



KURISMAA – MACHINE
Estonian Art 2/2003

1. „I am a painter by profession. A painting of mine, *Light* displayed at the 1982 spring exhibition – in fact I wanted to call it *Reflection of Light* – is currently at an exhibition too.”

1.1 That picture is allegedly still at the exhibition, because apparently it's not possible to take it down any more.

2. The previous sentence (1) is symptomatic: Kurismaa talks about a significant element that shifts space – reflection of light – as something ordinary. The author of original modernist metaphysics says: „Kinetic art offers me the joy of playing.”

2.1 Playing here is not an entertaining activity. Perception is a constructive process, where the activity as an act of the perceiver plays an important role. If the emotional level of the activity does not pass a certain threshold, the activity is not perceived as playful, and the playful is an inseparable part of culture.

3. In this labyrinth a thought moves as pure desire: „I have finished the model of a light object designated for the hall of the Designers' House. It will be one metre high, with moving lights and probably some sound.”

4. The dialectics of one's vision is formed as follows:

5. „On the one hand kinetic art is the product of an industrialised society – yearning for cleanliness, natural forms – although it is not necessary to oppose one to the other. One of my works stands in front of the administrative building of Northern Electrical Networks.” It is simultaneously hidden in the tentacles of aspiring towards infinity.

6. In the rain, time relays tick and vibrate on huge metal waves, with drops falling on them from the sky: ku-mo no su no ko-bore no-ko-ri-ta-ru ni, a-me mo ka-ri-ta-ru.

7. It is significant that Kurismaa's objects have been surprisingly 'interactive' from the very beginning.

8. This is essentially an invitation to participate in creating an alternative state of consciousness, supported by sounds, texts, ambivalent visuals, pop-aesthetics, the streamlined forms of industrial design, etc. It contains a techno-shamanist wholeness; the aspects here are non-escape lines. Tension + integrity = tensegrity, environment and movement. The objects express/describe only themselves as sleeping conjurers, the ataraxic system based on inter-actionism is constructed in the mind.

9. A simple click of a button produces a micro-shift into a new reality, and the mythological 'door' that has become familiar in the pop culture vocabulary in its best esoteric meaning is opened. With a tiny perceptive act a whole new field of meaning is achieved.

9. Borges thought of the world beyond as a library, whereas for Kurismaa it could be a chill-out environ-

ment where, leaning back in an armchair with an innovative shape, one watches a gadget dripping sounds.

10. Attention departs through the ears, and cool words, such as 'panorama', 'institute', 'engineer', 'electronics', 'high voltage', 'galaxy', and 'neo-sphere', float around. In spring you stand at the edge of a ditch beside a flower, compass in hand, and find that you are in fact a plastic doll: the Luarvik Luarvik syndrome*.

11. You start talking about sounds instead of music, texts instead of literature; instead of talking about art you smile shrewdly: the way out of the middle world is through optimism and checked follies.

12. The culmination of the feature *Schlager* (1982), about the behind-the-scenes goings-on in the Estonian pop culture world, is the apocalyptic appearance of a huge, very Kurismaaesque, blinking light object above girls prancing to the rhythm of aerobics disco music.

13. Ten years earlier, in the mid-1970s, Kurismaa took part in turning the first Soviet Prog-Rock Group concerts of Sven Grünberg's Mess into experimental multimedia performances. Western rock and Oriental mentality were no ideological weapons to the academic treatment of culture and the torment of Soviet reality; simple specific things are beyond description: Grünberg's macro-music, audio-primeval yoga, the blending of archetypal upper and lower sounds in the body on the one hand, and the micro-shifts titillating Kurismaa's consciousness on the other (see 8).

14. True social and political allusions are practically absent in Kurismaa's work, but it is an excellent example of Union-pop (Lapin's term for Soviet Union pop art), a TV set called *Avant-garde*, one of the very first 'domestic machines' at the time. *Avant-garde* contains Kurismaa's kinetic object, the movement and sound of which can be regulated by manipulating the TV set's knobs. I would place this work on the cover of *History of Modern Estonian Art*. As for me, for years now I have kept Kurismaa's short message in my phone: ”:”.

* Luarvik Luarvik – character from Arkadi & Boris Strugatsky's science fiction novel *Hotel of the Perished Alpinist*. Kaarel Kurismaa was one of the artists for Grigori Kromanov's cult film, made in Soviet Estonia in 1979; the composer was Sven Grünberg. Luarvik Luarvik is a stranger, an alien, and a robot who, judging by his behaviour, could be mistaken for an LSD-smoking autistic schizophrenic. The name is used by Kurismaa's students, artists Mihkel Kleis and Andres Lõo, while performing experimental psychedelic space-jazz-rock. (Author)

Kiwa

(1975), painter, sound, text and performance artist whose work is often regarded as „neopop” and „transpop”.
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