirit and a diverse collection, which will gather, store, research, and display different cultural inheritances, not so much on a national as a scientific basis. But also, the ENM should preserve the knowledge of its historical role in the creation of the Estonian nation and through its collection investigate and display this role.”General Conditions of the International Architecture Competition of the Estonian National Museum. 15 June to 10 November 2015. Appendix 1, p. 27.



The site designated for the ENM architectural design competition.



Jury

The all-male general committee put together in June 2005 had eight members: Minister of Culture Raivo Palmaru, Director of the National Museum Jaanus Plaat, Tartu City Architect Tiit Sild, Ministry of Culture Adviser on Museums Peeter Mauer, the Dutch architect Winy Maas and the Estonian architects Andres Alver and Rein Murula. Although also invited, the French architect Dominique Perrault was unable to join. He was replaced by Veljo Kaasik as a member of the substitute committee, with voting rights. Architects and urbanists (Veljo Kaasik, Andres Alver, Tiit Sild and Winy Maas) held a majority in the jury; a somewhat more conventionalist front was made up of museum specialists (Jaanus Plaat and Peeter Mauer) and Rein Murula as a more conservative architect. The then Minister of Culture Palmaru was not a clear representative of either side, but as a communication expert could undoubtedly grasp what kind of a message about Estonia this or that winning design would send to the outside world. The minister led the jury as chairman and, according to the rules of procedure, was the last to vote. In the event of a tied vote (4:4), he was to cast the deciding vote. The secretaries to the committee were Anni Nool and Pille Epner from the Association of Architects.



Sitting in the front row are Tiit Sild, Winy Maas, Andres Alver and Veljo Kaasik.

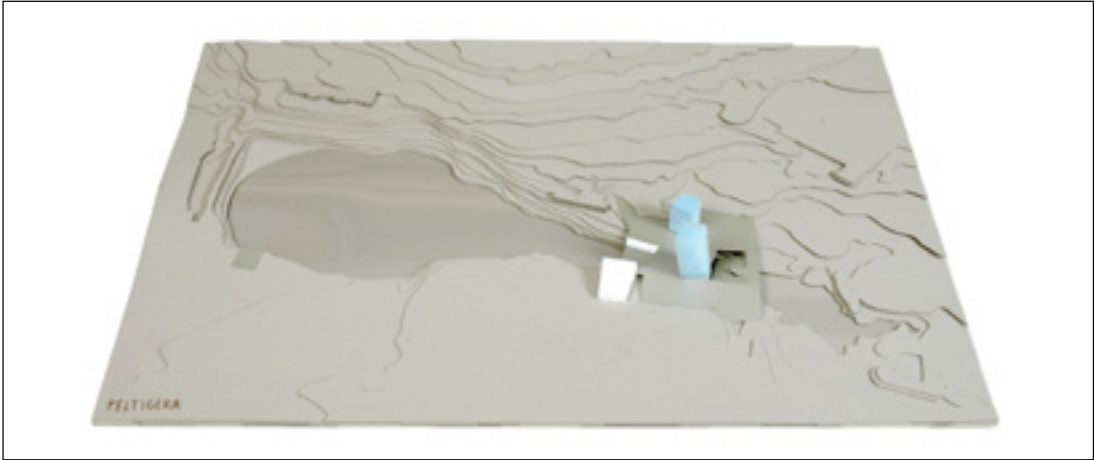
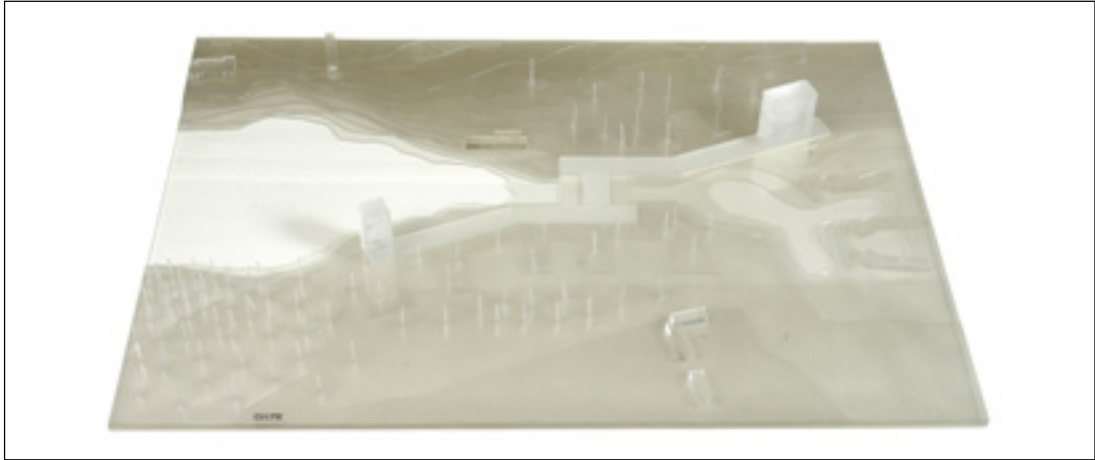
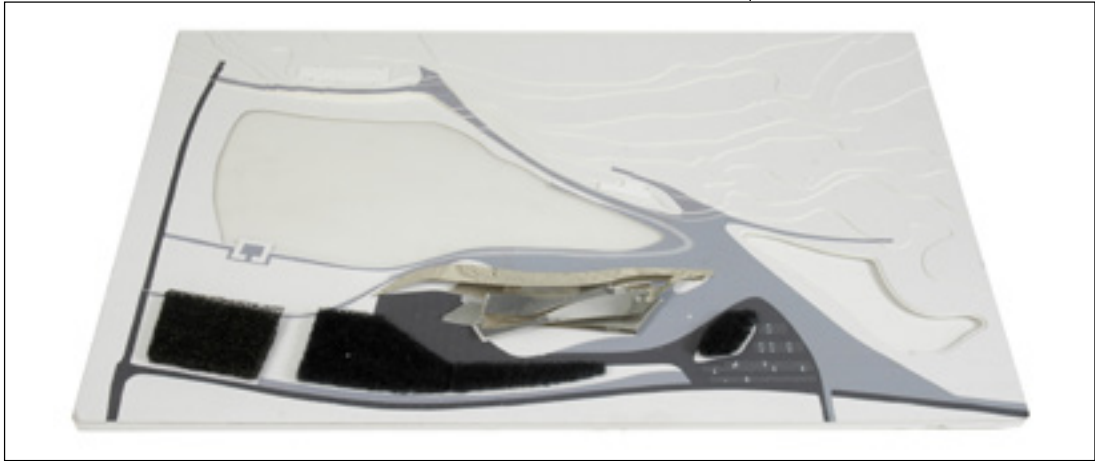
Competition entries

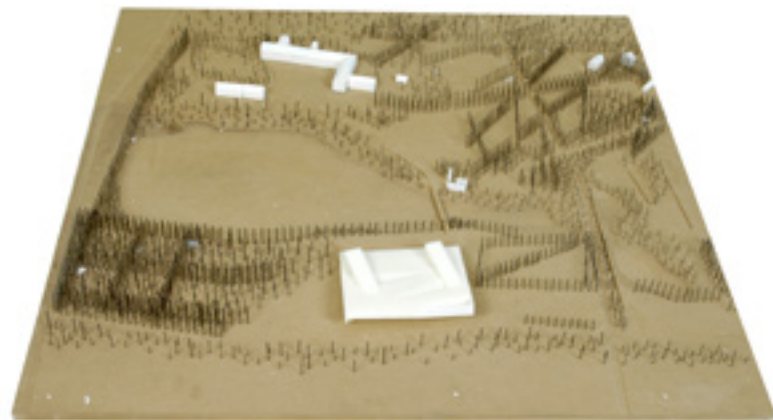
Over 500 architects and architectural firms from more than 20 countries registered for the competition; a total of 108 entries were received. Only 12 proposals came from Estonia, which may have been due to the fact that, at a time when the economy was booming, local firms were too busy with work to take part in such a time-consuming competition.

Most of the competition entries placed the museum building between the two water bodies, attempting to enclose these with the architectural form. Another faction of architects thought that the best position would be parallel to Vahi tänav (now Muuseumi tänav). While the former tended to be dominated by an energetic play with forms and attempts to design the building as a separate landscape in its own right, the designs that placed the building parallel to the street preferred a smooth, linear architecture. The former wanted to display the museum’s collections in as striking a manner as possible (rendering the building a monument in its own right); the latter designs were more modest, pavilion-like.

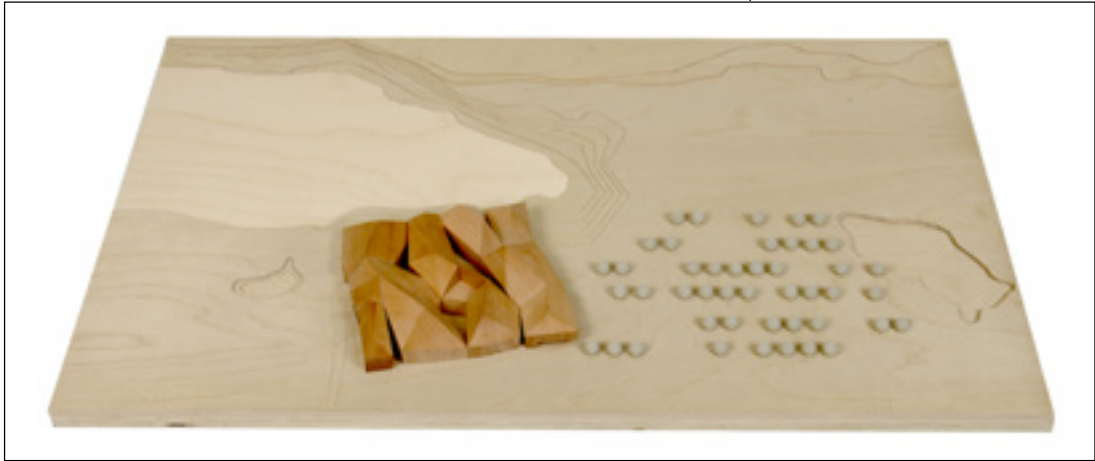
In addition to the winning design by DGT, there were also other entries inspired by the linear form of the airport, proposing a building in the shape of a rectangular slab cutting across the lake in a clearly defined line; the winning entry, however, was the only one to tie the building directly to the airport. Other “rectangular slabs” mostly sought to assert themselves in juxtaposition to the highly articulated landscape, but none was as convincing as “Memory field”. Many designs provided for a walk-on roof, perhaps due to the fact the competition criteria included a recommendation to design an observation terrace and outdoor café, and perhaps also encouraged by the Oslo Opera House designed by the Norwegian architectural firm Snøhetta in 2003, which in essence is one big observation deck. In summary, the level of the competition entries was consistently high and, with the exception of “Memory field”, which stood out clearly and gave rise to fundamental disagreements, the rest of the prize-winning designs were separated by very fine margins.

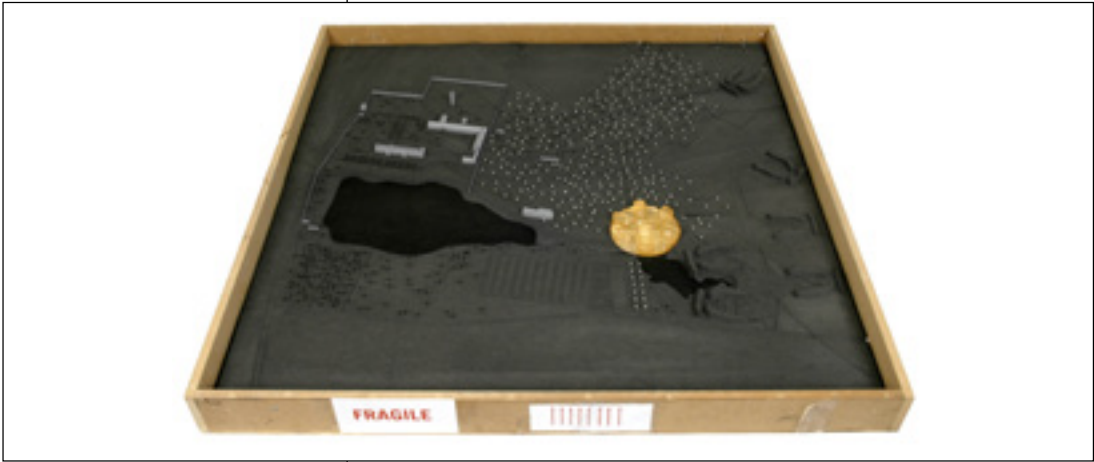
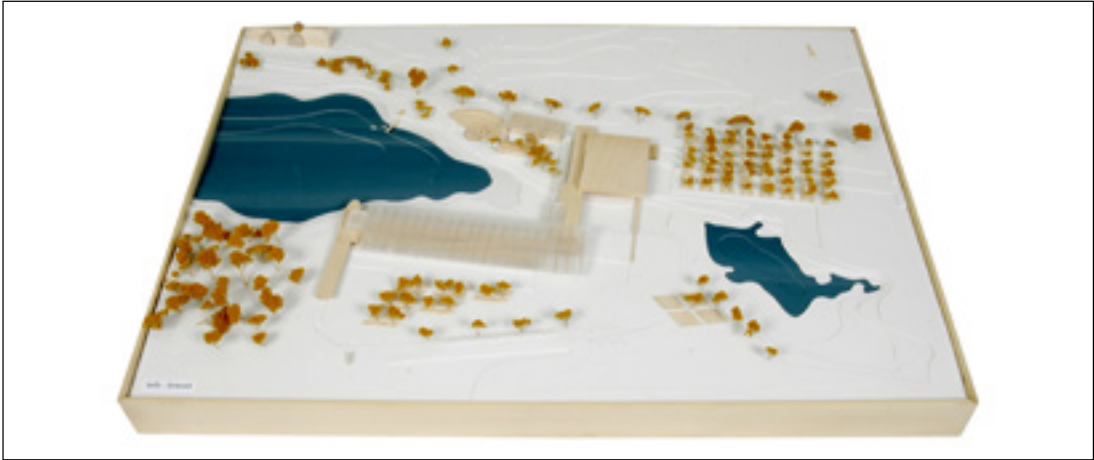




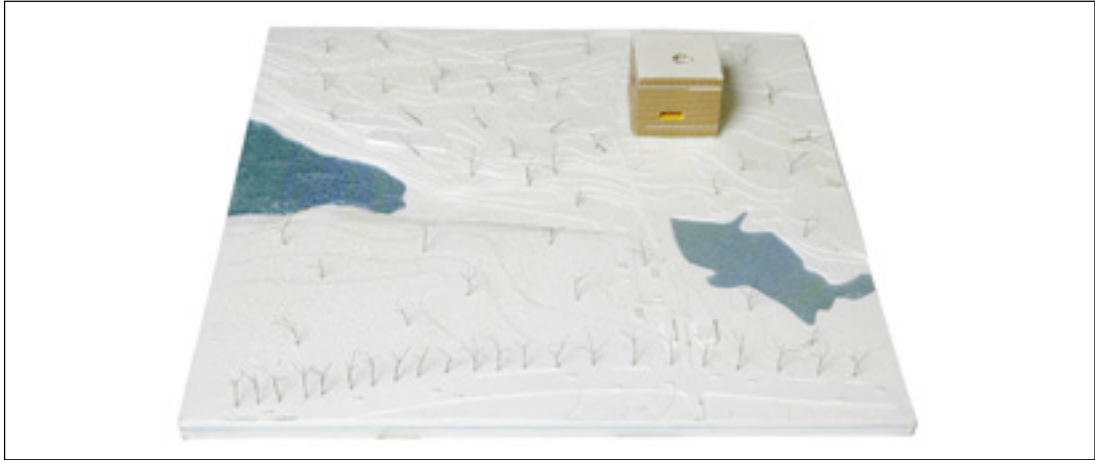
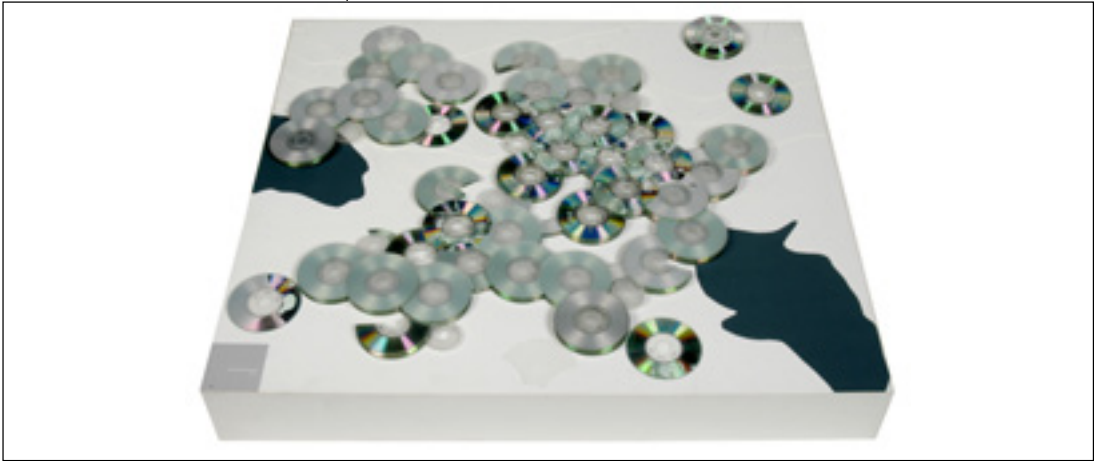






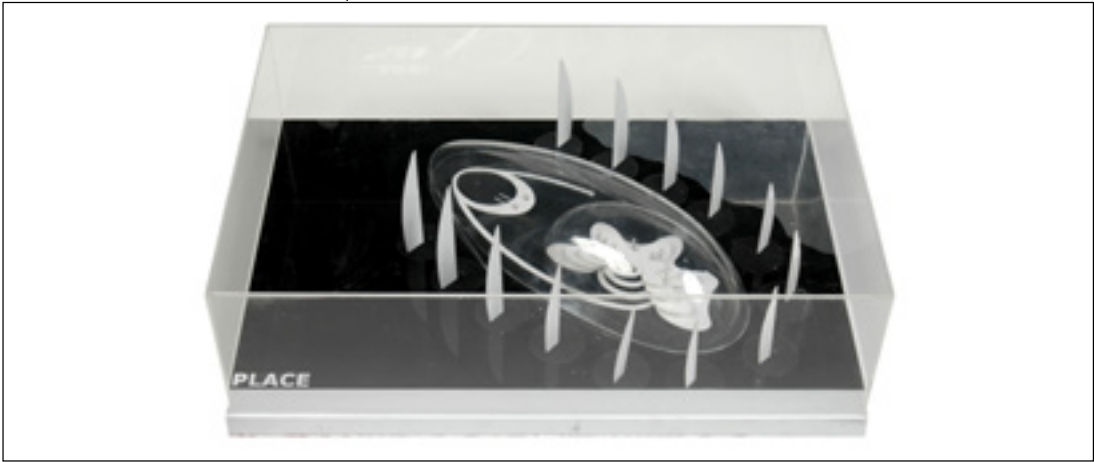
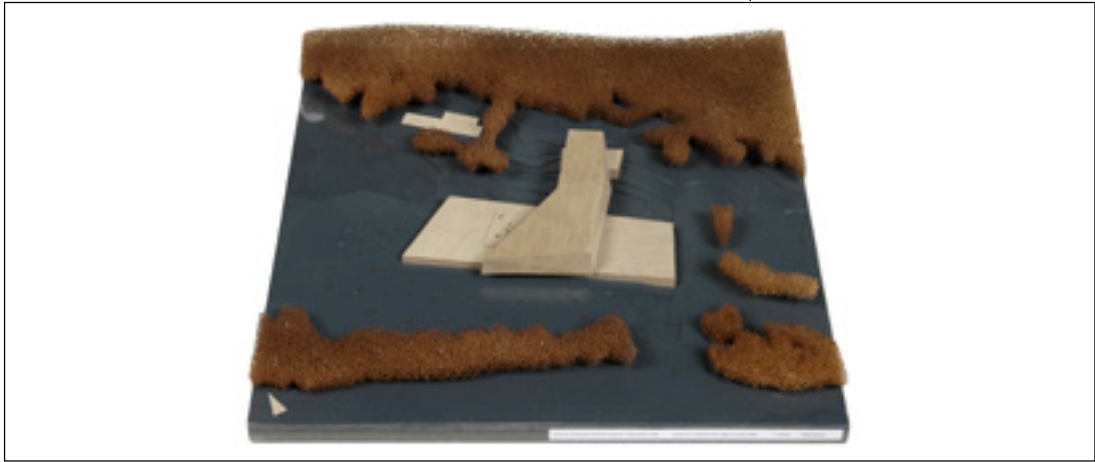
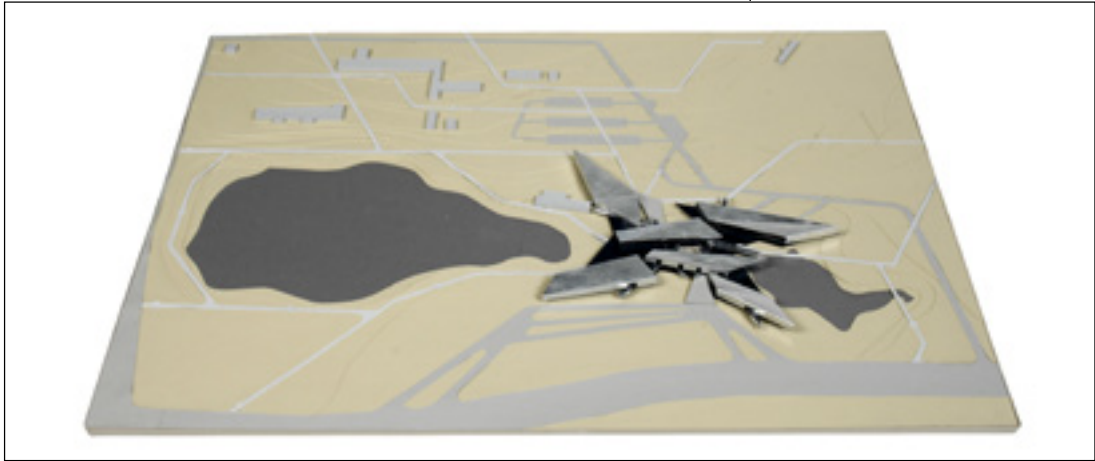


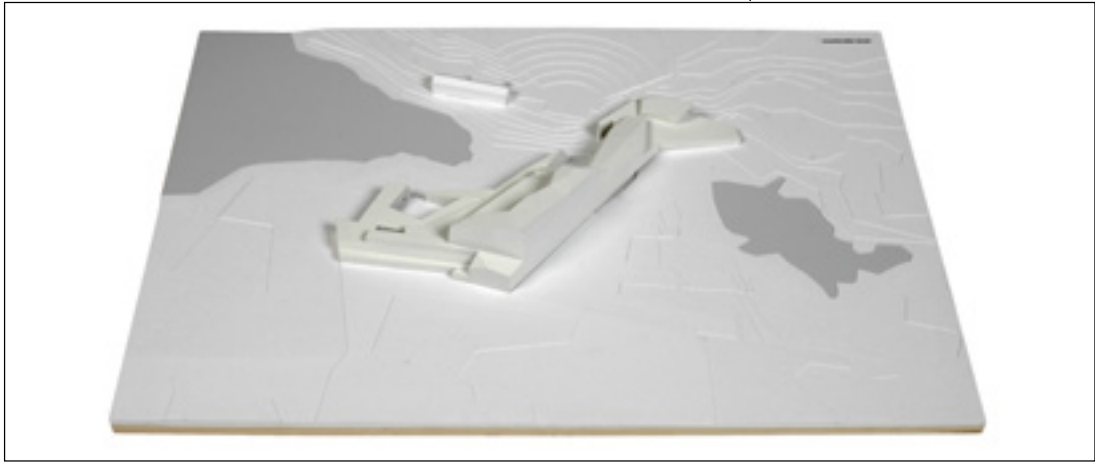






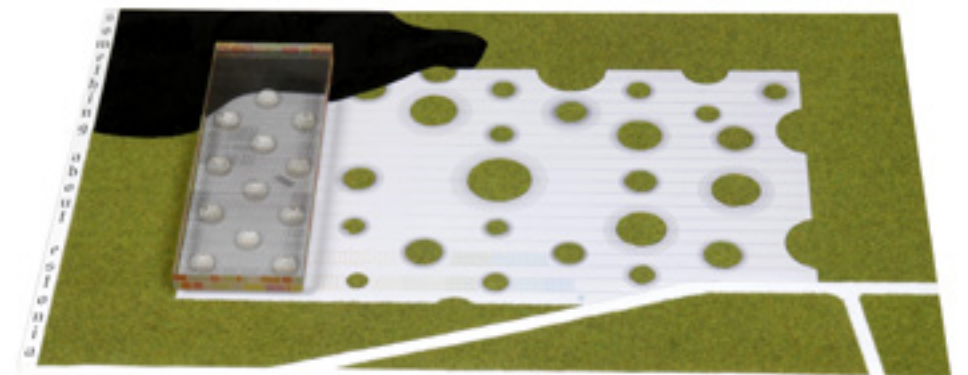
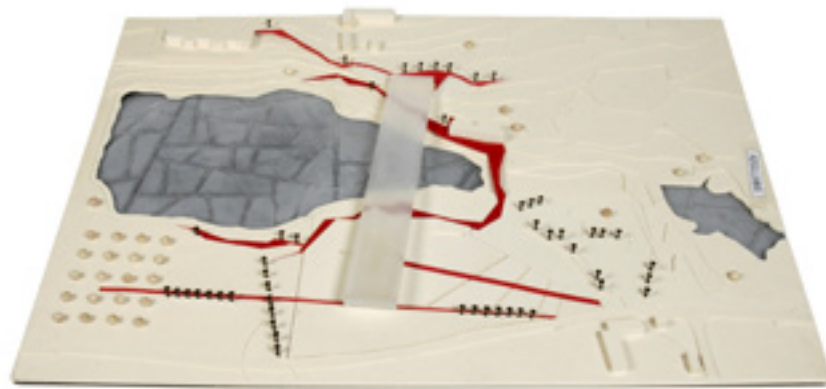
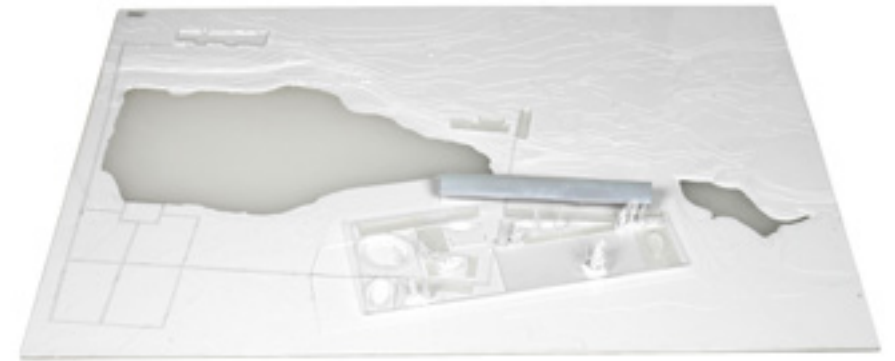
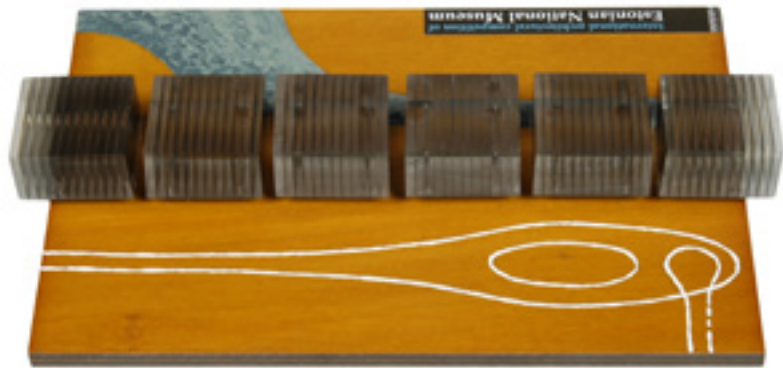




