

**I looked
into the walls
and saw**



*I looked into the plaster and saw
rugged cliffs, coral sea with foamy waves,
mythic ships, seamen's faces, lethargic
cormorants and blazing rainbow.*

Vladimír Boudník

*A museum devoted to different kinds
of emptiness could be developed.*

...

*Installations should empty rooms,
not fill them.*

Robert Smithson

I looked into the walls and saw...

The site-specific meta-exhibition *I looked into the walls and saw...* refrains—as much as possible—from physical intervention in the gallery. It is the space of the ISFAG itself that is curated *as found* in its layered condition of a palimpsest. The curatorial act consists of inviting 20 guests to identify and interpret diverse physical qualities of the space. Limestone bricks, mushrooms, pipes, insulation foam, holes, water puddles, walled-in windows and changing weather conditions are some of the main exhibits on show.

The space of the gallery is conceived as a *site* and a *non-site* at once: in an anti-monumental gesture the gallery points to itself as a painting, a sculpture, and an installation. The exhibition concept builds upon curators' experience of visiting previous shows at the ISFAG gallery, when they were unable to distinguish between exhibited art objects and walls and floors of the gallery. The concept draws also on the tradition of early minimalism and conceptualism, combined with the current sensibility for ruined industrial space. Yet if the former had been too soon compromised by its association with the white cube culture, the latter has come to present material decay detached from its context, filling everything with culture of any kind.

I look into the wall and saw... explores the dialectics of indoors and outdoors within the gallery. It scrutinizes the ways in which the experience of art as art is subjected to entropic processes such as history, oxidation, abrasion, fracture, collapse and weathering.

Ma vaatasin seina sisse ja nägin...

Kohaspetsiifiline metanäitus hoidub, nii palju kui võimalik, füüsilisest sekkumisest galeriipinna omapärasse. Kuratoorse žestina on palutud 20 osalejal identifitseerida ja tõlgendada antud paiga mitmekülgeid füüsilisi omadusi. Paekivi, seemned, torud, Macroflex, augud, üleujutatud alad ja kinnimüritud aknad on mõned näited sellest, mida näitus esile tõstab.

Galeriiruumi võib käsitleda kui kohta ja mitte-kohta üheaegselt: anti-monumentaalse žestina viitab galerii iseendale kui maalile, skulptuurile ja installatsioonile. Näituse kontseptsioon tugineb kuraatorite varasemale kogemustele ISFAGis, mil külastades näituseid polnud võimalik eristada kunstiteoseid neid ümbritsevast keskkonnast. Muuhulgas viitab näitus minimalismi ja kontseptualismi traditsioonile, millele on lisandunud nüüdisaegne tõmme hüljatud industriaalalade vastu, sealjuures vältides ideed valgest kuubist, kuid ka romantiseeritud vaadet materiaalse lagunemisele.

Näitus “Ma vaatasin seinasse ja nägin...” uurib dialektikat galerii sise- ja välisküljel, tuues esile, kuidas kogemus kunstist võib olla mõjutatud entroopiliste protsesside poolt nagu ajalugu, oksüdeerumine, kulumine, lõhenemine, varisemine.

Participants:

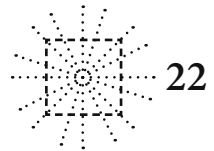
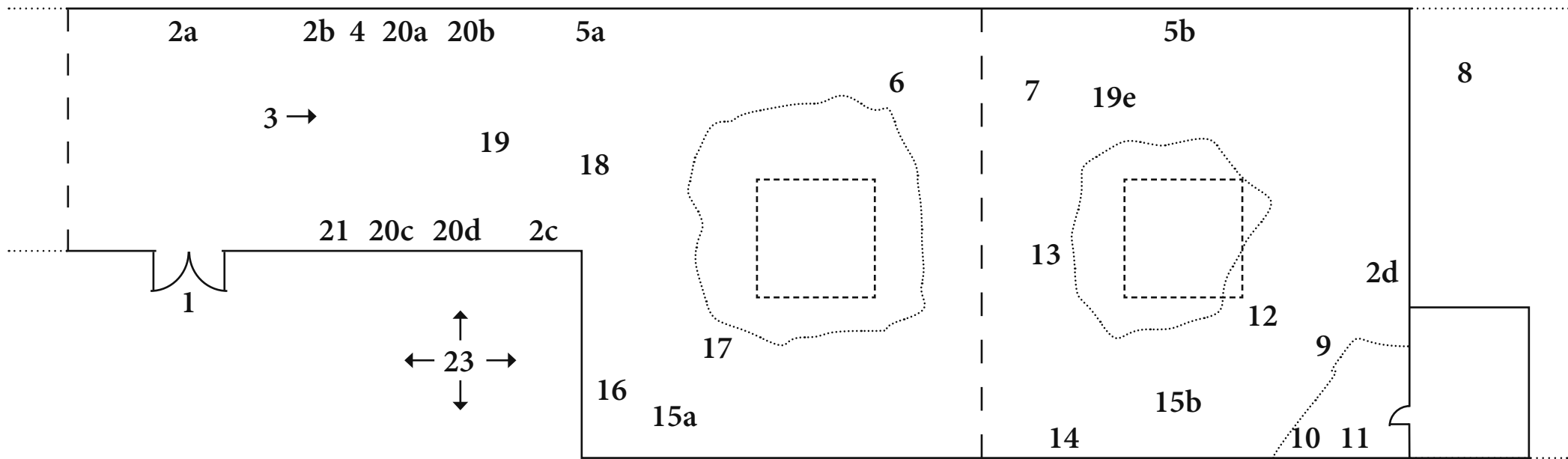
Andra Aaloe, Toomas Adrikorn, Marika Agu, Jana Dzadonova, Kärt Hammer, Ott Kagovere, Keiti Kljavin, Tiiu Koff, Franz Krause, Patrick Laviolette, Agata Marzec, MinaJaLydia, Ragnar Nurk, Andres Ojari, Kristina Õllek, Tarmo Pikner, Ingrid Ruudi, Marek Tamm, Toomas Tammis, Tauri Tuvikene and Anna-Liisa Unt

