



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN CULTURAL THEORY
IV AUTUMN CONFERENCE

THINGS IN CULTURE, CULTURE IN THINGS

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

TARTU
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conference program	4
Plenary lectures	10
Presentations (in alphabetical order)	14
Poster presentations	52
List of participants	53

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

THINGS IN CULTURE, CULTURE IN THINGS

Thursday, October 20

11:00-11:15 Opening of the conference
Prof. **Valter Lang** (head of CECT, University of Tartu)
Things in culture, culture in things: An introduction
Ülikooli 18-139

11:15-12:30 **Plenary lecture**
Prof. **Stephen H. Riggins** (Memorial University of Newfoundland)
The natural order is decay: The home as an ephemeral art project
Moderator: Tiit Remm (University of Tartu)
Ülikooli 18-139

12:30-13:30 Lunch (registered participants only) – Restaurant Entri (Rüütli 9)

13:30-15:00

Session I: 1 Home: The dynamics of materialities and meanings in migratory and transitional contexts

Moderator: Ester Võsu (University of Tartu)
Ülikooli 18-139

Susanne Nylund Skog (Institute of language and folklife in Uppsala)
Travelling furniture: How experiences and memories of living in Diaspora are materialised in a Jewish woman's life-narrative.

Anu Kannike (Tallinn University)
Estonian home in transition: Comparison of the 1930s, 1960s and 1990s

Maris Suits (Estonian Academy of Arts)
Searching for the meaning. Approaches for the common construction materials of the Soviet period

Session I: 2 Technologies

Moderator: Carlo A. Cubero (Tallinn University)
Ülikooli 18-140

Mari Lõhmus, Martin Malve (University of Tartu)
The body as evidence. Materialised violence from the 12th–13th century exemplified by a case study of a mass grave from Southern Estonia

Maaris Raudsepp, Andu Rämmer (Tallinn University, University of Tartu)
The social childhood of new ambivalent objects

15:00-15:30 Coffee break – University of Tartu Art Museum (Main Building, I floor)

15:30-17:30

Session II: 1 Landscape: Changing meanings of rural and urban landscapes

Moderator: Helen Sooväli-Sepping (Tallinn University)

Ülikooli 18-140

Hannes Palang, Anu Printsman, Piret Pungas, Helen Sooväli-Sepping (Tallinn University)

Marked with stuff

Irina Sadovina (University College London/University of Tartu)

Power, memory and urban space: Negotiating the meaning of public objects in Yoshkar-Ola

Johanna Laitamäki (Bournemouth University)

Changes in space: Interpreting the Helsinki University Observatory

Session II: 2 Things designed by man

Moderator: Krista Kodres (Estonian Academy of Arts)

Ülikooli 18-139

Marketta Luutonen (Finnish Crafts Organization/Aalto University)

Handmade culture

Visa Immonen (University of Helsinki)

Design for individuality: Contemporary consumer products and interpassivity in material culture

Virve Peteri (Aalto University)

Flexible minds and flexible chairs: Constructing future users and offices during a design process

19:00 Conference dinner (registered participants only) – Café Werner (Ülikooli 11, II floor)

Friday, October 21

9:00-10:15 **Plenary lecture** (video conference)
Dr. **Joanna Sofaer** (University of Southampton)
Pots and stories
Moderator: Valter Lang (University of Tartu)
Ülikooli 18-139

10:15-10:45 Coffee break – University of Tartu Art Museum (Main Building, I floor)

10:45-12:45

Session III: 1 Waste knot: Semio-scapes of inclusion and exclusion

Moderator: Patrick Laviolette (Tallinn University)
Ülikooli 18-139

Brigitte Glaser (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Waste and alterity in ‘speculative fiction’: An assessment of the de- and re-evaluation of material objects in selected dystopian novels

Tarmo Pikner (Tallinn University)

Interactive visualisation, waste and affects

Kati Lindström (University of Tartu)

Slip-pers-pective: Everyday objects as the markers of spatial hierarchy

Remo Gramigna (University of Tartu)

On toilets, boundaries, dirt and other disgusting 'things': A semiotic approach

Session III: 2 Construction of identity through material objects

Moderator: Ergo-Hart Västrik (University of Tartu)
Ülikooli 18-140

Matthias Müller (University of Greifswald)

Middle class identities in the eighteenth century: How did things shape the thirteen British colonies?

