



ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS

Faculty of Fine Arts

Contemporary Art

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Museum of the 20th Century Archeology

MA Thesis

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Tallinn 2023

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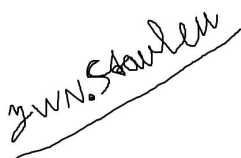
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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Chapter 1: The intersection of art and archeology	5-6
Chapter 2: How my practice has evolved during my studies at EKA	7-9
Chapter 3: Construction Aesthetic?	10-11
Chapter 4: How I relate to my environment	12-14
Chapter 5: Social and ecological spaces	15-16
Chapter 6: Museum of the 20th Century Archeology	17-18
Conclusion	19
Abstract	20-21
20. sajandi arheoloogiamuuseum	22-23
Bibliography	24-25
Illustrations	26-45
CV	46
Appendix	

Introduction

I will structure my research starting with examples of artists who work on the intersection between art and archaeology. I will examine the differences between an artistic practice and an archeological one. I will also explore how the element of collecting and categorising will fit in my practice.

Then I will be going through a selection of projects I did during the last three years of my study at EKA and where it led me. I will be examining how I started with using an online archive of images that I saw around me, and how that slowly evolved my artistic practice to a very site specific approach.

In the process I try to identify the commonalities between these works and open up the term “Construction Aesthetic” I am striving towards. In this chapter I will try to explore the fundamental differences in the maintenance of buildings between Estonia and my home country the Netherlands.

In the following chapter I explore how I view my environment. I start with discussing the idea of making an immersive art installation and continue with describing how different architecture and public utilities like street lights can completely change the experience of a space.

I then examine how a project can bring something positive to my environment. I will examine examples of artists who work with building waste for communal projects but also artists who let their works become one with nature.

The final chapter will go in depth into my “Museum of 20th Century Archeology”. The museum will be a place where found building fragments are categorised and displayed as archeological artefacts. I will examine what led me to this idea and lay out how I want to approach it.

The intersection of art and archeology

According to the artist Heidi Linck, who works in the intersection of art and archeology, an artist and an archeologist have different end goals. Archeological research lays the emphasis on uncovering the history of an object or a space, but artistic research takes the history of an object or a space and has as its end goal to create an artistic work.¹

When I interviewed Linck, we talked about her work *Panorama Fibula* in which she was commissioned to build a Roman watchtower in the Dutch village of Loo, not far from a Roman Castellum.² However, she did note that she didn't find the historical look of these Roman watchtowers architecturally very interesting. She instead decided to take the shape from a completely different archaeological object, a Roman jewellery called fibula³. She mentioned this as an example of how an artist only goes so far in the need for archeological research and at one point needs to have a turning point where the artistic research differs from historical research – the research needs to lead to an artistic work.

The Icelandic artist Þorgerður Ólafsdóttir also explored this in her work *Numinjar (Now Remains)*. In 2014 she was invited to observe and register an archaeological excavation in Iceland. She got fascinated with the top layer of soil that was being removed because, according to the archeologists, it was trash. After this she started a project with the research department of the National Museum of Iceland to examine the objects in this top layer that contains objects less than hundred years old and therefore not considered archeological artefacts. As part of her research and her collaboration with the museum, she photographed the plastic objects, and gave them a visual presence in the museum's registry. Like this, contemporary artefacts that are often discarded, became accessible as a part of the archeological record.⁴

The installations of the artist Mark Dion whose practice is very much grounded in collecting and archiving, have a similar approach. In a lecture from 2010⁵, he gives an explanation on how he collects and organises found materials. He talks about having a strong fascination with the curiosity cabinets as an early model for the European institution that would later become the museum. One of his early big projects in 1999 was to “excavate” the banks around the Thames near the Tate Gallery in London. Dion and a large group of volunteers combed the mud and gravel around the river to find objects and items of varying value. All of these items were loosely categorised by sort. After that Dion made multiple display cases, for them to be exhibited in the Tate Gallery. The display cases had a similar visual language as a

¹ Heidi Linck, conversation with the author, 22.03.2023. Author's notes.

² H. Linck, *Panorama Fibula*, 2022, <https://www.heidilinck.nl/commissions/panoramafibula>

³ Merian-Webster dictionary definition of a Fibula: “a clasp resembling a safety pin used especially by the ancient Greeks and Romans” Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fibula>

⁴ Þ. Ólafsdóttir, *Numinjar (Now Remains)*, 2014 Source: <https://thorgerdurolafsdottir.info/now-remains>

⁵ Mark Dion Lecture, Master of Fine Arts, California College of Art, 15.10.2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5yB2thWxBI>

museum display, however, unlike a museum, there was no additional text giving insight into the items.⁶ In the lecture Dion points out that local archeologists did not consider it to be a good site for excavation because the site was “contaminated”.⁷

This for me creates a fascinating dynamic because the area I find myself working within includes elements from approaches of both an artist and an archeologist. Similarly to the examples I brought above, I am also looking for a commonality between everyday objects and historical artefacts, questioning why one is considered having a higher value than the other and therefore worth preserving. How can I as an artist attempt to preserve the “invaluable”?

⁶ M. Dion, *Tate Thames Dig*, Tate Gallery, 1999,

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dion-tate-thames-dig-t07669>

⁷ W. Viney, Mark Dion and the *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999 and extract, 04.05.2010, weblog *Narrating Waste*
<https://narratingwaste.wordpress.com/2010/05/04/mark-dion-and-tate-thames-dig-1999-an-extract/>

How my practice has evolved during my studies at EKA

One of the first things I did when I moved to Tallinn in 2020 was to start up a second Instagram account.⁸ The account has the name *Bijelkaarraapseltjes* – with spaces: *Bij elkaar raapseltjes* which is a bent form of the Dutch sentence *bij elkaar rapen*, which roughly translates into “grabbing together” or “gathering together”. In this bent form it means “little things that are gathered together”, however, because it is not specified what these “things” are, it can be anything from physical objects to concepts and ideas.

This Instagram account is a collection of moments that fascinate me. These images are mostly of construction – buildings or structures that are in some form of repair or on the contrary, in decay. For instance, electricity wires hanging out of a wall that still need lamps fixed to them or houses with doors and windows not yet installed. Buildings in a state of transformation.

I see my Instagram account as an archive which has turned into a continuous project. At the time I’m writing this, I have 2283 pictures. This for me has been a very clear focal point in the search for my visual language. Also it has turned into a search for how I relate to my environment and how I can translate it into my practice as a visual artist. Collecting images and creating a narrative through all of them helped me to realise a commonality that has been going through my practice. All my thoughts, ideas and works have more in common than I initially thought. They all follow the same visual language. The materials are often from building supply stores or salvaged from construction containers. So in colour and texture they are very similar to the moments I capture in my photographs.

These images formed the basis of my MA studies at the Estonian Academy of Arts. I started working with found construction material and during the first year of my studies I realised a series of sculptures made of construction waste. I literally started diving into construction dumpsters and using material from there to create and assemble my sculptures (*ill. 1 & 2*).

This brought me to experimenting with sketches and models I made for my sculptural work, resulting in an assemblage of all these moments I captured (*ill. 3, 4 & 5*). I was also very reliant on making collages of found images from books (*ill. 6 & 7*) during both Corona-waves – this helped me to keep making work because at the time I had limited materials available. So I already had some experience with combining imagery into a new form. These sketches with combined elements formed the basis for a large sculpture which I showed at the Young Sculptor Award in 2021⁹ (*ill. 8*). The sculpture was an assemblage of all the moments I photographed in this time period. These included photos of free standing walls, loosely

⁸ Instagram: *bijelkaarraapseltjes*, 2020-ongoing, <https://www.instagram.com/bijelkaarraapseltjes/>

⁹ The Young Sculptor Award, or *Noore Skulptori Preemia*, is a yearly award exhibition initiated by the Sculpture and Installation department at EKA. The exhibition for the 2021 edition: 25.02.2021 - 06.03.2021, Ars Project Space.

peeling yellow paint, broken floorboards and broken rain pipes. I combined all these elements together in a large free standing structure where I played with details of colour and material.

For the exhibition *Second Act*¹⁰ in Viljandi I made a sculpture recreating a moment I experienced while walking through the old town in Tallinn. The moment captured was of a piece of police tape used to close off parts of the sidewalk when there is ice, moving in the wind while attached to a lamppost. I recreated this moment by making a false wall out of wood and “brick wallpaper”. I included a working lamppost and attached some police tape onto it. Lastly, I added a visible desk fan that created the wind that moved the police tape (*ill. 9*).¹¹

Around 2020 I did a project at the Volta Showcase, nowadays called the Infinite Life gallery.¹² The exhibition space is nothing more than a display window which one can exhibit the artwork in. I was fascinated by the rain drainage pipes which were outwardly visible on the buildings in Tallinn – this is in stark contrast with the Netherlands where the drainage pipes are integrated into the building and therefore become somewhat invisible. I decided to recreate one of these pipes and attach it to the display window. I kept hearing from people that no one saw it. It was so well merged into the environment and it was interesting to see a sculpture just blend into the public space like that. It was one of the first instances where I explored aspects of site specific art (*ill. 10*).

