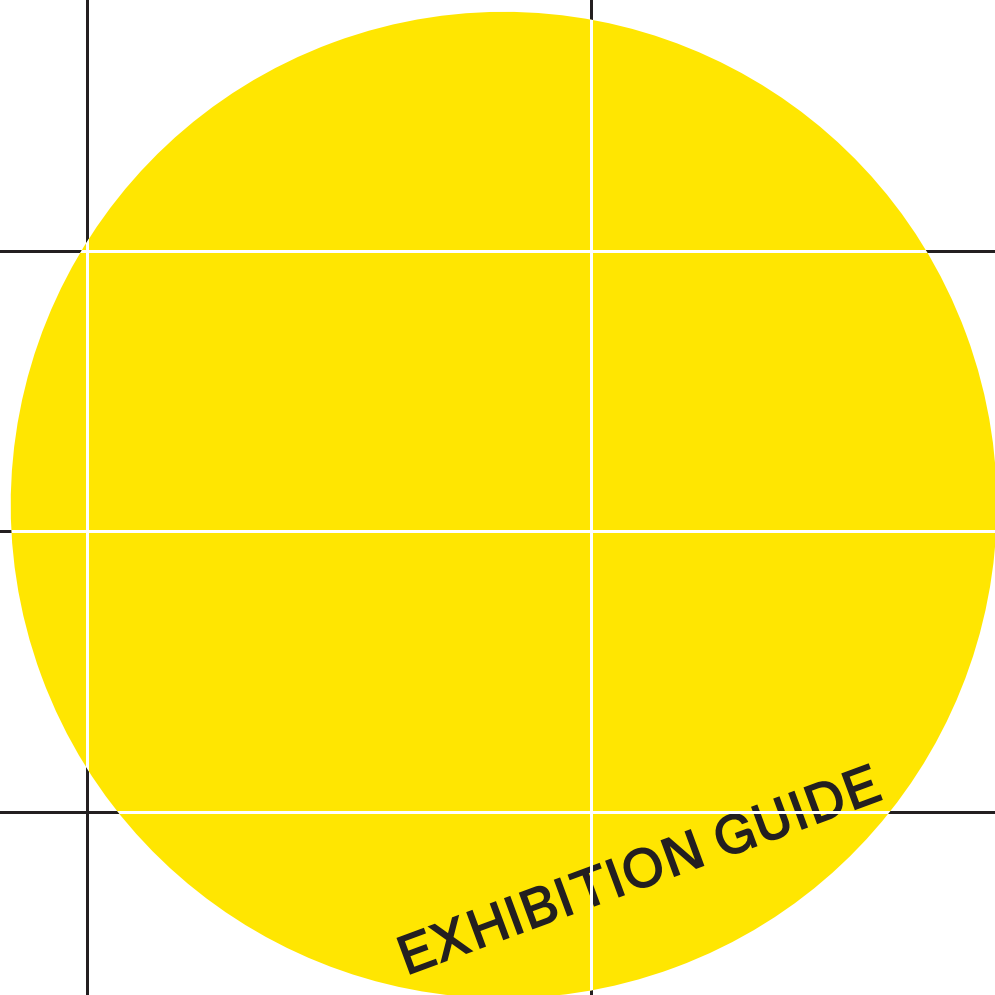


17.12.2016—05.02.2017

KAIDO OLE

NOGAMK
HOPARNIIS



EXHIBITION GUIDE

TALLINNA KUNSTIHOONE
TALLINN ART HALL

THE DRUM OF CHOICES
Oil, acrylics and a textile appliqué on canvas, stainless steel frame with remote control
187 x 197 cm
2016



To be honest, lately I have been quite muddled and a bit indifferent as to what the point or meaning of my work is; however, this does not upset me at all, it is even rather pleasant. Out of all the possible explanations, stories or thoughts that go through my head when I am working, I just sincerely cannot and often do not even want to single out one of them as the meaning. And these explanations of mine would not be the best or the only ones possible anyway. I have become especially suspicious of those rare occasions when a piece does indeed clearly ride on the coat-tails of only a single idea from beginning to end – when this happens, I am particularly certain that someone is trying to fool me and that several much better reasons are hiding just behind the corner until the last moment, giggling when they see how confident I am. At one time, this would have disturbed me immensely,

but now I think, fine, giggle all you like because, in a way, I am a fool, and so what.

There is a feeling that every piece of art is always accompanied by teamwork that starts even before you yourself have even thought of doing something and goes on even when the piece is already completed. This is not the sort of teamwork that can be seen at a company, where everyone is working towards a common goal, rather it is more like football, where you have your team, but there is also the opposing team who are giving their all so that you and your friends would not get your desired goal and who will score one against you yourselves. Perhaps a bit surprisingly, I have got the impression that in my own team I am not the captain, striker or even the goalkeeper – I am none of the players who have to fulfil a decisive role. I do believe that I am operating somewhere in midfield, even on my better days providing the

assist rather than scoring the goal myself.

Here in this picture though I am not wearing football boots and instead have on a pair of soft slippers, and in positioning myself against the backdrop of the spectrum I appear to have about the same degree of freedom as the needle of a compass would. Then again, a compass needle is enviably smart, because no matter which way you spin or disturb it, it always knows where north is. I dare not say that I am that smart. I am pretty sure that this piece too has a plan of some sort and that the role I and my slippers, the colours of the spectrum and the circular motion have to play in it will become clear quite soon. In any case, the team is on it, I have executed my pass, but the opponents are not asleep either. As the ball remains in play, everything is still possible.