Curators:

Maros Krivy and Francisco Martínez

Catalogue design:

Andra Aaloe





The door is an entire cosmos of the half-open.

Gaston Bachelard

The door

We stand in front of an immense black wooden door with tiny red stripes, and this door opens to another, mysterious world, to the art-world. We cross the door, and nothing is anymore the same, though everything is the same. Entering the gallery is not just an act of passage, but a rite of passage. The door represents transition, transformation and liminality. Standing in a doorway means that we are neither here nor there, we are “in-between”. The door is a boundary between the profane everyday life and sacred artistic life; “to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world” (Arnold van Gennep).

The door is a mode of both separation and connection, it demarcates and delimits, but also allows the conjoining of the interior and exterior worlds. The door crystallises an image of movement between separate mental, physical or ontological states. The door is a screen of our desires and fears, of our memories and secrets.

The gallery’s door has many different modalities; it might be a closed door, a half-open door, and an open door. To be more specific, the main door contains also a smaller door inside of it, so there are even more modalities: closed main door with an open small door, open main door with an open small door, closed main door with a closed small door, open main door with a small closed door, etc.

Like every entrance, also this colossal door has a Janus-face. Its inside is the outside for somebody else. The power of the door lies in its ability to effect and affect our experience of the space. Without the door, the gallery feels empty, meaning making is impeded, art risks to disappear.

“The wall is silent but the door speaks”, wrote Georg Simmel in his famous essay “Bridge and Door”. The door is indeed for me the most momentous piece of art in this gallery, it talks to me much more than the walls. I looked into the walls and saw ... the door.



Layers

I get to wonder what, why and especially—in which order things have been done in this space.

For example, windows disappeared in order to build a door; compare: opposing wall with the original situation [a].

I feel anxious to search the joints on the wall—both vertical and horizontal—, which refer to the existence of different layers of construction. Also different kind of materials (limestone for the underground part of the foundation, bricks, concrete) [b, c].

The 21st century's strange stratum of construction: foam, new tech-web, then a dividing wall at the end of the room with a supermarket door [d].

Loose stuff. Detached things

Space is given, it has been constructed as such and it is difficult, often illegal to change it. Space is an object of strict regulations. Space has been institutionally approved at a certain moment in time and has been legitimised as such rendering all other spaces at this particular location illegal. Space can be altered to a certain extent, it can be subdivided, lit, coloured or tuned in some other way, but one has to reconcile with the general setup of space. In its physical and material predetermination space does not necessarily need much attention, in this sense it is easy and light.

Loose stuff, the things detached from the material boundaries of space are changeable. Things generally lie outside regulations, they can be repositioned, added or removed at any time. Things do not usually exclude one another. Things don't need to be acceptable. In their looseness and variability things expect a decision or at least a standpoint, whether and where to move them. Things need effort —whether to accept their presence or to relocate and remove them. In their ephemerality, lightness and simplicity things are surprisingly difficult and demanding. Things need to be acknowledged and considered.

Things that need to be considered as at 19.10.2014...

...on the ramp:

- 1 collection of red, black and grey cord with 1 spotlight
- 2 broom handles
- 1 aluminium foldable ladder
- 2 brooms
- 11 paint buckets
- 1 padded chair
- 7 Fibro blocks horizontally in 2 vertical rows
- 2 empty bottles
- 1 telescopic tube of a vacuum cleaner
- 1 floor cleaning brush