I explored a different site specific approach for an exhibition I had in Riga.¹³ When I first visited Riga I became intrigued by the different cables hanging all around the streets. Later, I started going back to Riga through Google Street View to see how these cables were laid and how they interacted with the public space (*ill. 11 & 12*). They have a dominating presence and are visible all over the streets, often also attached to the houses. The lower cables are for lights and for public transport, the upper cables used to be for internet and telephone communication. Although nowadays most of them go underground, the unused cables are still attached to the buildings and remind us of a time when they had a clear function in this space. From that point I started working on the exhibition set-up that connected a series of wires to a central point. All these wires were connected to lamps spread throughout the space. The lamps turned on and off as you moved through the space creating a constantly shifting environment (*ill. 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17*).

A year ago I applied for the Copper Leg Residency with a project combining the ruins of old Soviet buildings with the idea of archeology. Copper Leg Residency is located near the borough of Jüri. I found an abandoned building (*ill. 18, 19 & 20*) across from the Jüri church which had no roof but only a series of freestanding walls suggesting a floorplan of a building that was not there anymore.

¹⁰ *Second Act*, Koidu Seltsimaja, Viljandi, 2021, curated by K. Ritval, 04.06.2021 - 06.06.2021

¹¹ Video registration of the work: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPTXn-kFZ8M/>

¹² *Delay Your Stop*, Volta Showcase (now Infinite Life gallery), 05.11.2020 - Volta Showcase is an art display window in the middle of a brick wall near the Volta tram stop.

¹³ *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, Riga, 6th of October-22nd of October 2022

At this point I had to think about the archeological site just outside the city of Utrecht which I used to visit a lot when I was still studying there. The site is the Vechten Fortress and used to be a roman fortress named *Castellum Fectio*. Because there are no visible remains of this fortress, a design company was hired to recreate the outline of the fortress as a blueprint in the landscape (*ill. 21 & 22*).¹⁴ Both of these structures have a similar visual language. They are both an architectural blueprint of a larger building that used to stand there. Literally remnants of a former space, even though the later example is a reconstruction. This visual correlation gave me the idea to start doing “archeological research” into the site of the abandoned building in Jüri. Starting by inspecting it and mapping it out and then eventually bringing it together into an artistic presentation.

During my residency in Copper Leg I found out that the building was originally functioning as a church manor and burned down during the 1960s.¹⁵ With this knowledge I started making a maquette of the current state of the building. (*Ill. 23 & 24*) For a long time I was contemplating how I could use this maquette and how I could extend it into something more. During one long walk from Tallinn to Vaskjala I started to organise my thoughts. I was playing around with the idea of making a *No Maintenance Museum* in which you walk through the abandoned space in a guided way. I was considering inviting local artists to make public sculptures related to important historical events in the area. It would be a “no maintenance museum” in the way that it would evolve in harmony with nature and would also not require any costs in upkeep, electricity, staff while still functioning as a museum space. This idea later turned into more of a project proposal for an open air art space. The research I did during this residency became a prequel to the artistic component of this thesis. I will elaborate on this later in the text.

¹⁴ E. Klarenbeek & M. Drost, *Castellum Fectio*, 2016, Located in Vechten

¹⁵ It was communicated to me by Janno Bergmann and Toomas Aru during my Copper Leg Residency.

Construction Aesthetic?

I came to the conclusion that my work is based around the idea I like to call “Construction Aesthetic”. So the question then is, What is this “Construction Aesthetic”?

The “Construction Aesthetic” comes from the different practical ways I’ve seen people repair their houses in Tallinn and rural Estonia. Walls, windows and other fragments of a building's exterior are often repaired by the residents themselves. For this a variety of handy materials and tools are used, such as expanding foam, assembly kit and support beams. For instance, I recently passed a wall with a 5 centimetre ceramic wall put in front of it, behind that wall was a 30 centimetre layer of styrofoam plates. Above this wall which was about a metre and a half high, a plate of styrofoam was attached with expandable foam (*ill. 25, 26 & 27*). These materials prioritise functionality over aesthetics and that gives the repair work a very distinct appearance. The very practical reasoning “I have a problem and I want to fix it now” is a big part of this appearance.

The entire idea of fixing your own house, I experience that as not a part of Dutch society anymore. I grew up in a household that belongs to the part of the society where people don't have the practical skills to do little maintenance jobs around the house. If a house needed to be painted or if something needed to be fixed, my parents would hire a company for electricity, for plumbing, for anything related to repairs. In some neighbourhoods in the Netherlands you even have to ask municipal approval to paint your house. An example of this is a case from a couple of years ago: there was a woman in the Dutch city of Den Helder who decided to paint her house neon green. The neighbours complained that it didn't fit with the rest of the neighbourhood's aesthetic and even complained to the municipality. This incident eventually led to the court forcing the woman to repaint her house.¹⁶

Related to this, in my personal experience there is an overall level of sameness in the Dutch streets which is a direct contrast to many of the streets in Tallinn. From the 1960s onwards there were a lot of newly designed neighbourhoods popping up in the Netherlands. We call them *forensensteden* or commuter cities.¹⁷ These new houses were being built for families so they can create a safe living environment for their children to grow up while they commute to work in the nearby cities. Most of these neighbourhoods were built quite fast and according to a strict plan, causing them to look almost identical. This also comes partially from housing scarcity after the second world war.¹⁸

¹⁶ ‘Appeltjesgroen’ huis moet van de rechter een nieuwe kleur krijgen, newswebsite [nu.nl](https://www.nu.nl/opmerkelijk/5997602/appeltjesgroen-huis-den-helder-moet-van-rechter-nieuwe-kleur-krijgen.html), 24.09.2019, <https://www.nu.nl/opmerkelijk/5997602/appeltjesgroen-huis-den-helder-moet-van-rechter-nieuwe-kleur-krijgen.html>

¹⁷ Forenzen / forens / forensisme - Betekenis van deze termen, Historyblog *Historiek*, 24.09.2022, <https://historiek.net/forenzen-forens-betekenis/128712/>

¹⁸ *Wederopbouw*, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, <https://www.cultureelerfgoed.nl/onderwerpen/wederopbouw>

This did create a contrast for me. I came to Tallinn thinking the “street image”¹⁹ was much less monotonous and much more authentic than I experienced in the Netherlands. By making sure every house looks similar to your neighbour’s you destroy a form of individuality.

¹⁹ *straatbeeld*, meaning “street image” - a Dutch word describing the look and atmosphere of a street

How I relate to my environment

During my first year of Bachelor I became fascinated with immersive experiences in art. Let me first clarify what I mean by that. Let's dissect the terms. The Merian-Webster dictionary definition of "immersive" is:

*providing, involving, or characterized by deep absorption or immersion in something (such as an activity or a real or artificial environment)*²⁰

So immersive experience in art provides this deep absorption into experiencing the artwork.

Thinking about the term, a very important artwork for me was *Black Box/Chambre Noir* by William Kentridge which I saw in 2012 exhibited in the Jewish History Museum in Amsterdam. It was displayed as a very dark and serious puppet theatre with references to Nazi-Germany and colonialism. It was one of the first times I saw an artwork that heavily used sound, movement and light to create an intricate immersive experience. In hindsight it left a lasting impression on me.²¹

Because of this, I strived to recreate such an one-on-one experience between the audience and the artwork – I wanted to create an experience which was the equivalent of cycling through the fields and seeing a beautiful sunset and at that very moment only you and this sunset exist. Clearly this need for creating immersive experiences in my art slowly evolved into a need to understand the spaces that are around me and trying to integrate them into my artistic practice.

Growing up in Veenendaal there was a little second-hand bookstore. It was located on the roundabout between my parents' house and the town centre. I remember vividly where this building stood. When you entered there would be stacks of books against all the walls, and at the end of the hallway was the bookstore owner with a big grey beard behind the counter. The physical location is not there anymore but sometimes I still walk past the empty plot and remember this place. The memory of a place can be so strongly linked to a location.

When I was in my early twenties I used to live near Nijmegen not far from the German border. Back then I visited Germany and I always noticed that there was a different feeling or different atmosphere to the country even though it was just a couple of kilometres from my house. To me, everything just felt completely different. I noticed how houses and spaces are designed differently in Germany and the Netherlands, how they have a completely different proximity to each other. Also little things made it feel so completely different, even though geographically, these countries are bordering with each other. The traffic signs were a

²⁰ Merriam-Webster dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immersive>

²¹ W. Kentridge, *Black Box / Chambre Noir*, 2005, displayed 16.06.2012 - 25.12.2012, *Joods Historisch Museum*, Amsterdam

different colour, had different lettering, different typography on them. “Street furniture” – a widely used Dutch term for traffic signs, park benches, mailboxes, street lanterns and such – was very distinguishably designed in the Netherlands following a specific pattern on how they should look.