Maarja Kaaristo (University of Tartu)

The materiality of tourism: Expressing identity, making souvenirs

Sabina Fazli (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Narrative, memory and things: The souvenir in Wilkie Collins’s *After Dark* (1856)

12:45-14:00 Lunch (registered participants only) – Restaurant Entri (Rüütli 9)

14:00-15:15 **Plenary lecture**

Dr. **Elizabeth Crooke** (University of Ulster)

„Bullet holes bring reality“: The significance of things in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict

Moderator: Kristin Kuutma (University of Tartu)

Ülikooli 18-139

15:15-15:45 Coffee break – University of Tartu Art Museum (Main Building, I floor)

15:45-17:45

Session IV: 1 Museum and heritage: Things to be remembered

Moderator: Elizabeth Crooke (University of Ulster)

Ülikooli 18-140

Claudia Theune-Vogt (University of Vienna)

Things from the victims and things from the perpetrators of the Nazi-concentration camp

Irina Paert (Tallinn University)

Orthodox icons in religious and secular cultures (case-studies from the 20th and the 21st century Estonia)

Session IV: 2 Special objects telling special stories: Question of materialities and contexts

Moderator: Ester Oras (University of Cambridge)

Ülikooli 18-139

Marge Konsa (University of Tartu)

The meaning of grave goods

Timo Muhonen (University of Turku)

Hard matter: Stones in Finnish-Karelian folk belief

Carlo A. Cubero (Tallinn University)

On koras & djembes: Multiple associations of transnational musical instruments

Svetlana Pogodina (University of Latvia)

The doll as a fetish in the traditional (folk) culture of Latgalia: A cross-border phenomenon

20:00 Film session – “Lotmani maailm” (“Lotman’s world”; dir. Agne Nelk; 56 min)
Introduction by film’s scriptwriter Rein Pakk
Zaal (Raekoja square 10, III floor)

Saturday October 22

10:00-11:15 **Plenary lecture**

Prof. Dr. **Ruth-E. Mohrmann** (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster)

Research into the history of material culture

Moderator: Ene Kõresaar (University of Tartu)

Ülikooli 18-139

11:15-11:45 Coffee break – University of Tartu Art Museum (Main Building, I floor)

11:45-13:45

Session V: 1 Media and materiality

Moderator: Halliki Harro-Loit (University of Tartu)

Ülikooli 18-139

Roosmarii Kurvits (University of Tartu)

The visual form of newspaper as a guide for information consumption

Indrek Ibrus (Tallinn University)

A multidisciplinary approach to media innovation: Studying cultural change in the network era

Ene Kõresaar (University of Tartu)

Things in a culture of remembrance: Oral history and journalistic discourses on ‘material life’ in the era of ‘mature socialism’

Rowan R. MacKay (University of Edinburgh)

Beware of dreams come true: Valuing the intangible

Session V: 2 Textile

Moderator: Kärt Summatavet (University of Tartu)

Ülikooli 18-140

Kirsti Salo-Mattila (University of Helsinki)

An embroidered royal gift as a political symbol and embodiment of design ideas in 1885

Carine Kool (University of Rennes 2)

Embroidered artworks: Objects, messengers of status and subversion, from cliché to singular writing

Ieva Pigozne (Latvian Academy of Culture)

Meaning and power of pieces of clothing and footwear according to ethnological and Latvian folklore data

Maria Cristache (Central European University)

Vintage fashion: Authenticity, individualisation and passion

13:45-14:45 Lunch (registered participants only) – Restaurant Entri (Rüütli 9)

14:45-17:00 Conclusions by session moderators, closing of the conference
Ülikooli 18-139

PLENARY LECTURES

“Bullet holes bring reality“: The significance of things in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict

Elizabeth Crooke

University of Ulster, UK

A recent visitor to the Museum of Free Derry in Northern Ireland wrote only four words on a response card: “bullet holes bring reality”. This visitor was referring to a jacket with holes caused by bullets shot at the person wearing the item. In the museum there are a number of objects that bare the traces of the conflict: clothing with damage where the bullet entered and exited the body and cloth soaked with a victim's blood. Even the building is scarred with the effects of conflict, the outer walls also bearing bullet damage. The subject of this lecture is the impact of and responses to objects associated with the conflict in Northern Ireland through consideration of how people have identified with and used such objects. Drawing upon a specific collection, as well as key ideas in material culture studies literature, it is an exploration of how we understand the meanings of things. Within the context of the Northern Ireland conflict, the discussion reflects upon how a selection of artefacts are used, understood, and displayed. It applies the literature that evaluates why we need things and the social and cultural meanings of artefacts to explore of the power and symbolism of objects, the social agency of object, and the importance of objects at times of loss or transition.