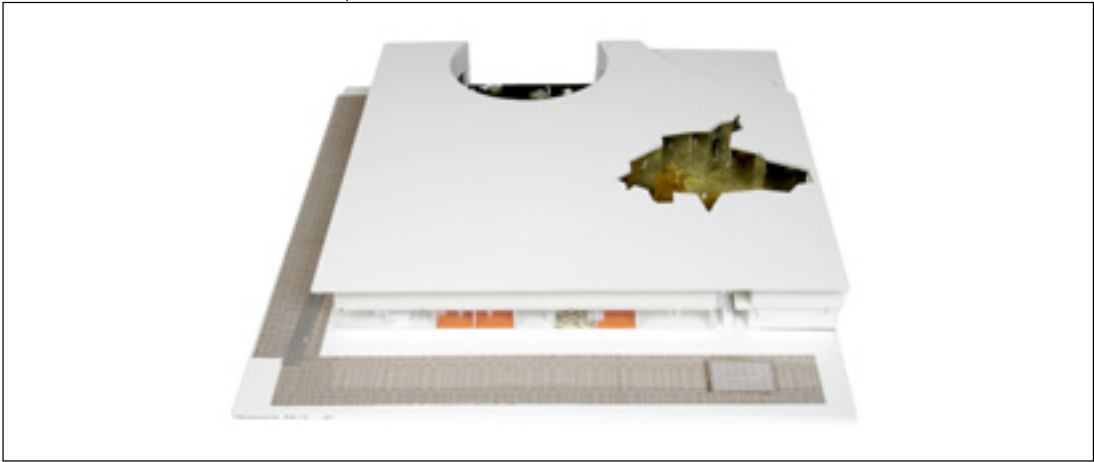
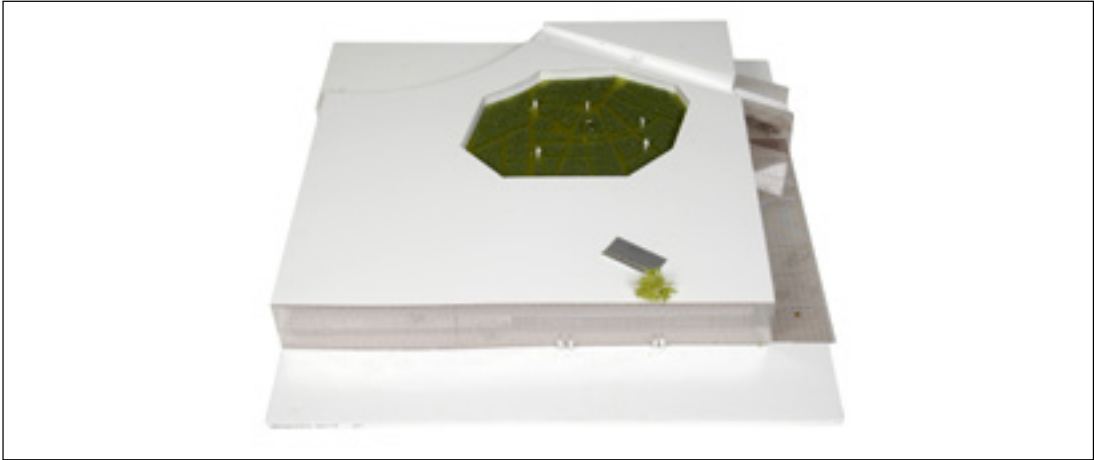
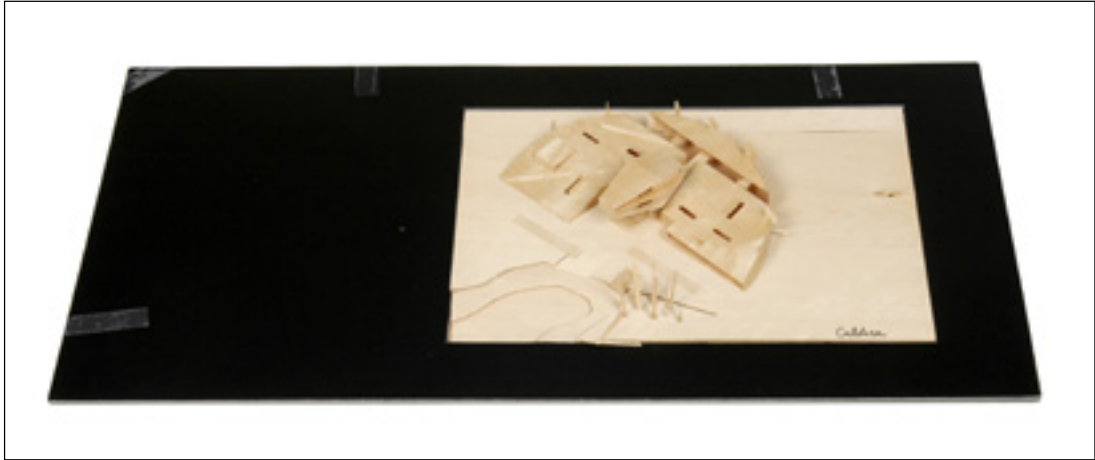
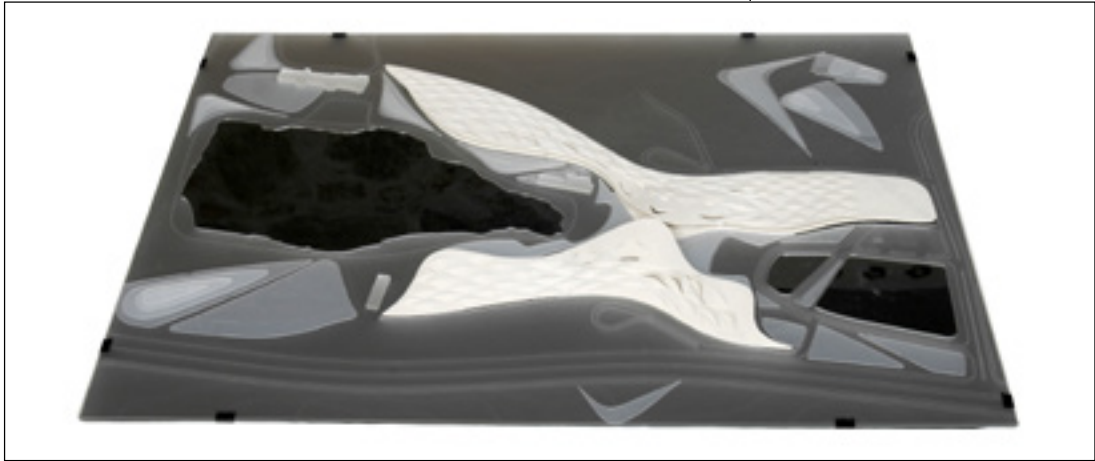


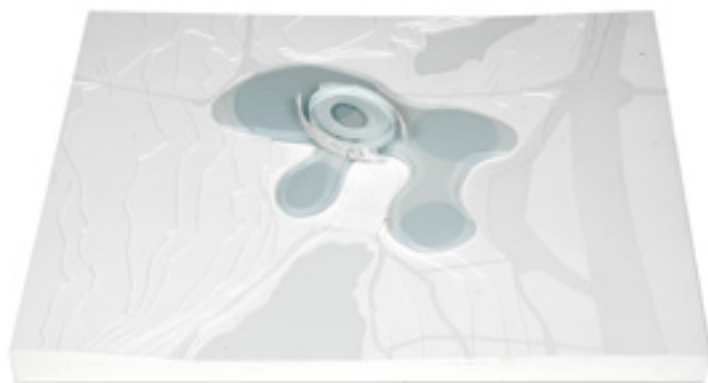
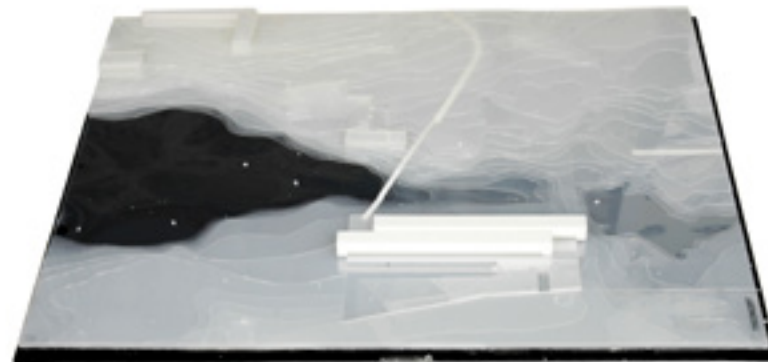




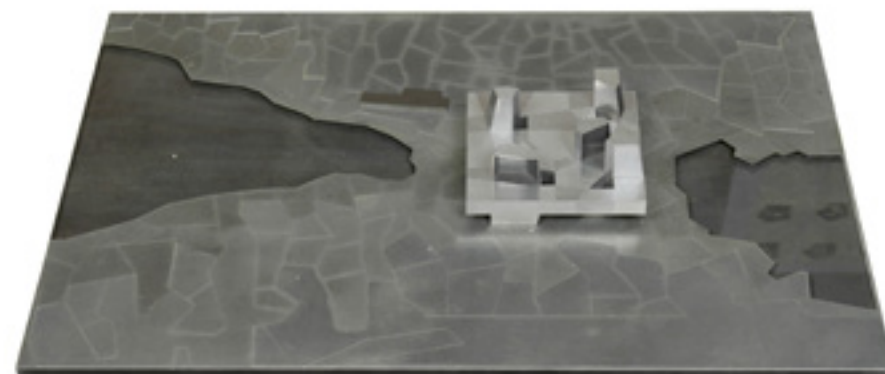
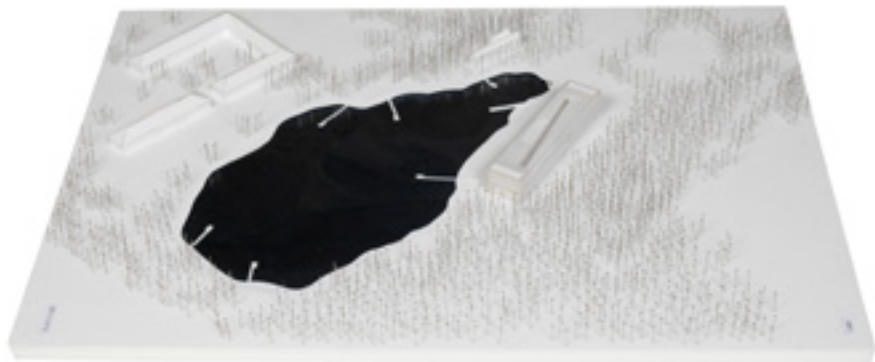


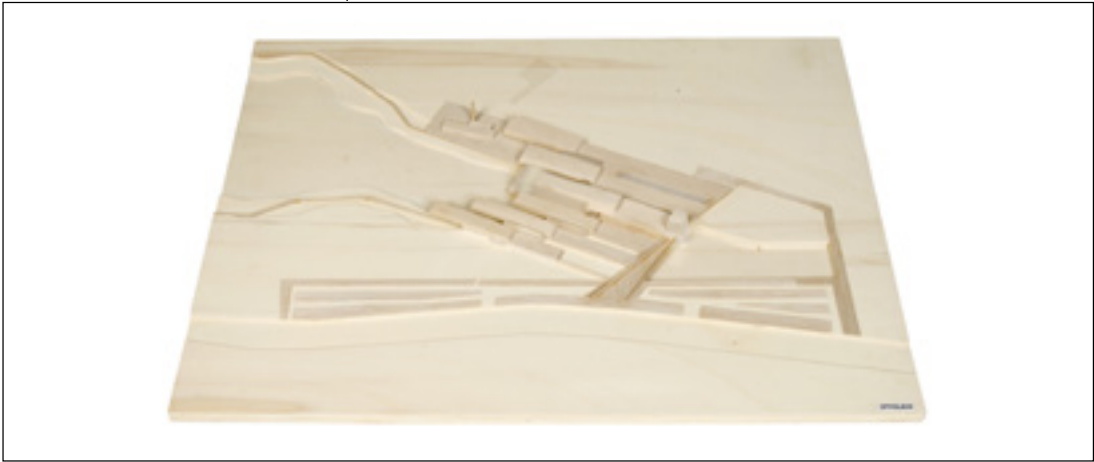
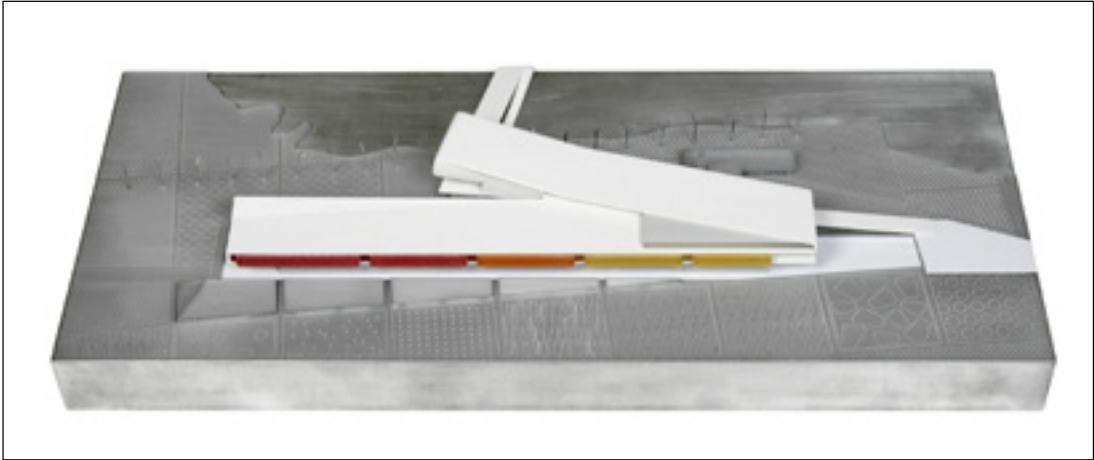




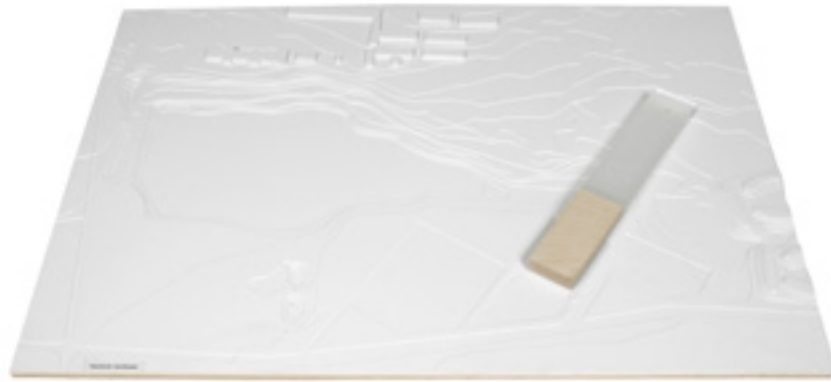
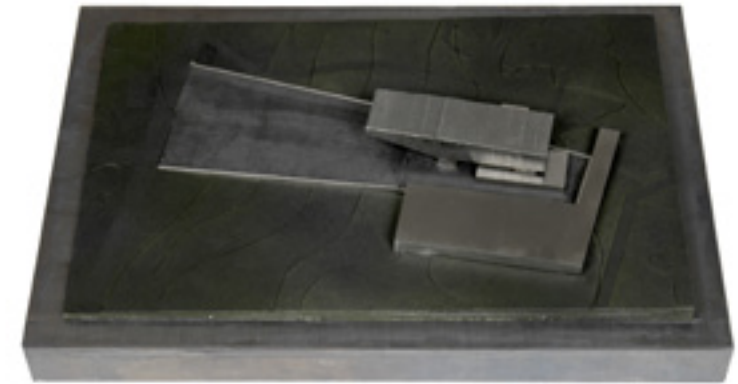
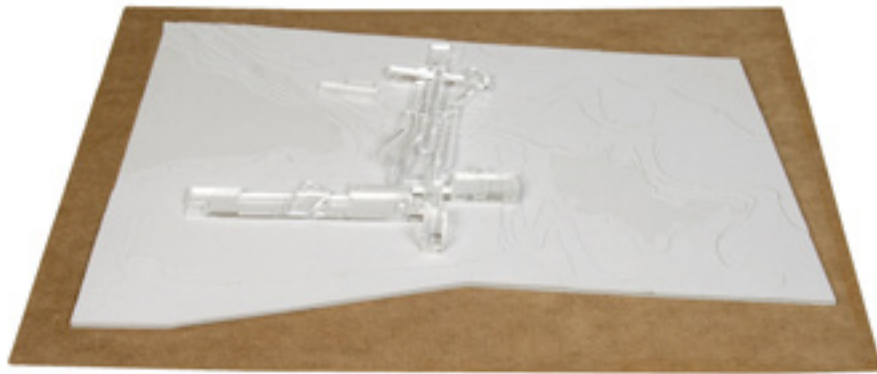
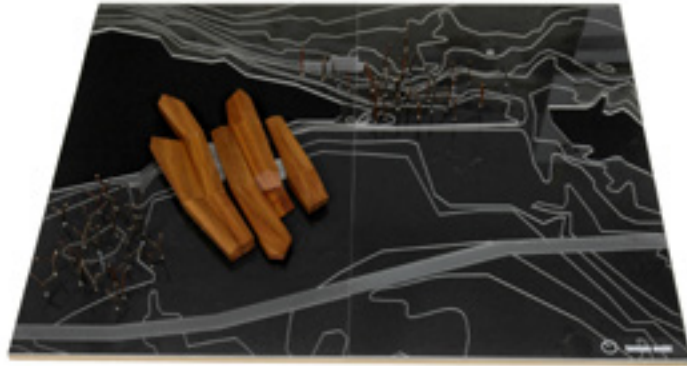


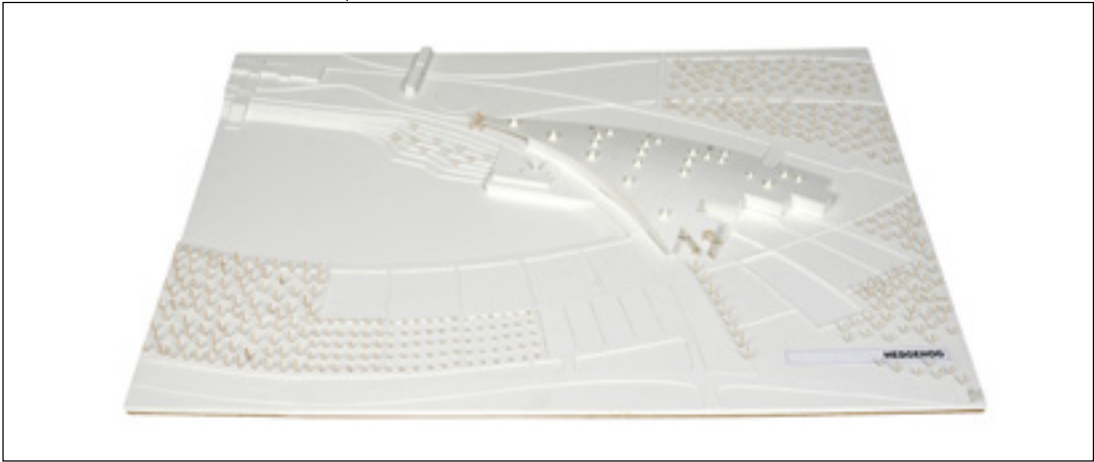
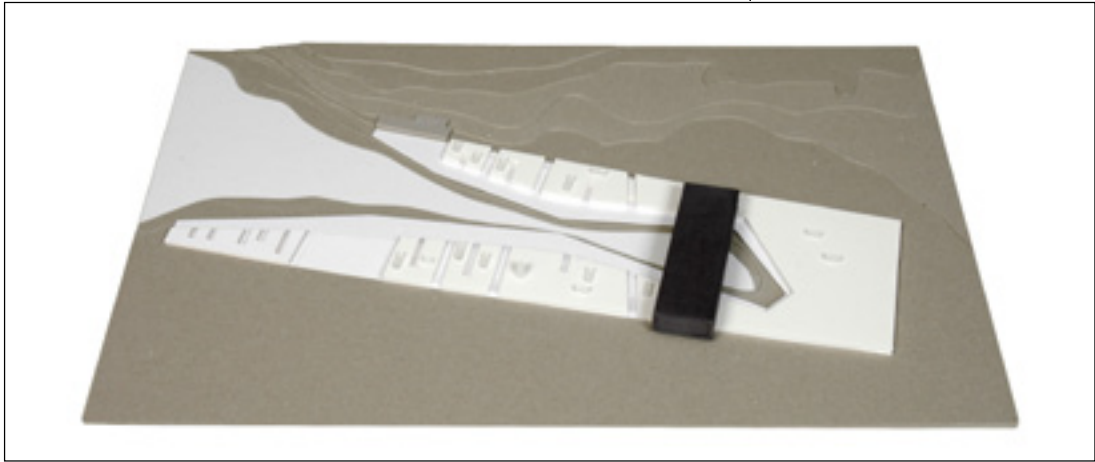
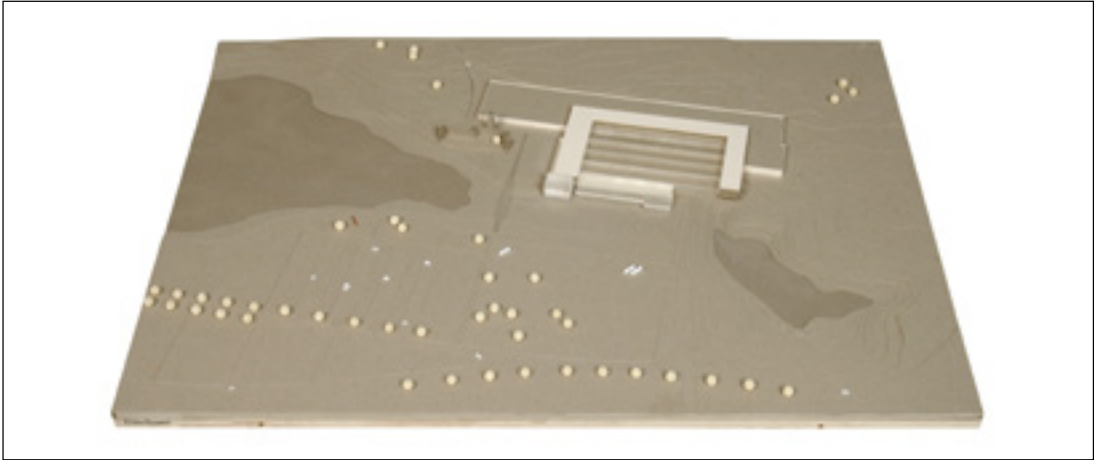
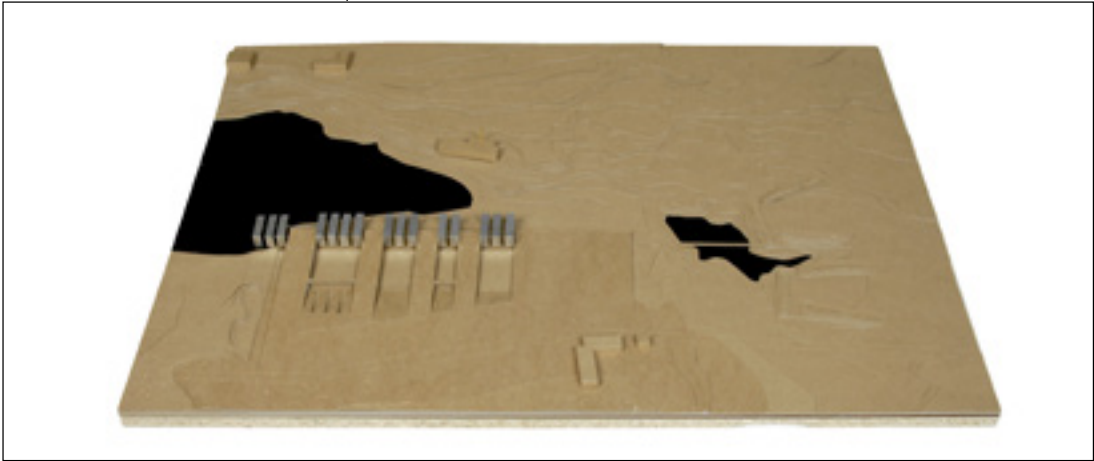
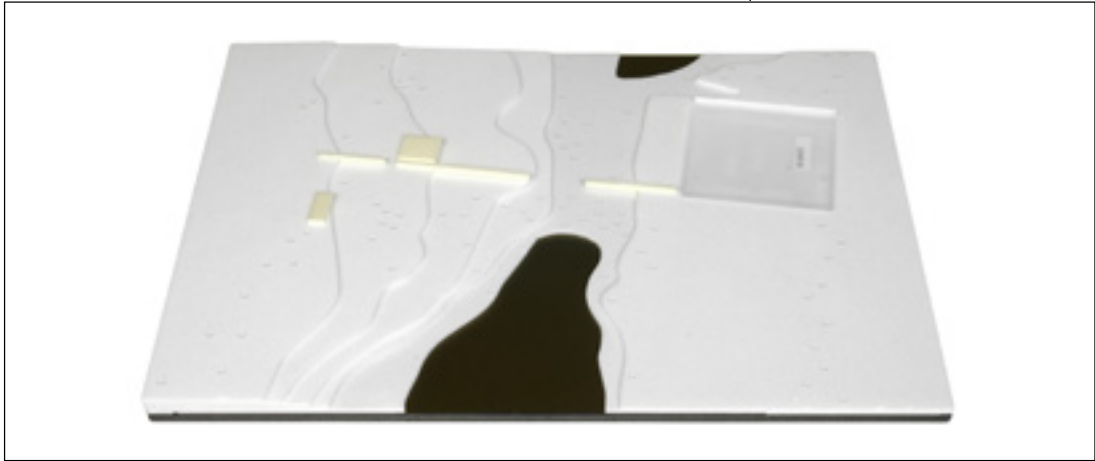




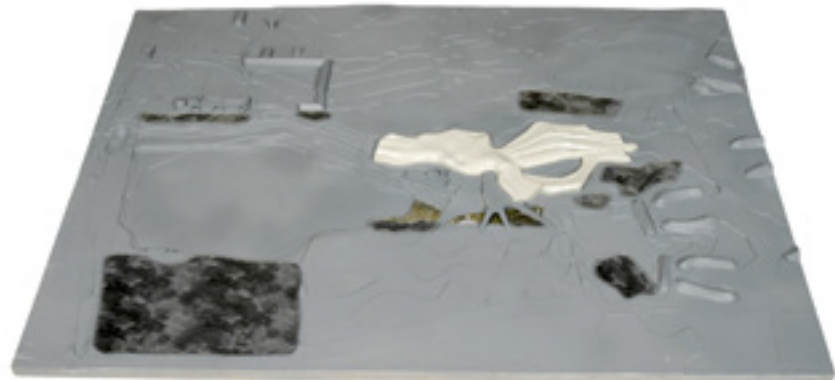












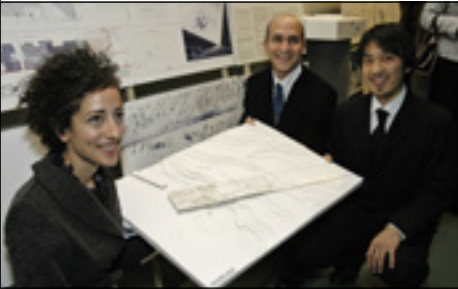


The winning design

The committee described the winning design as follows:

“The building is observable as a piece of conceptual art, which lends a cosmopolitan flavour to the whole museum. As such, the Estonian National Museum would become a symbol of the emancipation, freedom and independence of Estonian society. /.../ The ideological premise behind this entry is somewhat unexpected and surprising given Estonia’s dramatic recent history – the devastating Soviet occupation that lasted more than half a century. This history cannot and must not be banished from the nation’s memory by denying the traces still present; rather, they should be given a new meaning that inspires hope. The abandoned runway within the bounds of the designated territory – a vestige of the period of occupation – can, in its forlorn and unused state, be viewed as a dramatic space. /.../ For this area to become more “vocal”, the design proposes an extension of the space by using a new structure shaped as a long, open hall on the same axis as the runway. The slightly tilted roof – a symbolic reference to a takeoff into the sky to meet one’s destiny – would form a roofed plaza overlooking the surrounding landscape. /.../ [The museum building] has been designed as a long, open hall that can be organised and partitioned off in various ways to act as the stage for the museum displays. This flexibility should entice the visitor to return in anticipation of new aesthetic experiences of the space /.../. All the principle sections of the museum offer exquisite views of the surrounding landscape, providing a lovely backdrop for the displays – a portrait of Estonian nature.”<sup>13</sup>

Both the jury members and the staff at ENM thought that the floor plan of the winning design left a lot to be desired, but decided that anything could be done within “the box” in the course of subsequent design work, for it would change nothing in terms of the overall environment. The jury expressed the belief that a thorough reworking of the building design would make it possible to create a superbly functional museum facility: the aim of an open architectural competition is, after all, to find terrific ideas and then work on them constructively.