I remember when industrial designer Friso Kramer died in 2019. I had never heard of him before but read in his obituary that he designed almost all of the streetlights in the Netherlands.²² I immediately recognised the design. It was the same as the street light that was always outside my window when I was growing up.²³ At one point I participated in an exhibition²⁴ with the Dutch artist Leon de Bruijne who used this same cone-shape design of the street lanterns to turn them into a spinning top for a performance.²⁵ Before introducing his performance he asked if everyone was aware what these were. It was a Dutch crowd and everyone recognised them of course as street lanterns – he explained that in Belgium the audience did not recognise them. This interaction stood out to me. There are these two countries next to each other, with both of them speaking partly the same language²⁶, yet both have a completely different frame of reference when it comes to the public space.

When I was younger, I often felt that the German cities were grim or gloomy. Only later did I realise that this had a lot to do with the fact that a lot of German cities were completely bombed or destroyed during the Second World War. They had to, in a short amount of time, be rebuilt in the post-war period when the easiest material available was concrete. Therefore most structures have this practical blocky shape. This post-war architecture prioritised functionality over aesthetics. The entire “street image” changed from a historical one to a quickly constructed practical one.²⁷ This fits in with the experience of sameness I mentioned above.

In certain villages I've seen in the Netherlands, there's also a gloomy presence however in a different way. There has been a big migration of younger people towards the bigger cities. We actually have a word for it: *vergrijzing*, which means “the act of greying”. It is often the case that younger people leave these villages for the bigger cities for study and work and the population of the village is becoming older, so it is turning more “grey”.²⁸ I have experienced walking through shopping streets in these “greying” Dutch villages a couple of times. To me it always feels like this entire shopping street was stuck in the nineties. For instance, clothing

²² L. den Besten, *Een nuchtere lantaarnpaal*, 19.10.2002, Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/een-nuchtere-lantarenpaal~b2c8b583/>

²³ F. Kramer, *Friso Kramer Paaltoparmatuur*, 1960, https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friso_Kramer_Paaltoparmatuur

²⁴ *Kaalstaart, Festival voor Beta Kunst* (Festival for Beta Art), 5.10.2019-6.10.2019, Amersfoort

²⁵ L. de Bruijne, *Dutch Delight*, 2019

²⁶ Belgium is separated by a language border in the middle of the country. Flanders, the Northern part of Belgium, which has a population of 6,7 million people, is historically the Dutch speaking part of the country. They have the Dutch language as their mother tongue and their media, education, official documents and street signs are all in Dutch.

²⁷ N. Wojcjik and D. Levitz, *Changing Tastes*, 28.04.2010, German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle (DW)*, <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-postwar-buildings-eyesores-or-worthy-of-protection/a-5513760>

²⁸ J. Garssen, *Demografie van de vergrijzing 2011*, 14.06.2011, *Centraal Bureau voor de statistiek (CBS)*, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2011/24/demografie-van-de-vergrijzing>

stores that were selling clothes worn mostly by people of my parents' generation or a cafeteria where the outside sign had turned yellowish from too much sun exposure over a long period of time. Some of the houses are not well maintained so one could see the paint peeling off the walls. It had a feeling of a space outside its correct time and place. This feeling is also something that exists within immersive art. You are not present in the white cube but instead you are present inside the art installation. In the same way you can be present in an outside environment and through many small details start having a very site specific experience with it.

Social and ecological Spaces

I feel when reflecting on one's environment as an artist using an archive or museum format, one should also create a social space that is accessible to the public. As part of the definition of the term "museum" UNESCO uses a phrase *in the service of society*, which I would like to focus on²⁹ I think a museum should be in interaction with the surroundings, especially if it conceptually focuses on our environment, it should also give something back to it. There are several social or ecological projects that reflect on building waste and material while engaging with the public.

An example of a space gaining a very important function for its surroundings I encountered during my BA studies in HKU. One of my peers, Angelina Kumar, started a pop-up shop called *Lucrative Dumpster Diving* where she donated free material to art students who would use it for their work. The "materials" were, for instance, wood and metal found in construction dumpsters so she was recycling discarded building materials. Later she got more materials donated to her from, for instance, a concert stage who had unused old spotlights to give. The project started with a physical shop location inside the school, built from construction wood and pallets. Later she introduced a subscription system and built a location on the *Nijverheid*, a creative hub area in Utrecht similar to Telliskivi in Tallinn. In addition, at one point she even organised residencies with this idea.³⁰

I also want to mention the *Eco Cathedral* which is an ongoing project by Louis le Roy. Le Roy had a background in visual art, however, he also called himself an "ecotect", a blend between the words "architect" and "ecology". In the 1970s he purchased a plot of land from the Dutch municipality of Heerenveen. He then started creating a garden and asked road maintenance workers to deposit their building waste materials in the park. From here he started to build structures out of this building waste – he used no cement so that the plants could grow between the bricks and the structure could evolve and change with nature. The project is therefore also always expanding and always growing. It was called the *Eco Cathedral* in reference to mediaeval cathedrals that took generations long to finish. Le Roy died in 2012, and the construction on this project is still ongoing.³¹ A group of volunteers have taken over the construction and maintenance of this project. This shifted the creative decisions surrounding the garden from one visual artist to a diverse group of people. While maintaining the foundations laid out by Le Roy.³²

²⁹ Definition of 'Museum' on the website of UNESCO: *Non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.* <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/museum>

³⁰ A. Kumar, *Lucrative Dumpster Dives*, 2017-ongoing, <https://lucrative dumpster dives.nl/>

³¹ L. Le Roy, *Eco Cathedral*, 1970-ongoing, situated in Mildam, <https://www.ecokathedraal.nl/nl/teksten-over-de-ecokathedraal/time-based-architecture-bouwen-met-tijd>

³² Correspondence with the Eco Cathedral on 13.04.2023

It is remarkable that a project like the Eco Cathedral exists in such a bureaucratic country like the Netherlands. Because the country is very densely built and most of the land is agricultural, letting a small plot grow wild from a Dutch perspective means “letting nature reclaim things”. By contrast a small plot of farmland being reclaimed by nature is much more noteworthy in the Netherlands than it is, for instance, in a nature rich country like Estonia – thus, Estonia would provide a very fertile ground for my “No Maintenance Museum” idea where the artefacts would over time blend into nature. In a similar way the 1981 public sculpture *Marsh Ruins* by artist Beverly Buchanan was built with the idea that it would barely be noticeable. She called it an environmental sculpture. A sculpture where the experience changes depending on the season, light, climate and weather. It should not be restored while it slowly crumbles and gets reclaimed by nature.³³ I do like the environment reclaiming it however I feel a museum should be a space accessible to the public and not become dangerous to access. So I do not intend to completely let the “no maintenance museum” decay. Some upkeep and maintenance is needed to keep the walls from not falling on a visitor for instance. I also like the idea of not only letting nature but also the visitors interacting with the space in their own way. Like using it as a picnic spot, smoking spot or spraying graffiti on the sculptures.

³³ A. Groom, *Beverly Buchanan: Marsh Ruins*, 202, page 13-15

Museum of the 20th Century Archeology

I helped out with an archeological dig for one day in the old town in Tallinn somewhere in late 2021. This happened after I met an Estonian archeologist and she said that actually they are always looking for people to help them dig. I wanted to experience this because my parents were part of archeological excavations in Jordan during their studies in the 1980s. My father did his thesis on archeological findings, so it is an intergenerational fascination which I was brought up with. Besides having grown up with a natural curiosity for archeology, it also felt like a good moment to explore these fascinations from the artistic perspective.

I had to think about this experience when I started the Copper Leg Residency and decided to take the ruins of the former church manor as my point of departure. This building was in close proximity to a very important archeological site in Estonia, there has been almost continuous habitation there since the neolithic period.³⁴ I became curious about the combination of archeology and more recent ruins. This led to my idea to create a space that turned the building fragments of these ruins into important archeological artefacts called The Museum of 20th Century Archeology. The name refers to the idea that the fragments I find are mostly from the last century and I recontextualise them by emphasising them and laying a clearer focus on them. With that my goal is to create a stronger awareness with my public of their surrounding landscape.

When I was young I often visited the Dutch city of Leiden with my parents and especially the National Museum of Antiquities. One of the striking features of that museum is the large Egyptian temple of Taffeh. Unlike a lot of other antiquities, which are colonial looted art, this temple was donated to the museum after the Dutch helped with a giant dam construction project in Egypt.³⁵ This was foundational to my original idea – I started this project with the question what would happen if, instead of an Egyptian temple, I would place one of these decaying contemporary ruins inside the museum lobby. My goal is to rethink the concept of archeological museums in the context of these more recent abandoned spaces around Tallinn and Estonia. I intend to dumpster source the “collection” of this museum by exploring local demolition sites, mostly around the areas where there is a lot of redevelopment. I will display these building fragments or this building waste as great archeological findings and place them on pedestals. Besides creating a display, the museum would also function as an archive because it is important to register and archive the found material in order to preserve elements of the spaces that are being demolished. .