Research into the history of material culture

Ruth-E. Mohrmann

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany

My paper will deal with the developments in historically-orientated ethnological material culture research since the 1950s, especially in Germany historical Sachkulturforschung. The status and perspectives of the historical study of material culture in European ethnology will be brought into focus from the aspects of cultural anthropology and the wider context of the material turn.

The natural order is decay: The home as an ephemeral art project

Stephen H. Riggins

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Fieldwork in the Living Room: An Auto-ethnographic Essay, which I published earlier in my career, was an attempt to provide a systematic methodology for gathering information about the relationship between the self and objects displayed in homes. The present paper is an effort to update my methodology in view of advances that have been made in recent years in material culture studies which show that my perspective was limited to some extent by the uniqueness of the case study I used to illustrate my research. Formal ethics approval was also not required when I wrote Fieldwork in the Living Room. Today, however, the ethics of most social science investigations in Canada involving contact with human subjects must be formally approved by a university committee. The procedures which might be followed in order to obtain approval for an invasive research project about domestic artefacts are outlined. In conclusion, the revised methodology is illustrated with a case study of the apartment of a young artist and writer influenced by the 1970s punk subculture.

Pots and stories

Joanna Sofaer
University of Southampton, UK

The bowl is a common vessel type in the European Bronze Age found in both settlement and cemetery contexts. This paper explores how bowls may have been used to tell stories (more specifically cosmological myths) from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age in the Pannonian region (modern day Hungary and northern Croatia).

Over this period, changes in the relationship between the shape and decoration of bowls show a shift in emphasis from two-dimensional to three-dimensional use of the vessel surface. This can be understood in terms of the development of design principles that allowed the presentation of common Bronze Age motifs, such as the sun and the wheel, through vessel form as well as surface decoration. Pots were thus used as mnemonics for wider cosmological notions. Middle and Late Bronze Age developments in vessel form also created possibilities for the display of stories in new and overt ways through hanging vessels on walls. Moreover, changes in the location of motifs on bowls provided opportunities for the concealing or revelation of stories depicted by them. Finally, if pots were used to tell stories, then this places potters in the role of story-tellers.

PRESENTATIONS

Kaliningrad's fragmented landscape

Michael Amundsen
Tallinn University, Estonia

My paper will be an exploration of the fragmented landscape of Kaliningrad, Russian Federation. The city has lived through three distinct epochs: German, when the city was called Königsberg, Soviet after World War Two and Russian from the end of the Soviet Union to the present. Each of these epochs has left a distinctive layer in the cityscape. The change from the German to the Soviet era of the city entailed a trauma, an ethno-architectural rupture, whereby the medieval city was destroyed, the German population expelled and a planned Soviet city was built. In the Russian era, the exigencies of capitalism have seen the restoration of German cultural artefacts and the construction of 'German' style buildings for tourism. All of this has left a profoundly unusual cityscape. Inspired by Benjamin, the phenomenological, impressionistic perspective of the *flâneur* is employed in a panoramic and historical analysis. The construction of medieval 'kitsch' is examined through the prism of the neo-Marxist critique of post-modern urban geography as practiced by Harvey. My methodology involves walking the city, photography and interviews.

Vintage fashion: Authenticity, individualisation and passion

Maria Christache

Central European University, Hungary

Vintage fashion consumption, a well-established phenomenon in Western countries where it is moving towards commoditisation, is still incipient in the Romanian society being a generator of discourses about individualisation and originality. In my research, I looked at an emerging field of 'vintage lovers', a community of vendors and buyers whose rules and practices are still in the process of consolidation. More precisely, I wanted to find out how this community defines 'vintage' and how it differentiates it from 'second hand'. I also intended to look into the way vintage clothes are used: namely how the issues raised by their accessibility and scarcity are solved by the consumers.