Kaido Ole, artist

The picture shows two men who are picking umber. The mineral appears to be quite stubborn and a lot of pulling is required to get it out of the ground and into the nearby trailer. The men have muscular arms from constantly picking umber. However, these two labourers do not seem to be the workers found in Soviet paintings – they are not the usual proud harvesters, nor do they resemble muscled miners with wide shoulders. The likely reason for this is that picking umber is more of a job of the future. The activity is probably taking place in a time when umber, the mineral that is mainly found in Cyprus and yields a reddish-yellow pigment, is no longer mined, but grown instead.

In the future, everybody works less, because there are not enough eight-hour workdays five days a week to go around. The 'end of work' theoretician Andre Gorz describes how boring and necessary work should be more evenly divided amongst everyone and that

people should use the rest of their time on building the community, tending their gardens, volunteering and their hobbies, which are just as important as the over-fetishised paid employment.

I do hope that the umber pickers do not have to toil with these sturdy and stubborn logs for 40 hours a week and can afterwards also reap the benefits of their work. With their skinny jeans, UGG boots and weird, over-the-top hats, they look very much like the hipsters of Berlin's Neukölln district. A proper hipster, however, never works more than 20 hours a week and dedicates the rest of their time to creative pursuits. Perhaps outside of their paid employment the umber pickers are artists who in their free time make use of the paint that is made from the harvested umber? If their day job and hobby are both related to umber, it would also explain why their skin tone is the same colour as the pigment.

Even though the painting depicts the future, it reflects on questions that we do not have an answer for right now either. If machines and technology have advanced so much, then why are people still doing so much work? This concerns both the poor umber pickers whose labour probably costs less than buying a descent umber-reaper would, as well as those people who spend their days shifting papers from one pile to another. They both know very well that what they do day after day is what the anthropologist David Graeber has described as 'a bullshit job'. Is there no end in sight for these tedious jobs and their glorification through depictions of muscled and heroic workers? I would like to see a vision of the future where the umber pickers are busy with their favourite hobby – painting – and instead of hanging their heads in shame like the two characters are doing now, they proudly show their faces, eyes gleaming with joy.

Eeva Keskkula, anthropologist of work

UMBER PICKERS
Oil and acrylics on canvas
190 x 280 cm
2015



THE INVISIBLE IMPRINT
OF THE BIG TOE

A little after the small bluebird had made its nest in the oak in the pasture and laid there three golden eggs, from which the earth and the sky, the forest and the sea, and the stars and the sun and the moon would hatch – they finally arrived here, at the shores of the big water. There were three of them. Their nostrils smelled the salty water and the wrack, the soles of their bare feet carefully touched the coarse gravel, their ears picked up the plaintive howls of the worldbird from somewhere afar, at the dreamily hazy border between water and the earth. Their curious and yet a bit fearful eyes tried to comprehend the immeasurable field of water. Their slightly hunched backs instinctually counted on the support of the safe and familiar sougning behind them – the broadleaved and coniferous trees of the forest whispered persuasively and relentlessly: you made it, you are finally here. This land

here, at the shores of the big-big water, is yours, youurs, yooours.....! And the world-bird happily whooped its timeless whoop – finally, you have arrived! This land, this sea I have laid for you, youu, yooouuu...! And the thirty toe-prints on the seawater-soaked pebble beach signed a contract for forever and ever – we are here to stay. At least for some time, according to human chronology, one of the big toes added quietly. He was a bit withdrawn from the others and pensively scooped a hole in the gravel. We are now the locals! We will adjust! We will adapt! We will stop at nothing!, the three big toes confidently affirmed. And the little toes nodded in agreement.

Where exactly did the three come from? Did they come through the tall reeds, the wiry bentgrass, the mellow forest, or does it matter at all? What matters is they stayed. From time to time, the forest, the field and also the sea were devastated by storms that took many souls into the

kingdom of their ancestors, but one of the locals who had miraculously survived always came again to the big water in order to leave his timid footprints there; messages that were mute and yet very meaningful – hey, is anybody here, are any of us still alive? For god’s sake, give me a signal, let us meet up, have children and there will be many of us once again! We will survive, we will resist, we will not give up so easily! We are the locals, we have been here before the others! This here is our place! The big water will not sweep us away nor erase our imprints from the sand. There will always be a small boy somewhere in the forests, on the fields or at sea, who will firmly remember that there were three of us who came here in the time of our forefathers; who adjusted and adapted. It is our duty to remember, to uphold the agreement we signed. WE are the locals ...

On a dim and misty morning, the sorrowful howls of the

worldbird were heard over the immeasurable sea... at the beach, the thirty toeprints were no longer clearly seen in the sand... there was only a barely visible hole, the one from the time of the ancestral souls that was gouged into the gravel by a sceptical, withdrawn big toe, the undying pessimist who doubts everything.... And so it was. The sands of time had done its daily work slowly and inconspicuously, but still in a language understandable to those who noticed it. After all, he, the eternal graveltrickler, knows that people come and go, but places stay. The same grey sea that smells of wrack and salt and is immeasurable to the human eye will still be there at the end of time, as will the gloomy forest, the one-time indigenous fields and the dwelling places around them, and the yearning cry of the worldbird above the great water – oooo, oooo, locals, where on earth are you? I miss you! It is time to get going again, can you hear me? I laid the earth and the forest and the sea for you!