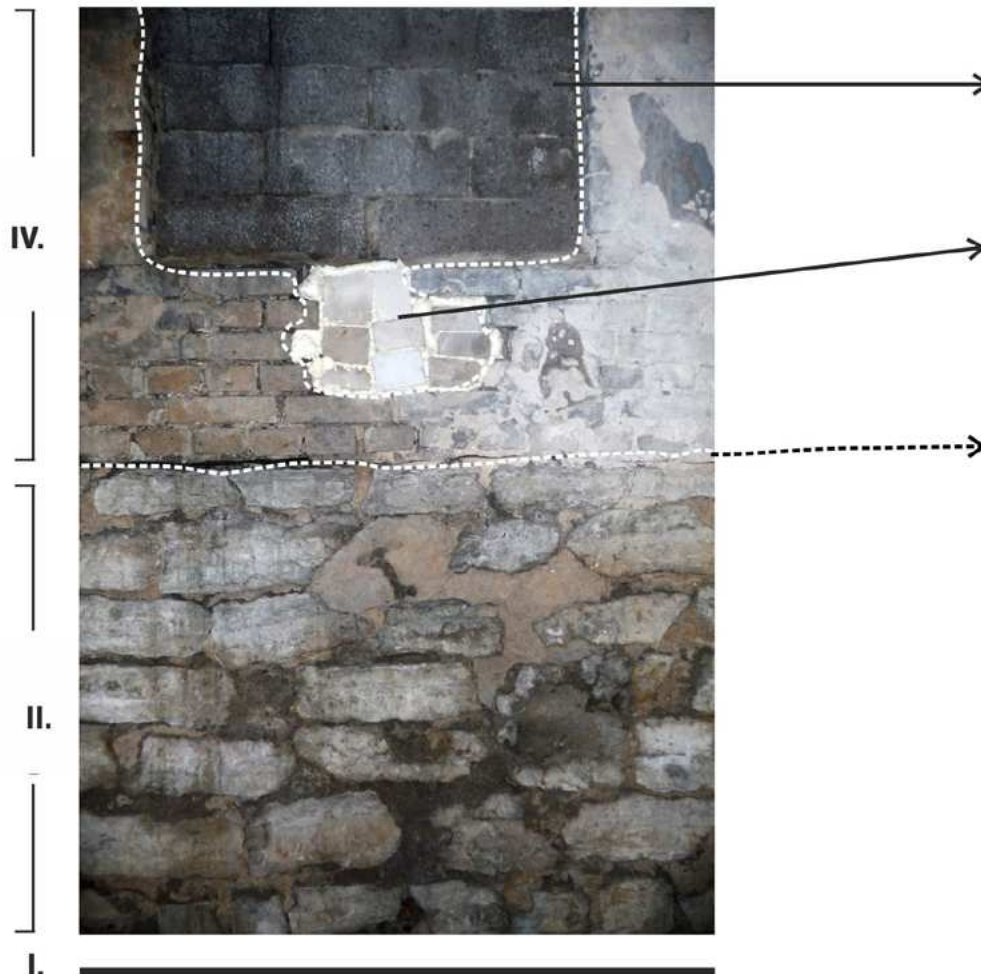
...in the 1st room:

- 1 half full garbage bag
- 2 extension cords
- 1 handful of timber screws
- 3 Fibro blocks horizontally at the wall
- ca 20 corner fixings made from mounting ribbon
- 1 black spotlight with white cord

...in the 2nd room:

- 4,5 white bricks
- 6 Fibro blocks at the lower end of the curtain
- 1 black spotlight with black cord
- 9 Fibro blocks vertically in 3 rows
- 1 black piece of canvas ca 80x50cm

Geological cross-section of the gallery wall



Geological section	ISFAG, October 2014		Geological period	Historical period
	rocks and materials			
V-a.	<p>Fibo blocks composed from various geological materials. Clay might be from different deposits e.g. the Cambrium (500 million years ago) or the last glaciation period (15 000 years ago).</p> <p>Description from producer: basic raw materials are all natural Estonian mineral materials, mined close to the factory: cement from Kunda, lime from Rakke, sand from Toolse sandpit. Suitable for wall building in winter.</p>	mixed origin - Cambrium, Silurian, Pleistocene	post 1990s	
V-b.	Intrusion of modern bricks (limesand) and macroflex foam into older wall.			
IV.	Silikaltsiit (limesand) bricks composed from water, lime and sand. Sand was excavated from Männiku fluvioglacial deposits formed during the last ice age regression.	Late Pleistocene 12 000 years ago	1960s-1970s	
III.	Discontinuity surface between limestone and bricks made from ruberoid (waterproof building material from bitumen, typically used in Soviet Union).	?	1960s-1970s	
II.	<p>Brownish-grey limestone most probably from Uhaku or Lasnamäe stages formed in Middle Ordovician.</p> <p>Characteristic features of the layer are marine fossils e.g. Brachyopoda and Endocerida (see a. & b. below).</p> <p>The hard and resistant limestones were widely used as construction material for the medieval city of Tallinn.</p>	Middle Ordovician 460-470 millions years ago	13th -20th century	
I.	Basement - cement? floor.	?	?	