In May 2010, I conducted 17 interviews in Bucharest: 11 with buyers and 6 with vendors of vintage clothes and accessories. The results of my research point towards a new type of consumption, different from what Veblen (1899) called "conspicuous consumption" or from fashion as the need to imitate or equate those with higher statuses (Spencer 1876; Tarde 1903; Simmel 1904). It refers to consumption as something intimate, emotional, experiential (Lipovetski 2007) connected with the quest for authenticity (Baudrillard 1996), but also with the armchair nostalgia or nostalgia without memory (Appadurai 1996).

Vintage is seen by most of the members of the community as a luxury subcategory of second hand or 'a selected second hand'. This selection is not based merely on the decade of origin of the object, but also on its design, fabric and overall quality. There are even situations when a 'not too old item' is considered vintage because it was made by a famous designer and it was a 'fashion statement' at the moment of its launching.

Through the manner in which they wear vintage, the followers of this trend try to convey several messages about themselves: that they are daring, receptive, but also selective with what they buy. They aim at the status of experts in fashion, being able to spot original items and to creatively combine vintage clothes and accessories with new pieces of clothing. While the buyers seem to be more a category of consumers, the vendors are rather collectors of vintage. Thus, the delimitation between their life as vendors and as users of vintage is quite dim since they select special objects for themselves, but also sell items, from their personal wardrobe, that they no longer wear. Moreover, they see these items as art objects and are reluctant to modifying their design because they want to preserve them.

References

- Appadurai, Arjun (1996). *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Baudrillard, Jean (1996 [1968]). *The System of Objects*. New York, Verso.
- Lipovetsky, Gilles (2007 [2006]). *Paradoxical Happiness. Essay on Hyperconsumption Society*. Iasi, Polirom.

On koras & djembes: Multiple associations of transnational musical instruments

Carlo A. Cubero

Tallinn University, Estonia

This paper will address the different meanings and uses the kora, an African harp, and the djembe, an African drum, assume when they go through a transnational network. For the past two years I have been carrying out sporadic periods of participant observation in Benelux, France, and Germany amongst West African musicians, primarily from Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso. Both the djembe and the kora feature prominently as a musical instrument amongst my informants. In the course of my research, I have found that the meanings and uses associated with these musical instruments are inconsistent and at times contradictory, depending on the social context they are in. The paper will address this complexity and argue that the multivalency of objects mirrors the subjective multivalency of transnational migrants. The paper will address the various incarnations that these musical instruments go through by addressing the various assembly practises in Africa and in Europe. Methodologically, I will contextualise my work within ethnographic cinema and present the different ways in which ethnographic film-making has informed this research project. Through this narrative I will engage in a kind of ‘life history’ of the kora and the djembe, emphasising their mobile quality.

Narrative, memory and things: The souvenir in Wilkie Collins's *After Dark* (1856)

Sabina Fazli

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany

The souvenir is situated at the point of intersection of material culture and narrative: definitions of the souvenir include narrative as constitutive for linking the thing and memory. Susan Stewart emphasises this intricate relationship between objects and narrative and argues that “we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative” (2003: 135). The souvenir thus constitutes a special object category as its fragmentary character allows for its ‘poetogenic’ potential (Oesterle 2006: 38).

In the 19th century, the souvenir as a category emerges and becomes a part of the proliferating object world in an ‘age of things’, in which a “thing culture” (Freedgood 2006: 142) or “proto-consumer period” (Watson 1999: 50) determines human-object relations as different from our own, privileging readability and circulation over disposability and static possession. In literature, too, a fascination with the object world has been observed and increasingly informs critical readings of Victorian fiction from the angle of material culture.

Following Appadurai’s postulate to “return [...] to the things themselves” (1988: 5), I will read Wilkie Collins’s short-story collection *After Dark* (1856) focusing on the representation of seemingly marginal objects as personal souvenirs. Their production and circulation instigates narrative and, on several levels, the nexus of thing, memory and story binds together the frame and nested narratives, alongside the more obvious intertext of the *Arabian Nights*. At the same time, the probing of things for their stories highlights the sensational interest in detection and moves the affective and intimate souvenir into the realm of the public and material evidence. Focusing on the seemingly marginal thus opens an alternative reading in which things take their place alongside the literary intertext to provide coherence.