³⁴ Copper Leg Residency lies in Vaskjala (modern Rae Parish), near the borough of Jüri, both formerly part of the historic Jüri Parish. Archaeological evidence, consisting of both loose finds (such as stone and metal axe heads, and coins) and Viking period and later settlement sites, shows that the area has been inhabited by people from the Neolithic period onwards – archaeologist Raija Heikkilä, contacted on 11.04.2023

³⁵ J. de Baaij, *Hoe UNESCO tientallen Egyptische tempels verplaatste*, Artblog *Kunstvensters*, 24.07.2020, <https://kunstvensters.com/2020/07/24/ho-unesco-tientallen-egyptische-tempels-verplaatste/>

I really like the idea of starting a dialogue with people that normally don't notice these spaces that possess the “construction aesthetic” or that are standing in ruins. The exhibition location will be in the Tallinn Art Hall. The ongoing renovation brings in a lot of character to the space. You can currently already see that with the amount of construction going on around it. It is also a space that is centrally located and in close proximity to the strong redevelopment areas in the city. Therefore this presentation should be cleaner and more traditional than the one in the more rural area. I want to invite a number of people from different fields to reflect on the “collection” in the form of a walking tour and an interview. I also ask them to interact with the work. Write about it, make art related to it, categorise it. Whatever fits their expertise. This creates a more active dialogue between the audience and the collection and functions as a way of documenting and archiving the work during the graduation exhibition. Afterwards it will continue to exist as an online archive which I intend to keep working on and activating in various ways.

I also find it important to have a satellite location outside the capital because these rural spaces played such an important part in my research. I intend to build up this satellite in one of these decaying ruins in the countryside. I will also display building fragments here but more according to the No maintenance Museum concepts I laid out earlier in the text. These building fragments will be completely exposed to their environment and they will be in constant interaction with the weather, nature and the audience. So by the end of the week it will look completely different than it did in the beginning.

Conclusion

To my conclusion I feel like there are two strongly recurring approaches to my work at this moment. The first one is the excavating and collecting of the materials. This approach is related to the way Mark Dion and Þorgerður Ólafsdóttir worked in the aforementioned projects – similarly, I plan to excavate and categorise building materials that I find and afterwards put them in a clean setting like a pedestal to recontextualise them. The second approach is the more environmentally engaged site specific art like Buchanan's “environmental sculpture” and Le Roy's *Eco Cathedral*.

Throughout this text I have written about two different types of decaying landscapes here in Estonia. There is the urban landscape in Tallinn and there is the more rural landscape outside of the big cities such as in Jüri but also in the Dutch “greying” villages. To me it is fascinating to put the *Museum of 20th Century Archeology* inside both of these significantly distinct landscapes with different approaches.

Abstract

An artist and an archeologist have different end goals. Archeological research lays the emphasis on uncovering the history of an object or a space, but artistic research takes the history of an object or a space and has as its end goal to create an artistic work. An example of the use of archeology in art is the work *Numinjar (Now Remains)* by Þorgerður Ólafsdóttir from 2014. She photographed the plastic objects found in the top layer of soil at an excavation site, and gave them a visual presence in the museum's registry. Similarly in 1999 Mark Dion and a large group of volunteers "excavated" the banks around the Thames. He then loosely categorised all of these items by sort and showed them in museum display cases. I am exploring this commonality between everyday objects and historical artefacts and questioning why one is considered having a higher value than the other.

I started my studies by creating an Instagram account which was a collection of moments that fascinate me. These images are mostly of construction – buildings or structures that are in some form of repair or on the contrary, in decay. These images formed the basis of my MA studies at EKA. I started working intensely with found construction material. First I combined these elements and they formed the basis for larger sculptures. Later, I developed a more site specific approach which was visible in the projects I did in Volta Showcase in Tallinn and Dom Gallery in Riga. As a prequel to the artistic component of this thesis I explored combining the ruins of old Soviet buildings with the idea of archeology during an artist residency at Copper Leg. I found inspiration in a building that originally functioned as a church manor but burned down during the 1960s. I started playing around with the concept of a No Maintenance Museum in which you walk through the abandoned space in a guided way. It would be "no maintenance" because it would evolve in harmony with nature and would also not require any costs in upkeep, electricity and staff.

I came to the conclusion that my work is based around the idea I like to call "Construction Aesthetic". The "Construction Aesthetic" comes from the different practical ways I've seen people repair their houses in Estonia. Fragments of a building's exterior are often repaired by the residents themselves using a variety of handy materials. This is in high contrast to my experiences within the part of Dutch society I come from where people don't have the practical skills to do little maintenance jobs around the house. In my personal experience there is an overall level of sameness in the Dutch streets. However the streets in Tallinn I experience as much less monotonous and much more authentic.

Early on I became fascinated with immersive experiences art. Meaning artworks that provide a deep absorption into the experience. The need for creating immersive experiences in my art slowly evolved into a need to understand the spaces that are around me and trying to integrate them into my artistic practice. In my twenties I often visited just across the border in Germany and I always noticed that there was a different atmosphere than in the Netherlands.

Houses and spaces are designed differently and have a completely different proximity to each other. “Street furniture” – a widely used Dutch term for traffic signs, park benches, mailboxes, street lanterns and such – can also affect the way you experience a street. The population demographic can also be a deciding factor in how a street feels. Some villages in the Netherlands have younger people migrating away from them leaving only the older population. This creates a situation where the shopping streets would resemble the streets you saw 30 years ago, creating thus a space outside of its correct time.

Because I am working with the museum format, I feel I should also create a social space that is accessible to the public. The initiative *Lucrative Dumpster Diving* from Angelina Kumar did this by recycling discarded building materials from construction dumpsters and donating them to art students. In a similar fashion in 1970 Louis Le Roy bought a plot of land and created a garden. From building waste materials he then started to build structures that could be reclaimed by nature. Similarly, in the 1980s Beverly Buchanan experimented with public sculptures where the experience changes depending on the season, light, climate and weather. It should not be restored while it slowly crumbles and gets reclaimed by nature. Something I intend to explore with the “No Maintenance Museum” segment of my project.

I became curious about the combination of archeology and more recent ruins. This led to my idea to create a space that turned the building fragments of these ruins into important archeological artefacts and call it the Museum of the 20th Century Archeology. I intend to dumpster source the “collection” of this museum by exploring local demolition sites. The museum will have two locations. One that is cleaner and more traditional will be on location in the Tallinn Art Hall. The second location will be in an abandoned ruin in the Estonian countryside and following the “No Maintenance Museum” concept I outlined. Afterwards it will continue to exist as an online archive which I intend to keep working on and activating in various ways.

20. sajandi arheoloogiamuuseum

Kunstnikul ja arheoloogil on erinevad eesmärgid. Arheoloogia keskendub esemete ja kohtade ajaloo uurimisele. Loomeuurimuslikuks eesmärgiks on aga eseme või koha ajaloo põhjal kunstiteose loomine.

Näitena arheoloogia ja kunsti põimimisest võib tuua Þorgerður Ólafsdóttiri 2014. aasta näituse „Numinjar“. Kunstnik pildistas arheoloogilistel kaevamistelt pindmisest kihist leitud tänapäevaseid plastesemeid ning andis neile visuaalse kohaloleku muuseumi kataloogis. Teise näitena võib tuua Mark Dioni töö. 1999. aastal sooritas ta koos suure hulga vabatahtlikega „väljakaevamised“ Thamesi jõe kallastel. Seejärel ta grupeeris leiud ja eksponeeris neid muuseumivitriinides. Oma magistritöös võrdlen igapäeva esemeid ajalooliste artefaktidega ja arutlen, miks ühtesid peetakse teistest väärtuslikemaks.

Magistriõpingute alguses avasin Instagrami konto, kuhu postitasin minu jaoks paeluvaid hetki. Enamus fotosid on seotud ehitistega – lagunevad või remonti vajavad hooned. Need pildid kujunesid minu magistriõpingute aluseks EKAs. Asusin intensiivselt tööle leitud ehitismaterjaliga. Kõigepealt ühendasin erinevad elemendid, millega moodustasin suuremaid skulptuure. Hiljem töötasin välja kohaspetsiifilisema lähenemise. Viimane kajastub projektides, mida tegin Tallinnas Volta Showcase'is ja Riias Dom galeriis. Selle lõputöö loomingulise osa eeltoona uurisin Vaskjala Loomeresidentuuris vanade nõukogudeaegsete hoonete varemte ühendamist arheoloogia ideega. Inspiratsiooni leidsin algselt kirikumõisana toiminud, kuid 1960. aastatel maha põlenud hoonest. Hakkasin mängima hooldusvaba muuseumi kontseptsiooniga (No Maintenance Museum), kus külastaja liigub juhitud viisil läbi mahajäetud ruumi. See oleks “hoolduseta”, sest see areneks kooskõlas loodusega ning ei nõuaks ka ülalpidamis-, elektri- ega personalikulusid.