Marju Kõivupuu, folklorist

The main idea of *The Origin of Estonia* is to use sounds to examine the experiences of being near or distant both spatially and cognitively, whilst also looking at the relativity of units of time and the charm of varying repetitions. Six contact speakers are attached to a wooden wall and play pre-recorded flute motifs according to certain rules and patterns – the sequences meet and then drift apart again. The patterns start repeating after about a one and a half hour cycle and everything evolves almost into a super-slow breathing. At the same time, the computer-controlled mixing system

guarantees that the material of the patterns changes and that new and unique combinations are created constantly.

Every day of the exhibition, I record new material specifically for that day and transfer it to the computer. As a result, this is a macro-piece that lasts for more than a month and its form evolves, grows and changes with its author throughout the duration of the exhibition. The daily concentration that is needed to record the motifs for that day is almost like entering a prayer hall, it is a fulfilment of a day-to-day routine and at the same

time an opportunity to stop and stand still in the rapid passing of time. Other than in the Art Hall’s large exhibition room, a stereo-version of the sound installation can be listened to in real-time online at tarmo.webhop.net:8000/radio

The End of Estonia uses the echo of the final accord of the first Estonian oratorio, Rudolf Tobias’s *Jonah’s Mission* (1907). In a way, it is a reflection on the soundscape of *The Origin of Estonia*, although probably not from a completely smooth surface ...

Tarmo Johannes, musician

Tarmo Johannes
ESTONIAN
ORATORIO
Sound installation,
pre-recorded
sounds
manipulated in
real-time
2016



THE ORIGIN OF
ESTONIA
Oil on canvas
120 × 164 cm,
440 × 818 cm
including the
background wall
2016

One of the more interesting and yet more difficult things to study in art is what happens at an exhibition when the artworks and the viewer interact. What happens to the viewer? How do they look at art? What meanings do they create? What kind of connections do they make and how is it even possible for the artist to steer this? I think that all the meanings a well-intentioned viewer creates are right and that it is impossible for the artist to keep these under total control anyway. All the artist can do is to set the ball rolling and hope that this impulse will hit a nerve or an experience, that it will provoke thoughts that might not necessarily correspond at all to the artist's intentions.

The painting titled *At the Exhibition* definitely hits a professional nerve of mine. I am an art professional, a critic and a curator, a lecturer and a teacher, but above all a frequent and passionate visitor of art exhibitions. I can honestly admit that this piece disturbs me. But why? After all, the picture is even a bit funny: an easygoing metaphorical penis-shaped visitor is standing in the exhibition hall and measuring up an artwork – some kind of sculpture that is comprised of different forms and materials and the whole thing is balanced on one wheel. At least the location is clearly established – still lifes on one wheel were the central image of one of Kaido Ole's own exhibitions. We have met the spectacled penis-man before as well: two years ago at Ole's *Freaks* exhibition, he was learning to read from an alphabet book that started with A and ended with B. He has words in place of his legs. The right leg is the word 'right', which in English means both a direction as well as 'correct', but the left leg is, unambiguously, just 'wrong'. In Estonian, the corresponding words could be not *parem* and *pahem* (meaning 'right' or 'better' and 'left' or 'worse'), but *parem* and *halvem* ('right'/'better' and just 'worse'). It seems that the character has a sympathetic attitude towards the sculpture: with an approving and cheerful expression on his face, he has taken the time to stop and delve into the sculpture, supporting his weight equally on both legs.

What is so disturbing about the fact that Ole has now placed this representation

of a viewer, whose erudition is limited to the letters A and B, into an exhibition hall, to Ole's own exhibition? But I am also one of the attendees at Ole's exhibition, so this means that I am precisely this smart aleck, eccentric d*ck with black-and-white opinions, who with a kick of my "right" and "wrong" legs can obliterate the whole fragile but complex structure of art or knock it off balance. But wait, let's take another moment to look at this sculpture: abstract forms and colours, raw materials bought from a hardware store, a wheel, a lamp, steel strapping... This is not actually a very interesting piece, is it? How can the artist even confidently claim that their artwork is something more than simple assembly material? The viewer's guarantee is their faith and trust in the artist, but the possibility that someone is pulling a fast one on you is never far away. The danger of this might be exactly what is appealing about the intellectual game of experiencing art: the emperor might have no clothes, the viewer might simply be stupid and the pot can call the kettle black.

Anneli Porri, curator



AT THE EXHIBITION
Oil and acrylics on canvas
240 x 190 cm
2016



A WALK TO THE LAKE
Oil and acrylics on canvas
190 x 280 cm
2015

In this painting, clear and bright colours, geometry and narration meet up – people are going to the lake. A person has played around with all this and sent out a gleeful signal that all creation can be redone – to be simpler. And it does not matter anymore if it will be like real-life or if the things and forms are made so that they are alive, like a human. All of this does not mean that there cannot be joy, movement, purity, expressiveness.

