



Commercial- and office building in the Rotermann-quarter, KOKO architects, Photo: Kaido Haagen

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DAZ FORUM

## BOOM/ROOM

New Estonian Architecture

20.05. – 01.08.2010

+++ BOOM/ROOM presents outstanding examples of contemporary architecture from Estonia which interact in a special way with the urban context. The exhibition deals with the building boom in the Baltic Republic since the mid 1990's. However, in consequence of the fast-paced building activities in many places fragmented urban spaces emerged. For this reason the architects' responsibility to create new buildings with a high spatial, cultural and social quality is all the more important. BOOM/ROOM therefore shows successful Estonian architecture which interacts with the user and the surroundings by creating new types of urban movement, communication and living. +++

**EXHIBITION:** 20.05. – 01.08.2010 // DAZ Taut Saal  
Tue to Fri 12.00 am - 7.00 pm, Sat + Sun 2.00 pm - 7.00 pm  
Admission: 3,00 EUR / reduced 1,50 EUR

**PRESS PREVIEW:** 19.05.2010, 7.00 PM // DAZ Taut Saal

**PANORAMA ESTLAND:** 19.05.2010, 5.30 PM // DAZ Taut Saal

Short lectures by:

Ülar Mark, Chairman Estonian Centre of Architecture

Triin Ojari, Architectural historian, Editor-in-chief of MAJA Estonian Architectural Review

Martin Aunin, Architect, recipient of the Young Estonian Architect of the Year award 2010

**OPENING:** 19.05.2010, 7.30 PM // DAZ Taut Saal

Speakers:

Dr. Mart Laanemäe, Ambassador of the Republic Estonia

Kristien Ring, Director DAZ

Ülar Mark, Chairman Estonian Centre of Architecture



Pärnu City Centre Gym, KAVAKAVA architects, Photo: Kaido Haagen

Berlin, May 2010. BOOM/ROOM presents outstanding examples of contemporary architecture from Estonia which interact in a special way with the urban context. The exhibition deals with the building boom in the Baltic Republic since the mid 1990's.

In the course of rapid economic growth between 2000 and 2008, the appearance and atmosphere of Estonia's cities transformed decidedly. At the same time the dream of many Estonians came true: to work in a large western-style city and to live in a private home with a garden. However, in consequence of the fast-paced building activities and inadequate planning principles, in many places fragmented urban spaces emerged. For this reason the architects' responsibility to create new buildings with a high spatial, cultural and social quality is all the more important. BOOM/ROOM therefore shows successful Estonian architecture which interacts with the user and the surroundings by creating new types of urban movement, communication and living. The exhibition is divided by nine topics that reflect the important spheres of the period's building landscape:

### Big City Lights

The inhabitants of the small state of Estonia are longing for the metropolis already since the beginning of the 20th century. The Greater-Tallinn-design of the famous Finish architect Eliel Saarinen from this time and the utopian high-rise-projects from the 1960s were because of historical congruity never realized. But in the new century the appearance of Tallinn's city center rapidly changed. However the densification and high-rising of the city is not the result of sustainable planning. Private developers concentrated their activities on the most densely populated part of the city. Thereby a commerce and traffic oriented environment arose, leaving only little space to the city's inhabitants. Nevertheless there are also positive examples of new buildings, which contribute to a livable urban space: The area of the former Rotermann-factory is changing into a dense and vivid urban quarter.

### Culture and Symbols

In addition to practical utilization architecture also has an important communicative role. A building can transmit political messages, visualize national identities and create cultural solidarity. In the case of important cultural institutions designed in the new Estonian era, one can notice two different approaches: In one case, symbolism and timelessness is emphasized with the help of the language of monumental form; in the second case, a simple open and flexible platform is created that lets its content, rather the building itself, dominate.

### Municipalities Build

The boom-era construction was based mostly in the country's capital and was in the hands of private investors. At the same time, there were positive examples of the desire and daring of local governments and the modernization of urban space. Although only the larger cities and

every fifth rural municipality have city architects, it is gratifying that a number of young architects interested in urban planning, who have graduated from Architecture Department of the Estonia Academy of Arts, are ready to stand for the common good and start working as city architects, with all the ensuring responsibility and bureaucracy, instead of establishing their own offices. In recent years, the activism of young and enthusiastic city officials has resulted in architectural competitions producing youthful and playful projects for cultural and educational institutions, as well as public space. A small separate group is comprised of specially commissioned educational institutions that are welcome addition to the underfinanced local educational landscape.

### Modern Work Environments

The keywords of a contemporary work environment are openness, flexibility and a smooth flow of information. An employer who takes care of his employees will also consider break rooms and how to spend leisure time, since today, most people spend more time at work than at home. Undoubtedly, a high-quality and creative environment has a positive impact on work productivity and company's success. A building with superior architecture also functions as living intermediary for the identity and values of an institution. The topic is a broad setting for a small selection of modern work environments, office and manufacturing buildings of very different scales and serving very different functions, presented in the exhibition – from the planned national broadcasting building that aspires to be a symbolic structure to a homey building of a forest district in a picturesque corner of a woods.