Mu teosed põhinevad ideel, mida kutsun „ehitusesteetikaks“ ja mis on inspireeritud praktilistest viisidest, kuidas eestlased oma kodusid remondivad. Väiksemaid fassaaditöid teevad elanikud tihti ise, kasutades erinevaid käepäraseid materjale. See on suures kontrastis minu kogemustega selles osas Hollandi ühiskonnast, kust ma pärit olen, kus inimestel ei ole praktilisi oskusi, et teha majapidamises väikeseid hooldustöid. Minu isikliku kogemuse põhjal on Hollandi tänavatel üldine sarnasus. Tallinna tänavaid kogen ma aga palju vähem monotoonsena ja palju autentsemana.

Juba varakult vaimustusin kõikehõlmavatest kogemustest kunstis, siinkohal pean silmas kunstiteoseid, mis pakkusid sügavat kogemuslikku elamust. Vajadus luua oma kunstis kõikehõlmavaid kogemusi arenes aeglaselt vajaduseks mõista mind ümbritsevaid ruume ja püüda neid oma kunstipraktikasse integreerida. Kahekümnendates eluaastates käisin tihti üle piiri Saksamaal ja märkasin alati, et seal valitseb teistsugune õhkkond kui Hollandis. Majad ja ruumid on kujundatud erinevalt ning linnaosad on planeeritud täiesti erineva tihedusega. Tänavamööbel – laialdaselt kasutatav hollandikeelne termin liiklusmärkide, pargipinkide,

postkastide, tänavalaternate jms kohta – võib mõjutada ka seda, kuidas tänavat kogetakse. Rahvastiku demograafiline näitaja võib olla ka selle kogemuse määrav tegur. Mõnes Hollandi külas rändavad nooremad inimesed välja, jättes alles ainult vanema elanikkonna. See tekitab olukorra, kus näiteks ostutänavad meenutavad tänavaid, mida nägite 30 aastat tagasi ja loovad ruumikogemuse väljaspool selle õiget aega.

Kuna töotan muuseumiformaadiga, siis leian, et peaksin looma ka avalikkusele kättesaadava sotsiaalse ruumi. Angelina Kumari algatus “Lucrative Dumpster Diving” tegi seda ehitusprügikastidest kasutuselt kõrvaldatud ehitusmaterjalide ringlussevõtmisega ja materjali kunstiüliõpilastele annetamisega. Sarnasel moel ostis Louis Le Roy 1970. aastal maatüki ja rajas aia. Ehitusjäätmetest hakkas ta looma ehitisi, mida loodus saaks tagasi võtta. Samamoodi katsetas Beverly Buchanan 1980. aastatel avalike skulptuuridega, kus kogemus muutub olenevalt aastaajast, valgusest, kliimast ja ilmast. Neid skulptuure ei tohiks taastada ja lasta neil aeglaselt murenedä, kuni loodus nad tagasi võtab. Seda kavatsen uurida oma loomingulise projekti osas “No Maintenance Museum”.

Mul tekkis huvi leida viis, kuidas ühendada arheoloogia ja tänapäeva hoonete varemed. Seeläbi sündis idee luua projekt “20. sajandi arheoloogiamuuseum”, kus hiljutised varemed transformeeruvad arheoloogilisteks leidudeks. “Kollektsioon” saab koosnema kohalikelt lammutusplatsidelt leitud esemetest. Muuseumil saab olema kaks asukohta. Esimene on Tallinna Kunstihoones. Tegemist on traditsioonilisema ja puhtama väljapanekuga. Teiseks asukohaks linnast väljas asuvad mahajäetud varemed. Viimane põhineb minu “No Maintenance Museum” kontseptsioonil. Kui näitus on läbi, jätkab muuseum digiarhiivina, millega töotan edasi.

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Heidi Linck, visual artist - 20.03.2023