Lina Ghotmeh, Dan Dorell and Tsuyoshi Tane during the announcement of the winner of the architecture competition in 2006, with a model of their winning entry “Memory field” on the table. To the right, the architects’ vision of the building’s placement.

The following pages present the architects’ vision for the museum building.

13

The general committee’s remarks concerning the winning entries. Estonian National Museum Open International Architecture Competition: Catalogue. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2006, p. 25.







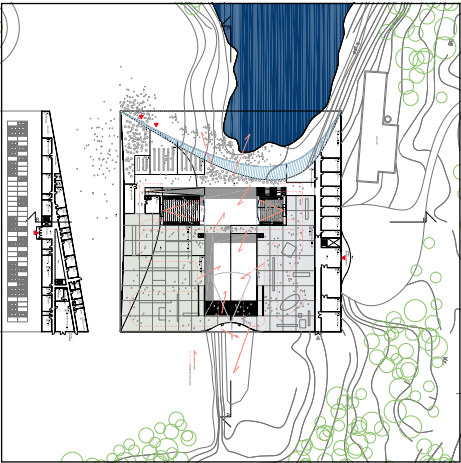
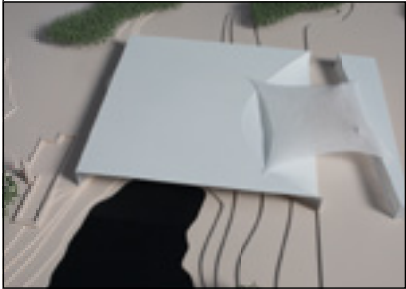






Second prize

“Gems”, the entry that won second prize by Ala Architects (Juho Grönholm, Antti Nousjoki, Janne Teräsvirta and Samuli Woolston) of Finland, impressed the jury with its perfect logistical solution. In terms of a well worked out floor plan, this was the best design for a museum. Situated along the axis of the lake, the proposed building was beautiful and dignified. Winy Maas commented on the design saying, “Nice, but not particularly outstanding. They wanted to build a podium on the roof – a plaza where people could go and sit. But to see what?”<sup>14</sup>



14

J. Saar, Tõeliselt rahvusvaheline muuseumiidee ammutas inspiratsiooni lennurajast. – *Postimees*, 17 January 2006.

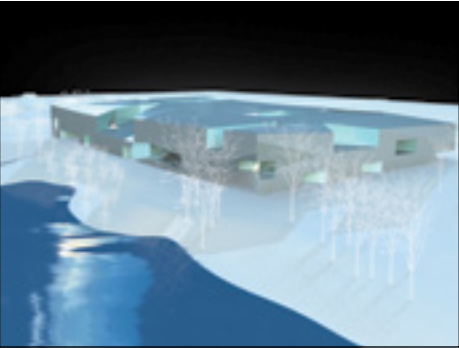
Third prize

The design by the Austrian architects Alfred Bramberger, Thomas Pucher, Heidrun Steinhauser, Martin Mathy and Christa Pucher envisaged the ENM building as a large cube with an abstract Estonian map, reminiscent of a sort of landscape of lakes, on the facade. This was one of the entries that continued in the spirit of the postmodernist ideas submitted to the 1993 competition. Similar to a decade before, architects once again felt that the building should resemble, gesture at or even serve as a substitute for Estonia with its shape, appearance or facade.

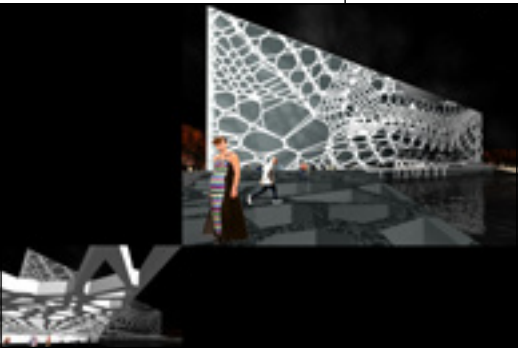
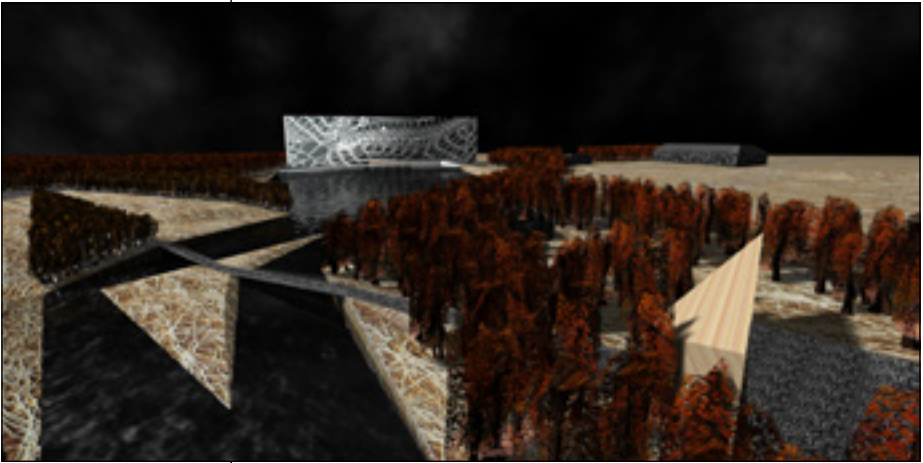


Purchase prizes and honourable mentions

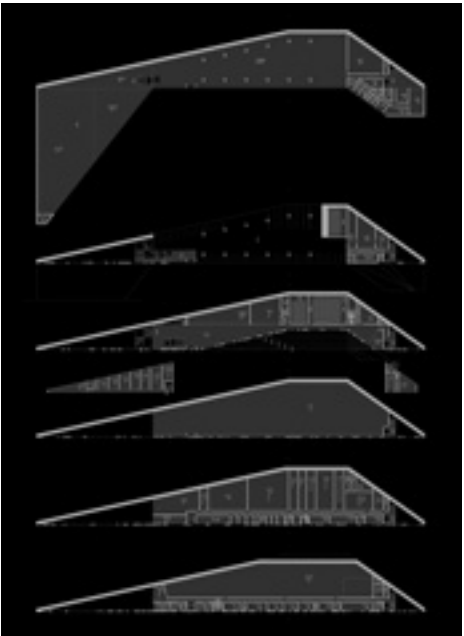
The jury awarded four purchase prizes, which went to “Lightfield” by Gianni Botsford, “Crochet” by Kosmos (Ott Kadarik, Villem Tomiste, Mihkel Tüür, Krista Saluveer and Urmas Oja), “Lake whisper” by Local-architecture (Manuel Bieler, Marco de Francesco, Antoine Robert-Grandpierre and Laurent Saurer) and “Kivi kive sisu” by friman.laaksonen (Kimmo Friman, Esa Laaksonen and Marko Pulli). In addition to these, two entries received honourable mentions: “Sõlg” by Pekka Helin and “Tube or not to be” by Giovanni Galli and Salvatore Farinato.



Gianni Botsford  
“Lightfield”



Kosmos  
“Crochet”



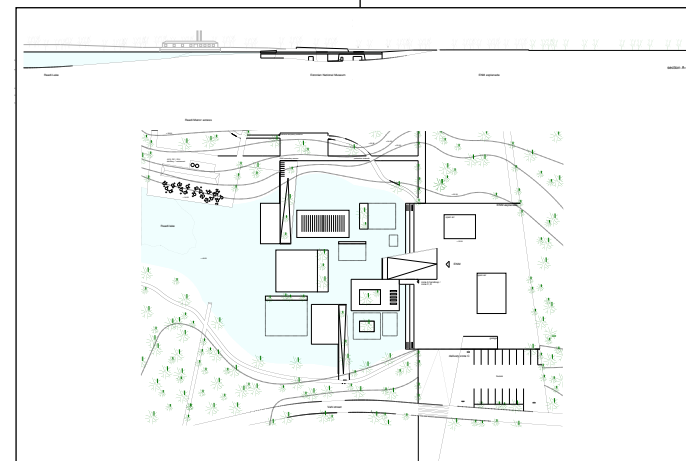




Friman.laaksonen  
Arkkitehdit  
"Kivi kive sisu"

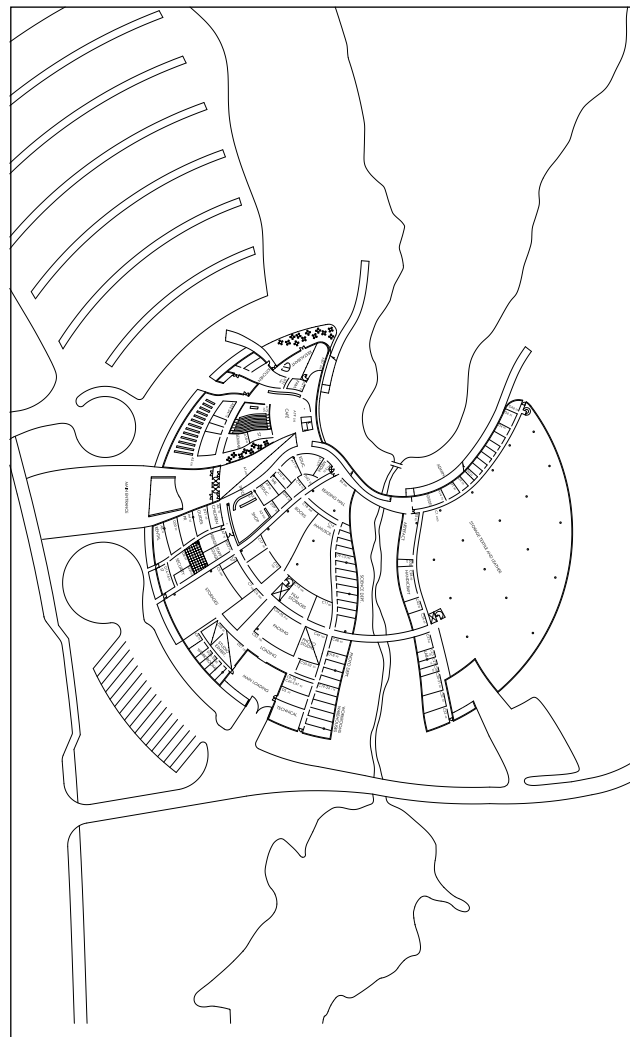
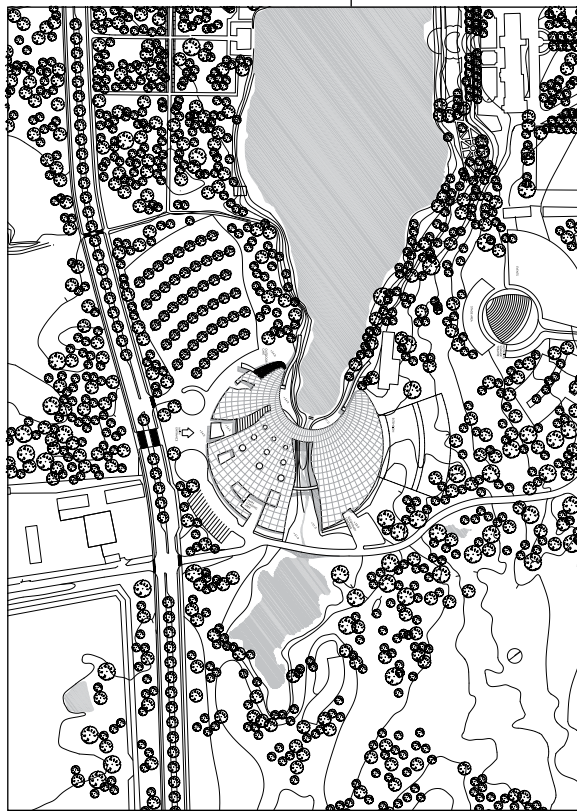


Localarchitecture  
"Lake Whisper"



Giovanni Galli ja  
Salvatore Farinato  
"Tube or not to be"

Pekka Helin  
"Sõlg"





Conflict

The jury took its final vote in mid-December 2005. The titles of the winning designs were made public on 2 January 2006 and the architects behind the designs on 16 January. Unfortunately, a scandal broke out even before the winners were announced, as Karin Hallas-Murula, director of the Museum of Estonian Architecture, who participated in the activities of the jury as an expert, told the media that a design that was both ideologically and practically unsuitable for a new ENM building had been chosen as the winner.<sup>15</sup>

To be honest, I would in fact prefer not to recall this conflict at all, for Hallas-Murula unprofessionally broke her duty of confidentiality and the Association of Architects unequivocally condemned her actions. The message that she very forcefully served up to the media – that the jury’s decision had done damage to the museum, Raadi, Estonians, patriotism and so on – added a negative flavour to the winning design, as if the architects had intentionally come to harass the locals.<sup>16</sup> In retrospect, one can also find some positive aspects to this bickering, such as the fact that the shortcomings pointed out by the critics were later transformed into the museum building’s strengths. Another plus may be the fact that the media clamour first brought the ENM and architecture to the front pages of daily newspapers, where they have remained to this day. In the wake of the criticisms from Hallas-Murula, it became apparent that the “ordinary people” in online forums would have preferred a museum building that looked like something between a housebarn and a mansion – and I am not being sarcastic. For the museum, this debate was certainly a fortuitous opportunity for self-reflection and constructive work with the public. The heated arguments at the time have provided the substance for several scholarly publications contemplating the construction of collective identity against the background of the architecture of the national museum.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the debate was also useful in view of the fact that the hitherto vague views of the different camps were formulated and the Estonian architectural scene became clearer as a result.<sup>18</sup>

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Her main arguments were the following: “The design chosen as the winner glorifies the military airport of the Soviet occupiers at Raadi, and as a museum, is one of the most inept of all the competition entries, while being one of the most expensive solutions.” In her view, building a 350-metre-long glass museum/bridge with a walkable roof as an extension of the Raadi airport was an absurd idea, which could have at best been commended in a competition for conceptual projects, but certainly not in one that aimed to find a real design for a new museum. In the expert assessments of both Hallas-Murula and the Canadian museologist Barry Lord, the other expert on the jury, the winning design had been assigned to the last category, marked as “out of the question”. Hallas-Murula, therefore, considered the jury’s decision to be irresponsible, showing disregard for the interests of the ENM and being disrespectful of patriotic ideals. See [Author not noted], *Ekspert taunib otsuse tulemusi. – Eesti Päevaleht*, 16. I 2006.

16

Because of the sharp criticisms about the glass walls of the draft design advanced by Hallas-Murul, “Memory fields” quickly picked up nicknames such as “the bottle” or “the aquarium” in the online forums of daily newspapers. The public’s misconception that the whole building is made of glass is probably bound to persist even after the museum opens.

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See e.g. P. Runnel, *Rahvusidentiteet Eesti Rahva Muuseumiga seotud tähenduste kujundajana arhitektuurivõistluse aruteludes. – Ed. M. Arukask. Muutused, erinevused ja kohanemised eesti kultuuriruumis ja selle naabruses*. Viljandi: Tartu Ülikooli Viljandi Kultuuriakadeemia, 2007, pp. 83–103.

It would be unfair to say that the jury had an arrogant attitude towards the opinion of the people for whom the Raadi airport is a painful subject. They were well aware of the ideological tangles, but as the jury saw an opportunity to make architectural history by realising DGT’s winning design, foregoing this opportunity seemed unacceptable to them.

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To illustrate, let us compare the views of Karin Hallas-Murula and Veljo Kaasik. In her article, Hallas-Murula wrote as follows: “Everyone has the right to ask how something like this could happen. A short answer: the jury was assembled so that the members with ‘fewer complexes’ about history and the willingness to ‘go along with anything’ formed a majority. It is not the first time that the architect-urbanists Kaasik and Alver, who spearheaded the jury, have organised design contests whose results are never realised. Of course it is good fun to invigorate the mind with purely theoretical brain gymnastics. But if the contracting authority (the Ministry of Culture along with the ENM) puts together a jury to find the best feasible solution for the museum, it is absurd to put visionary urbanism on the podium.” K. Hallas-Murula, *Abielluda vägistajaga? – Eesti Päevaleht*, 17 January 2006. Seven years earlier, Veljo Kaasik had written from a diametrically opposed point of view: “While trying to avoid speculation, I see parallels between architecture and art. If we compare spacial architecture with traditional manual art, we can see parallels between urbanistics (and planning in general) and conceptual art. A painting or a graphic print has a price, and for an individual or a company, they may become purchases that have a permanent value as objects (an investment value). Conceptual art has to be generated by a special supporting project and in return we have a phenomenon without any permanent material value. The sum of this speaks of society and its condition and trends much more comprehensively than manual art within a traditional framework of values. If a building is commissioned, the result will be an architect’s plan, which has a definite and expected construction price. But who is going to commission (and for what kind of money) an urbanistic or general planning project which is not a particular document (a general plan, a detailed plan in the Estonian gradation) or a description of lots marked by signs or their construction rights, but rather a more undefined network of associations, a pulsation of a locality and its future? Not one institution is doing this in Estonia while it is standard practice everywhere else.” V. Kaasik, *Architecture and the end of the century. – Over the buildings and beyond: Urban projects & articles 1994–1998* Ed. M. Peil. Tallinn: Alver ja Trummal Arhitektuurbüroo, 1999, pp. 7–8.



Kaur Alttoa, the jury's heritage conservation expert, thought that while the elegant composition that builds on the remnants of the military airport would have made a wonderful museum for Dudayev, as the Estonian National Museum it glorified the Soviet armed forces and was therefore unacceptable for him, which, however, did not mean that he would, for that reason, publicly oppose the museum being built. Alttoa drew a brutal comparison, saying that if a country in Central Africa announced a competition to find its visual identity and a foreign designer would then find a pair of leg irons under a bush somewhere and offer this up as a conceptual basis for design solutions, it would hardly go through. Alttoa also remarked that many people comforted him after the competition, saying, what can you do, times have changed. True enough – for the generation that restored Estonia's independence, the preservation of national independence and culture is a fundamental aspiration. For my generation, which has grown up in a free Estonia, national independence is a natural setting and it is democracy that is yet to be fully realised, and therefore, constitutes an aspiration in its own right (citizens' initiatives, community movements, volunteer work, standing for the rights of the weaker and so on). As the internet is the primary source of information for this generation, local issues are approached globally.

The photograph shows artist Tanel Rander's action at Raadi airbase.



## The concept

At this point, I will let the architects of the winning design speak for themselves, by citing the key points from the design concept they submitted for the competition:

“On the fringes of the dense part of the city of Tartu, the cultural heart of Estonia, a wide spread of land, a lake, a forest /.../ An old Baltic German manor, what used to be the colonizers’ private precinct, is re-appropriated as a space of key importance, to collect and construct Estonian national identity. An identity that seems to gain its complexity and richness through its ability to appropriate and intersect with ‘other’ cultures.

“And on the same site there is a wide cut in the landscape, a “runway”, a “landing strip”, a long stretch of transformed land leading towards an “infinite space”... an intriguing space only revealed as a military airport on the map. An element that testifies to a long struggle with occupation, a rich historical construction, a memory landscape, a strip of space that goes beyond its physicality by being embedded with the meanings of Estonian culture. /.../ A “platform” that seems to have overwritten the history of the site, as in a palimpsest.

“It is a memory landscape that besides having embedded contextual and historical significance is a unique urban element that could become ‘our’ site, a wide stretch of built landscape extending towards an infinite horizon. /.../ As such we see in this element great spatial and urban potential that incite us to formulate our ideas based on these questions:

“How can the same elements that once led to the degeneration of the eastern part of this city become a tool for its regeneration and transformation? Can the contradiction and struggle between two cultures continue to be at the heart of the production of new unique spaces? How can the production of one space (the museum) maximally use and appropriate the memory of another (the airport representing the space of ‘the Other’)? /.../

“As architects, we only provoke situations. Uncertainty and doubt remain our most important design tools.”



The photographs show the architects’ vision of the museum’s interior (top) and rear entrance (bottom).



DGT's vision of the main entrance (right) and rear entrance (left).





## From the preliminary design to a design contract

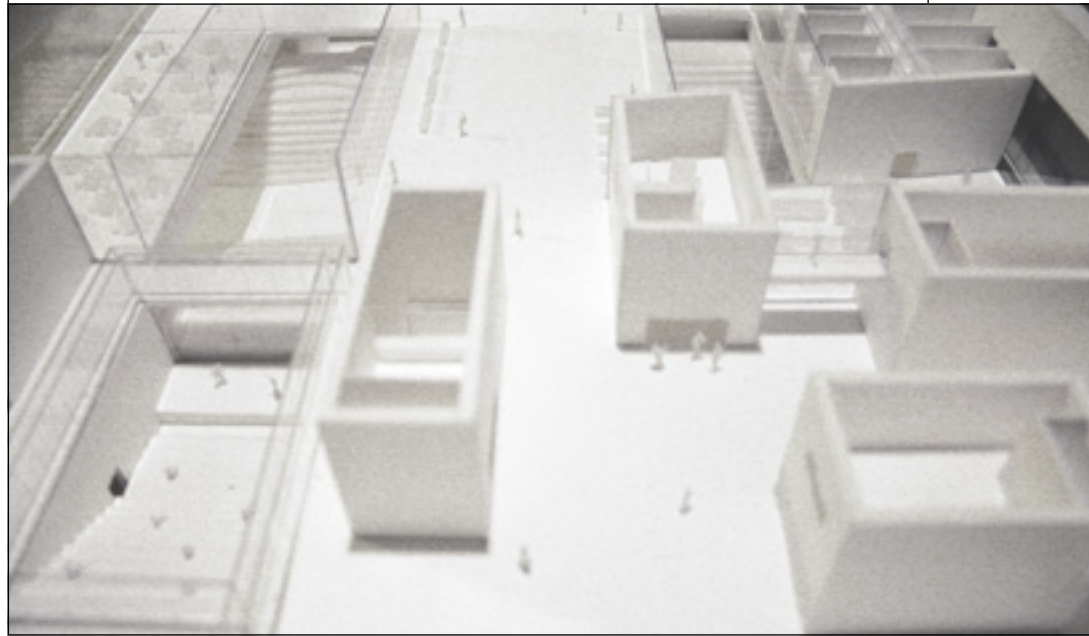
After the competition the museum only had a preliminary design, and it took the parties a year and a half before signing a design contract in May 2007. The main reason the signing of a contract was put off and construction delayed was that DGT and ENM failed to reach agreement on how to construct the building together. Being used to wealthy Western European clients, DGT demanded that they be in command of the whole process, choosing the designer, engineers, builders, creating the interior architecture and designing the exhibitions. This approach was completely at odds with standard practice in Estonia, according to which engineering and construction work is performed by companies who have been awarded public works contracts on the basis of having offered the lowest price.

In addition to the general terms and conditions, the museum and the architects sharply disagreed over what the building would be like. The young architects were not willing to give up the idea of a glass building or the walkable roof. The ENM's director Krista Aru, however, brought in the best experts in the field, construction engineers Tiit Masso and Indrek Tärno, to help the museum as consultants. Based on their expert opinions, the decision was made to replace the glass building with a concrete one, raise it 150 centimetres higher, have three storeys instead of one, close the roof to visitors and replace the flat roof with an inclined roof.<sup>19</sup> Masso and Tärno carried out expert assessments of the preliminary designs, and in the end, the architects largely accommodated the assessments in their design.

Looking back, both the ENM staff and the architects at DGT agree that these first years of intense debate were necessary and useful in order to establish mutual trust and a shared understanding of which way to proceed together. Once the museum and the architects had finally signed an agreement and come to see eye to eye on the main issues, they set out to work on the floor plan together. Most of these discussions were based on models, which Dorell, Ghotmeh and Tane brought with them from Paris. Being able to see the building in the form of a model right in front of them kept the discussions from losing focus, for a balance had to be struck between different ideas and, what is more, all the functions ultimately had to be made to fit within the model. The way the ENM staff moved the rooms around inside the model could be called a kind of participatory design process. The reader can imagine the meetings between the three architects and 70 museum employees, each one of whom had a number of detailed comments and complaints concerning their particular departments or duties. The solidarity and

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DGT's original idea was to give the building a horizontal roofline that would merge into the runway (and the building itself would disappear underground). Masso and Tärno concluded that, in order to keep groundwater from seeping in (a common problem in Estonia), the building would have to be raised by a metre and a half. The change was made, and as a result, hundreds of tonnes of soil had to be piled around the building in order not to lose the metaphor of the building emerging from the runway.



thoroughness of the cooperative effort between the architects and ENM employees in itself makes this museum an example of architecture that is human-scale and human-centred.