References

- Appadurai, Arjun (1988). Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value. In: Appadurai, A. (ed.). *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–63.
- Freedgood, Elaine (2006). *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*. Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press.
- Oesterle, Günter (2006). Souvenir und Andenken. In: Gablowski, B. (ed.). *Der Souvenir: Erinnerung in Dingen von der Reliquie zum Andenken*. Cologne, Wienand, pp. 16–45.
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- Watson, Janell (1999). *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Waste and alterity in ‘speculative fiction’: An assessment of the de- and re-evaluation of material objects in selected dystopian novels

Brigitte Glaser

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany

Combining theoretical approaches from the fields of Material Culture Studies and Ethical Studies, this paper seeks to read Ronald Wright’s *A Scientific Romance* (1997) and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003) in a new way. Most scholarly explorations of these two Canadian novels have emphasised topics connected with their ‘science fiction’ layer, such as the authors’ representation of technological progress achieved through the crossing of biological and ethical boundaries, their use of the ‘mad scientist’ *topos* and its implied criticism of human hubris, and their depiction of environmental destruction. My own reading will place the focus on two interconnected and hitherto neglected themes, the representation of what is left behind, that is, objects once denoting civilisation but which have turned into rubbish, as well as the authors’ projection of a new form of alterity, the recognition of which is required of the protagonists in the process of their adjustment to the dystopian surroundings. Both Arjun Appadurai’s *The Social Life of Things* and Michael Thompson’s *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* will, combined with Emmanuel Levinas’ publications on “the ethics of deconstruction”, serve to connect the themes of waste and radical otherness. Objects representing the dailiness of human life rather than great achievements of human kind will be examined with regard to the new functions assigned to them in the post-materialist and post-consumerist worlds which characterise the dystopian settings of the two novels. Furthermore, the paper will address the question of the fate of humankind in a post-apocalyptic setting as depicted in these novels and as related to the status of things.

On toilets, boundaries, dirt and other disgusting 'things': A semiotic approach

Remo Gramigna

University of Tartu, Estonia

The contemporary toilet represents a conspicuous part of the daily cleanliness liturgy in occidental societies, a great deal in our everyday life “taskscape” (Ingold 2000: 195).

The present paper contends that the toilet is a meaningful microcosm insofar as it provides cues for understanding the relationship between nature and culture, the perception of human body and its bodily wastes, and the collective representations about dirt and cleanliness embedded in ‘things’. In a nutshell, the toilet is culture. It makes cultural separations concrete and apparent. It is my contention to demonstrate the semiotic relevance of this topic by analyzing how the toilet shapes the relation between nature/culture, how it contributes to illuminating the conventional assumptions and perceptions of the human body and its excreta, and how it entails a particular relation with a socio-cultural definition of dirt and cleanliness inscribed through design and urban landscape.

The paper seeks to build a semiotic approach to toilets that combines three theoretical concepts: the notion of dirt as elaborated by Mary Douglas (1966), Yuri Lotman’s conception of boundary (1990; 1992) and Tim Ingold’s “dwelling perspective” (1992). My suggestion is that toilets function as mechanisms of translation between nature and culture for the ‘dweller’ that lives and perceives the landscape, inasmuch as it renders that what is considered ‘dirty’ culturally acceptable. The toilet makes dirt clean, purifies the body via concealment, occlusion, ablution, daily tasks, processes and routines that translate what is meant to be ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ into cultural. Dirt cleans, so to say. The toilet works as a border between the outer and the inner space, a boundary that contains and deletes, that renders as ‘good’, clean and decent that which is considered to be ‘bad’, dirty or impure. Absence, void, deletion, blankness, water and fluids characterise toilets as facilities for the disposal of bodily excreta. Detachment, separation (from our bodily excesses) and absence are key terms here; absence of dirt, of “matter out of place” (Douglas 1966: 44). All this is aimed towards the elimination of what is meant to be present in the environment. That is why toilets are technology of concealment and mechanism of semiotic translation. The paper will seek to analyse Estonian toilets focusing on outhouses as a case study.