Raija Heikkilä, archeologist - 12.04.2023

Stichting tijd, organisation running the Eco Cathedral - 13.04.2023

Illustrations

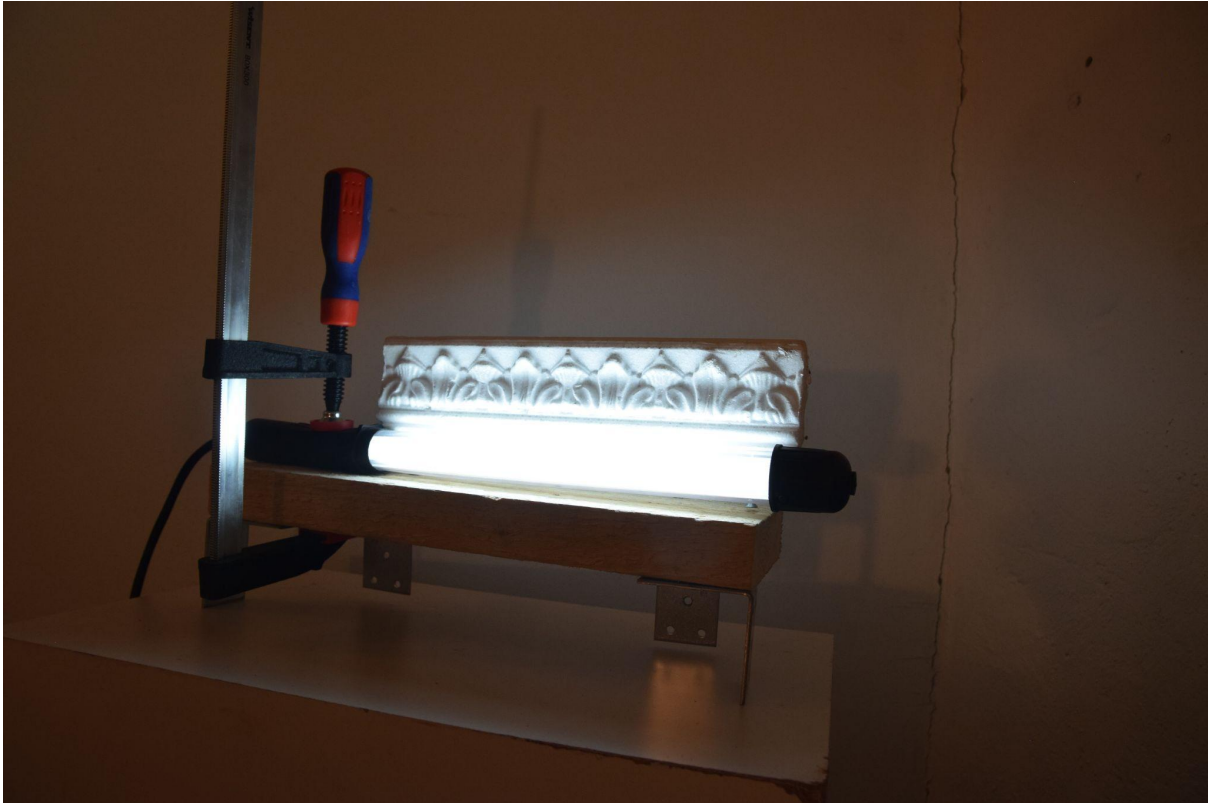


Illustration 1: Example of my work during the first semester at EKA, 2020



Illustration 2: Example of my work during the first semester at EKA, 2020

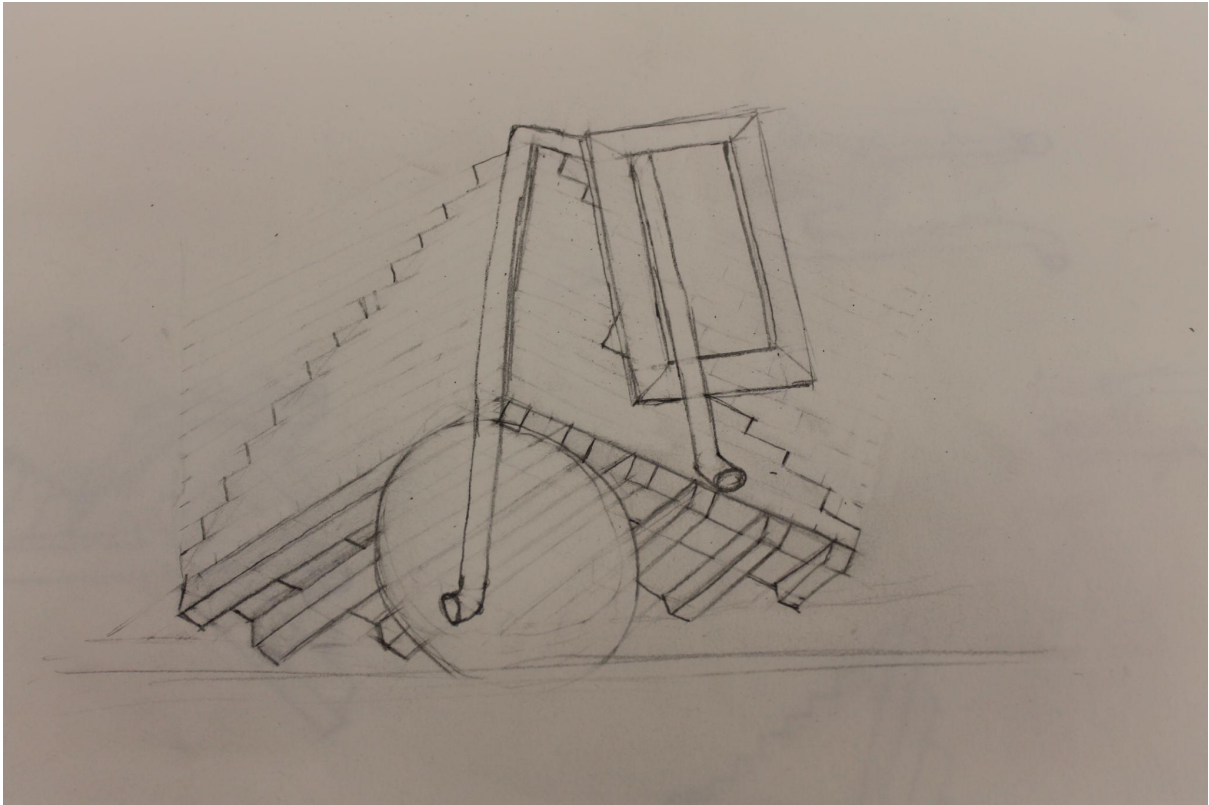


Illustration 3: Sketch for sculpture for Young Sculptor Award, 2021

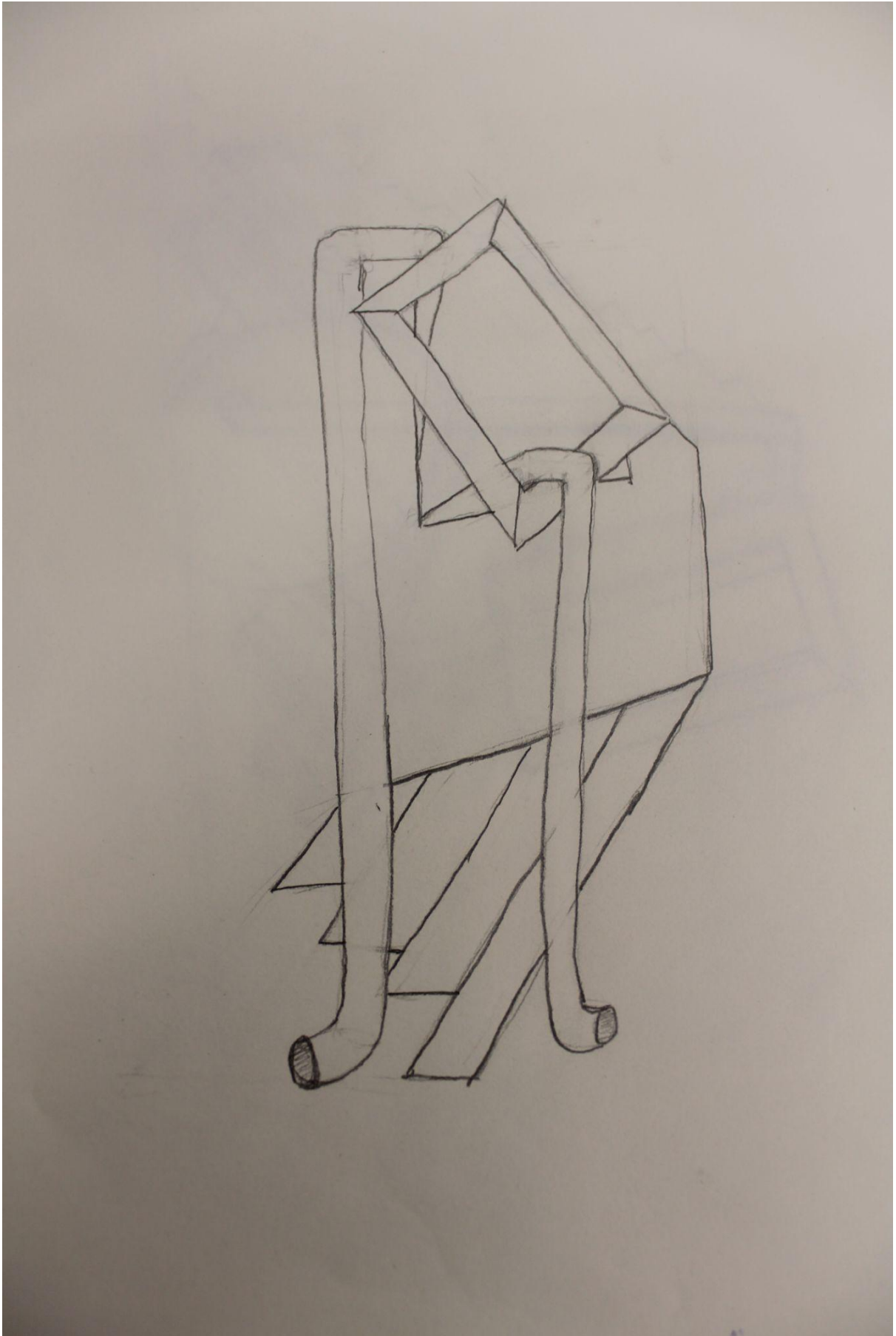


Illustration 4: Sketch for sculpture for Young Sculptor Award, 2021



Illustration 5: Model for sculpture for Young Sculptor Award, 2021



Illustration 6: Example of my collage, 2021



Illustration 7: Example of my collage, 2021



Illustration 8: Final sculpture for Young Sculptor Award, 2021



Illustration 9: Work for *Second Act*, 2021 (Photographed by Kerly Ritval)



Illustration 10: Installation view of *Delay Your Stop*, Volta Showcase, 2020

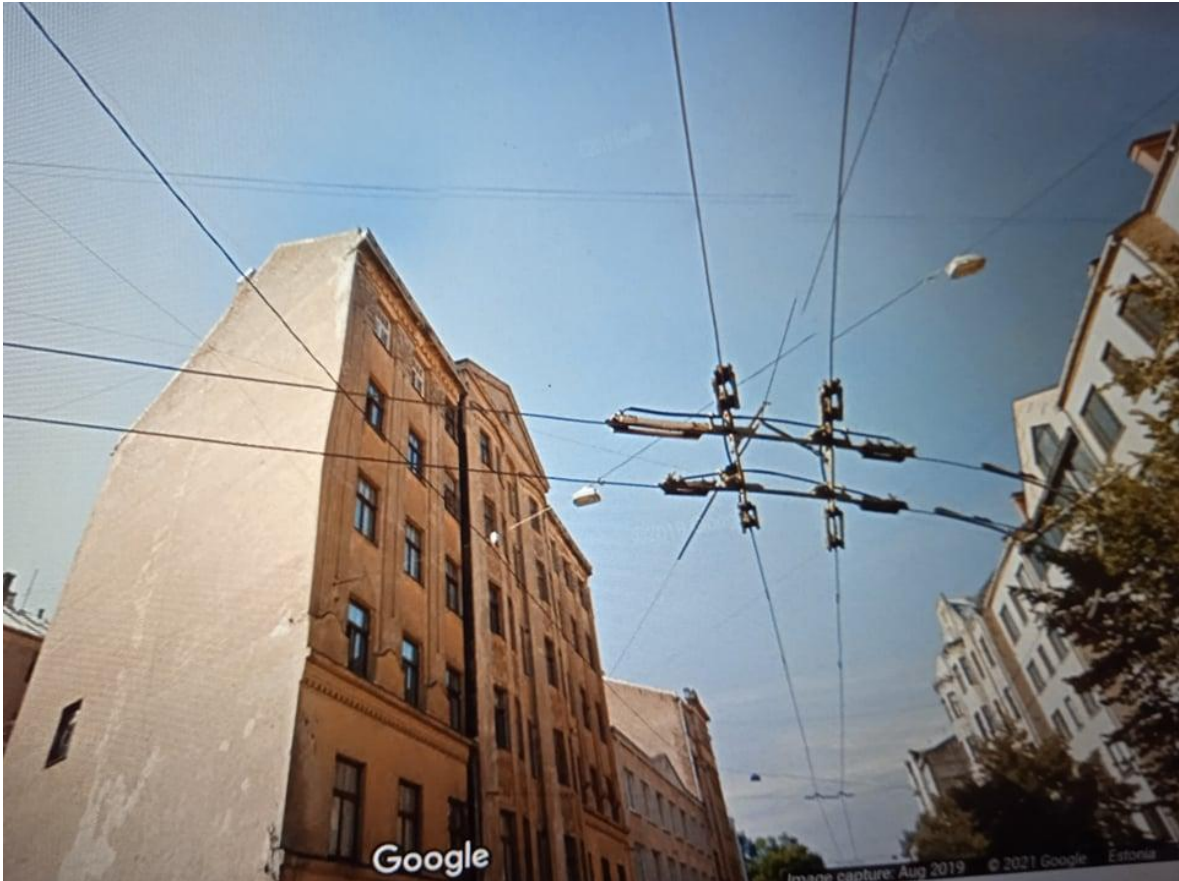


Illustration 11: Google Street View research in Riga for *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, 2022