There is a sense of going somewhere, the viewer can perceive light movement and hovering that is characteristic of something animate, and there is also delight and excitement about the fun to be had by the water. The voluminous skirts point towards female creatures – one of them is connected to the world that is real, with her shapely legs and work-worn hands. The other voluminous skirt is perhaps not the sharpest thinker

Few on words, high on ideas – this is Kaido Ole. *Baltic Match* is quite *nogank hoparniis*, meaning that everybody sees it differently.

For me, this is not a sports picture, even though the location, the clothing and the pedestal would point to this. I see here a symbolic description of Baltic co-operation, the fight

for the top spot in this region. There is no great friendship, the competition is fierce. They have turned their backs on each other and the Estonian is clenching his teeth even when he is facing away from others. On top of that, the Estonian does not have both feet on the ground. The Lithuanian with strong legs is grimacing in the

and her head is bolted to her body. She seems to be a wooden squarehead. The child creatures are still smooth, they have heads like planets, their eyes are wide open and they move along with the joy of riding on a wheel. All around there are round forms and everything is exuding cheerful harmony. There is no need to fight.

On the other hand, a person can seem to be alive, but be so in the manner of objects. He might not be as good at it as the objects and forms in Kaido Ole's painting. There is a terribly real possibility that humans have an inherent tendency to both see and do things as cubes, spheres and cones, so that everything would indeed be simple. Perhaps this indicates a wish to escape from the fact that everything has got so complicated.

My pedagogical work deals with very human questions:

what is it like to be a child and a human in the real and artificial world, during recessions and under various threats, and under the precepts of the conventional bureaucratised world? The susceptibility to renounce what is living, healthy and natural, and the inner human rudiment that opposes this are always there. Having read quite a lot of analyses of the current zeitgeist and human experience, I can perceive a threat of an invasion of artificiality, with which people hope to free themselves of responsibility and the difficulties of life. So that they could walk along pure forms to the lake with clean water without having to fight or think. So that there would only be simple solutions and smooth surfaces, and the way a wooden-head is attached to the voluminous skirt with a blue bolt would be insignificant.

Tiiu Kuurme, associate proffessor of pedagogy at TLU

throwing circle and chasing a small feather, like Forrest Gump. The Latvian does not even glance at the others, but is preparing for a long jump. There is no winner yet, the pedestal is still empty. Kaido Ole has depicted the eternal contest between friends.

Raul Rebane, journalist and communication expert



BALTIC MATCH
Oil and acrylics on canvas
330 x 390 cm
2016

The tiger, who is growling at the viewer through its human teeth, makes me think of the evolution of animal coloration. Yellow and black stripes can be a warning – don’t touch me, I’m a wasp, I can sting you! The tiger, however, does not need to warn anybody, because no one tends to accidentally stumble upon it. The tiger’s stripes are more of a camouflage. I look at pictures on the Internet of big cats prowling in the dry savannah grass. The background of the tiger in the painting also has the tones of its fur. So maybe it is for camouflage? Maybe it helps to sneak up undetected on the unsuspecting creature?

I read that the mathematical model for the molecular formation of the tiger’s stripes was proposed by the famous English codebreaker Alan Turing. The same Turing who was persecuted until his death because of his homosexuality. Perhaps he could have used some stripes to blend in with his surroundings and stay hidden from his persecutors? And some

teeth that he could have shown whenever hiding failed? In an ideal society, there would not have even been any need for him to hide or blend into the crowd. The forced effort to do away with something that made the genius different had a very sad ending. Perhaps we are slowly moving towards a society where people do not have to hide their individualities behind stripes that blend in with their surroundings?

The tiger in the picture is not hiding or prowling. It just wants to walk along its trail without anyone disturbing him, without anyone laughing at him, even though he does look odd, with its human teeth and dress shoes. He is not even thinking about attacking the little creature in the bush, because human teeth are not very good for hunting. They are not the fangs of a predator that can rip, cut and kill the prey. These are suitable for gnawing at vegetables and chewing tender, cooked meat.

So are the stripes warning coloration after all? Aposematic

markings. Müllerian or Batesian mimicry. In Müllerian mimicry, the dangerous and poisonous animals are similar to one another. Poisonous bugs, snakes or frogs can all have yellow and black stripes. In the case of Batesian mimicry, harmless animals imitate the dangerous ones to fool the viewer, for example when a hoverfly looks like a wasp.

I am not going to find out whether the tiger in the painting has Müllerian or Batesian mimicry. For that, I would have to try to pat him, which I don’t want to do, because perhaps it is in fact a dangerous animal. The bush creature has obviously arrived at the same conclusion. Let the cat continue on its way. Perhaps on the other side of the hill it will find a beautiful brown-and-yellow striped sea of grass, where it can hide from the world, arch its back not out of aggression, but to stretch itself, and take off those shoes.

Tuul Sepp, ecologist

THE HUNT
Oil and acrylics on
canvas
135 × 170 cm
2016



BURIED
Oil and acrylics on
canvas
198 × 113,5 cm
2016

*Language is not life,
it gives life orders.
Death doesn’t speak,
it listens and waits.*
(D & G)

Was it Dolce & Gabbana or Deleuze & Guattari? – doesn’t matter – this magical paraphrase buries us into Kaido Ole’s painting *Buried*, a painting that could itself easily be a paraphrase of René Magritte’s famous 1963 painting *La Lunette d’approche*.