Pipes

Material: steel, mineral wool, synthetic fabric, water

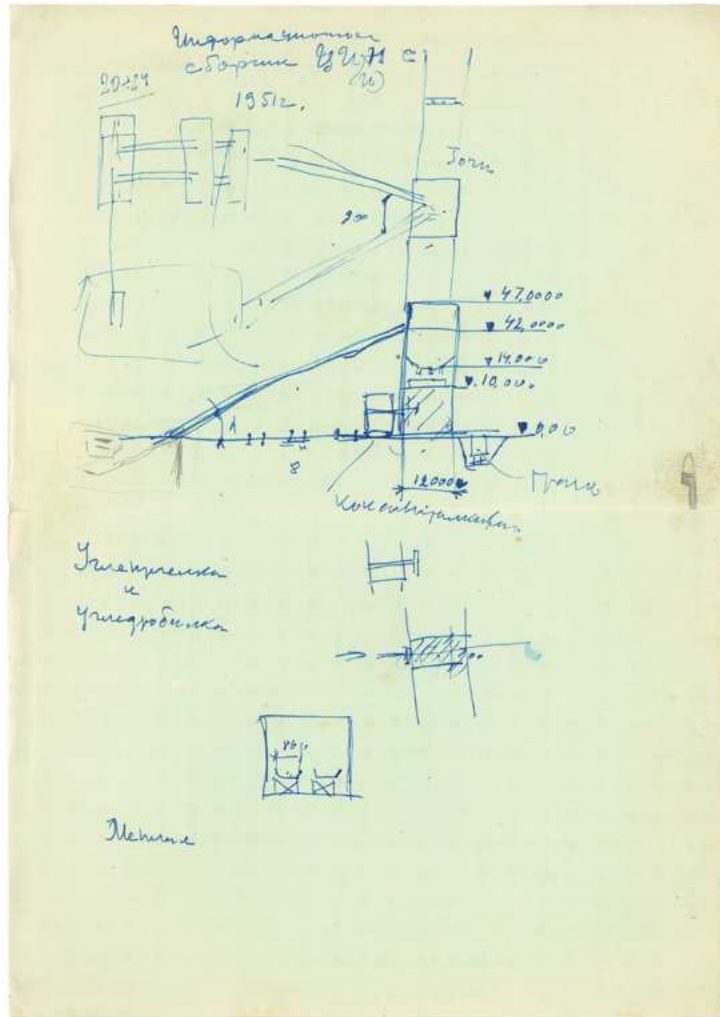
These pipes are not supposed to be here. They are just passing through. They are hidden, where possible, behind a makeshift plywood facade. And they are insulated with thick sheets of material, not to reveal any of the riches they carry, on the way from somewhere to elsewhere. Much like this room itself, they are not made for loitering, but as corridors—spaces to hurry through on the road to a proper destination. They connect points, a point of origin and a target point; and this connection has to be as smooth, fast, frictionless as possible, and deliver all the content in its original state, unadulterated by the journey. This room was built as a ramp for oil shale from the railway by the harbour to the furnace of the former electricity plant. Where are the pipes leading their load? From where does it come and where does it end?

There are three valves with long levers in different places along the pipes [a]. They regulate the water, but they provide also a time valve: They are made by a Finnish company—were they imported during the Soviet times, when the electricity plant was in operation? Or were they installed

afterwards, when the plant had already been shut down a decade before the Iron Curtain joined its fate? The valves give you the power to manipulate the water flow; of course, children are not supposed to play with the light switches, and gallery visitors not with the valves. But basically, you could—for instance release some water into the pipes that branch off upwards and leave the room through the side wall. Outrageous! Someone along the way can influence the flow from source to destination.

Are the pipes without water running through them pipes at all? Or are they just former pipes, like this room is a former oil shale ramp? Can we revive the pipe by opening the valve? Would the water gush out happily and energetically, and join its distant cousin in the puddle behind you? How long has the water in those pipes—for instance the drops just below the valves—been waiting there? Or has the water been waiting at all? Does it care? I like to think that water likes to move, but I've never spoken to those drops. Anyway, water is not meant to simply move as it pleases here. These pipes are designed to let it move only along a certain trajectory, and only when people open the respective valve.

The pipes' thick insulation also speaks to their transience: their contents must stay contained in the conductors. The pipes carry hot water, a precious good everywhere, and especially in a place where people consider the summer as an annoying three-month disruption of the skiing season. Steel pipes make a good conductor for water, but they are also a great conductor for heat—sideways, outwards, radiating; not from origin to intended target, but all along the journey. Even in this room that has been planned as a non-place of connection. The silver fabric covering the insulation has been worn away in places, the mineral wool is crumbling, the pieces are coming apart at the seams; here and there, the insulation seems to be cut open intentionally, exposing the precious heat to this very room, the corridor, the connector, the non-place [b]. Maros tells me he has seen a security guard sitting close to the pipes, in what was probably the warmest place in the room. Carefully, but your hand on a pipe—if it's cold, then *ce n'est pas une pipe!* If you find a warm one, keep your hand there for a moment, and revel in the joys of the journey, the love of loitering, the limits of containment, the bliss of sharing and exchange, and the beauty of warm water.



ill.1 scetch from graduation thesis

Duration

Duration I

It must have been some time in the late 1980s. We were walking down the stairs of Linnahall, probably returning from a concert, when my father briefly mentioned that he had written his graduation paper on loading ramps. Precisely like the one on our right at the moment. I managed to anchor it into my memory that it was the given ramp stretching diagonally over the railway line that my father had constructed.

Following my father's death in the summer of 2010, we were stacking his things and documents from the Polish cabinet with polyester finishing into cardboard boxes when I noticed the graduation thesis by Johannes Ojari, a student of the Faculty

of Construction, from 1952 in the brown paper folder tied with white ribbons. The folder most probably included the selfsame ramp that he had once talked about near Linnahall. I did not untie the ribbon then.