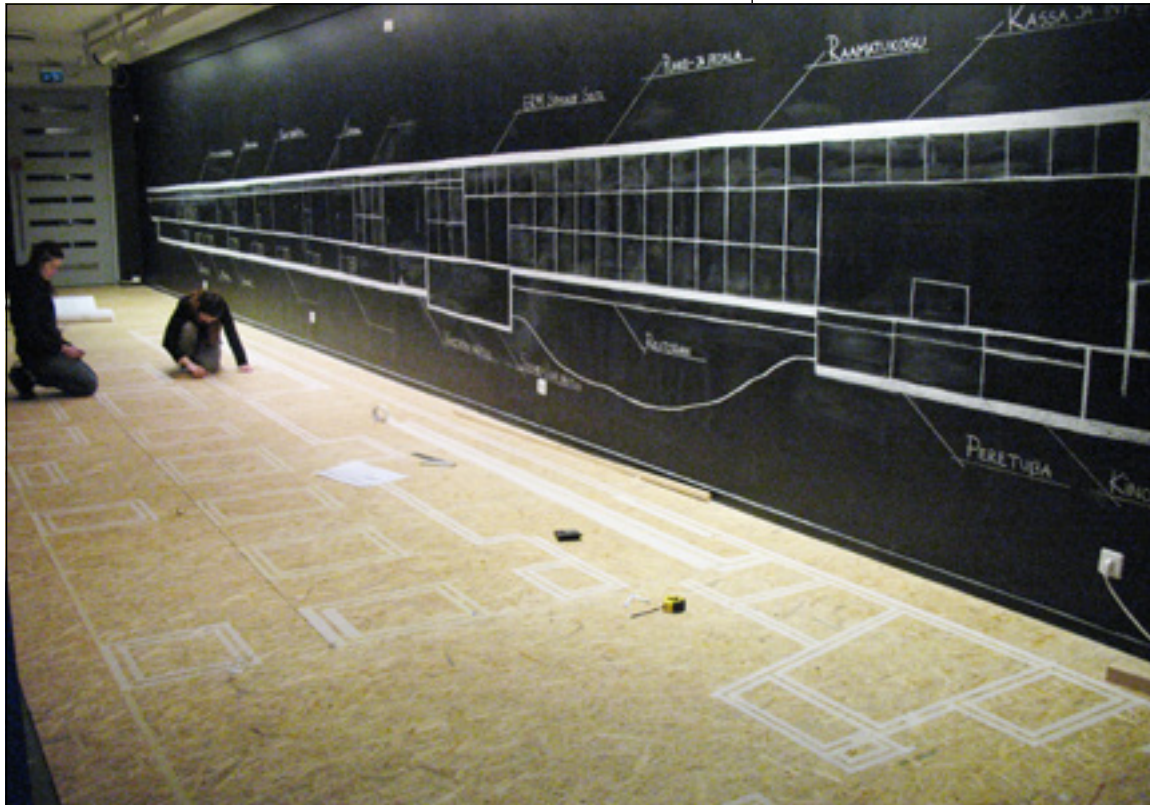
The architects and museum staff used many models to work out the building's spatial layout.







ENM staff and DGT architects immersed in work.





## The funding and design process

The architecture competition and the preliminary work before construction (cleaning up the contaminated soil at Raadi, the fees of the engineers consulting the ENM, etc.) were financed by the Estonian Cultural Endowment under a prior agreement. Initially, the state planned to finance the construction work using the same scheme as with Kumu art museum. For the construction of Kumu, the state had set up a special foundation alongside the art museum itself; the foundation then organised the public procurement procedures and the construction work as well as taking out loans, which are being repaid through the Cultural Endowment, from gambling tax revenues.

Similarly, a foundation for the construction of the ENM (ERMi Ehituse sihtasutus, ERMES) was established in 2007; it was essentially a construction department within the ENM, managing the design work and organising financing and procurement among other procedures. From 2008 to 2011, the foundation was led by Peeter Mauer, previously a museum adviser and member of the jury of the ENM architecture competition.

In 2007, the total construction cost was estimated at 1.32 billion Estonian kroons (or approximately 84 million euros) VAT included, which was in fact more than the final cost of the building, a total of 75.69 million euros (including construction, furnishing, VAT and all the rest). Initially, it was hoped that the building would be completed by 2011, the year Tartu wanted to be the European Capital of Culture. The plan was to finance at least half of the construction work with EU structural funding, which had been allocated to Estonia, but regarding which the European Commission was still awaiting the Estonian government's more detailed proposals.

In March 2008, a public contract for the building services was awarded to EA Reng, an engineering firm based in Tallinn. In cooperation with IB Aksiaal, they put together a team of heating, ventilation and electrical systems specialists. As the level of sophistication and detail of the design grew, the more evident it became that DGT could no longer cope with the help of an interpreter alone. In early 2008, DGT therefore subcontracted Hanno Grossschmidt's architectural firm (HGA) as their partner in Estonia. The construction design for the museum was completed in three years, by 2011. This period covered both the outbreak of the economic crisis and losing the European Union structural funding in 2012.

At the end of 2011, the Estonian government implied that if the European Union decided not to allocate the funding, Estonia would build the museum with national funds. For this we must thank the then Minister of Culture Rein Lang, whose support and influence proved crucial in getting the funding for the museum. Under Lang,

the ERMES foundation was wound up and in late 2011 the ENM and State Real Estate Ltd signed an authorisation agreement, according to which the latter would organise the construction work, the supervision of the construction work and the public procurement procedures required for the construction and furnishing of the museum building as well as carrying out related activities.

## Public procurements and construction

The first public procurement for the construction of the museum was organised in 2011 but annulled because the tenders were too expensive. While the intended maximum cost of the new building at the time was 38 million euros (without VAT), the tender prices ranged between 51 and 71 million. The procurement process showed that the construction prices were just too high given the existing criteria. A new design with cheaper solutions was prepared.

In September 2012, State Real Estate Ltd announced a new public procurement for construction work, where the finishing materials previously chosen by the architects had been replaced with ones that were tens of times cheaper. The cuts covered almost 25,000 square metres of cladding and paving materials: aluminium composite sheets were swapped for fibre cement boards, cheaper glass was preferred instead of the exclusive glass facade and less expensive pavings were preferred instead of cast-in-place concrete slabs for the footpaths and parking lots; the design classics intended for the museum interior were replaced with locally produced furniture and so on. All together, this resulted in colossal savings. Although State Real Estate Ltd maintained that the changes would not make a difference for the ordinary visitor, the whole complex was nevertheless conceptually watered down and lost significantly in character. That is, of course, a pity, but a small sacrifice to make in order to ensure the completion of the museum. Such cuts have been part and parcel of architecture throughout history.

The second construction procurement attracted four tenders at the end of 2012. In January 2013, a contract was signed with Fund Ehitus in the amount of 47 million euros (without VAT) as specified in their tender. It must be said that the Estonian construction market is shaped by a system of subcontracting, and as a result, even the largest contractors only have a few dozen full-time employees. When a contract is won, tens of companies are hired as subcontractors to work on the construction site. Construction budgeting is a highly complicated field where the principal contractor cannot be certain that the value of the contract will not be exceeded. How the construction project paid off financially for this or that company in the end is probably only known to a select few in the company's management. There is talk in construction circles that the Kumu art museum

project left the contractor Merko with huge losses, which means, however, that the state saved a lot of money. On the other hand, the gamble may work; before the ENM construction project, Fund Ehitus was not considered a major player in the Estonian construction market, but the risks seem to have paid off and it has now grown into an important contractor.

The principal contractor, then, divides all the construction work between various subcontractors, requesting offers for scaffolding, concrete casting, ceiling, roof, floor casting, steel structures, floorings, windows, doors and so on. What follows is a cat-and-mouse game of trying to bamboozle each other – as prices are not openly discussed in the market, the principal contractor has to estimate the costs of many operations based on intuition. The subcontractors, who do not want to lose the job, must offer very low prices, which can only be done if they use cheap materials or solutions. At the same time, the main contractor and subcontractors alike have to factor in the possibility of extensive fines and warranty repairs that may result from faulty work. The best project managers, then, are clever “swindlers”, on the one hand capable of persuading the client to use “similar” or “equal” products (the contracting authority is not allowed to include a preference for the quality products of a particular producer in the contract notice, for that would mean creating a monopoly), while forcing their subcontractors to make offers below market price. It is therefore quite common for the larger construction sites in Estonia to have a hostile atmosphere where everyone is trying to pull a fast one on the others.

All in all, State Real Estate Ltd as the authority responsible for the construction of the ENM building was satisfied with the quality of the work. While there were some non-compliances, these were a result of human error. As the design process was long, hundreds of small decisions were made during this time, the broader consequences of which may not have even been grasped at first. These, in turn, led to yet more decisions and developments. Some were excellent, others ill-considered and wrong. In certain respects, the building grew like a forest in its specific entropy, energetically at times, less so at others.

The ENM construction site in summer 2013.



20

Here is a simple example of a disagreement between the client and the contractor at the ENM construction site. DGT and Kino Landscape Architects have designed traffic bollards to be specially made for the site. Even before the architects get around to preparing detailed designs, ready-made bollards appear at the site and the main contractor claims that these are sufficiently similar to the rhombic designs by the architects and can be replaced according to the contract. The project manager refuses to say where the bollards came from. The landscape architects at Kino accidentally discover that they bear a suspicious resemblance to a design by a European street furniture firm and the contractor can be suspected of plagiarism. The design firm is notified. The contractor then maintains that, as the rhombus is a basic shape, it is not subject to patenting and that companies have to take out a patent in each European Union member state separately anyway, etc. Now picture yourself managing the construction of the ENM and having to resolve conflicts like this on a weekly basis. Day after day, reasonable compromises have to be found, for it makes no sense to go to court over, say, some traffic bollards. At this point, you could heave a sigh and ask whether the contractor really fails to grasp that it is the “building of the century”, to use a journalistic epithet. But if the state (or State Real Estate Ltd as the construction department of the Ministry of Finance) deems it important to count every last cent in the project, why should a private enterprise act any differently? That is precisely how public contracts are won – the costs shown in the tender documents are brought down to a minimum, while having several strategies in place in order to force the contracting authority to spend more. In the end, this is not peculiar to the Estonian construction market – *nihil sub sole novum* – construction has worked like this for a long time.





The ENM construction site in summer 2013.





The ENM construction site in summer 2013 (left) and autumn 2013 (right).





The ENM construction site in summer 2013.



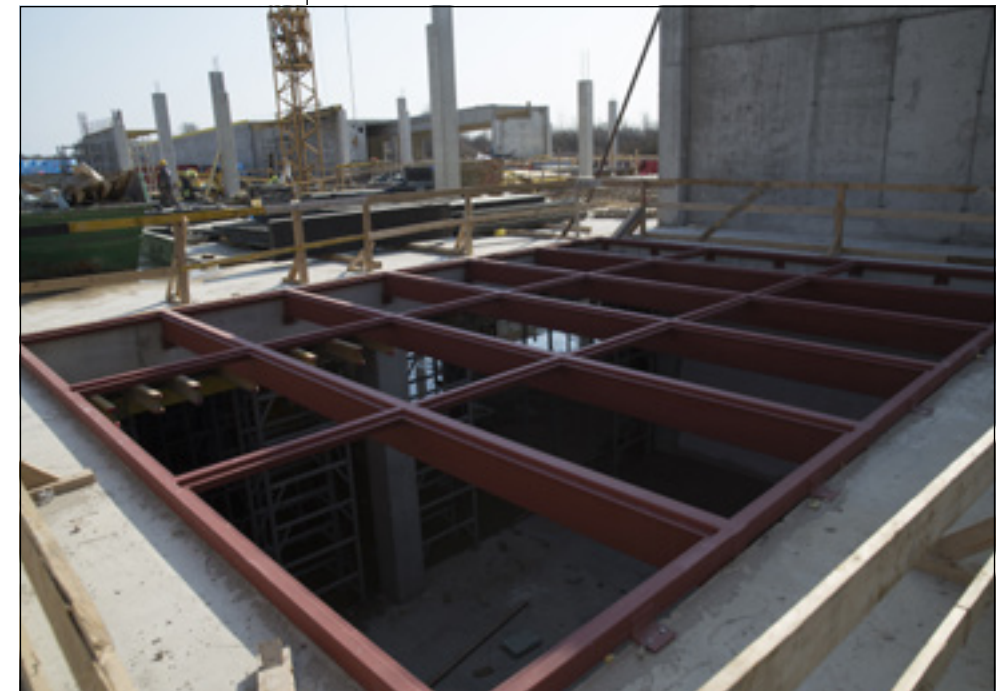


An aerial photograph  
from the direction of  
Annelinn in October 2013.



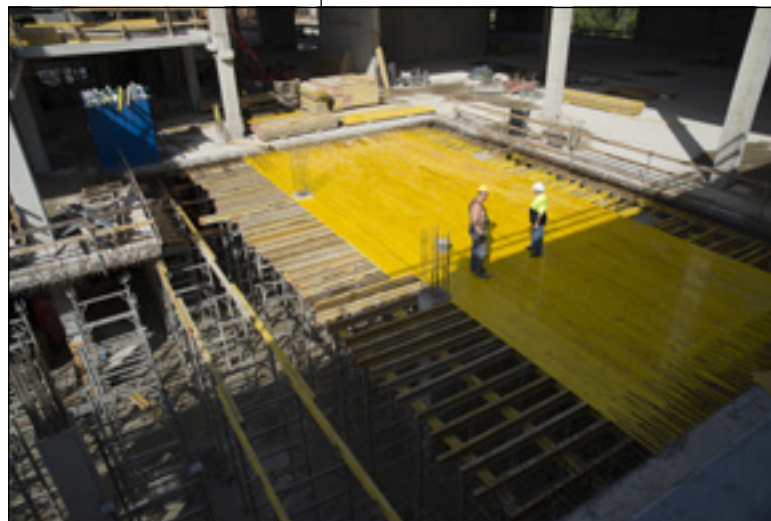


Top left, the museum construction site in December 2013. The remaining photographs show the construction site in March 2014.





Construction work in  
spring 2014.





The main entrance  
in April 2014.





The main entrance  
in May 2014.





Construction work in summer 2014 (top and bottom left, top right) and autumn 2014 (bottom right).





Indoor construction work  
in January 2015.





An aerial photograph  
from October 2014.





The main entrance  
in April 2015.





Construction work at the ENM in July 2015 (top left), January 2015 (bottom left), July 2014 (top right) and September 2015 (bottom right).





Indoor construction work  
in April 2015.





Construction work  
in June 2015.





Constructing the ENM  
permanent exhibition in  
February 2016.





Constructing the spaces  
for the Finno-Ugric  
permanent exhibition  
in the basement in  
September 2015.



The exterior of the museum in February 2016 (top) and November 2015 (bottom).





# Estonian National Museum's new main building at Raadi

## The building from a structural point of view

The ENM building is a reinforced concrete structure with steel structures used at the main entrance.<sup>1</sup> The columns supporting the floors are all hidden within lightweight walls (making a building with a concealed structure), which means that the placement of the interior walls can easily be changed should the museum wish to do so in the future. The lightweight walls imitate the massive concrete walls, giving a monumental and evoca-

tive impression. The architectural composition of the interior relies on the different volumes – open and closed areas – created using these walls. The technical systems are also hidden between the walls, which made the construction process easier. The load-bearing columns are spaced at intervals of 7, 11 and, at the bridge section, 21 metres. There are a total of more than 300 of these columns supporting the ground floor and the roof. The spacing of up to 21 metres was achieved by giving up the idea of a walkable roof. Thanks to this, the temporary exhibition hall, for example, is not interrupted by a single column, as all the columns are hidden in the partitioning walls standing 21 metres apart. For comparison, the temporary exhibition hall in Kumu art museum, which is the same size, is supported by six columns.

The museum has a two-layer facade: the inner wall is mainly concrete, while the outer wall is made of glass sheets. Suitability to climate conditions, conformity with the climate requirements specific to museums, special acoustic requirements and other such criteria have been carefully observed in the design process. The building is designed to simultaneously accommodate 3,315 people; there are parking places for 355 cars and 20 buses, plus disabled parking places.

The building is situated along the same axis as the runway of a former Soviet military airbase. The building's evenly pitched roof visually merges into the runway and represents an ascending platform. At the main entrance, the roof rises 14 metres from the ground and forms an airy, 40-metre-long projecting canopy. Taking its cue from the 7-by-7-metre grid of concrete slabs on the airport runway, the rooms inside the museum are divided into rectangles.

The building has a 21,941 sq. metre footprint and 34,347 sq. metres of usable floor area. By comparison, Kumu art museum has a footprint of 6,430 sq. metres and a usable floor area of 20,926 sq. metres, while Tallinn City Hall has a footprint 39,422 sq. metres and a total enclosed area of 37,221 sq. metres. Other major structures in Tartu include the University of Tartu library with a footprint of 7,194 sq. metres and usable floor area of

1

In what follows, I am relying on Krista Aru's overview of the building in K. Aru, Eesti Rahva Muuseumi ehituslugu: üle saja aasta kestnud teekond ja viies üritus. – *Sirp*, 28. January 2011.

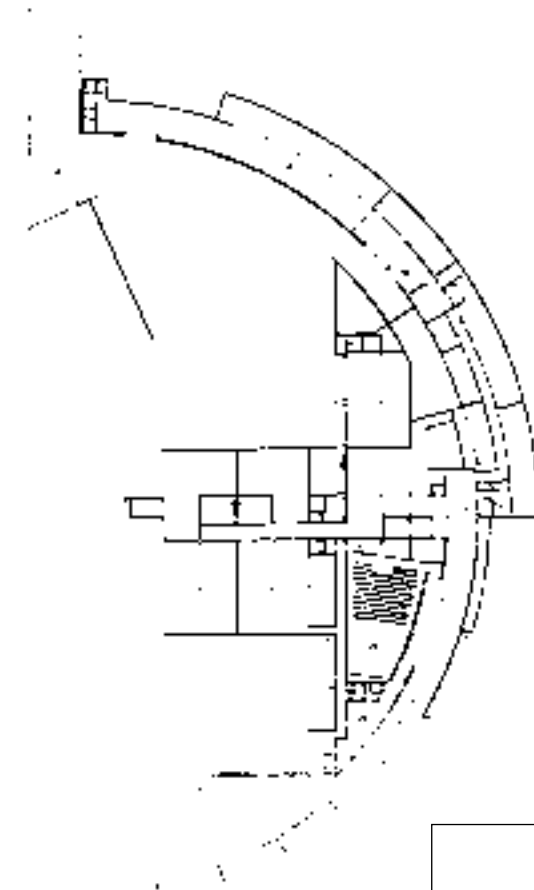
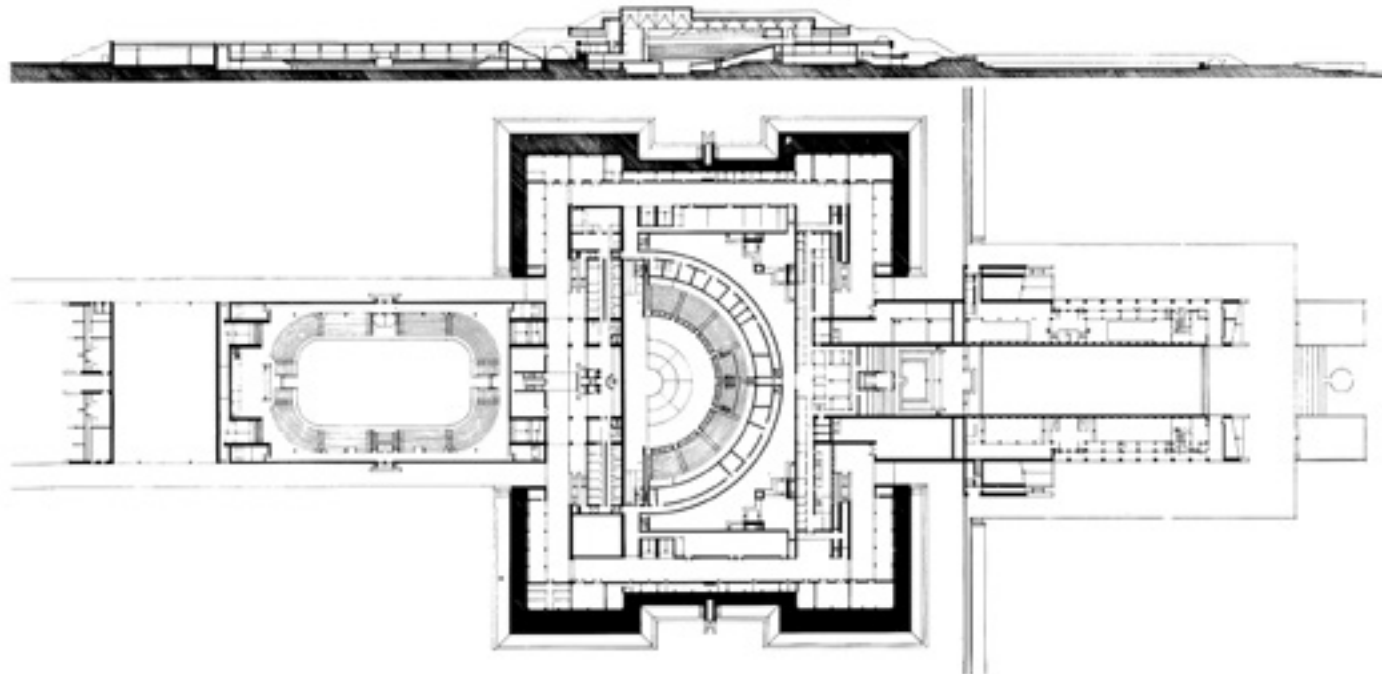






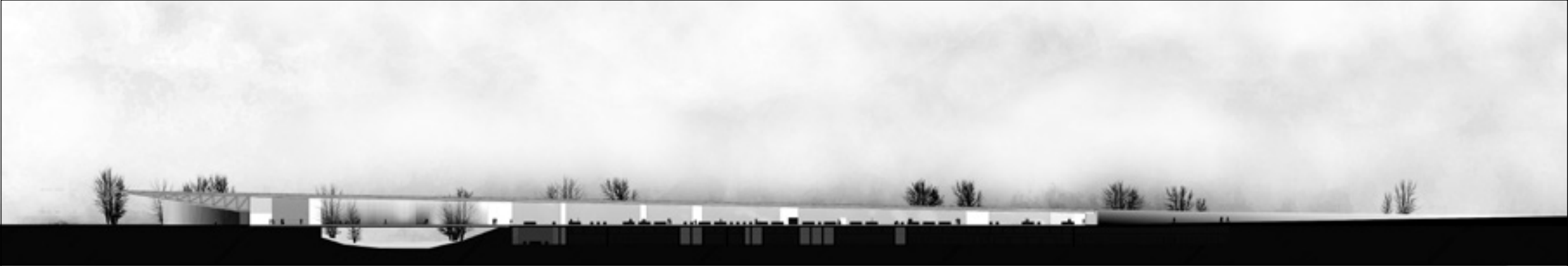


Tallinn Linnahall  
(designed by Raine Karp  
and Riina Altmäe, 1980)  
has stood in disuse for  
roughly a decade,  
awaiting renovation.  
At the time, the architects  
were awarded the Gold  
Medal of the President  
of the International  
Union of Architects and  
a USSR State Prize for  
the building.



The international  
architecture competition  
for the Art Museum of  
Estonia held in 1993 and  
1994 received 233 entries,  
from which the jury  
unanimously chose the  
design by Finnish archi-  
tect Pekka Vapaavuori as  
the winner. The building  
was completed in 2006.





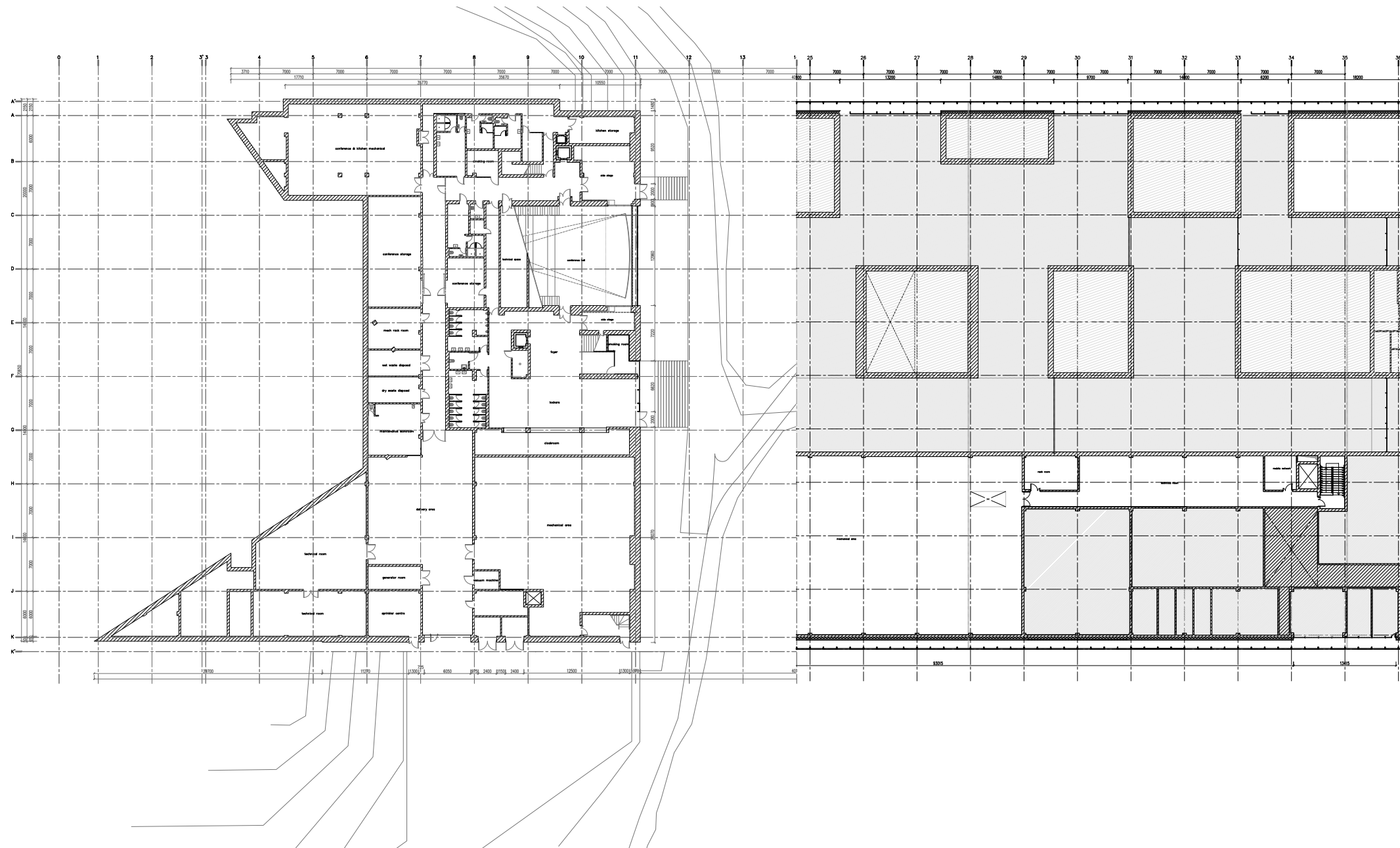
26,930 sq. metres, Tartu Kaubamaja shopping centre with a footprint of 8,269 sq. metres and usable floor area of 30,396 sq. metres (energy efficiency rating G), Lõunakeskus shopping centre with a footprint of 32,669 sq. metres and gross floor area of 38,217 sq. metres. The ENM building is divided into three large blocks: storage facilities (7,500 sq. m), exhibition halls (6,250 sq. m) and public spaces (6,475 sq. m), including a conference centre, theatre, concert hall, restaurant, café, museum shop, the Friends of the ENM Society room, playroom for children and so on.