As is generally known, a paraphrase is one of the special forms of glossolalia and private language (e.g. nogank hoparniis), and as such, is pleasantly glitch. Just like Magritte opens a window into The Other World, but then again actually doesn’t, Ole’s grave is in The Other World and yet at the same time is not. This is because it is a matter of perspective – which is, of course, selective, always socially constructed and learnable – whether we see

the ideal type of the escape zone (the underworld [the grave] and the middleworld [the ground]) or of the comfort zone (the middleworld [a field, for example] and the upper world [the sky]). The same way, our pathologically necrolatric culture forces us to imperatively look at “life from the perspective of death”, even though it would be more sensible and natural to examine “death from the perspective of life”.

“Every ontology has its own hauntology” (Derrida, Berardi, et al.) and the ghosts of perspectivism (“no privileged perspective”) appear to be quite benign, because, in our digi-phrenic and moronically literalist culture, these spooks rummage through the *streng verboten* extremely rich deposits of multi-associativeness.

So, what could Ole inform us about? Perhaps that the only functioning resistance to the compulsively hyper-expressive, idiotic and

stupefying “whole-family capitalism” is glossolalia, avoidance, hiding, invisibility, non-participation, boycott, privacy, desertion, evasion and so forth – remember the evasive strategies of Tiqqun or The Invisible Committee – so that is everything that we usually have in mind in connection with “being in the grave”. Perhaps this is the prerequisite for the cryptic nogank hoparniis? And if Arthur Kroker spitefully admits that “today, nothing can escape the Image”, then Ole seems to say that images can be escaped from – namely through paradoxicality and glossolalia; taking into account that, fundamentally, an image is an icon, which itself is a code, and as such, more of a language.

Nogank Hoparniis® ought to be available in tablet or injectable form.

Kalev Rajangu, cultural historian and gravedigger
Written by kif © 2016 Luminoso Entertainment Group, Inc.

MY GMO
GARDEN
Oil, acrylics and
textile appliquéés
on canvas
159,5 × 198 cm
2016



GMO is not a common concern for home gardening, as yardwork is more of a thing for green fingers and eco-people. Still, at the moment, everybody has an opinion on GMO. There is widespread belief that genetic combinations created through the use of genetic engineering are something very disastrous. In reality, their danger to people or nature has not been unequivocally proven. In the context of GMO, the biggest fear seems to be plants. Vegetarianism has at times even become synonymous with GMO. And, of course, all vegetarians without exception eat genetically modified soy and nothing else. Actually, the average European has the most contact with GMO-s through farm animals, who predominantly consume GM food and are in turn consumed by humans.

There are several sides to GMO. GMO as a technology can be really successful in growing certain plants, on the other hand, there is a corporate capitalism that has caused a spike in the suicide rate of Indian farmers. They take out loans to buy GM seeds in the hopes of attaining unimaginable riches, but the Garden of Eden with singing Hindu deities that they see in television commercials never becomes reality. Unable to provide for their families and ashamed of letting their community down, they take their own lives.

Here, there does not seem to be any corporate capitalism. There are no farmers either. But could there yet be a heavenly garden? In any case, Kaido Ole has planted GMO-s all over his garden, watering it with a slightly worrying or even weary look. Is he worried about the growth prospects

of the plants? Is he worried that GMO-s are taking over the world and that they could become its downfall? Or are they precisely what is needed to prevent the apocalypse? Or is the end already here and there is no other choice?

We see monstrously big and weird plants, some of which still seem at least a bit natural. Some plants have been modified so much that they are totally unrecognisable. However, there is also one last normal fruit, which appears to have just been pinned on top of a DNA chain. Once this will also have been modified, will it be the fall of man or, instead, salvation? Is Kaido Ole creating new genetical combinations himself or is he just a gardener? Everyone can ponder over this themselves.

Loore Emilie Raav, artist,
spokesperson for vegetarianism

EXPLORING
THE JUNGLES OF
ABSTRACT
EXPRESSIONISM
Oil and acrylics on
canvas
200 × 190 cm
2015
courtesy of Triinu
Tombak



When I look at this painting, *Hopelessly Lost in the Jungles of Abstract Expressionism*, I think, how does a man reach a place like that, or, how did he end up there? He is heading somewhere, but claims to be lost. Does he know where he is going or is he heading towards the complete unknown? Will he emerge from this the same or will he be a changed man? Is his equipment good enough for him to endure, find his way and hold the course?