Illustration 12: Google Street View research in Riga for *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, 2022

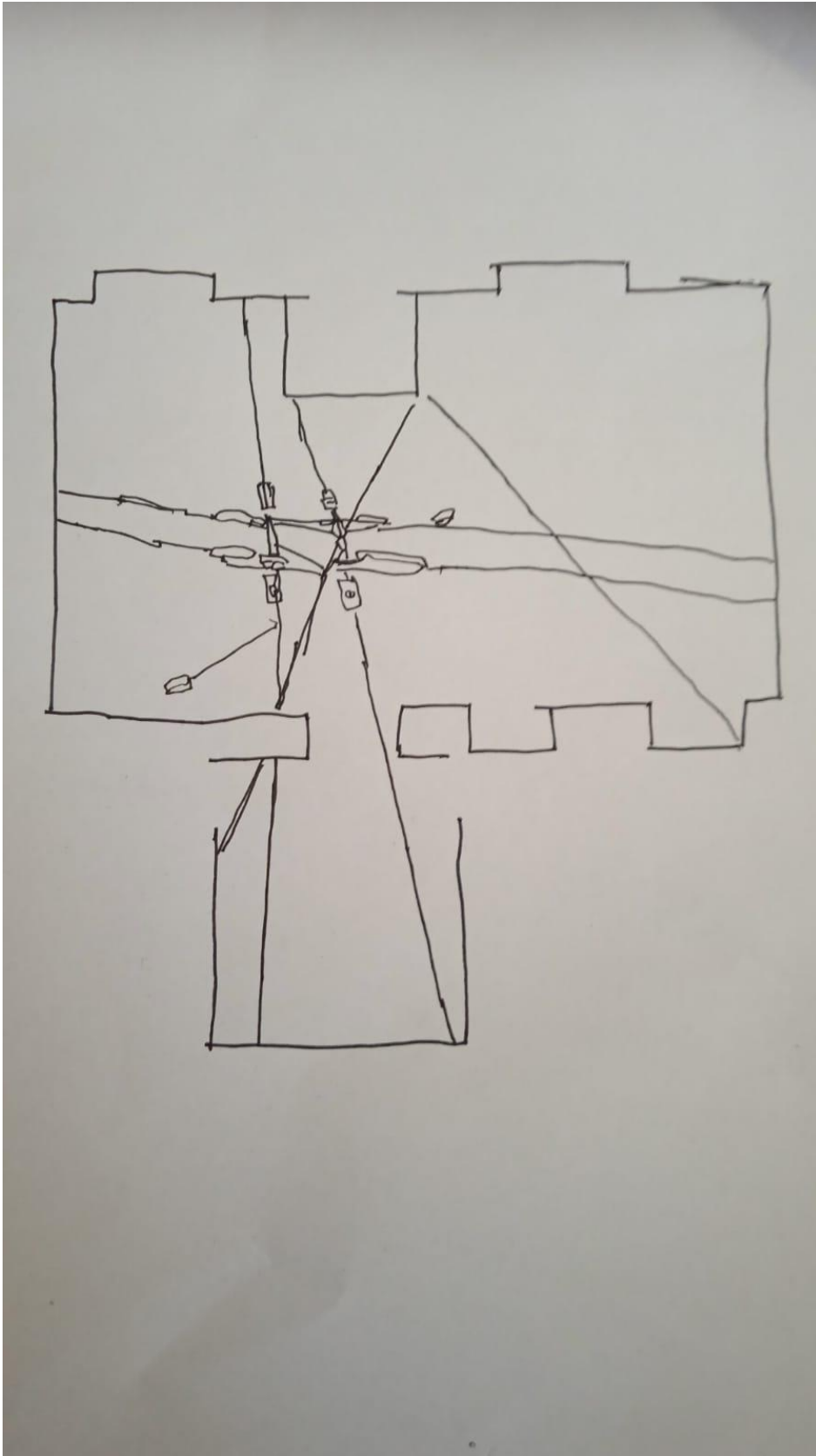


Illustration 13: Sketch for *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, 2022

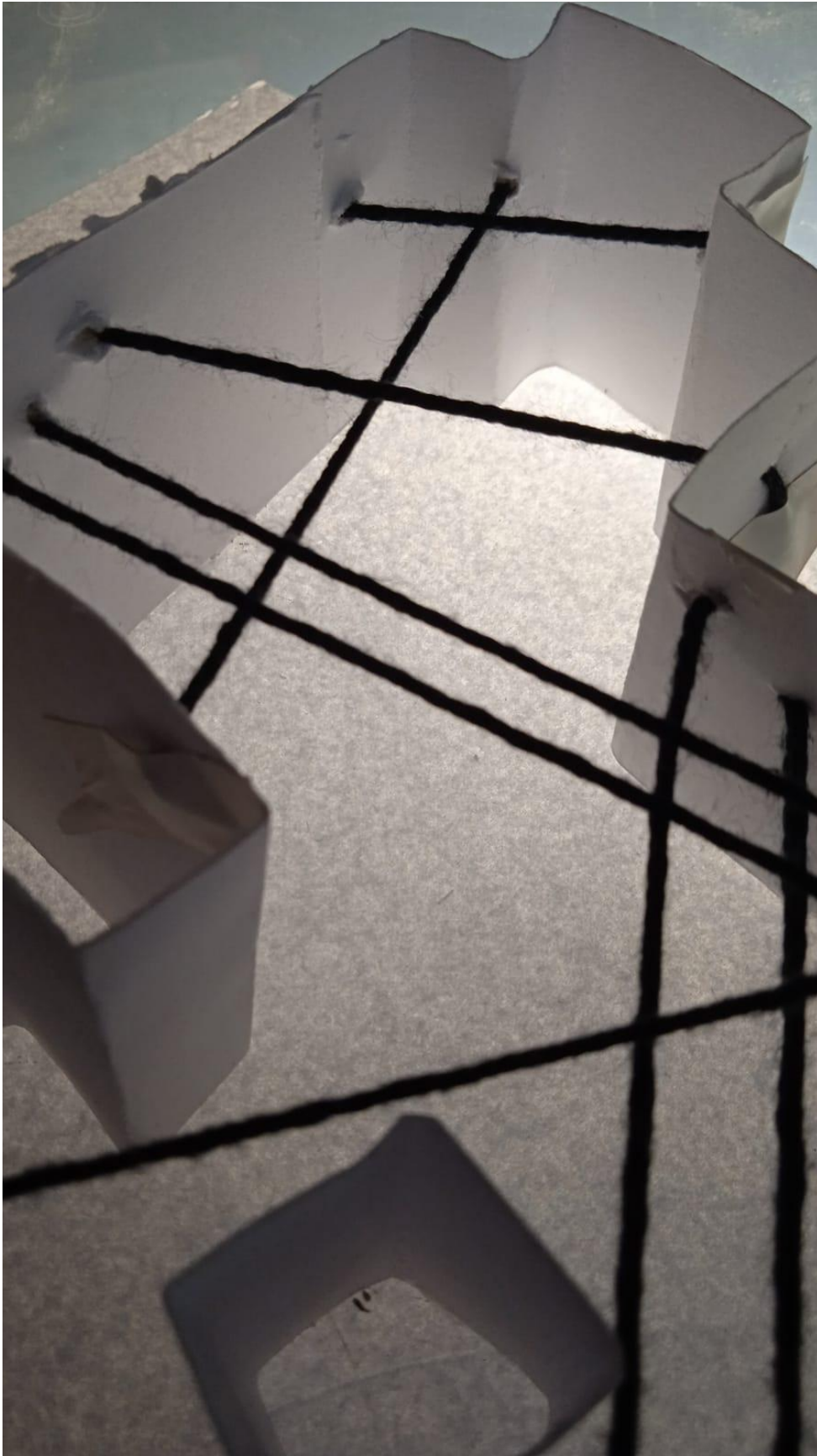


Illustration 14: Sketch for *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, 2022