The massive storage facilities (with walls made of autoclaved aerated concrete and floors and ceilings made of reinforced concrete) are housed compactly in the basement. Being surrounded and separated from the external walls by a so-called protective corridor, the storage facilities have a minimal contact area with the outside environment. A passive storage technology, or the Nordic system, is used, which results in minimal energy consumption. Kumu art museum, for example, uses an energy-intensive storage technology, where heating and ventilation systems keep the indoor humidity and temperature levels stable (which requires the rooms to be cooled in the summer and heated in the winter; in the wet seasons, a close eye has to be kept on indoor humidity levels). The ENM's storage facilities are essentially not heated at all, as the indoor temperature is allowed to fluctuate between 8 and 25 degrees centigrade according to the changing of the seasons. The exchange of air has been brought down to a minimum in the storage facilities. The aerated concrete walls help to balance out the fluctuations in humidity. The walls act like sponges: as air humidity rises, the porous concrete absorbs excessive moisture,

releasing it as humidity drops. This eliminates the need for extensive ventilation in order to keep humidity under control. As a result, one-third of the building is basically a zero energy house.

The building's fire safety is ensured by means of the technology used on oil platforms. In the event of a fire, high-pressure mist is sprayed from the ceiling at 130 atmospheres, creating an environment where air does not move and fire cannot progress. Passing through under these sprinklers with a jacket on, they say, feels like catching a light drizzle.

A financial analysis carried out by State Real Estate Ltd showed that district heating would be the most economical solution for the museum over the next 25 years. The energy for heating and cooling the building, therefore, comes from a central boiler station by the Emajõgi River. The museum's energy efficiency rating C is a relatively good achievement, given its status as a special-purpose building. The estimated annual cost of heating is 170,000 euros and the electricity bills may reach up to 210,000 euros per year. The sum total of 380,000 euros per year is allegedly half the expenditure of Kumu art museum, which has a floor area equal to two-thirds of that of the ENM. In the future, the ENM may start using solar power or other alternatives.





The idea

If a building has a strong original concept, it can inspire endless discussion. With the ENM, we can talk about two impulses, the airport and the straight line that Dan Dorell, Lina Ghotmeh and Tsuyoshi Tane drew on a map as an extension of the former. From a simple straight line, a museum was born. Looking at the building, I am reminded of the space bar, the largest button on a keyboard. A generator and a principle. It opens up all avenues for interpretation.

I am also reminded of the composition classes given by the Estonian architecture luminary Leonhard Lapin, where first-year architecture students must draw hundreds of black lines on blank sheets of paper. Some get frustrated; others realise that it takes decades of drawing lines before being able to create space. By the time of the ENM design competition, Dorell, Ghotmeh and Tane had around thirty years of apprenticeship between them. Examination passed! Another thing that comes to mind is that Steven Holl reputedly spent weeks painting water colours in Helsinki – day in, day out – when designing Kiasma.

The airport

As the building’s form is based on a Soviet-era military airport, it is fitting to talk about pseudomorphosis; that is, giving new content to a pre-existing form. If the new content has some sort of structural unity with the form, pseudomorphosis can yield good results. If not, the resulting contradictory formations, in which form and content do not engage with each other, tend to disappear from the historical scene soon. The new ENM building is certainly an example of twisted pseudomorphosis, and in that respect is a huge risk. At the same time, we see at Raadi a development towards replacing the whole airport with new buildings and meanings. There is an increasing departure from the pre-existing form, and as a result, within a few generations it may seem incredible that the idea for the museum building was once inspired by a Soviet airport. Once the airport is forgotten, the pseudomorphosis will be complete.

The critics would say that tying the ENM to the Soviet airport is like marrying a rapist. I dare predict that disputes over whether the airport will lead Estonians to heaven or to hell are not bound to end any time soon. In some sense, the fact that discussions circle around one and the same issue speaks against the architecture. In literary theory, the principle of heterophony is used to describe this phenomenon. It refers to thoughts converging on a single point as it were, that is, whatever the protagonist is thinking about, one and the same obsessive thought jumps to mind (the thought of someone’s death, revenge, unhappy love, etc.). It is the multiple variation of a single idea. Is the ENM building an example of heterophonous architecture?

Looking at the building from the airport side, you cannot even tell where the runway ends and the museum begins, or how far it extends exactly. There are no chimneys or other elements on the roof to get your bearings from and judge the volume of the building. Personally, I am not disappointed that the roof is not walkable. First, the view looking at it is much better than that looking from it onto the surrounding landscape. Second, I do not think that wandering on the museum’s roof should outdo the experience of visiting the exhibitions. After all, a national museum is a classic modernist institution for popular enlightenment and this burden should not be downplayed for effect.





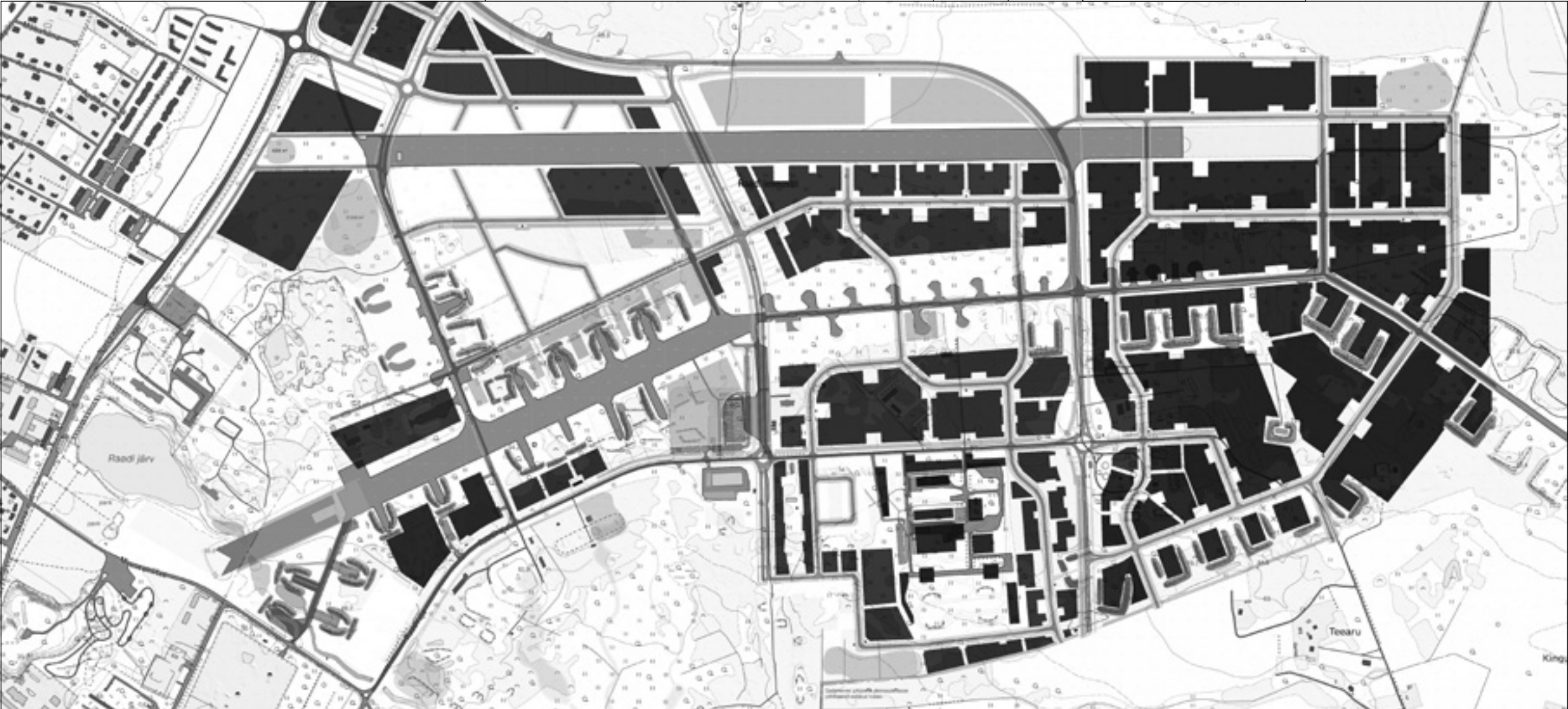


Raadi City

In 2000, the rural municipality of Tartu initiated the detailed planning of the 50-hectare territory of the Raadi airport; the resulting plan foresees a city district with up to 6,000 residents. In addition to residential buildings, a hotel, ice rink and indoor sports arena, school, kindergarten, nursing home for the elderly, shopping centre and, further out, industrial facilities are also included in the plan. No such multi-functional urban district has been created from scratch in Estonia since it regained independence. The detailed plan requires public architecture competitions to be held for the buildings in the area and their spatial layout to be based on the artificial environment created by the former airport. In twenty years, could the ENM's rear entrance

A detailed plan for the immediate surroundings of the ENM, which shows the museum's B entrance opening onto the main square of a new city district surrounded by cultural and entertainment venues as well as residential buildings. Also included in the area plan are commercial spaces and, furthest from the museum, industrial functions.

open onto a beautiful "town hall square" for the new city district, lined with cafés and little shops and set within an enjoyable, dense urban environment?



Palimpsest

Dan Dorell, Lina Ghothmeh and Tsuyoshi Tane, who had never been to Tartu, found this eerie-looking airstrip on the map of the city. As it appeared in their eyes as a sort of exotic Berlin Wall, they thought the artefact had to be preserved or re-interpreted. The main thing was not to have people shutting it out of their memory. The past cannot be erased; it must be addressed. And each new generation actualises different strata of social memory.

Perhaps the best way to approach this landscape is to take the bus to Kavastu from Tartu city centre and after about 20 minutes get off at the Rõõmu-Pilka junction. The easternmost tip of the Raadi airport is a short walk away. Now you have ahead of you a 90-minute psycho-geographical journey to the museum. On several occasions during this journey, I was reminded of the Neues Museum in Berlin. A building that has survived almighty entropy to become a landmark of hope.

The peaceful architectural language and horizontal form of the ENM are symbols of the linear progression of time. The good old modernist spirit of progress, so rarely seen today, is discernible in the building, promising uninterrupted advancement.

A barn

Estonians are well familiar with farm cellars that disappear underground. Soil and turf as architectural elements. Remarkably, both the ENM and Kumu slide into the ground. What should we make of this? That Estonian culture relies heavily on the soil and nature? Or perhaps also the fact that four-sided villas are historically unfamiliar to Estonians.

The Neues Museum in Berlin

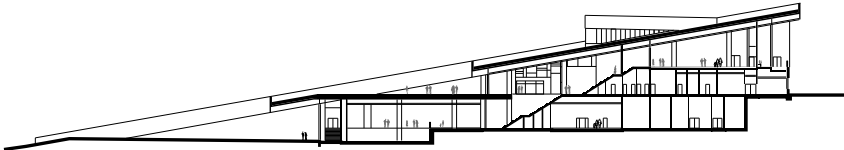




Parallel lives

The ENM building is an urban installation that draws inspiration from the music of Arvo Pärt, 20th-century French philosophy, abstract art and god knows what else. It is difficult to find architectural influences and perhaps pointless to look for any. Though I would like to point out one. The new building of the Moesgaard Museum (MOMU) of archaeology and ethnography designed by Henning Larsen Architects (2010–2014) is similarly situated alongside an old manor house and crawls out from underground exactly the same way, as if intimidated by the mansion. The exhibition, too, unrolls according to the same logic as at Raadi: the deeper you go into the building, the further you go back in time. Similarly, at the Moesgaard Museum we see how contemporary ethnology and anthropology resemble visual art both in terms of the methods of presentation and research (artistic documentaries, comic strips, etc.). MOMU has a multi-layered interior, which represents the different layers, or stratification, in archaeological excavation. The roof is walkable. In my mind, the building – half an hour away from Aarhus – exhibits one formal fallacy, though: natural forms tend to fall, rather than rise. The Moesgaard Museum stands bizarrely erect; the ENM sinks into the ground as do all things living.

The Moesgaard Museum of archaeology and ethnography in Skåde.



The average Tartu resident

I think that to a perfectly ordinary, university-educated Tartu resident the ENM building may seem a nondescript grey box. Perhaps even a distinctly ugly one. A barn, an outbuilding, an aquarium. Or am I mistaken? On the other hand, the building falls in line with the classical order of Tartu’s architecture. For after all, it does have clean lines, something that should befit the university town. But a glazed facade? Out of the question in Tartu! Massive scale? “No, thank you,” says the Tartu resident. The city is changing, that is a fact. Will the people?

The ENM construction work in November 2015.



Fallow ground

“Memory field” is not only a building but also a landscape drama that unfolds from the harmony between the building and its environment. Architecture that is as concrete as possible juxtaposed with a lush wasteland. The objective in the longer term is to let the land lie fallow, teeming with prolific vegetation that is cut once a year. The landscaping is more “cultured” on the city side with specifically chosen plant communities and a methodically arranged field of birch trees. What will grow at the remoter edges of the “Memory field” is left up to nature. We will not see this result right after the opening, but have to wait patiently for five or six years. By then the wilderness that sprawled here before the construction activities began will be restored. Only after the building disappears in the vegetation will we get the real picture. Then the viewer will get the feeling that the seasons rule over the building rather than the other way around.

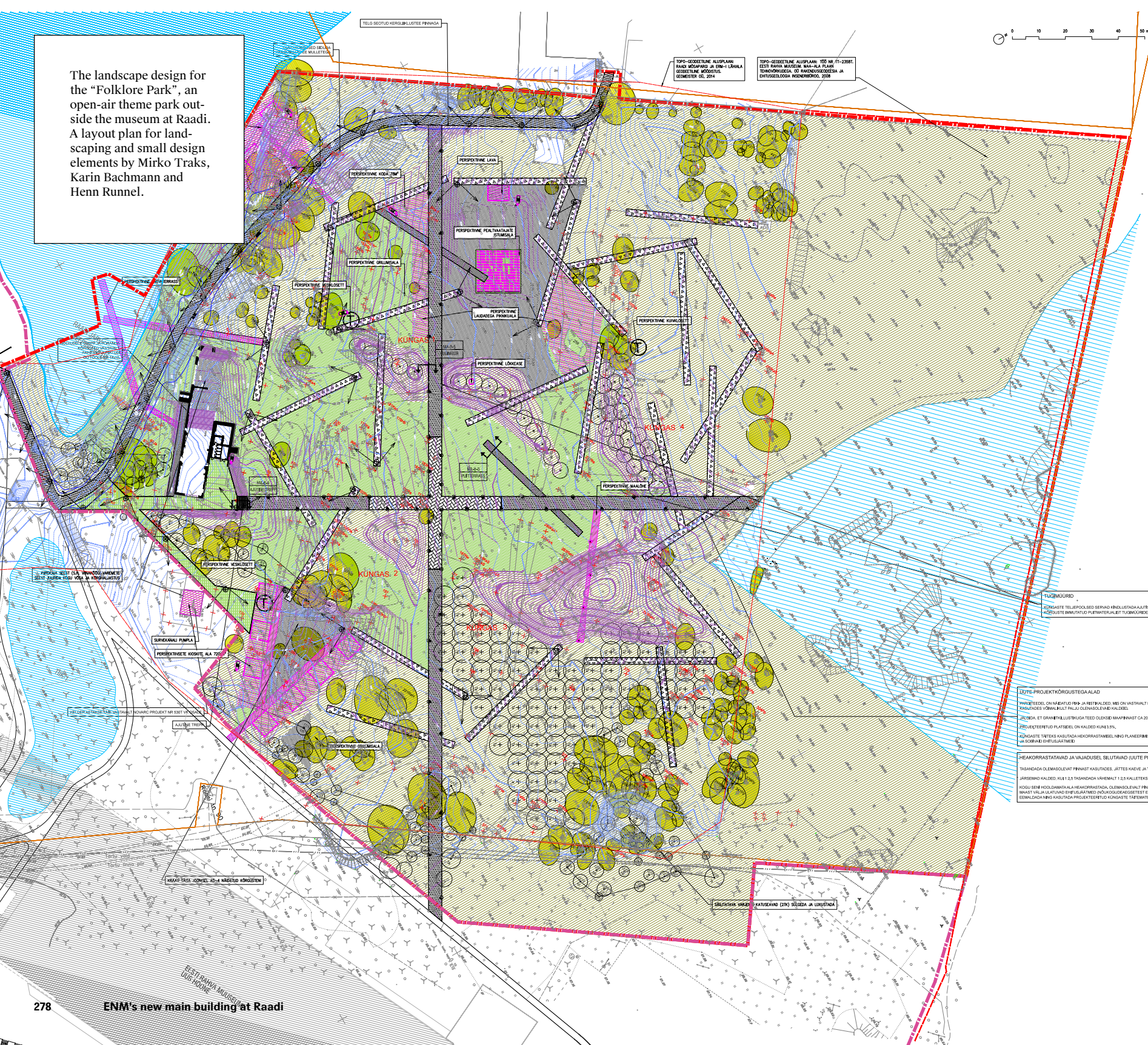
The museum hopes that in the summer visitors will spend a whole day at Raadi, bringing a picnic basket and swimming clothes. By the lake, there is an old distillery, which has been transformed into a cosy stage for theatre performances and concerts. Between the manor house and the new building lies the ENM theme park with a hand-craft market consisting of seven wooden pavilions as a centrepiece.

Initially, DGT brought in Bureau Bas Smets of Belgium to design the landscape, but at a later stage of the project the work went to Kino, a young Tartu firm. This was a welcome development, as the Kino architects had been engaged with Raadi for some time through volunteer work and just out of professional interest. It is an example of how “Memory field” has quite naturally found its way into the hands of people who really care about this environment. Karin Bachman, co-founder at Kino, defended her master’s thesis in landscape architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts in 2006, discussing the mental status of the Raadi complex<sup>2</sup>; in 2008, she participated in a workshop on Raadi where ideas for a new city district were sought. More recently, Kino Architects helped the ENM with the Rooski tänav regeneration plan. Rooski tänav connects the museum to the city centre and making the street more user-friendly is perhaps one of the most important factors in closing the mental distance between the museum and the city in the eyes of Tartu residents.

<sup>2</sup>  
Karin Bachmann. Koha vaimne saastatus Raadi näitel (Mental pollution of the place – on the example of Raadi). Master’s thesis. Department of Architecture, Estonian Academy of Arts. Tallinn, 2006.



The landscape design for the “Folklore Park”, an open-air theme park outside the museum at Raadi. A layout plan for landscaping and small design elements by Mirko Traks, Karin Bachmann and Henn Runnel.



TINGMÄRGI	
<p><b>PIIRD JA TSOONID</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PÄRIMISTE PÄRISTE PROJEKTALA PIR</li> <li>EESTI RAHV. MUUSEUMI PROJEKTALA PIR</li> <li>OLEMASOLEV KINNISTUP</li> <li>KATSEVALDUSE LIG. LEIUKOIT. KESKONNAREGISTRI KODU ALUSPÕHIST</li> <li>EESTI RAHV. MUUSEUMI UUS HOONE</li> <li>LIKVIDEITAV KRUUSAKATE / KRAAV / ASFALIKATE</li> <li>LIKVIDEITAV OBJEKT</li> <li>SÄLITATAV OBJEKT</li> <li>SÄLITATAV PINKKATTEGA HEAKORRATATAV ALA</li> </ul>	<p><b>VITED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VEE TÄRUSTATAV JONKSELE</li> <li>PERSPEKTIVNE</li> <li>PERSPEKTIVNE TREPP</li> <li>PERSPEKTIVNE PUTTERASS</li> <li>PERSPEKTIVNE RAJATISE EHTUSALA KOOS PERSPEKTIVNE RAJATISE SOOVITUSLUGU ASUKOHAGA</li> </ul>
<p><b>TEED JA PLATSID</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD GRANITISÖLMED LAUDÄRSEGA</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD PUTROPPSILLUTS JA LAUDÄRIS</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD ASFALIKATE</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD PUTTERASS</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD MURUKIVI</li> </ul>	<p><b>HALJASTUS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROJEKTALA OLEMASOLEV SÄLITATAV PUU / JRK NR VASTAVALT DENDROLOOGIASELE HINNANGILE (VT MÄRKUSTEST)</li> <li>PROJEKTALA OLEMASOLEV SÄLITATAV PUUESALU / PÕOSASTIK</li> <li>PROJEKTALA LIKVIDEITAV PUU / PÕOSAS</li> <li>EESTI RAHV. MUUSEUMI PROJEKTALA PROJEKTEERITUD KÕRHALJASTUS KOOS GRUUP- JA LISTÄRSEGA</li> <li>PROJEKTALA PROJEKTEERITUD KÕRHALJASTUS KOOS LISTÄRSEGA</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD MADALHALJASTUSE TÕUP 2. KESA</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD MADALHALJASTUSE TÕUP 8. NIDETAV MURU</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD MADALHALJASTUSE TÕUP 9. SPORDIMURU</li> </ul>
<p><b>VÄRVEFORM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD KUIVAKALA</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITAV PARGVALGUSTI (H=5,25 M) JA PROJEKTORITE SUUNAD</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITAV MADAL POLLAR (H=0,36 M) KOOS VALGUSTI SUUNAGA</li> <li>PERSPEKTIVNE MADAL POLLAR (H=0,36 M) KOOS VALGUSTI SUUNAGA</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD KAMBLUKAPP / VALGUSTUSE LÜLITUSKUP</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD PINK</li> </ul>	<p><b>MAASTIKUKUUNLUND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OLEMASOLEV SAMAKÕRUSJON</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITAV SAMAKÕRUSJON</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD KERGKULISTEE MÜLDE ALUMINE PIR</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD KERGKULISTEE SÕNENI ÜLELINE SERV</li> <li>PROJEKTEERITUD KERGKULISTEE SÕNENI ALUMINE SERV</li> <li>JÄRY / TIK</li> </ul>

**TEE-PROJEKTIKÕRUSTUSTEGA ALAD**

PARGITEEDEL ON NÄDETUD PIRI JA RETRIKALDE, MIE ON VASTAVALT KUN 0% JA 2% KASUTADES VÕRRAJUT PIRI OLEMASOLEV KALDE.

JÄRDEJA ET GRANTIKULUSTRUGA TEEDE OLEKSID KAMPINAST CA 20MM KÕRGEKAL.

PROJEKTEERITUD PLATSEDEL ON KALDE KUN 0%.

KÕRDEKATE TÄRTE KASUTADA HEAKORRATATAV, NING PLANEERITUSDOEL TÄRTEKAD TÄTEMATERIAALI JA KÕRDEKATE EHTUSALATIDE.

**HEAKORRATATAVAD JA VALJADUSEL SILUTAVAD (LUITE PROJEKTIKÕRGETA) ALAD**

TASANDADA OLEMASOLEVAT PINKKAT KASUTADES, JÄTTE KAEVE JA TÄTE MAHU BLANENITALL.

JÄRSEKAD KALDE: KUN 1-2% TASANDADA VÄHEMALT 1-2% KÄLLETES.

KOOS SEH HOOLDAMATA ALA HEAKORRATATAV, OLEMASOLEVAT PINKSE REALMITES KÄTIDES JA MAAT KUN ALA KÄTID HOOLDAMATAV HOOLDAMATAV KÄTIDEST KÄTIDEST JA KÄTIDEST.

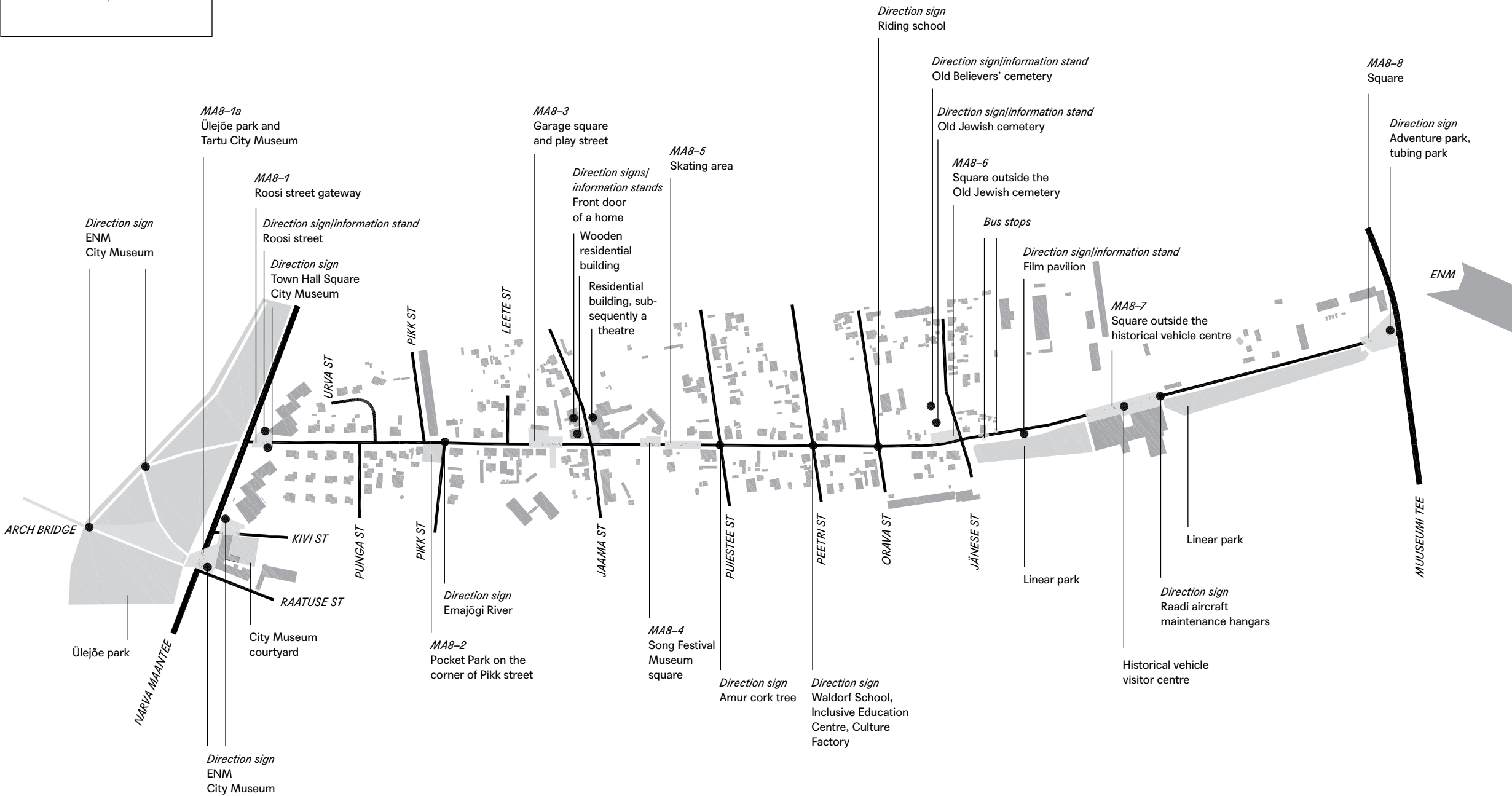
TEEMALDADA NING KASUTADA PROJEKTEERITUD KÕRDEKATE TÄTEMATERIAALI.