### Spaces of Leisure

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, cruise ships with thousands of tourists added little Estonia, with its capital's medieval Old Town and its untouched nature, to their itineraries. With the subsequent increase of consumer power, the ways that the local population spends its leisure time also changed, and demand increased for ready-made products from the leisure industry. The sanatoriums that provided vacations and health recreation during the Soviet period have today been replaced by modern spas. Water parks and health centers can be found throughout Estonia, which offer stressed working people suffering everything they need – diversified consumption opportunities and relaxation for the body and soul. Tourism is based on singularity, the uniqueness of a place, and personal services – hotel owners also understood this. Increasingly, cozy lodgings with distinctive high-quality architecture do spring up next to anonymous boxlike hotels.

### Layers of Time

The various periods of Estonian history are very legible – visible in the local urban texture; no era has succeeded in totally erasing the marks left by the previous period. Fragmentation and an abundance of contrasts give Tallinn its unique appearance. Adding a contemporary layer onto the existing structure to develop something new, while preserving the old, is a delicate undertaking and assumes a masterful responsiveness to place, form and material. The pain thresholds of architects and preservationists in regard to new and old will probably always differ, although when they collide, they can develop a point of balance between mutually adaptable ideas that gives birth to something new. If there will always be those who are skeptical about the construction of modern buildings in the Old Town, then there is a considerably more optimistic and creative attitude toward reawakening life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial quarters that has always been successfully initiated in some of the important districts of Tallinn's city center.

### Old Neighborhoods

The old peaceful and green wooden settlements located adjacent to the city center continue to provide underappreciated alternatives to fast-paced and expensive city life and car-centered suburban idylls. The wooden settlements that developed during the industrialization and rapid urbanization of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and were conclusively shaped during the inter-war period, were considered to be decaying districts deserving demolition during the Soviet period. Even in the flurry of construction that followed the restoration of independence, many historical buildings were ruined with plastic windows and unsuitable

extensions. Today, these unique city center suburbs have been declared to be of cultural and environmental value; attempts are being made to renovate them; and developers and architects can be found that value the spirit of these places and want to add vitality to these areas by providing contemporary living conditions that suit the atmosphere of these districts. Another type of housing erected for accommodating working people – Soviet-era panelized housing – is also related to this topic. How to humanize these grey and ugly residential districts is still an unresolved issue, but there are some endeavors to give these areas new life by building new apartment buildings and public institutions.

### **New Neighborhoods**

Increases in the living standard and favorable rates for bank loans fulfilled the dream of thousands of Estonians to escape grey panelized districts or decaying neighborhoods of natural areas at the edge of town. Often the advantage of personal space and a yard were outweighed by the discomforts of car-dependent lifestyle and lack of infrastructure. Urban sprawl continues to be a problem in local residential constructions and planning although the market has diversified with time. Today, clients have been disappointed by the poor quality of life in the quickly and cheap built, as well as the ugly, new developments and clients have learned to know what they really want. More attention is being paid to the surroundings outside the four walls of one's home and to the diversity of typological living alternatives. The living environments on display include both budget solutions and true luxury, while the connective trait is a contribution to the environment – by creating it a new or making use of what exists.

### **Ideal Home**

An Estonian's ideal home is a private house. Many of these are built in developed suburbs, on wind-swept fields, as well as tucking in forest by the sea. Despite the numerous contrary examples resulting from the boom of new development villages, a positive Estonian characteristic is the relatively popular custom of commissioning an original design for your home from an architect. For the owners of private homes, an architect-designed house guarantees personal solutions and a certainty of quality, while small scale provides the architect with the opportunity to execute creative ideas and test new architectural ideas. Especially the younger generation prefers an approach for site-specific homes that thoroughly analyzes the nature of the lot, space relationships as well as people's movement. The preliminary work results in unique architecture that conforms to the specific place and owner.

**Curator:** Pille Epner

**Project Team:** Karli Luik, Margit Mutso, Inga Raukas

**Designer of the exhibition:** Inga Raukas

**Graphic designer:** Tuuli Aule

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BOOM/ROOM is an exhibition by the Union of Estonian Architects, presented by the Estonian Centre of Architecture. The exhibition curator is Pille Epner. The exhibition is part of the festival program "90 years Estonian Embassy in Berlin" and is supported by the Estonian Embassy in Berlin, the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, the Union of Estonian Architects and the Estonian Centre of Architecture.

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BUUM/RUUM  
UUS EESTI ARHITEKTUUR

BOOM/ROOM  
NEW ESTONIAN ARCHITECTURE



A project by:



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OF ARCHITECTURE KESKUS

We kindly thank:



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Press photos on request

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### **01**

Commercial- and apartment building, Tallinn, 2009

Architects: KOSMOS

Photo: Paco Ulman



### **02**

Commercial- and office building in the Roter-mann Quarter, Tallinn, 2008

Architects: KOKO architects

Photo: Kaido Haagen



### **03**

Pärnu Central Library, 2008

Architects: 3+1 architects

Photo: Kaido Haagen



**04**

City Plaza, Office building and business centre,  
Tallinn, 2006

Architects: Alver Trummal Architects

Foto: Tiit Veermäe



**05**

Private house in Nõmme, Tallinn, 2007

Architect: Martin Aunin

Photo: Kaido Haagen



**06**

Pärnu City Centre Gym, 2005

Architects: KAVAKAVA architects

Photo: Kaido Haagen



**07**

Lotte Kindergarten, Tartu

Architects: KAVAKAVA architects

Photo: Martin Siplane