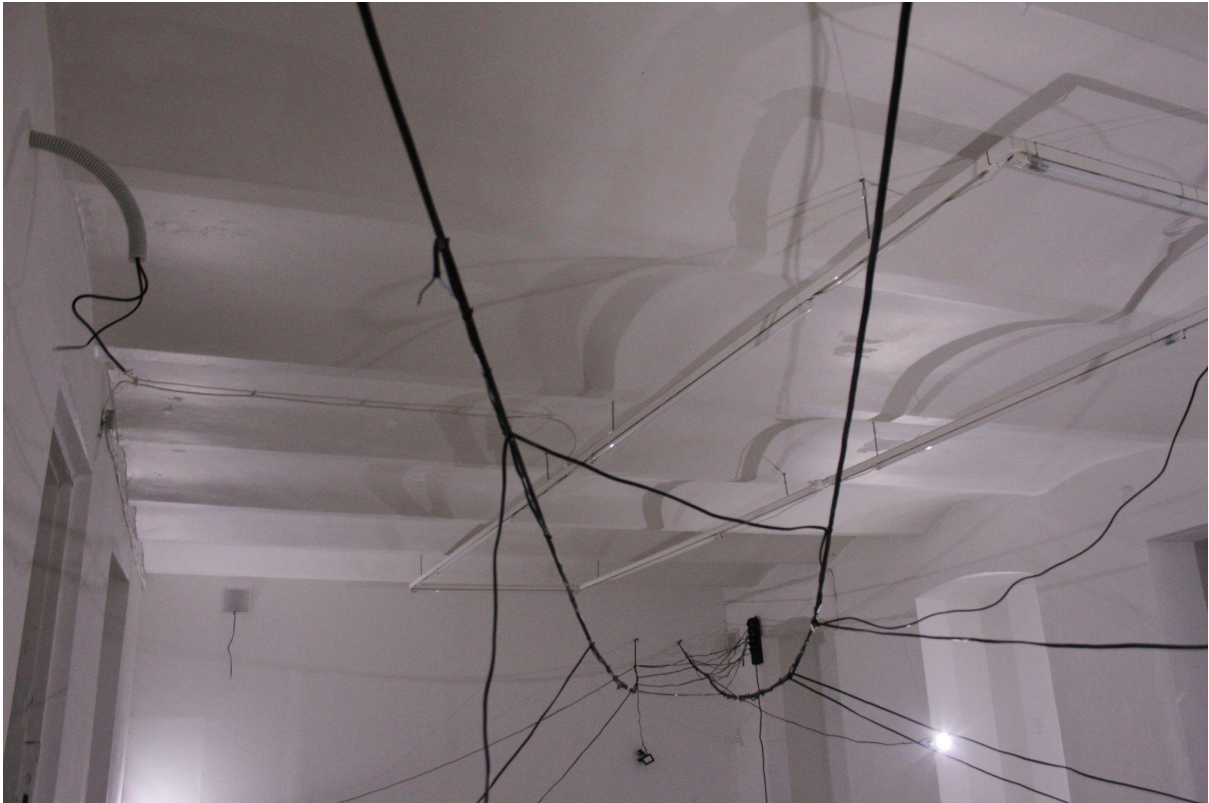


Illustration 15: Installation view of *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, Riga, 2022, photo: Liene Rumpe

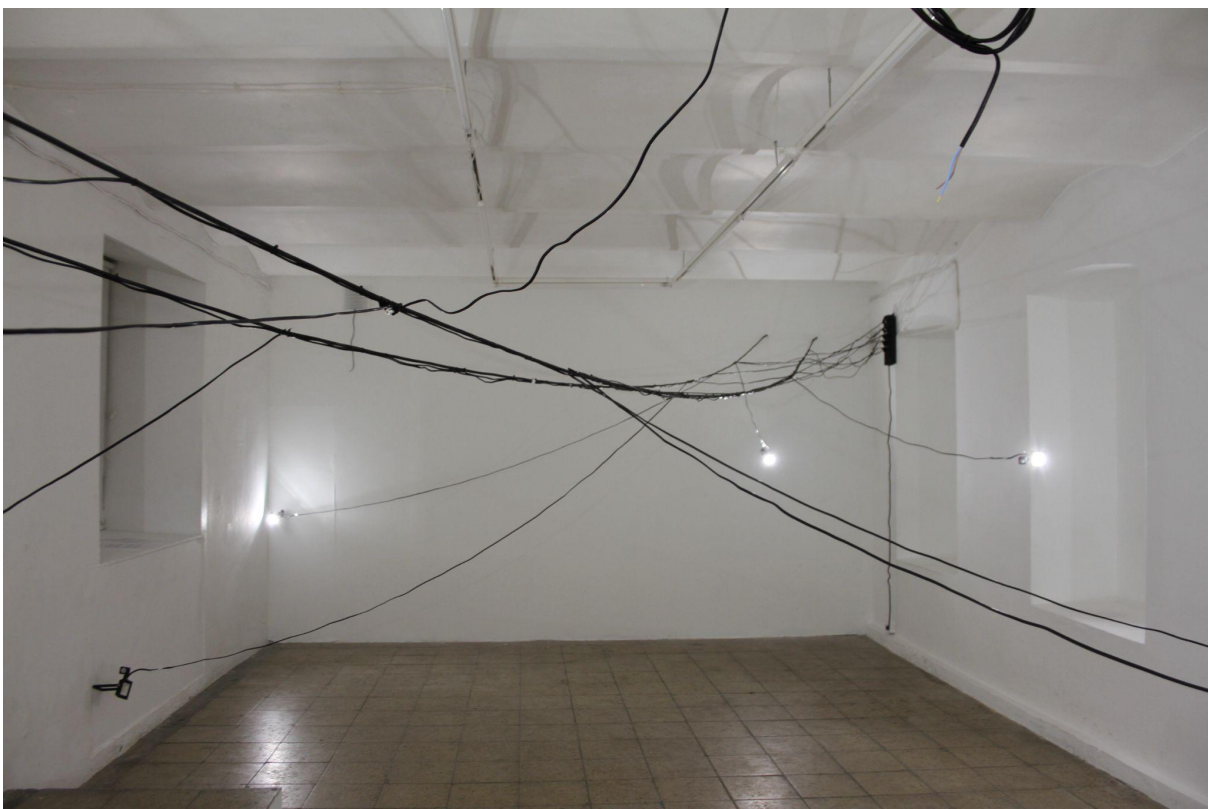


Illustration 16: Installation view of *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, Riga, 2022, photo: Liene Rumpe



Illustration 17: Installation view of *Wire Act*, Dom Gallery, Riga, 2022, photo: Liene Rumpe



Illustration 18: Abandoned building near the Jūri church



Illustration 19: Abandoned building near the Jüri church



Illustration 20: Abandoned building near the Jüri church



Illustration 21: Castellum Fectio



Illustration 22: Castellum Fectio



Illustration 23: Project at Copper Leg Residency, 2023, photo: Elo Vahtrik



Illustration 24: Project at Copper Leg Residency, 2023, photo: Elo Vahtrik



Illustration 25: Example of “Construction Aesthetic”



Illustration 26: Example of “Construction Aesthetic”



Illustration 27: Example of “Construction Aesthetic”

CV

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HKU (Utrecht) – Bachelor of Fine Art – Graduated 2019
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Residencies:

2018 – Het Vijfde Seizoen (Den Dolder)
2023 - Copper Leg Residency (Vaskjala)

Awards:

2021 & 2022: Finalist EKA Young Sculptor Award

(Selected) Exhibitions:

2018 – In Transit. Pop-up Exhibition in the back of a van (Utrecht, Rotterdam, Maastricht, Nijmegen, Amsterdam)
2018 – Sea Overleaf. Beautiful Distress (Amsterdam)
2018 – Verzet en verdriet in beeld. National Museum Huis Doorn (Doorn)
2019 – An Endless Directionless Road Trip on the Roundabout (*Solo Exhibition*) ExBoot (Utrecht)
2019 – Jong Talent 2019 (Young Talent 2019). KihK (Velp, North Brabant)
2019 – Kaalstaart Festival for Beta Art. De War (Amersfoort)
2020 – Uitzonderlijk Uniek. Museum Het Valkhof (Nijmegen)
2020 – Experiments About Art. Expo Popop (Nijmegen)
2020 – This Art Fair (*Cancelled due to COVID*). Kromhouthallen (Amsterdam)
2020 – Rea! Art Fair. Fabicca del Vapore (Milano)
2020 – Delay Your Stop. Volta Showcase (Tallinn)
2020 – Kratts. LVL UP Museum (Tallinn)
2020 – Utrecht Down Under. Oude Bieb (Utrecht)
2021 – Second Act. Koidu Seltsimajas (Viljandi)
2021 - On Time (*Also Curator*). Vent Space (Tallinn)
2022 - BIP Vienna. Neuer Kunstverein Wien (Vienna)
2022 – Wire Act (*Solo Exhibition*). Dom Gallery (Riga)