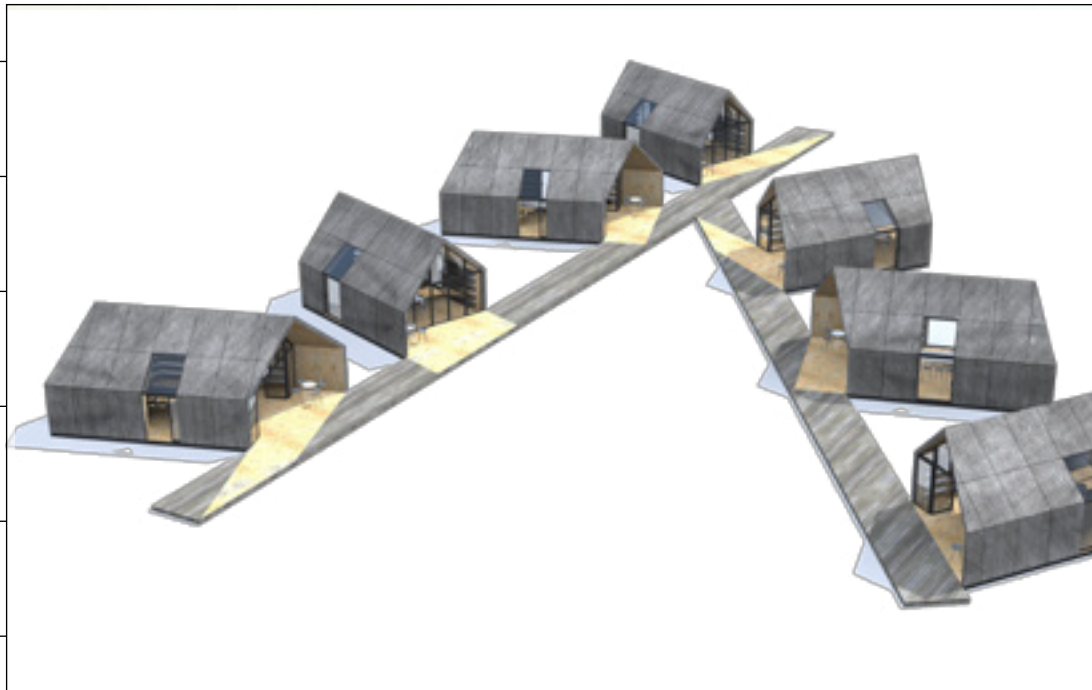




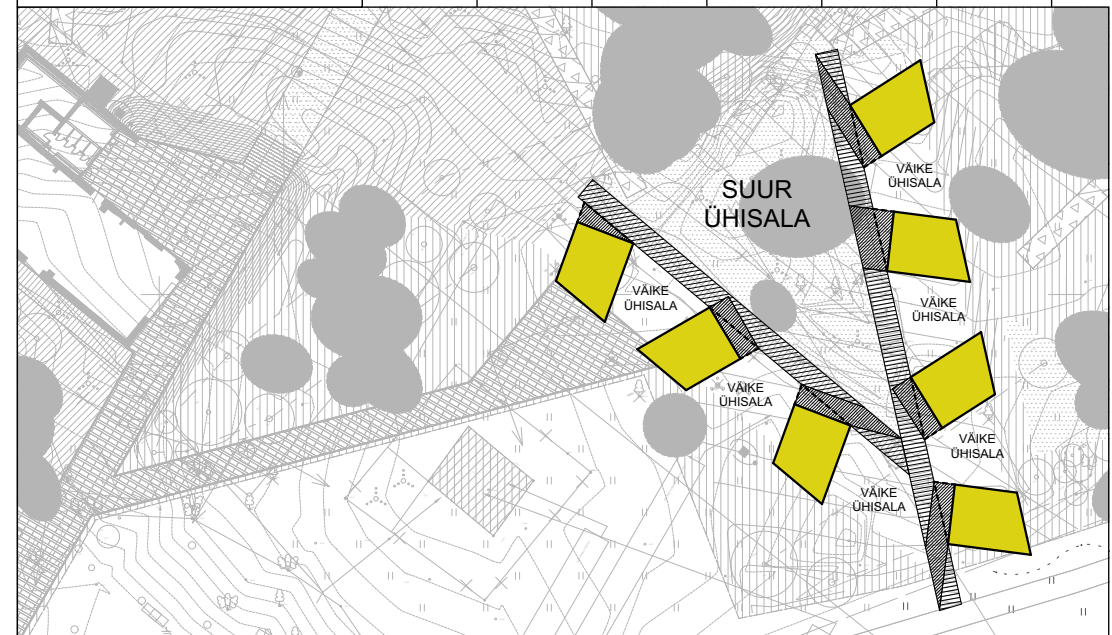


A draft plan for Roosi  
tänav by Kino Landscape  
Architects (Mirko Traks,  
Karin Bachmann and  
Henn Runnel).





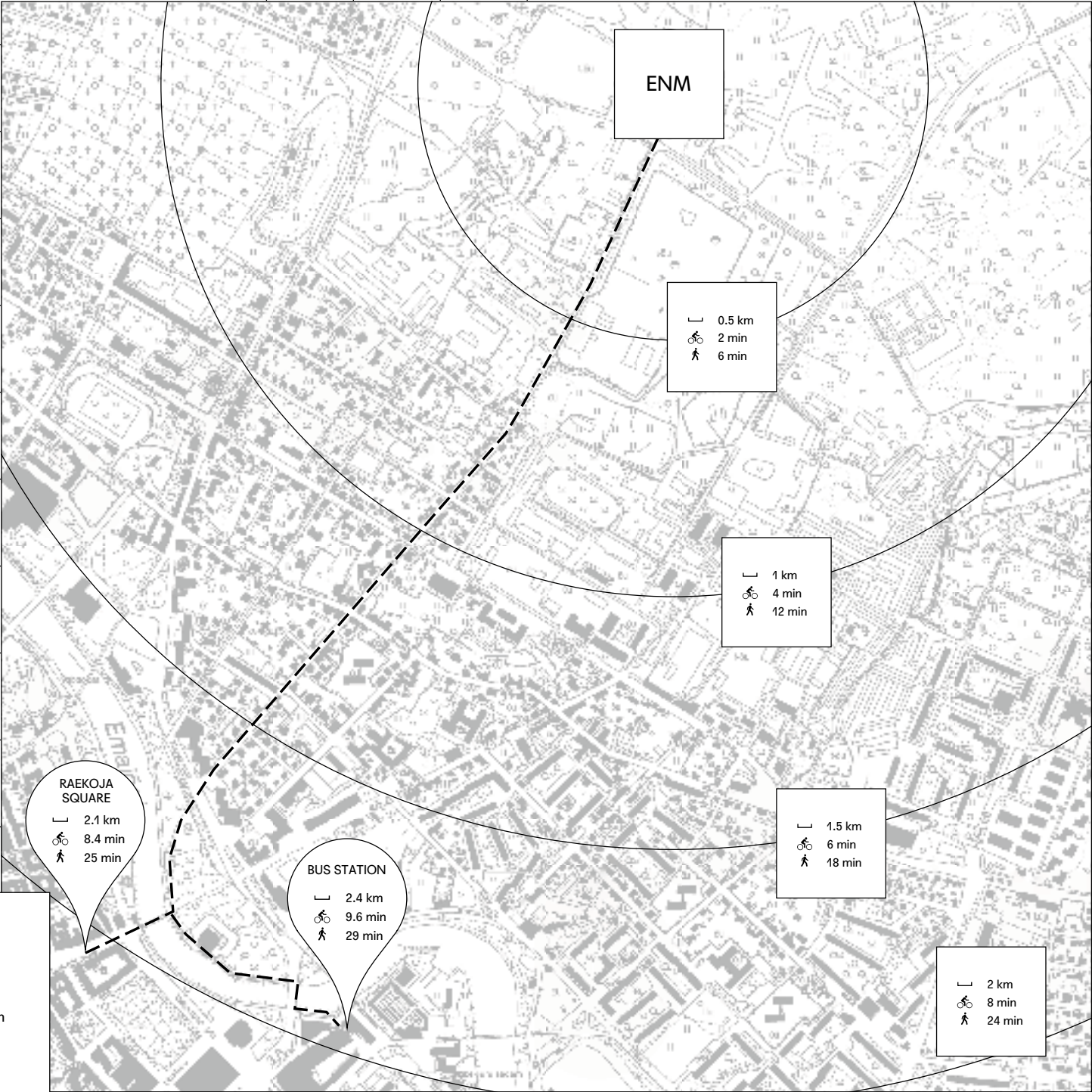
The pavilions of the winning design “Ajavaod” by Kauss Architects are all based on a standard solution with a rhomboid floor plan, drawing on the central element in the visual identity of the ENM. Placed along a boardwalk, the pavilions follow the pattern of traditional linear villages with their natural harmony. The gabled roofs of the buildings are a reference to traditional village architecture, while the panelling, absence of eaves and large glazed surfaces fit in with the contemporary form of the main building. The architecture and design of the buildings is deliberately neutral and universal, making room for the users, who will invest the pavilions with meaningful content through their activities.





Metres of memory

“Metres of memory” is a joint project by the ENM and the Tartu City Government aimed at reducing the perceived distance between Raadi and the city centre by bringing various activities to Rooski Street. The street will be transformed as a new type of plaza-street that allows for pop-up cafés and street bars to be set up, outdoor exhibitions organised and so on. By re-interpreting the street, the ENM is expanding its reach and suggesting that cultural history, which is presented within the museum walls, is inextricably linked to what goes on outside. This way the ENM asserts itself as an organic part of the city, while constantly changing and transforming. All told, it is highly symbolic that it was the new ENM building that led to the creation of a city-friendly street that may serve as an example for many other street facelifts in the future.<sup>3</sup>



3  
Reaching the goal has not been all roses, though. When the city and ENM brought the draft plan for the street before the public, the residents responded with a wave of instead than ovations; the locals demanded the removal of the benches that were planned to be installed on the street outside their homes, claiming that these would attract drunken gatherings. Another objection was that Rooski Street was already in perfect condition and reconstructing it would be a waste. See E. Kiivet, Kaasav linn – osalemise ruum. – *Sirp*, 14 August 2015.



All bridges are bridges for lovers

The French political scientist Dominique Moïsi writes in his “Geopolitics of Emotion” that the behaviour of states is only ever based on three emotions: humiliation, fear and hope. Humiliation is largely destructive. Fear hinders action. The only progressive emotion worthy of serving as a basis for action is hope.<sup>4</sup> Bridges, especially those connecting buildings in mid-air, are the symbols of hope in architecture. The ENM building is designed as a bridge. What could be a more beautiful metaphor for a national museum to embody? The building is literally a bridge between the city and the neighbouring rural municipality, between the Soviet period and the present, but metaphorically also between different people, nations, languages, interpretations of history and much more. A master class in the creation of symbols.



4

Dominique Moïsi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation and Hope are Reshaping the World*. London: Anchor, 2010. See also Kaja Kallas, Püsime lähedal. – *Eesti Ekspress*, 18 November 2015.



The bridge section under construction in June 2014 (left) and a bridge in the building's interior (right).





Construction work in the  
bridge section in June  
2014.





Construction work in the  
bridge section in June  
2014.





The atrium in the bridge section in spring 2016.





Glass as clear as fog

With a total floor area of 34,347 sq. metres, the building is covered by approximately 5,000 sq. metres of glass screen. A 1:7 ratio between floor area and glass facade is typical of the simplest office buildings, as it happens. The ENM has much fewer windows than office buildings do; however, it is essentially a closed concrete envelope, an exclusive warehouse. This is typical of museum buildings, as museum pieces must be kept away from sunlight. Inside the museum, natural light can only be seen in the two exhibition halls thanks to skylights and in one of the exhibition halls with a view onto the grounds of the old manor. Natural light abounds in the atrium and restaurant, however, with high windows opening up magnificent views onto the lake.

The entire facade glazing is covered with a pattern of eight-tipped crosses that draws on traditional folk ornamentation. This is both heart-warming and appropriate, for it sets the museum apart from thousands of other buildings wrapped in blank sheets of glass. A repetitive pattern creates a unique effect. At the same time, the eight-tipped cross is the most predictable and commonplace piece of ornament for Estonians, and therefore, comes across as kitsch. Would it not be inappropriate to cover a Russian museum with matryoshka dolls or a British one with portraits of the queen? All the more, given that the ENM gave up using the eight-tipped cross in its corporate identity for the very same reason some years ago. Fortunately, the facade can be read in two ways: what looks like a pattern of eight-tipped crosses up close gives the impression of an interesting arabesque from a distance.

Between the glass and the concrete wall is a gap visitors cannot enter; birds, however, had made their nests there long before the building was completed. Under the canopy, left of the main entrance, there is a tiny botanical garden with different mosses growing between the glass skin and the building envelope. This moss garden reminds me of a prophecy made by the Estonian thinker Valdur Mikita, that in a thousand years our planet will be taken over by a civilization of superintelligent kilns, or ovens, used in the traditional Estonian housebarn. According to Mikita, humans will have degenerated into sponges by then, though the good news is that the sponges will speak Estonian.<sup>5</sup>



The facade of the ENM in autumn 2015.

<sup>5</sup>  
Valdur Mikita, *Lindvistika ehk metsa see lingvistika*. Tartumaa: Vara, p. 232.



The facade overlooking  
Lake Raadi in spring  
2016.

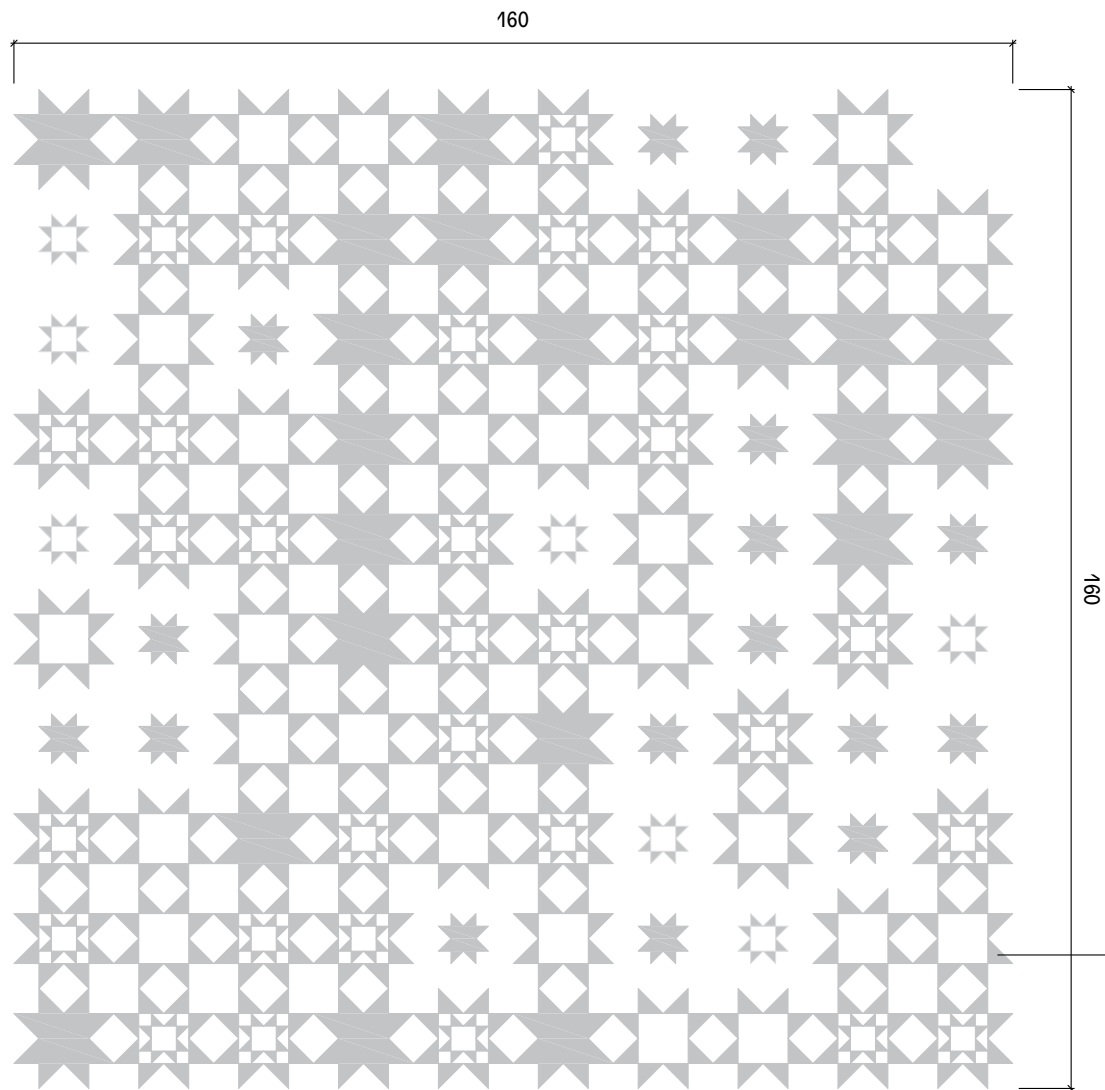











Left, work on the ENM building's glass envelope in autumn 2015. Right, a close-up of the facade pattern.





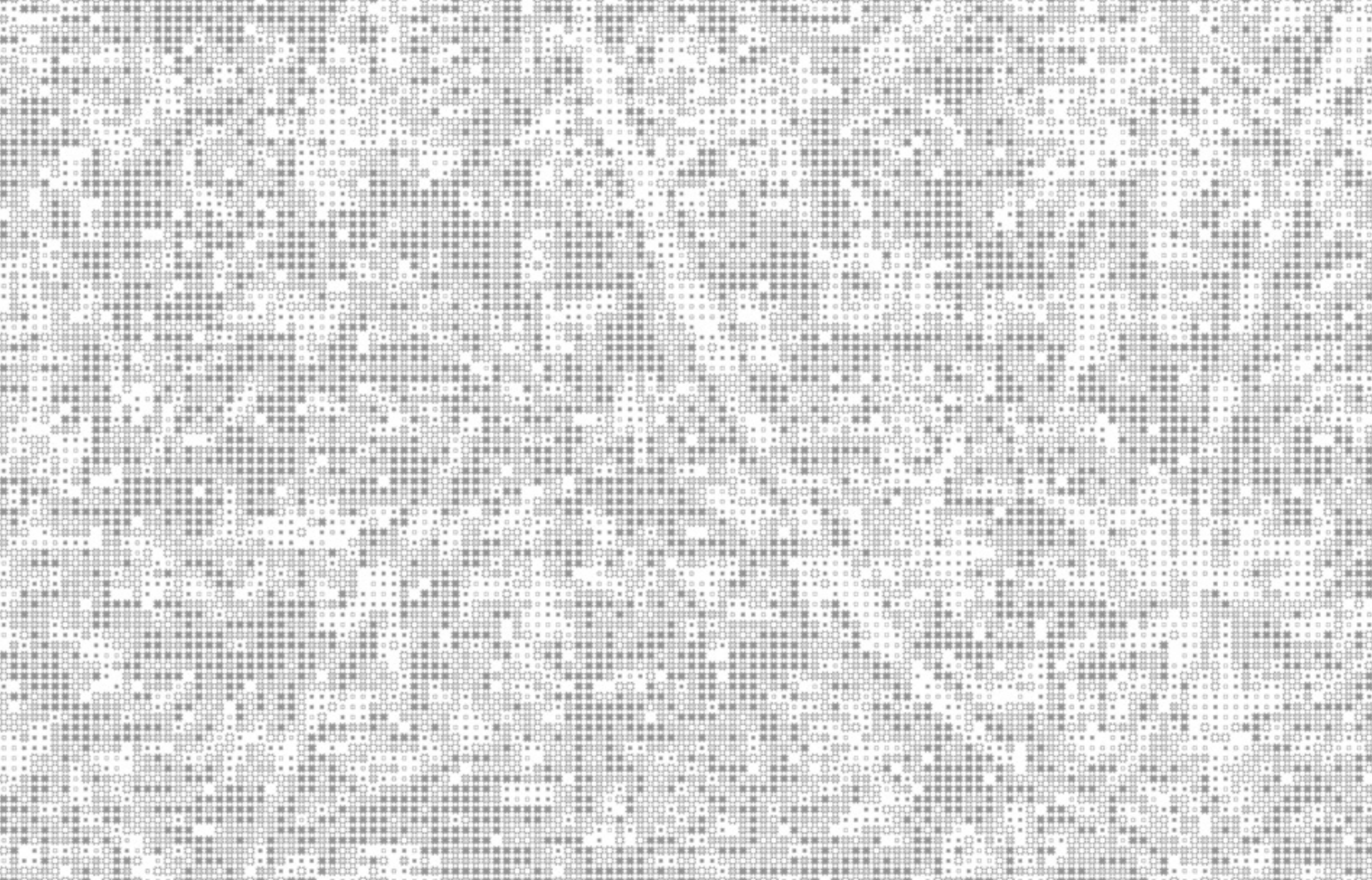
A typical silkscreen pattern, M 1:1

Types of motif, M 1:1

	16	16	16	16	16
					
	128 mm <sup>2</sup>	80 mm <sup>2</sup>	64 mm <sup>2</sup>	32 mm <sup>2</sup>	16 mm <sup>2</sup>
	256 mm <sup>2</sup>	256 mm <sup>2</sup>	256 mm <sup>2</sup>	256 mm <sup>2</sup>	256 mm <sup>2</sup>
	50%	31.25%	25%	12.5%	6.25%

The silkscreen (seralit) pattern for the outer surface of the glass panels of the ventilated glass envelope.









Left, a view from the inside out; right, the gap between the exterior wall and glass envelope of the building.





The “moss garden” next to the ENM’s main entrance.





An optimistic refuge

The main entrance is framed by a cantilevered canopy. Its shape marks the footpaths that had been trodden into the landscape before the museum was built. The canopy forms a sort of sounding board, with a covered volume larger than that of the Tartu song festival stage; it is as if the building is roaring at the nation's capital in Tallinn, not forgetting that it was right here at Raadi that the first Estonian Song Festival was held. These times will return, you will see. In architecture history, cantilevered roofs were introduced in the 1930s, as reinforced concrete and innovative engineering solutions allowed architects to create large horizontal surfaces that billowed, soared and rolled. This is how fashionable streamlined canopies were born. These achieved particular popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, signifying cultural optimism – everyone will find shelter under our roof. Since then, canopies have emerged as important markers of public space. I find it appealing that it is precisely this kind of element that the ENM greets its visitors with.

Members of the public around the new ENM building in February 2016.



An anti-monument

Looking at the building in side view, we see that the canopy – gigantic in frontal view – leaves a rather modest impression given the overall length of the building. It is perhaps this detail that encapsulates the building's enigmatic nature: it is gigantic, monumental and iconic, while at the same time being modest and ephemeral, seeking to conceal itself in the landscape – an anti-monument that is the opposite of being carved in stone and expresses the readiness for change in the turmoil of history.

An educational skatepark

The square outside the main entrance has a rough concrete surface to provide traction. The paving is also a reference to the rugged surface of the airport on the opposite side of the building. Hopefully, skateboarders will find the their way there, for it is the advance guard of street culture in particular that has the potential to attract the city folk to the museum. If they go, others will follow suite.

Entrance and exit

From the city, the museum building greets us at its most spectacular when approached along Narva Road. Its strikingly monumental front facade comes into view across an old sand quarry. Like a gaping mouth, the portal seems to want to swallow the city whole. Pedestrians and cyclists approach the museum along Roosi tänav, which gradually opens up a view on the south side of the building. In grey weather, this facade looks dull, not unlike one of those DIY centres on the outskirts of town. The only thing missing are the glaring advertisements. The most exciting way to approach is from the side of the B entrance with the roof disappearing into the distance as the building's fourth facade. While museums usually have a single entrance and a specific route for moving through the exhibitions, here the two entrances create more options for understanding and interpreting the exhibits. The museum building suggests that the nation's history is multifaceted, with no single correct way to present the narrative.



A view from under the canopy, spring 2016.





The ENM's main entrance  
in early spring 2016.





The ENM's exterior  
in February 2016.





A view of the ENM's  
B entrance from the  
Raadi airbase runway  
in July 2014.





The first impression says it all

The monumental sense of space created by the canopy is continued after entering the museum. The entrance hall that rises through two storeys is awe-inspiring. The expansive white wall surfaces emphasise the feeling of being in a church. While Gothic cathedrals, figuratively speaking, tower to the sky to make room inside for God, here the human dimension has been eliminated in order to stress the history of the ENM and its central place in Estonian cultural history. As soon as the visitor reaches the vestibule in the bridge section of the building, the architecture returns to human scale. Here, instead of the massive vertical grey wall surfaces, peaceful views of the surroundings open up. Abundant sunlight is ensured by the skylights fitted between the restaurant, vestibule and library. At this point, the 70-metre-wide building feels much smaller than that.

The public part of the museum divides into three: entrance A, exhibition section and entrance B. Around entrance A on the city side, something like a festive cultural centre is formed, with a large auditorium (for conferences, concerts and film screenings), an education room, a world cinema theatre, a library, a vestibule, a children’s playroom, a shop, a restaurant and a few other rooms with public functions. Here the building has three storeys. The cloakroom is in the basement level, creating a special atmosphere for the presentation of high culture. The visitors smarten up as if at some fancy opera house in order to then go and see the exhibitions, and the other people, all neat and tidy.

The public functions spread out across the front section of the first floor of the museum reaffirm the impression that this is a multi-layered memory institution not confined to exhibitions alone.