There is no doubt in my mind that Kaido Ole knows where he is heading and he is definitely staying the course, even if it would take him into various undefinable inevitabilities like this jungle. The journey is

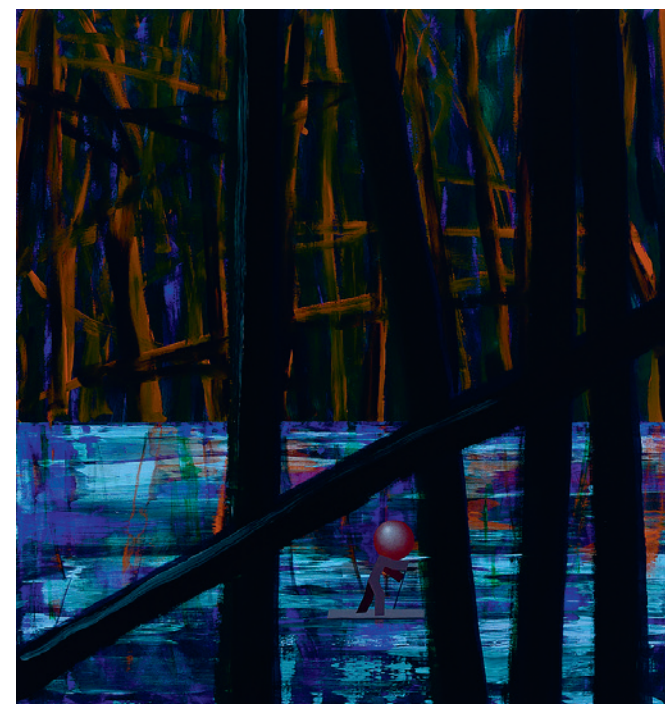
probably an end in itself... This jungle though. I cannot wrap my head around something like this. I guess I haven't seen one with my own eyes. I would call it a bosc instead. A dense brush, a boscage. Difficult to traverse, but fun and adventurous. From my childhood in Paide, I remember I used to play a game with my friend where we set some destination in the town that we had to reach, and we were only allowed to go straight ahead. This meant crossing yards, fences and roofs. This jungle picture reminds me of something similar – no matter what you come across, you have to go through or over it. I wonder if the character in the painting feels the same. Is he running from something or is

he an explorer? I am not sure, but his eagerness to keep going is enthralling.

Kaido Ole should be familiar with these kinds of bosks. He is an inlander. I think the fact that he grew up in Rapla is somehow important. The natural environment where a person spends their childhood has a certain effect on them. Even though I have never been to Rapla myself, I reckon it is a place where the built-up area is surrounded by forests and meadows. I imagine that if you would walk from the town centre for fifteen minutes in any direction, you would already be in nature, and it would probably be a bosc. That is a pleasant thought. Somehow, the forest is comforting.

Then again, you don't know with Ole. Perhaps a truly fetid patch of swamp would make him restless. He was born in Tallinn and has been active here for a long time. Rural people often ask about your roots. In the city, this question would be a bit out of place, not to say awkward. The measure of a man is different here. For example, in the city, they are rated. "How do you rate him?" Some would say that Ole is a first-rate guy, others would say that they rate his versatility. I like this expression, but being rated doesn't help much when you are in the bosc. In this situation, all you need is a boat and a strong stroke.

Mihkel Ilus, artist



HOPELESSLY
LOST IN
THE JUNGLES OF
ABSTRACT
EXPRESSIONISM
Oil and acrylics on
canvas
200 × 190 cm
2015
courtesy of Triinu
Tombak

DANCE NIGHT
AT THE LONELY
HEARTS CLUB
Oil and acrylics on
canvas
190 x 290 cm
2016



I cannot recall when I last saw Kaido Ole at a dance night, if I've seen him at all. I do however remember Urmas Muru, who liked to give me a ride home after parties. Back then we both lived in Lashamäe. This meant that at the crack of dawn we would always sit for at least another hour in Urmas's car and talk. Of course, Urmas did most of the talking, which mainly revolved around the works of Deleuze and Guattari. When I finally got to bed, I felt like a herring after a round of spawning.

One day Muru called and requested an audience to ask me something. Fifteen minutes later he was at my door, stepped in and blurted: "What interests you the

least in the whole world right now?" I looked around the room, speechless, and saw a painting that Muru had given me years ago. It was his version of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*. I hesitated and mumbled, "Painting." "I see, very good," said Urmas and took off.

What can I say, the '90s were a bit stupid like this. Painting was out.

These days I rarely see Muru at the parties, but Siim Nurklik fulfils his role brilliantly – there is still some capitalism and schizophrenia at underground parties, don't worry

But what about the painting then? The general picture is nice and modern, it would

make a good album cover for some hipster band. Are the felt boots a reference to the current winter of the Estonian underground club scene – attendances are low and a new generation of ravers is nowhere to be seen? The situation really is sad.

Who's that in the clouds? God, who is a DJ? Or is Ole alluding instead to the fact that music is now in the cloud? Does he mean streaming?

I doubt though that Kaido Ole worries about any of these things. Kaido listens to The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and paints.

Raul Saaremets, Raadio 2 programme editor and presenter, musician, DJ

CURATOR'S DISCLAIMER

What can I say to complement a painter who has more words than a writer, a better capacity for self-reflection than a psychoanalyst, a philosopher's aspiration of capturing the absolute and a healthy dose of self-criticism from a good upbringing? Does an art critic have anything else to add? Looking at the ongoing careful reception of Kaido Ole's exhibitions, it seems that criticism itself is sensing its futility. If Ole's art is not a topic of discussion for art theorists, then there is all the more reason to believe that we could instead find out more about him through economics, materials engineering or philosophy. I, however, do not possess these tools. The only thing I am certain of is the methodical nature of his work. So let us proceed on this.