Now I found a reason and also felt the need to look for the folder in the basement. And I found it.

It was filled with calculations and sketches of technical assemblies and also a draft of an explanatory report with the headline: "The topic of my thesis lies in designing a steel transport ramp for the coke department in the Donbas".



Duration II

I take this body with my usual surgical detachment. I look around, my eyebrows expressing feigned surprise. It's damp.

The quiet breathing raises a faint waft further intensifying the somewhat stale air. Two buttresses are missing—amputated. The enormous weight for the legs to support is gone. He must have been able to seep through enormous amounts, I ponder.

Having presumably witnessed tons of brown stone, the openings oozed single tears to the floor as if dewdrops left by the morning rain.

ill.2 Figure 45 shows the construction and use of a very efficient apparatus for the leg, especially when the fracture is of the compound variety

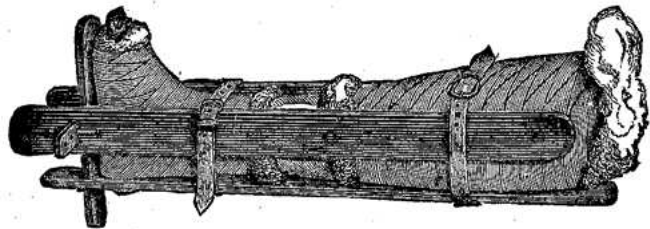


Figure No. 45.

Duration III

Within one second I scan each millimetre in the incision which are further divided into infinitely smaller parts each requiring a further second to measure. I do not concern myself with the new organic matter, I exclude it.

I notice that each millimetre is completely different from the previous one and the one before that ...

The moment is endlessly long.



*ill.3 scene from
Peter Greenaway's movie
THE DRAUGHTSMAN'S
CONTRACT*

7

TOOMAS ADRIKORN

The floor

I looked on the floor and saw...

I stepped on the floor and felt...

I thought about the floor and understood...

... it's different!



ISFAG Gallery's dark corner

Corners are symbolic and structural—sometimes intimidating or even scary and yet at others, compellingly attractive. I suppose the anthropological imagination has had a particular fascination with ‘the corner’ at least since 1943, when William Foote Whyte’s classic study of Cornerville first appeared in print as *Street Corner Society*.

Through such landmarks as Hyde Park’s Speakers’ Corner, they not only invoke controversy and free speech but are also representative of being spaces on the margins. Their very angularity, however, draws attention to themselves.

So to be honest, I knew before even visiting the ISFAG Gallery space that my attention would be tuned towards those areas where walls meet. And Francisco did not have much difficulty in convincing me that there was a space within the ‘fake storage

room’ which would surely grab my interest. Opening a door to a musty black room at the very end of the coal loading tunnel, he commented immediately that no one had explored the room beyond which can only be seen through a small 4 inch diameter hole at the bottom of a wall tucked into the far left-hand corner. Light enters the adjacent space, which is considerably larger and rougher, through a semi-closed steel doorway, accessed by going outside.

Some obvious questions can be asked of this neatly cut hole... is it a vent or a passageway for wires? What it reminds us of, however, is the significance of negative space. Of that which exists beyond the delimited confines in which we find ourselves. Such holes offer us new possibilities. They are an invitation to escape or to reveal something hidden. To peek through or simply to break on through to the other side.

Water

Water—it is the source of life and a death of buildings. Seeping through pores and cracks in walls and roofs, water leads to mould and damage. For the construction to last, water has to be blocked, contained, covered and channelled. Untamed water has no place inside buildings; only docile water is allowed in: water in pipes and containers. So listen to the sounds of water dripping. Each drop is a step towards the end of the building.

This puddle of water in the corner of the building reflects the rhythms of nature and rhythms of building. It becomes vocal in the days of rain while remaining silent during other times. But even silent water is an actor; it remains as signs on the surfaces and various physical, biological, and chemical processes hidden from our sights. I invite you to walk through the water puddles and leave steps on the floor. Perhaps you domesticate this water in this way.

Hole in the wall

as ART, because...

- ..it is source of continuation and promise as well as danger and inconvenience.
- ..it is part of decision-making ritual.
- ..it is not a celebration of new form.
- ..it is creation of new possibility.
- ..it is a kind of heterotopia.
- ..it is being encountered by audience right now.
- ..the process of its creation is not documented.
- ..it is authentic and analogue.
- ..it is surprising.
- ..it is place of undefined in-betweenness.
- ..its height and location resembles the windows in Vermer's paintings, what raises a question of privacy and intimacy of personal relationships.
- ..it allows to fictionalize new reality.
- ..it is a probe, which is cutting the layers of the building and thus revealing the truth of its materiality.
- ..it is an information, heat, light, smell, smoke, humidity ..
- ..it allows an interexchange of 'new' coming in and 'old' going out.
- ..it was created to be experienced by others.
- ..it is intuitive.
- ..the hole is just 'nothing' articulated by certain assemblage of bricks, which is however capable of performing many things.
- ..its image is not constructed, but spontaneous.