The mid-section of the building houses a two-storey exhibition block: the permanent exhibition and temporary exhibition hall on the main level and the Finno-Ugric cultural history exhibition at basement level. Around entrance B, an alternative and more liberal “cultural centre” is formed, with a black box theatre space, café and gallery. In the evenings after the exhibitions close, theatrical performances, concerts, festivals, receptions, parties and other events can be organised independently of each other in the public spaces in the different corners of the building.

On the south side of the museum, a block of offices, workshops, conservation facilities and mechanical rooms runs the entire length of the building on two floors. In the basement, below the permanent exhibition, are the storage facilities.



The library

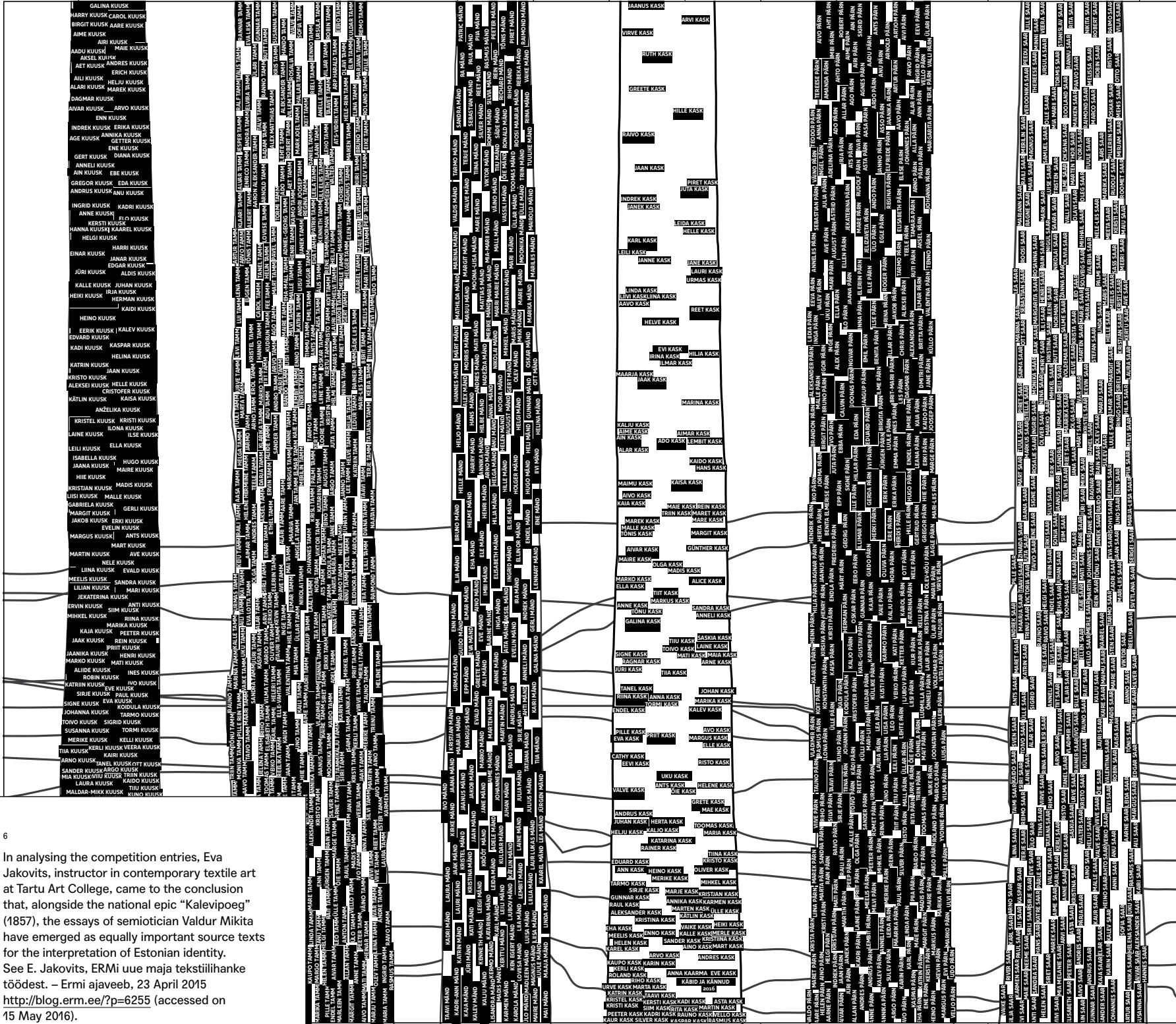
Here more than anywhere else the architects have given in to ostentation. The floor-to-ceiling library in the style of an English country house is obviously impractical. Will the top shelves, which no one could possibly reach, have to be lined with antique volumes for the sake of appearances? Looking at it the other way round: where else if not here could modern-day architects realise the library of their dreams? After all, it is a collection established by the early 20th-century Estonian folklorist and diplomat Oskar Kallas. He was the first to dream of a national library to bring together all the books published in Estonian.





Percentage art

From the conference hall, a view opens onto the water under the bridge section of the building. The architects therefore wanted to have the end wall made of glass from floor to ceiling. The museum refused. As a compromise solution, a strip of windows at floor level was left in the plan and the idea was that it could be covered using a stage backdrop when necessary. An artistic design solution was sought for the backdrop using what these days is known as “percentage art” in Estonia. This is a reference to the Commissioning of Artworks Act introduced by Estonia in 2011. The act requires that at least 1 per cent of the construction cost of a public building be spent on works of art. A design competition was held and 29 entries received, from among which “Käbid ja kännud” (Cones and stumps) by Eve Kask and Anna Kaarma was chosen as the winner. It is a piece of text-based art where Estonian family names based on the names of trees, of which there are many (such as Tamm (oak), Saar (ash), Kask (birch), Mänd (pine), Kuusk (fir) and Vaher (maple)), make up a forest landscape. The artwork brings into focus the Estonian people as the ENM’s main asset and highlights language as a dynamic part of culture.<sup>6</sup>



6  
In analysing the competition entries, Eva Jakovits, instructor in contemporary textile art at Tartu Art College, came to the conclusion that, alongside the national epic “Kalevipoeg” (1857), the essays of semiotician Valdur Mikita have emerged as equally important source texts for the interpretation of Estonian identity. See E. Jakovits, ERMi uue maja tekstiilhanke töödest. – Ermi ajaveeb, 23 April 2015 <http://blog.erm.ee/?p=6255> (accessed on 15 May 2016).

Encounters

A two-stage competition was organised in 2009 for the design of the permanent exhibition, and won by 3+1 Architects, a Tallinn-based firm, with an extended team.<sup>7</sup> The overall appearance of the exhibition is cool and Scandinavian. The design draws on the building’s minimalist architecture. While the main emphasis is on the original items on display, the overall impression is intriguingly diverse. In terms of functionality, Google Earth served as a nice inspiration, attractive to children and professional scholars alike. At the same time, the exhibition experience resembles a forest hike. The forest is a vast environment of information where, however, one little fungus, root or footprint may prove the source of a deeply satisfying experience when focused on separately.

7

The 3+1 team include Toomas Adrikorn, Gert Guriev, Markus Kaasik, Raul Kalvo, Kaarle Kannelmäe, Riin Kersalu, Kerstin Kivila, Karin Leht, Taavi Lööke, Andres Ojari, Juhan Rohtla, Siim Tiisvelt, Ilmar Valdur and Pirko Võmma. The exhibition films are by Marko Raat, artistic multimedia solutions by Timo Toots, graphic design by Margus Tamm, font design by Mart Anderson, multimedia solutions by Mikk Meelak and lighting design by Christine Gräfenhain. At the beginning, the team also include Andres Kurg, who developed the concept, and Linnar Viik, who helped with IT. The director of the Estonian cultural history permanent exhibition “Encounters” is ENM’s senior research fellow Kristel Rattus.

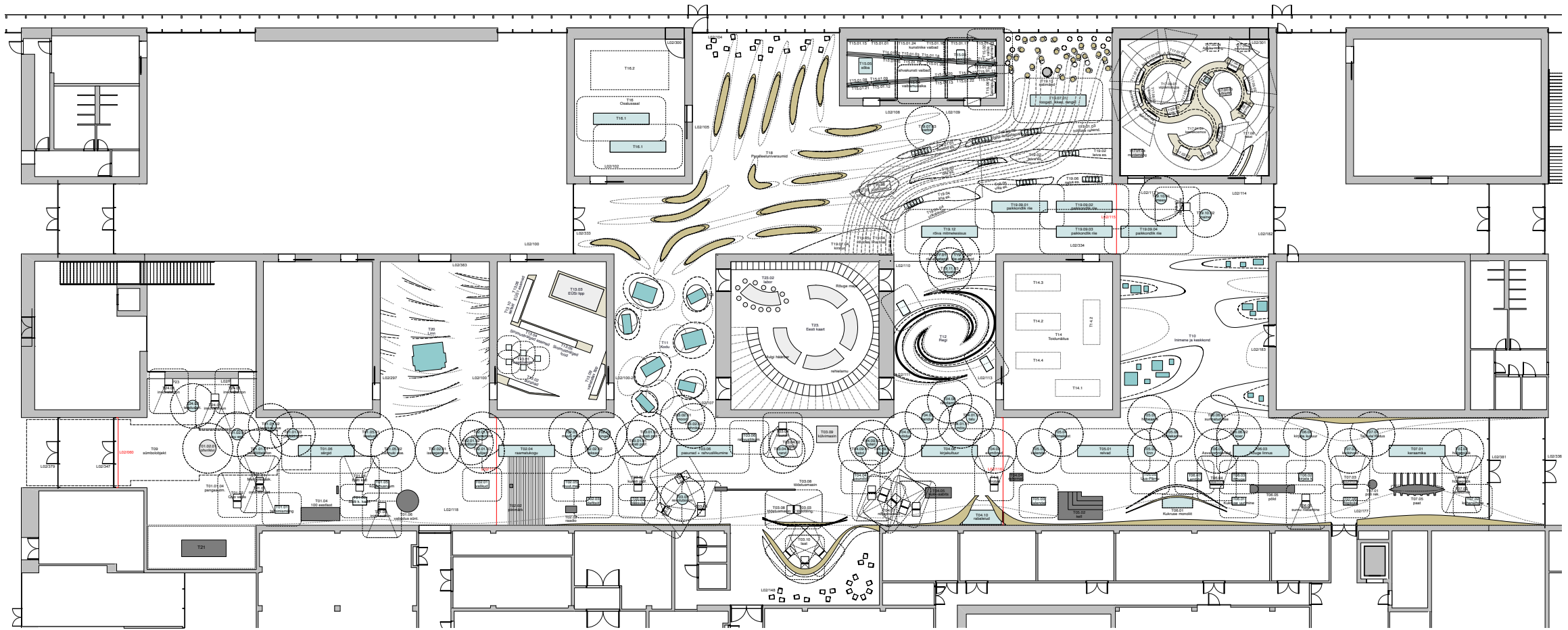
The permanent exhibition of Finno-Ugric cultures

Ideologically, the ENM’s Finno-Ugric exhibition has perhaps even more weight than the display of Estonians’ everyday lives, for the former represents the eastern flank of the Finno-Ugric world as the cultural archetype of Estonia. As being part of the Finno-Ugric language family and mentality is fundamental to Estonian identity, it is understandable that this exhibition was placed in the basement. According to Gaston Bachelard, the cellar is where a building’s subconscious lies. In four rooms, 17 Finno-Ugric peoples of the Permic, Volga, Baltic and Arctic regions are introduced by means of staged spaces. As the ENM’s Finno-Ugric collection is less systematic, the main message and impression of the exhibition is created with the help of replicas and interpretations as well as original items. A special role in creating these spaces is played by photographic murals by Peeter Laurits.<sup>8</sup>

8

Exhibition design is by Jan&Ken and production by the Velvet design agency. The concept was created by Art Leete and the exhibition is coordinated by Svetlana Karm (ENM); the working group also includes Madis Arukask (University of Tartu), Indrek Jääts (ENM), Piret Koosa (ENM), Nikolai Kuznetsov (University of Tartu), Marleen Metslaid (ENM), Maire Kuningas (ENM). Special elements were executed by Museko and RGB.





The floor plan of the permanent exhibition.

The permanent  
exhibition hall in  
February 2016.





Members of the public next to the window in the floor of the permanent exhibition hall, which opens up a view into the storage facilities, February 2016.



Conclusion

At the outset of the 21st century, museum architecture seeks to give expression to the values of civil society, such as openness, solidarity, peacefulness and democracy. Although such values are not easy to convey through architecture, it has been accomplished successfully in the ENM building.

Over the course of eleven years, the construction of this museum has sparked discussions about architecture, identity, memory and culture in Estonia. Just before the results of the architecture competition were announced, literary scholar Peeter Olesk claimed in an opinion piece that despite having become more international over the years, Tartu had also become provincial. Olesk thought that despite the image of internationalism and the presence of foreign students, the city might lose its meaning if efforts were not made to the contrary. Serious efforts were made in the name of the new Estonian National Museum and the result is a powerful statement against becoming provincial.<sup>9</sup>

At first, the ENM was criticised for moving away from the city centre. That was the only possible decision at the time, as the city centre zoning plan precluded such a large structure from being built in the heart of the city. Sometimes, however, the peripheral location of a museum may prove useful for the local residents. Just under 2 km from the Town Hall Square, the museum helps to activate the communities of Ülejõe and Raadi.<sup>10</sup> New shops, cafés, bikeways, street furniture, rising real estate prices and so on will expand the city’s public space as a whole.

Perhaps it is generally true that the concentration of public buildings, businesses and offices in city centres is useful for bureaucracy and corporations, rather than residents. The city centre is a place where people, rather than corporations, should dwell. Figuratively speaking, the 35,000 square metres of land “left empty” in the city centre after the ENM building was erected at Raadi now ought to be filled with residential buildings.

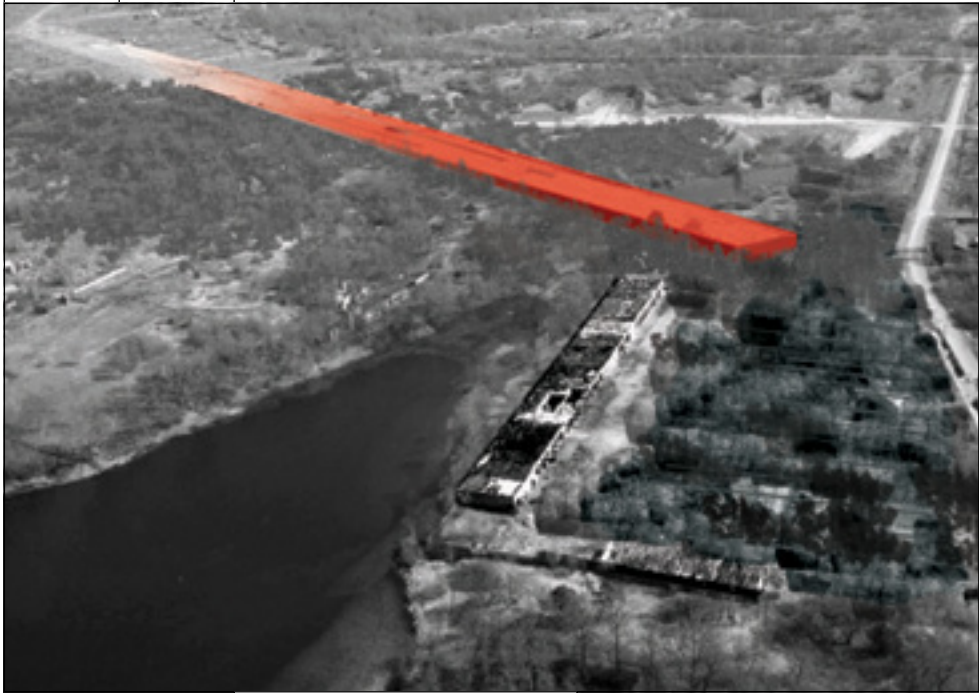
The ENM building links the progressive Estonia of today and the traumas of the Soviet occupation. The museum’s architecture seems to reaffirm that the period of occupation lasting more than half a century cannot be removed from the nation’s memory by denying the existence of the traces still present. Complicated memories must be invested with new hopeful meaning. Architecture helps to build bridges between different eras and memory landscapes.

9

In Olesk’s own words: “The backcountry is a place beyond the forest. That neck of the woods where the post does not come every day. When people ask me when are you coming to town, they do not mean Tartu city centre around the university library. They mean my native town of Tallinn.” P. Olesk, *Meie ja muuseum*. – *Postimees*, 3 January 2006.

10

Peeter Olesk commends the remote location of the museum for an altogether different reason: “The way to the museum must be long, not unlike the way to the church. When I receive guests at our home, the journey there, too, is long. At one time, I myself was received this way by Paul Ariste ...” P. Olesk, *Meie ja muuseum*. – *Postimees*, 3 January 2006.



The placement of the museum building as proposed by DGT.



Although it is an extraordinarily compelling museum building, the Estonian National Museum's integration with the local landscape is by no means exceptional. It has been a key discourse in architecture over the last couple of decades. The building site as landscape has become a central object of interest for a whole generation of architects.<sup>11</sup>

Another thing about Dan Dorell, Lina Ghotmeh and Tsuyoshi Tane's winning design "Memory field" that struck a chord with the ENM architecture competition jury was the fact that they boldly linked their draft plan to the prospective main square of a future city district. No other architect dared to put forth such a radical dream of a future that was still a couple of decades away. DGT had dreams and conviction, despite at the same time manifesting doubt: "As architects we only provoke different situations. Uncertainty and doubt remain our most important design tools." This is precisely what the building is like – provocative, while also uncertain and inspiring doubt. One and the same aspect may seem either a weakness or a strength of the building, depending on your point of view (or mood).

*Viljandi,  
December 2015 – May 2016*

11

See e.g. *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*. Ed. J. Coner. New York: Princeton University Press, 1999.







































































































































































# Dorell. Ghotmeh. Tane / Architects

When the ENM architecture competition was announced, Dan Dorell, Lina Ghotmeh and Tsuyoshi Tane were working for highly rated architecture firms in London. It is quite common in Europe for young professionals working as staff architects to dream of a firm of their own and the creative freedom that comes with it; open architecture competitions are therefore used as an opportunity outside daily work to come up with crazy ideas that might take their careers to the next level. Quite probably, other teams of architects without their own firms also entered the ENM competition.

Lina Ghotmeh (then 26) and Dan Dorell (then 33) who were working in London on a Foster + Partners and Jean Nouvel joint project for a bank building, joined together with Tsuyoshi Tane (then 26), at the time working for David Adjaye Associates in London. The ENM competition looked intriguing and the trio had already been looking for open competitions to enter. This time, they acted decisively.

Every day, or rather every night, over the next six months, the trio toiled away together in their small studio after their day jobs until the wee hours of dawn: they researched and read on the ENM, Raadi and Estonia, drew a lot, debated, and in the later stages worked on the model, poured over the floor plan and created renderings.

The architects have described how they absolutely could not believe what had just happened when the results were announced to them, and they probably could not even dream of what was going to happen next. As they flew to Tartu for the award ceremony, they did not have their own firm; so they quickly had a bunch business cards printed and boarded a plane to Estonia, where a saga began that was to take up more than a decade of their lives. During this time, their cooperative effort gave birth to a highly esteemed, world-class architecture firm, which has designed buildings in different places all over the world as well as designing and curating exhibitions; in private life, they have created families, argued and fought with each other, made up and moved on, flown hundreds of times between Tallinn and Paris and been invited as professors to reputable architecture schools, and despite all this, remained true to themselves. This last is the most important, for it is from the depths of one's own self that the best ideas come.

While DGT is, strictly speaking, a single author, one creative persona, which currently comprises several dozen architects working for the firm, a few words are in order to separately introduce the original trio brought together by fate to design the ENM building. The point is



Dan Dorell (left), Lina Ghotmeh (centre) and Tsuyoshi Tane (right) at the ENM building site in autumn 2013.

to show the great diversity of the background that gave rise to the winning design.

Born to an Italian mother and Israeli father in Tel Aviv in 1973, from 1984 Dan Dorell grew up in Milan and trained as an architect at the local polytechnic. In 1997, he spent a year as an exchange student at Glasgow’s Mackintosh School of Architecture. In 2000, he participated in the open architecture competition for a concert hall in Sarajevo and received an honourable mention. Before founding DGT, Dorell worked at the Renzo Piano Building Workshop in Paris (being involved in the construction of an art museum in Turin) and, between 2003 and 2006, at the Paris office of Ateliers Jean Nouvel (working on the Danish Radio Concert House in Copenhagen and in London with Foster + Partners). As the only European architect of the trio, after winning the competition he was the one to open the DGT architectural ltd company in Paris to allow his partners to practice in the European Union.

Born in Beirut in 1979, Lina Ghotmeh studied architecture at the American University of Beirut and the Ecole Spéciale d’Architecture in Paris. She has worked with Bernard Khoury Architects in Beirut, Ateliers Jean Nouvel in Paris and Foster + Partners in London. For Ghotmeh, the ENM competition felt particularly close to heart, as she noticed similarities between the histories of her homeland on the eastern shore of the “southern Mediterranean” and Estonia on the eastern shore of the “northern Mediterranean”<sup>1</sup>. From 2008 to 2015, Ghotmeh led her own studio as associate professor at the Ecole Spéciale d’Architecture in Paris and has also given art and architecture workshops at various institutions across the world.

Born in Tokyo in 1979, Tsuyoshi Tane trained as an architect at Hokkaido Tokai University and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, where he also began work with Henning Larsen Architects. Between 2005 and 2006, he worked for David Adjaye Associates in London. Alongside his work as an architect, Tane is also active as an installation artist. Since 2012, he has been teaching at the Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

Despite coming together in London, the trio decided to set up their office in Paris, a city that has been a supportive meeting place of different nations for centuries, an old university town and probably also a more “respectable” place than London. Designing the ENM building was to be the firm’s first commission. At this point, one is reminded of the words of Frank Lloyd Wright, who said that an architect should design his first buildings at least 1,000 miles from his place of residence.

<sup>1</sup>  
Francophone Lebanon, the most diverse society among the Arab countries, gained independence after World War II, but went through a devastating civil war between 1975 and 1980.



While DGT have won all sorts of prizes and a lot of recognition, by the beginning of 2016 they have, strictly speaking, completed just one other building alongside “Memory field” – “A House for Oiso” (2015), a masterpiece of site-specific architecture that aspires to reflect the 7,000 years of the history of a local settlement in the home for a private client. In 2015, construction work began on their multifunctional “Stone Gardens” in Beirut, a building that combines public (a gallery, a restaurant and a foundation) with private functions (apartments). Like the Oiso house, it is a conceptual masterpiece, which seeks to address Beirut’s genius loci. In the building, which is erected on the site of the first concrete plant in the Middle East, surfaces of concrete – the material that during the era of modernisation has replaced almost all traditional building materials across the globe – are juxtaposed with the rough texture of traditional plasterwork. The building’s diversely shaped windows and other openings represent the empty spaces left behind by fighting. With “Memory field”, these three buildings make up a sort of architectural triad of myth creation.

DGT are not a one-dimensional architecture firm; their activities also incorporate interior architecture, exhibition design, scenography, urbanism and the development of sustainable living strategies, which is perhaps the metadiscourse that mainly describes what they do. In the latter connection, DGT have cooperated with the French ministry of culture and the Council of Paris over the last decade to find economical solutions to future problems with resources. These are long-term projects, under which several exhibitions have already been organised, installations created and publications authored. DGT have also participated in many architecture competitions for zero energy public buildings: they made it through to the second round in the Milan velodrome competition and won third place in the two-stage competition for the Città della Scienza museum in Naples; in 2014, they won the design competition for a zero energy public office building commissioned by the local government in Bolzano, foremost among Italy’s “smart cities”.

Several other projects that have gleaned prizes in architecture competitions also deserve mention: in 2012, DGT made it through to the second round with 11 other firms in a tight competition for the regeneration of the National Stadium of Japan and in the same year took second prize in the competition for the Museum of Rimbaud in Charleville-Mézières. Soon after the “Memory field” competition, DGT received second prize in the 2007 competition for the transformation of the Song Festival Stage in Riga.



Tsuyoshi Tane (top),  
Dan Dorell (centre) and  
Lina Ghotmeh (bottom)  
with “Father and son”  
by Estonian sculptor Ülo  
Õun in Tartu city centre  
in July 2006.



Among the firm’s breakthrough projects was designing a showroom for car manufacturer Renault, which will travel to 44 locations around the world from 2012 to 2017. While cars are usually displayed in a technician artificial environment, “The Bump” by DGT created a very cosy space that gives car show visitors a much more pleasant feeling than other showrooms. And what could be better from the client’s point of view than giving expression to the cosiness of their brand? Since then, DGT have created dozens of exhibition designs that have attracted a lot of attention: the Toshiba pavilion for the Milan Furniture Fair in 2010 and the Citizen pavilion for the same event in 2014; the design for an exhibition of the Japanese master Hokusai in the Grand Palais in Paris in 2014; in 2015, DGT curated and designed Frank Gehry’s “I Have an Idea” exhibition in Tokyo. Alongside exhibitions, they have created scenery for modern dance performances, interior designs for various exclusive shops, restaurants and private apartments in Paris, and also a dormitory for child cancer patients in a Beirut clinic, where a 25 sq. metre room was transformed into an exploratory spatial experience.

While not much in terms of quantity, the above packs heaps of substance. To sum up, one could say that DGT specialise in offering the client a peculiar kind of spatial psychoanalysis. No Gestalt is left unscrutinised. Seeing a psychoanalyst is, of course, an elitist and perhaps even anachronistic privilege; not everyone has the means and time for it. So far, DGT have been employed by wealthy clients with whom they have been able to use architectural tools to express the distinct originality of the clients and their properties.