The structural strictness and self-discipline of Ole's work is externalised in his paintings, the concepts of which are always rigidly in place before the painting starts; the series are based on either a comicbook-like narrative, the exhibition space or a modular system that only the artist knows; likewise, the colouring and light-dark contrast are precisely set by chromatic scales (which are only known to the artist, but are easily deducible). In the same way, the technical content of the *Nogank Hoparniis* paintings was preset – formally, Ole is building on the 2012 Kumu and 2014 Art Hall Gallery exhibitions. If at Kumu he exhibited a number of still lifes that were balancing on one wheel and comprised of real figures, realistically painted ones as well as abstract shapes, then in the Art Hall Gallery he combined similar objects into manlike characters with different personalities. Now he has taken the next step in attempting the most difficult assignment in academic painting – the thematic figurative composition. This should cause a small smirk to appear in the corner of the mouth, but should also be taken completely seriously: through painting scenes on different subjects, Kaido Ole is attempting to put his finger not only on what is essential in a given subject field, but also on what is ambiguous. The subjects are family, work, war, death, sports, art, leisure...

Kaido Ole describes his own thesis statement: "The logical follow-up to my earlier work, as it would be in classical painting studies, is to take on the final master painter's examination – a multiple-figure thematic composition where people and objects can finally live and act together in all kinds of natural circumstances. In short, although

I am painting genre art, it is not purely in any established key of realism, but in this eclectic, promising and personal parallel realism that I have developed over the past few years."

Parallel realism is probably the best term for an arbitrary style-amalgam of different realist painting in which elements of both surrealism and hyperrealism can be found, and where the subjects of some paintings correspond to those by 19th century realists, while the pathos of some pieces is socialist or pop realist. Ole primarily uses the means of light, shadow and perspective to create systems that seem extraordinarily real, but here he uses an important technique to contrast illusion and reality: in every painting, in addition to what is a corporeal and almost tangibly spatial and physical construction, there is some unrealistic element – a broad brushstroke, a spill of colour on the canvas that seemingly exists outside the world and lighting scheme of the painting. With this painterly gesture, he turns around the conventional spatial relation of the understanding that a painting should be like a window: the only thing that is real in the painting, that actually exists, is the brushstroke or colour, the rest is an illusion. The use of this technique was especially clear at the *Still Lives* exhibition. Another reason to believe that the scenes are taking place in a parallel world is the lack of an environment – Ole's composite people are operating in some invisible room. They cast downward shadows, but no floor, walls or ceiling are in sight.

Kaido Ole is definitely someone who figures in attempts to define contemporary Estonian art and the art community has high hopes for his creative development. An artist's body of work, which usually tends to be tied to the name of the author, is actually a heterogeneous mass of creative statements that may also have been collective works in co-operation with students or other authors and in which "the being of the author" reins itself in considerably and does not conform to the expectations of the public. There may also be whole exhibitions, public and correctly presented, that deviate from the creative homogeneity (for example, *Meeting and Hymn* in 2007). In these cases, the author has either knowingly or through experimentation digressed from the uniform path. These exhibitions can, in a way, be excluded by the author's authenticity function. Likewise, amongst the paintings at *Nogank Hoparniis*, there is an odd photo, albeit surrounded by a painted illusion. To generalise according to Foucault – the author is the constant, but creation is disruption, the name of the author attempts

to tie everything together into a body of work, but the pieces resist because they contain different discourses.

Then again, Ole is a very convenient author for his viewers, because in every innovation, there is a reference to his earlier known work. At this exhibition as well, something familiar can be found: in two of the paintings we meet the bubblehead-man from the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s; the background of *The Drum of Choices* is the circular spectrum from *Questions* (2008); *Dance Night* repeats the speaker motif of 2003–2005; in the background of *War* there are two burning houses from the exhibition *Attention, Matches!* (2006). What is most bizarre, however, is that an approach to abstract painting, dating back to the so-called search for an original style at the beginning of Ole's professional career as an artist, has sneaked in, disguised as some body parts between clearly outlined fields of colour.

The tension is apparent, but Ole casually paints situations where something has inevitably gone wrong or is no longer under control – to him, the motifs that are destructive and pose a physical threat are central – the matches beat up a man, a house burns down, someone is cutting off their fingers in a race against time, two cars have been in a crash, the bubblehead-man is smashing a porcelain trinket with a hammer, ejaculating on rose petals or using the artist's hand as a urinal; in the end, the author's head outright explodes. His most obvious fears are material damage (fire), the loss of certain values in life (the bubblehead-man's destructive behaviour) or physical abnormality, disability, helplessness (finger amputation, explosion). At the exhibition of still lifes, the danger lurked at first in becoming unstable – all the still lifes are balancing on wheels or ignoring gravity and other laws of physics in some other way. All of this is supported by the presence of the discourse that painting is the only tool that enables to make statements that differ from the physical world. This is also how the *Freaks* and many characters of this exhibition stay put together – only in the world created by the artist.

At the *Nogank Hopaniis* exhibition, Ole undertakes a massive existential destruction, a move that almost seems to be blasphemy – he lets a whole nation disappear. The two murals *The Origin of Estonia* and *The End of Estonia* have been specially conceived for the large room at the Art Hall. They signify the starting point and ending for the Estonian narrative, binding between them the people

walking in the hall as well as the rest of the exhibition.