- .. the author of this 'piece' is unknown and it has no current value.
- .. it is associated with the voyeuristic and inquisitive instincts of human.
- ..it, itself, was asked to be identified.
- ..it is schizophrenic.
- ..it calls for action.
- ..it acts as screen, virtual space, another three dimensional world enclosed by a frame and situated inside the real space.
- ..its form is not eternal nor monumental.
- ..it creates a frame.
- ..it divides, sets apart and simultaneously connects and unifies.
- ..it is an agent of architectural experience.
- ..it is interface without customary format.
- ..it is 'actual', projecting real-time image.
- ..it is beautiful.
- ..it is a hidden story of its own becoming.
- .. it is open for immediate decision.
- ..it doesn't necessarily deal with finitude of body.
- ..it is relational and subjective.
- ..its geometry is unique and complex enough to not be easily reproduced.
- ..it separates different scales of physical and virtual space.
- ..it distracts the enclosure.
- ..it doesn't imprison and freeze the body in the screen apparatus of perspectival window.
- ..it is ambiguous, raises the question of life and death.
- ..its definition potentially creates discussion.





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While swimming in beginnings,
the end came by.
While swimming in beginnings,
the end came by.

While swimming in beginnings,
the end came by.
While swimming in beginnings,
the end came by.

While swimming in beginnings,
the end came by.
While swimming in beginnings,
the end came by.

Light

Light is the main dresser of space—very little remains without it. Light itself is as reactive—it responds to space by echoing or absorbing or rattling around, depending on the nature of the catalyst.

Light enters the far end of the chute and displays a modest show: it colours the concrete, tinsels the mould and mirrors the wet floor. Without this funnel-fed light you'd feel like descending into a trap, or you'd probably not descend at all. The sunken space exposes a closer sky—it is much closer down there than it is up where you started from.

Sounds

ISFAG reminds me of the music of Rashad Becker. At first quiet—a regular industrial space, left empty and alone, but slowly growing into noisy details. You notice the weird composition of the rooms, old, broken walls, covered with dust, fungus and old paint. The more you look, the more you find. But you can relate to it also on a general scale, taking the whole wall as a self-generating abstract painting. A contemporary version of the Rothko Chapel, if you may. Hence, another comparison might be with Morton Feldman's compositions, which have been often described as so spacious that you can almost walk inside the music. If I should imagine myself walking inside, let's say 'Piano and string quartet', ISFAG would be a likely place, with its endlessly dripping water and strings of wind outside.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0												
1	M	I	N	A	I	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	
2	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R
3	F	U	X	X	U	P	R	R	Y	O	L	O	C	Y	O	O	I	V	A	M		
4	C	K	V	I	I	O	I	V	E	E	C	O	C	Y	R	G	B	O	B	O		
5	N	E	O	O	M	I	T	Y	T	Y	T	Y	L	L	K	A	D	O	G	B		
6	O	N	F	K	F	R	L	Y	B	N	O	O	J	A	F	U	F	R	S	A		
7	N	E	M	Z	M	I	E	E	O	M	G	R	A	M	I	I	M	I	F	S		
8	O	N	N	E	I	I	R	R	V	I	J	D	B	A	G	B	E	L	Õ	Õ		
9	C	Y	B	E	R	I	R	R	O	O	M	A	O	R	E	D	G	G	X	X		
0	O	O	Y	O	F	U	R	R	H	U	X	O	X	O	X	O	C	Y	D	I		

Coding and decoding

As a street artist I know that the walls are talking to me all the time, every scribble, text, image, crack, hole on the wall is talking, another matter if it's decodeable or not. In coding theory, decoding is the process of translating received messages with code-words of a given code. Coding and decoding can cause mistranslations and by that generate new information and therefore errors are the only humane aspects of machines, codes, algorithms.



*ISFAG
Corner Piece #1
Ready-made
2014*



*ISFAG
Creating the Corner Piece #2
Ready-made
2014*

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The last time I visited ISFAG, there was a puddle of water in the middle of the room. No wonder—there is a hole in the roof, a remainder of the space’s past life as a storage for the nearby electricity plant, now letting in rain instead of oil shale. At the brink of the puddle there was the curator, Siim, with some kind of water sucking machine, performing a Sisyphos’s task of drying the floor. I was watching the exhibition, an intriguing if kind of didactic display of politically charged art of the past decades, and suddenly realizing that the actual artwork is the situation in its entirety, embodied in the figure of the curator sweeping up the floor. A non-profit gallery as a commerce-free zone of exchanging ideas is made possible by someone initiating it, maintaining it, taking care of it. Sweeping up the water from the floor. Doing it voluntarily, out of enthusiasm, largely unpaid.