[www.dgtarchitects.com](http://www.dgtarchitects.com)



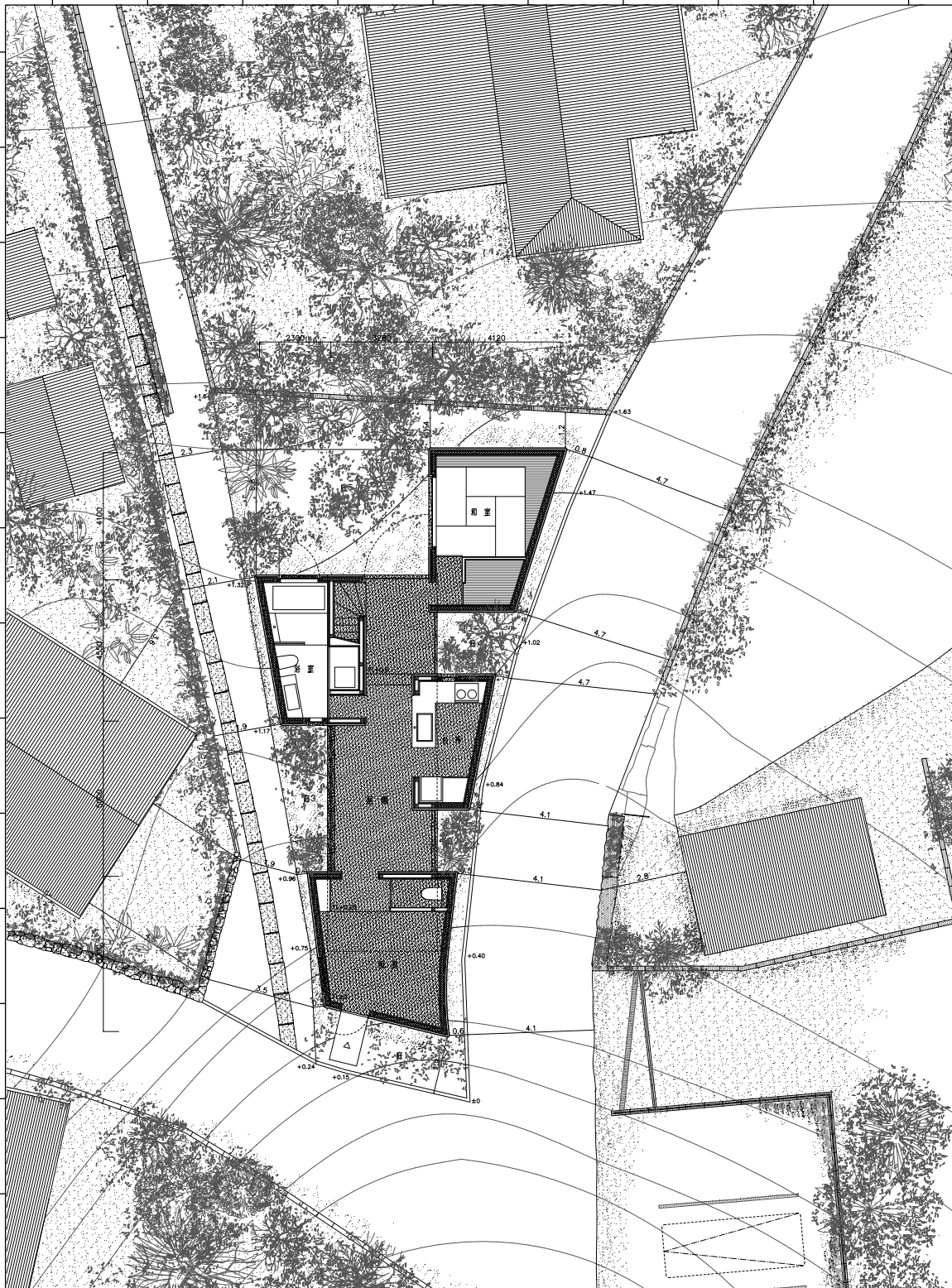


A House for Oiso (2015).  
A family home outside  
Tokyo.

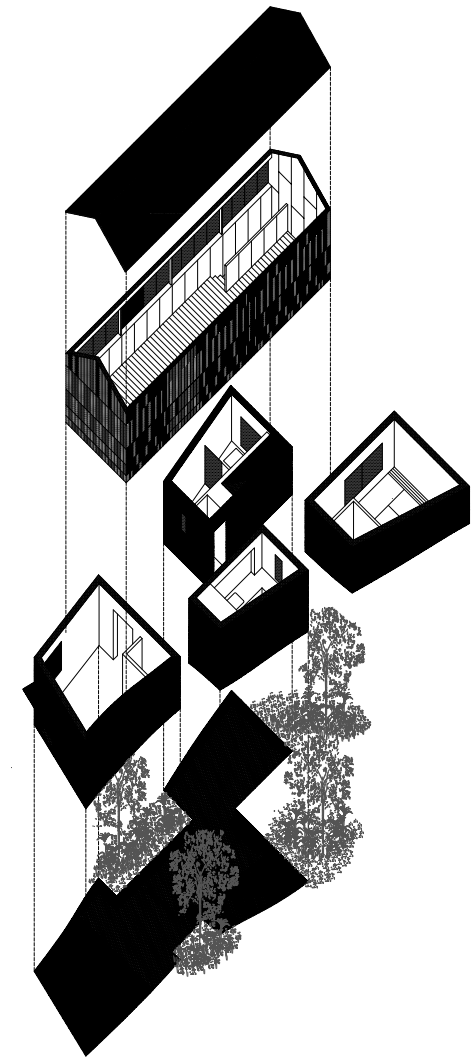








The ground floor plan (left) and an axonometric projection (right) of the Oiso house.











The "Stone Gardens"  
office and residential  
block in Beirut,  
Lebanon.







A competition entry  
for the Maspes-Vigorelli  
velodrome in Milan  
(2013).









The office building  
for the Social Housing  
Institute in Bolzano.  
The winning entry in  
an invited architecture  
competition with 10 par-  
ticipants (2014). Unbuilt.



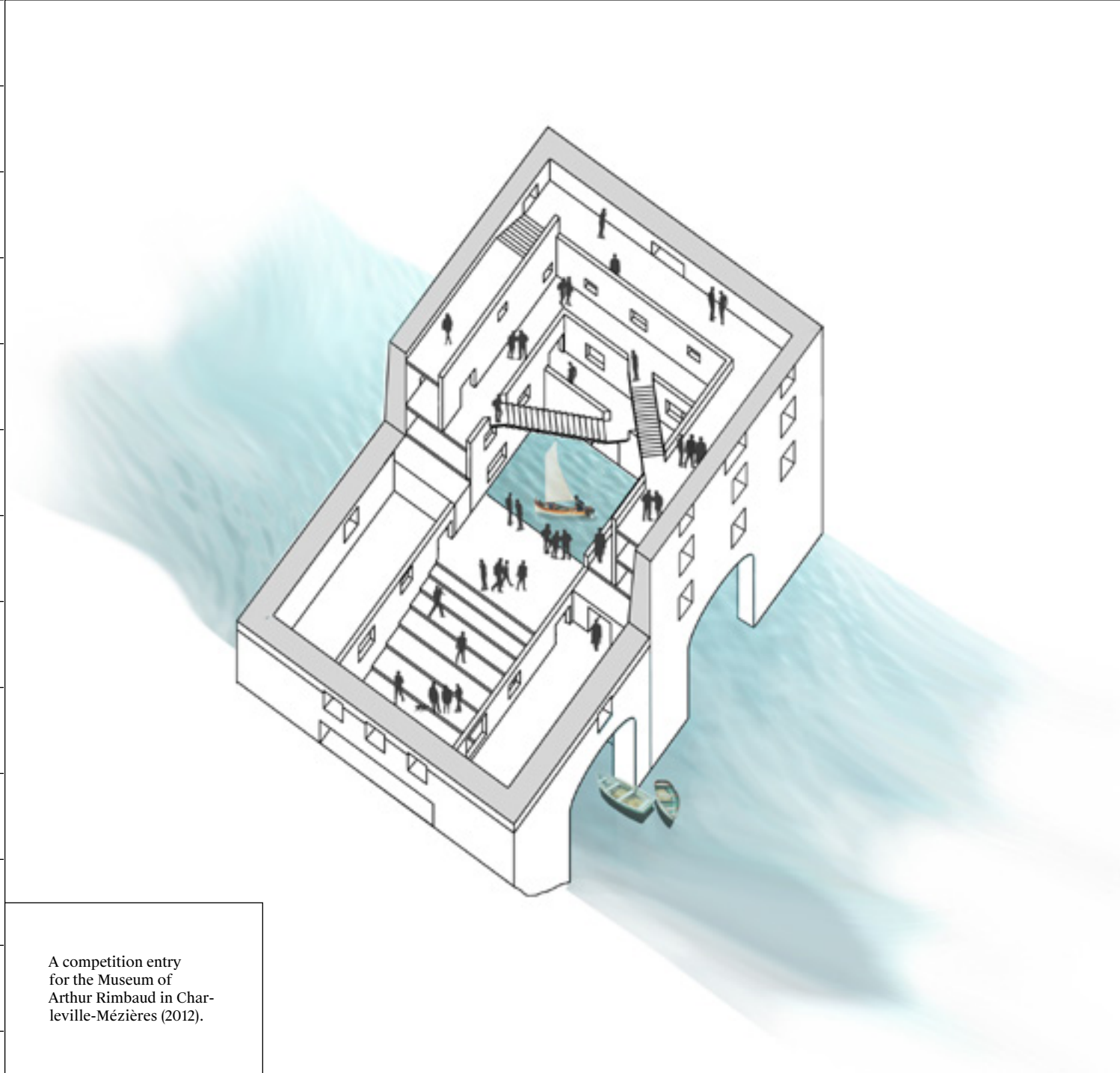








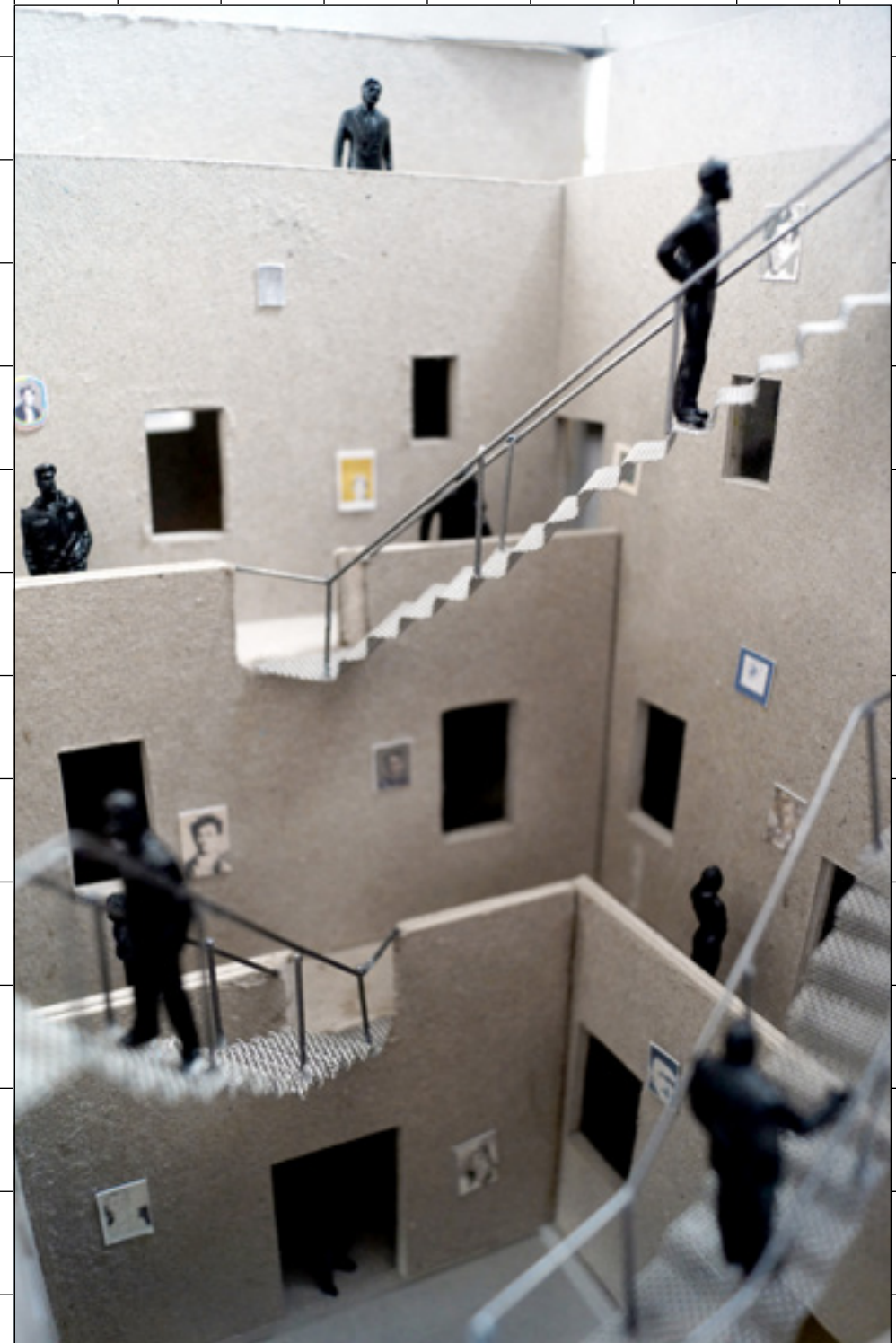




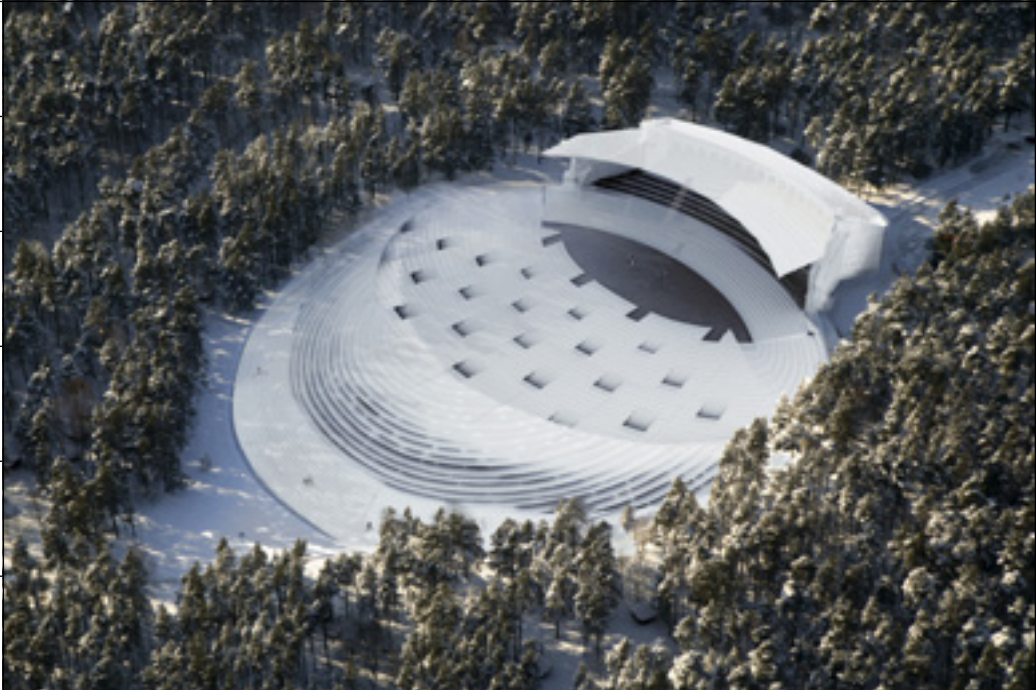
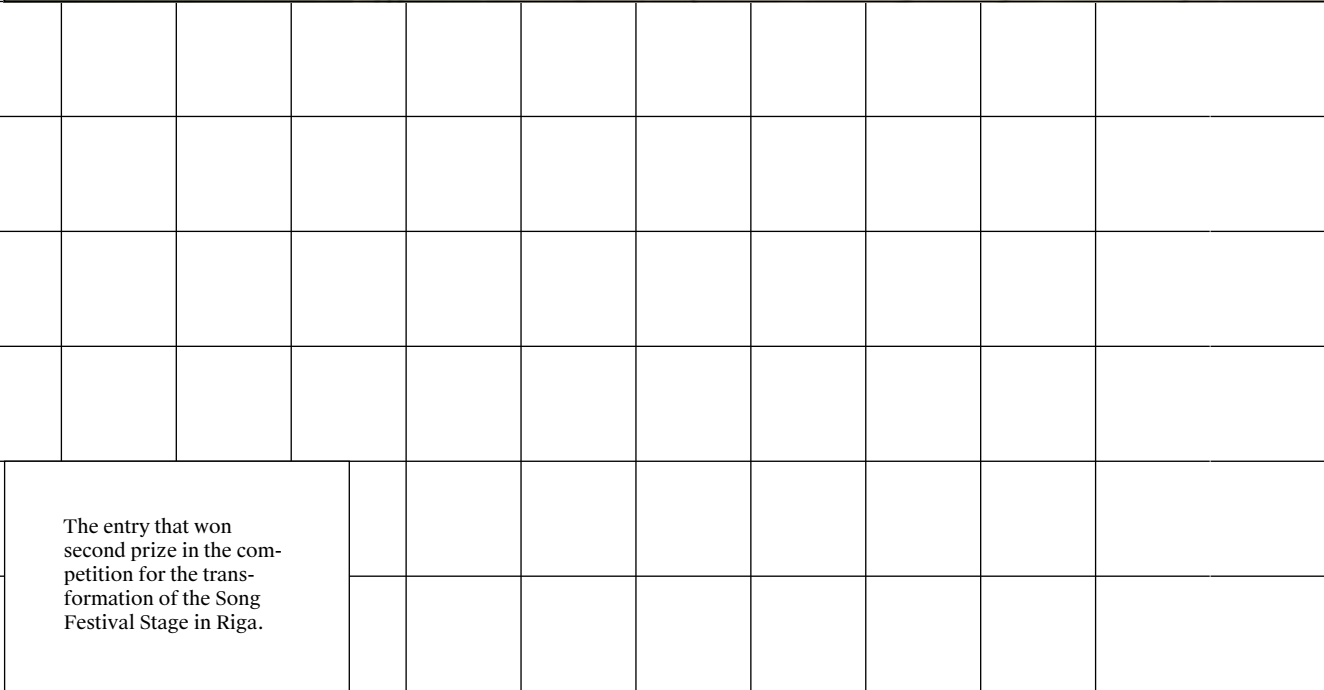
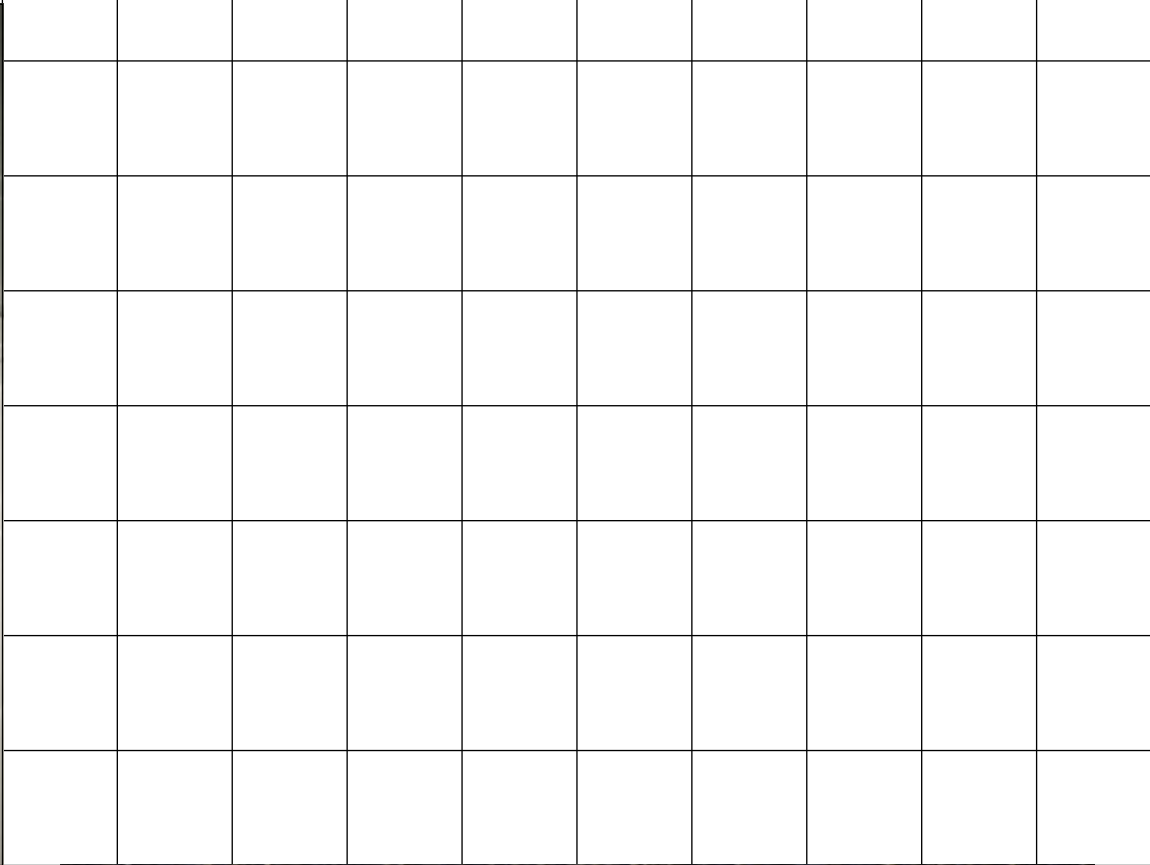
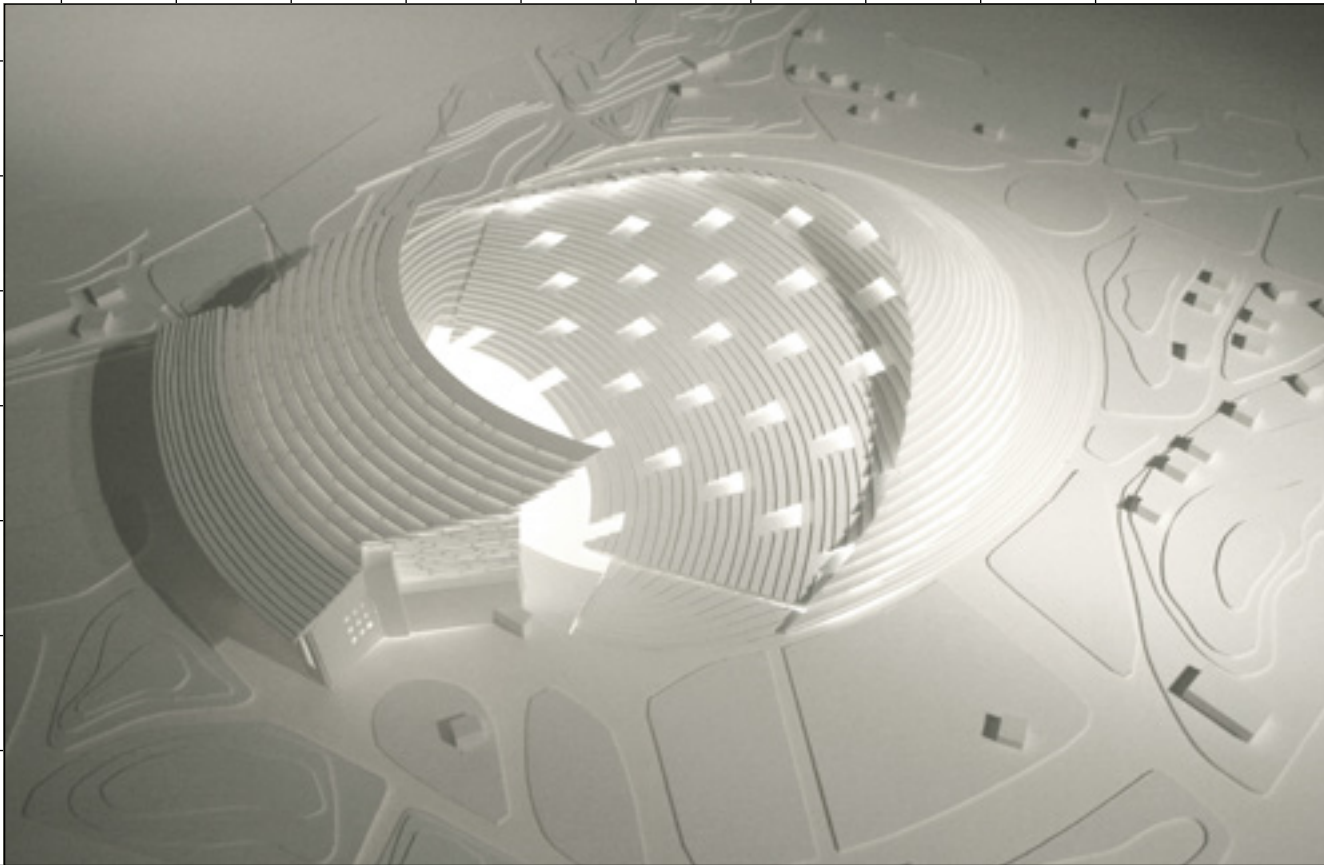
A competition entry  
for the Museum of  
Arthur Rimbaud in Char-  
leville-Mézières (2012).











The entry that won second prize in the competition for the transformation of the Song Festival Stage in Riga.









A showroom design for Renault, which will travel to 44 locations around the world from 2012 to 2017.









The design of the  
Toshiba pavilion for  
the Milan Furniture Fair  
in 2010.



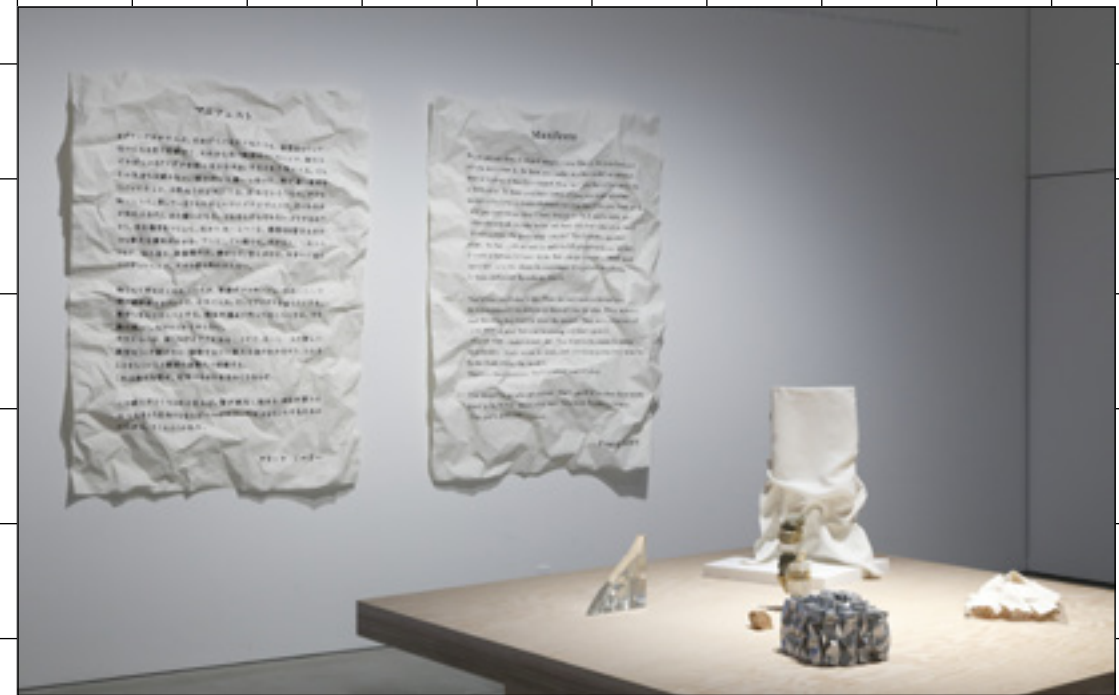






The curation and design of a Frank Gehry exhibition at the 21\_21 Design Sight in Tokyo in 2015.









The scenery for a modern dance performance at the National Theatre in Tokyo (2009).