The Origin of Estonia takes a look thousands of years into the past, where Ole has focused the lens of his time tunnel and is attempting to capture on a surveillance camera an event equivalent to the primeval bang of Estonianness – the arrival of the first Estonians to the shores of the Baltic Sea: “The open arms of the vast sea glimmer before him, it is hostile, yet cool, withdrawn, yet welcoming, more mysterious than the forest, more homelike than the starry sky, the end of a world and the beginning of another.”¹ True, there is nothing left of Lennart Meri's sensory magnificence in Ole's piece, there is only a purely logical fact. Likewise, the sigh of the last Estonian that fades into eternity is a mere logical conclusion. We, however, have to live our lives now, swaying between these two boundaries, and to live it as *nogankhoparniis* as we can.

What is *nogank hoparniis*? These are made-up words in a made-up language that can mean absolutely everything that we can come up with. What we can come up with is, at this exhibition and why not in life in general, the measure of all things. If we can think of it, we can say it. Or to depict it, like Kaido Ole does. Furthermore, with his made-up words, Ole signifies the intensity of living; the pleasure derived from painting, thinking and pondering over life; the condition of the creative flow; the joy of life or any other impelling, vital and all-encompassing frame of mind where taking action as well as solving problems is challenging and engaging. In a state of mind like this, some fundamental notions about life in general could reveal themselves.

Thus it is difficult to say what this exhibition is actually about. Is it mostly related to Estonian life, painting or playful fun? The super-text of art usually starts to open up together with the viewer, in active interpretation. That is why we have invited people from different walks of life to share their outsider views on art in this publication, just the way their *nogank hoparniis* guides them, so that we could have an ecologist, an anthropologist, a gravedigger and others figure out Kaido Ole.

Anneli Porri

¹ Lennart Meri. Hõbevalge. Reisikiri suurest paugust, tuulest ja muinasluulest. Sine loco: Eesti Päevaleht, Akadeemia, 2008, p 14.



ONE-WORK EXHIBITION

Kaido Ole
UNTITLED
oil on fibreboard
120 × 120 cm
1991

KAIDO OLE (born 1963) lives and works in Tallinn. He studied design and painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts from 1982 to 1992 and has worked at the academy as a drawing and painting teacher and as a professor at the painting department (2003–2010). He has been a freelance artist from 2010 onwards, having been featured at exhibitions since 1989. In 2003, he represented Estonia at the 50th Venice Biennale, appearing together with Marko Mäetamm under the alias John Smith.

The conceptual painting is at the centre of Kaido Ole's work. Even though his large paintings are intricately calculated and even seem machine-made, he is in fact interested in painting as mistakes that occur during the handicraft and painting process. Ole's theatrical and controversial plots always combine techniques from different

Unfortunately, I no longer possess any of my paintings from the very beginning, but this *Untitled* does belong to the same first group of works from the time when I finally managed to start making art. This “making of art” may sound a bit bad, or artificial, but in any case it is much better and nicer to make art than to make non-art, a cycle in which I was stuck for years and made a narrow escape from just before graduating from what was then called the Tallinn Art University.

In fact, the making of art is a very good description of the method that lead to success. Before that, I actually hoped that the most important thing will somehow happen by itself when the time is right, but the wait went on and on. Finally, when I was already about to panic – damn, I won't become

an artist after all, this has all been for nothing!!! – I approached it systematically with reason, logic and a brutal honesty; from a clean slate, I started over. I chose that and only that which truly interested me and I kept the game as simple as possible, even primitive, when, at the pre-visualisation stage, I combined colours and the different methods of applying them to the surface. I kept the colours clearly apart, so that I could also play around with their shapes, i.e. with composition. Everything I did I tried to do as rough and silly as possible, so that I could overcome the false sense of shame and at the same time avoid becoming entangled in the trap of examples and ready-made solutions. So this is the picture and that was the period as I remember it. Amen.

Kaido Ole

painting styles, from geometric abstractionism to pop art and nouveau réalisme.

Instead of directly tackling current events, Ole's paintings speak about the general power dynamics between people or the artist and the artist's work, but these positions of power are always ambiguous, absurd and even humorous. He uses different characters to act out the conflicts in the plots – besides his own figure and the comicbook-like bubblehead-man, different surrealist assemblage-creatures have appeared since 2012.

A selection of recent exhibitions: *The New Building*, Tartu Art Museum; *The Meaning of Life*, FUGA, Budapest, Hungary (with Marko Mäetamm, 2015); *Freaks*, Tallinn Art Hall Gallery; *Typical Individuals*, Tartu Art Museum; *100 Painters of Tomorrow*, One Art Space, New York

(2014); *...oh, and also...*, Temnikova & Kasela, Tallinn (2013); *Archaeology and the Future of Estonian Art Scenes*, Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn; *2003-2011*, Novy Museum, Saint Petersburg; *Handsome Hero and Plenty of Still Lives*, Kumu Art Museum; *Collection of Desires. Privatized Art*, Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn (2012).

Kaido Ole is a member of the Estonian Artists' Association. He has received the Kristjan Raud (1998), Konrad Mägi (2012) and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (1999 and 2005) annual art prizes, amongst other awards. Ole's works are held in the collections of the Art Museum of Estonia, Tartu Art Museum, Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, the European Parliament, the ABLV Bank collection for the Latvian Museum of Contemporary Art and the Angerlehner Museum.

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