More than anything, the curating practice under such circumstances pertains to the very original, latin meaning of the term—

curating as taking care of. In 1969 Mierle Laderman Ukeles wrote up a manifesto for maintenance art. The manifesto, and her following performances, were borne out of frustration over the privileged and gendered image of an independent artist but also aimed at acknowledging the whole sphere of invisible routine tasks required to keep up any gallery space, cultural institution, or, for that matter, societal order. She wanted to mark the economy of labour that structures our society where the daily existence of collective life is sustained by invisible and underappreciated labour of countless maintenance workers, in both literal and metaphoric sense of the term. The labour of art workers is sustaining zones of unconventional, critical thinking. In a similar way, this work could remain largely invisible, and notoriously underappreciated. But the lack of it would be immediately felt.

“My working will be the work,” stated Ukeles 45 years ago. This still counts.

The avant-garde of frailty

There is a stick at the centre of the gallery. A wooden column left over from the previous show. The stick brings to my mind the figure of Pinocchio, who doesn't find his place in this world and is made out of a different material than the rest of his mates—tubes, hooks, electric wires and limestone bricks.

This vertical stick with four sides represents also the solitude of a free rider. The pillar stands in a disagreement with the expectations of usefulness attributed to it by its producers and reacts against the assumption that the peak of its working life is already past.

This column was the last one to arrive to the gallery space; and probably it will be the first one to be removed when new users take over the gallery, or when demolition-workers start to pull down the building. Perhaps, these workers will think about the bread of their children while entering into the space; or perhaps they will just act and demolish it without thinking at all.

The wooden stick adds another stratum of time to the space. Obstinate persisting,

not reaching the ground, differently made and forgotten: the pseudo-pillar is the avant-garde of frailty.

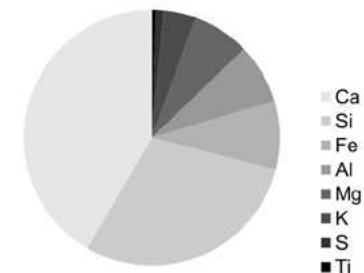
Abandoned matter plays a cultural role, it suggests alternative orders and values. Indeed, abandonment has to be acknowledged as a cultural fact. Decaying material haunts; it has a trace effect that is passed on, suggesting stories far beyond our personal experience. Demolition appears, however, as an act of violence against urbanity and cultivation.

The hanging column symbolises also the hardships of emancipation and contemporary labour. The stick hangs uncertain and precarious, listening nonetheless lullabies about the importance of mobility and fluidity in being successful and becoming a leader.

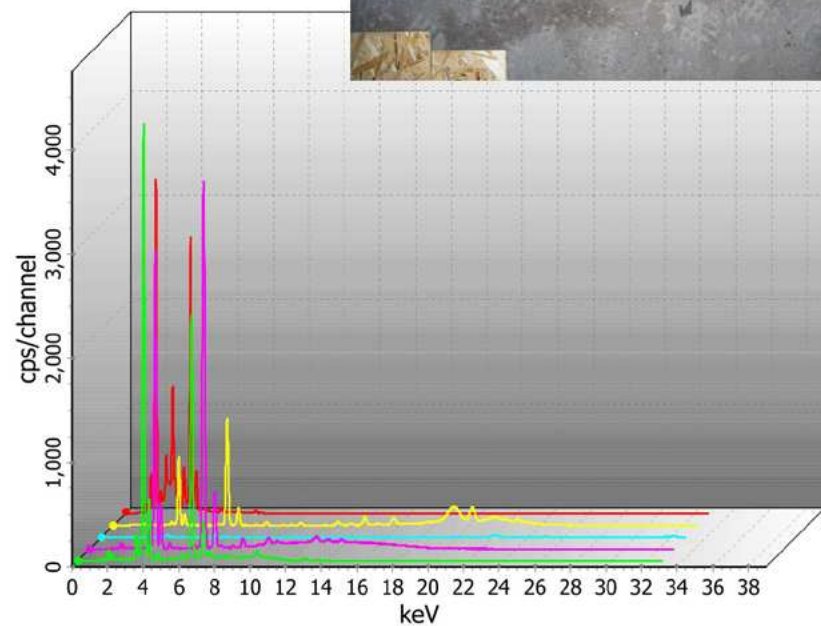
Last but not least, the wooden pillar tells back about the expiry of contemporary art practice. If you come close enough, the forgotten stick will whisper in your ear about the sadness that dismantling of an exhibition brings to artists and curators.

X-ray fluorescence spectrometry of the gallery floor

Main composition (%):



sampling point:
ISFAG_2



Rear earth elements
+ heavy metals (mg/kg)

Zn	260	mg/kg
Pb	250	mg/kg
Sr	180	mg/kg
Ba	160	mg/kg
Zr	120	mg/kg
Cr	110	mg/kg
Cu	70	mg/kg
V	50	mg/kg
Sb	50	mg/kg
Ni	40	mg/kg
Y	10	mg/kg
Re	10	mg/kg
Ga	trace levels	
As	trace levels	
Yb	trace levels	
Ir	trace levels	
Hg	trace levels	

Maximum concentration levels (mg/kg) of
hazardous substances in soil (RT I 2010,57,373)

	1*	2**	3***
Zn	200	500	1000
Pb	50	300	600
Sr			
Ba	500	750	2000
Zr			
Cr	100	300	800
Cu	100	150	500
V	50	300	1000
Sb	10	20	100
Ni	50	150	500
Y			
Re			
Ga			
As	20	30	50
Yb			
Ir			
Hg	0.5	2	10

*background values
** toxic for living organisms
*** limits for industrial land



Gallery space as an ecological habitat

[a] Fossil of Endocerida (Estonian: peajalgne) in the limestone. Middle Ordovician limestone was formed 472-460 million years ago in the gradually deepened sea, where beside the clay diverse skeleton fragments of marine animals were abundant. Endocerids may have been living close to the sea floor. The group of animals appeared in late Cambrium and lives until the present times (octopuses).

[b] Fossil of Brachiopoda (Estonian: Käsijalgsed). Marine animals with hard “valves” on the upper and lower surfaces. These molluscs appeared in late Cambrium and live until present times.

[c, d] Fungi *Coprinus disseminatus* (Estonian: Seltsiv tindik; Eng.: Fairy Inkcap). Extremely fragile and small mushroom living on decaying materials. Produces lot of spores. (picture under microscope: spheroidal objects).

[d] Microbes. Microscopic image indicates an abundant microbial community but further analysis would be needed to specify the species composition (picture under microscope: translucent spots).

[e] Leaves of *Sorbus intermedia* (Estonian: pooppuu). Planted in Estonia, able to grown outside the natural habitat because it is resistant to frost. The species is also resistant to dust and atmospheric pollution and can inhabit industrial and urban areas.



Illustration by Dani Soon for Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "Thumbelina".

Thumbelina

"Tweet, tweet," sounded over her head suddenly. She looked up, and there was the swallow himself flying close by. As soon as he spied Thumbelina, he was delighted; and then she told him how unwilling she felt to marry the ugly mole, and to live always beneath the earth, and never to see the bright sun any more.

"Cold winter is coming," said the swallow, "and I am going to fly away into warmer countries. Will you go with me?"

"This is my house," said the swallow; "but it would not do for you to live there—you would not be comfortable. You must choose for yourself one of those lovely flowers, and I will put you down upon it, and then you shall have everything that you can wish to make you happy."

Where a tree and post-industrial mingle

The tree grows in and over a rusted metal skeleton. It was part of an encounter while locking my bicycle to the vertical structure just next to the gallery entrance. More precisely wooden stems intersect into the industrial infrastructure by unnatural curves and wounds. But iron is stronger material, thus tree branches changed their trajectories of growing. Minimalistic ladder pegs are part of the reddish-brown skeleton tower for claiming up. A large lamp and even a view-platform would stand here on top in the case of working heat-production plant. Currently the tree or actually two different trees with several stems and red berries is higher than the industrial thing. It is not a rowan tree and I am sorry not knowing this particular spice yet. One could approach this assemblage as a particular setting of installation, or climb along the iron ladder, continue along stems and then

see the sea and surroundings while swinging in wind. Maybe the growing stems removed the lamp and platform from the top of the transparent tower. If I would leave the bicycle here on one location for years then tree stems would trap and remove the wheels too. The iron skeleton limits and simultaneously protects the growing tree. An island of organic matter surrounded with asphalt was suitable for a small plant becoming of multiple tree(s). Verticality is mixed with horizontal rhizomes extending under concrete surface in every possible direction. Rather similar assemblage appears with a transparent net-fence mingled with brushwood-like trees bordering the usual entrance side of the gallery. Movement appears with organic matter and also with inorganic matter. Yellowish autumn tree leaves are getting lightly similar with rusting metal ribbons.



Red polygons

The recent publication of the Kultuurikatla Aed detailed plan, which places the ISFAG gallery under a red polygon and thus slates it for demolition, has shown two things: that the 1990s-style roll-back property rights policies, in which municipality actively weakened itself by selling land, have not disappeared from the agenda in the wake of the financial and housing crisis of 2007–2008—as we might have imagined or hoped—and have returned on the table as a new real estate bubble possibly builds up; and that the “soft” roll-out cultural policies of promoting creativity and generating spontaneous “buzz” hardly represent a real alternative to the former with which they can go perfectly hand-in-hand.

The red polygons signal a divide within the notions of culture and creativity that many have for some time now assumed to stand in an opposition to everything institutional, bureaucratic and business-minded. The dividing line follows the concept of relevance. The notion of “culture” as employed in the Kultuurikatel project have risen to being an instrument relevant in economic specula-

tion and entrepreneurial policy making: it can raise land values, fuel policies of competitiveness, or help public and state institutions to divest of social responsibilities. To what extent is the ISFAG in conflict with such notion of “relevance”?

As opposed to abandonment, speculative redevelopment or conservation, the practices that can go hand in hand in spite of the fact that they appear to be contrasting, we should think about the maintenance of ISFAG. In this context, rather than being a conservative practice of maintaining status quo, maintenance can be conceived in relation to spaces of everyday life.

The ISFAG can be destroyed in two ways —by demolishing its physical space, or by making it relevant in the above-mentioned sense. The question is how to maintain it as the space of the everyday and how to conceive it, in this way, in relation to a different kind of relevance, which would question cultural practices of self-entrepreneurialization and self-precarization and even point to the urban politics of property rights.

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