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A multidisciplinary approach to media innovation: Studying cultural change in the network era

Indrek Ibrus

Tallinn University, Estonia

This theoretically-oriented paper looks for the ‘evolutionary dynamics’ of new forms of media. It aims towards developing a multidisciplinary approach for studying the parallel and interdependent evolutions in media forms, technologies, markets, and organisational forms of the media and cultural industries. The paper proposes that the evolution of modern complex ‘ensembles’ of textual forms and technological and organisational systems is no longer comprehensible through autonomous disciplines. It is for this reason that this paper proposes an integrated use of a rather varied set of disciplinary approaches – semiotics (Lotman, Sebeok, Peirce, Eco, et al.) for interpreting the textual dynamics inherent to form-evolution in cultures; evolutionary economics (Schumpeter, Freeman, Nelson, Dosi, Perez, et al.) for understanding the market dynamics that condition the formation of media industries in late capitalism; and systems theoretical sociology (Luhmann, et al.) to understand the broader dynamics of social organisation in late modernism. Theoretical intersections of these approaches are studied with the focus on the following phenomena and principles: dialogical interchange between social subsystems as enabling innovations and emergence of new societal structures, their self-organisation in the contingent social environment, the role of memory and societal ‘path dependencies’ in guiding the processes of self-organisation, and the nature of related power-relations that shape the dialogic processes between the relevant stakeholders. The paper proposes that the suggested integration of the above-mentioned approaches provides a useful analytic framework for interpreting the modern evolutionary dynamics of media systems. As such, it also complements a somewhat similar ‘cultural scientific’ approach that has been recently developed by scholars at the Queensland University of Technology Centre of Creative Industries and Innovation.

A study on the early evolution of the mobile web is used to support and exemplify the theory-formation. The study was conducted in 2006–2009 and consisted of the collection of two corpora – designs of 200 mobile websites from around the world and three dozen interviews with industry stakeholders who were participating in developing and standardising the mobile web at different arenas. The empirical study will be discussed to showcase some of the foci of the proposed analytic framework.

Design for individuality: Contemporary consumer products and interpassivity in material culture

Visa Immonen

University of Helsinki, USA

Choices made between various contemporary consumer products are often designated as acts of designing one's individuality. In 2007, the Jordan Individual range of toothbrushes was launched into the Finnish market. Some of them were explicitly marked with a sign of gender. This paper analyses how the brushes work in the spheres of individuality, gender and consumption. Three narratives establish three different toothbrush histories. The first is a tale of technological progress, while the second addresses the practices in which toothbrushes function and bring forth modern notions of individuality. The third narrative discovers desire present in the practices and implements of oral hygiene. Desire and its relation to individuality open a connection between the material culture of design and psychoanalysis. Analysed through the Lacanian notion of interpassivity, the claim of individuality in mass products gains discordant currency. Interpassivity refers to the fact that beliefs, like individuality, are fundamentally exterior realities embodied in everyday practices. Even if consumers do not subscribe to individuality as the Jordan Individual toothbrushes present it, the material things as commodities in their actual circulation and exchange do believe in such individuality. Beliefs can thus be delegated to things as rituals without any inflation in their sincerity, and in this way, the objects support the fantasy regulating the social reality. Combining the toothbrush design with traditional gender signs provides a point of reference, a securely sedimented place for the consumer to make the product part of an interpassive arrangement.

The materiality of tourism: Expressing identity, making souvenirs

Maarja Kaaristo

University of Tartu, Estonia

Resonating the ‘material turn’ in anthropology, many researchers have stressed the need to ‘rematerialise’ tourism research. Taking into consideration the relative dominance of John Urry’s (1990) influential *The Tourist Gaze*, the importance of objects in tourism studies has indeed often been limited to their symbolic and representative roles. However, tourism is actually often ‘done’ both by hosts and the guests through objects, and therefore, it is important to bring the interaction between objects and subjects into the foreground.

The most prominent material objects related to tourism are souvenirs, which range from handicraft to mass-manufactured items imported from other countries. Through the crafting process, handicraft can become a way of communicating both their society’s and their crafters’ creative individual and cultural identity. Through souvenirs, one can try to create positive images of their most valued characteristics; in this sense, souvenirs can be tools of identity politics as they are sometimes deliberately crafted to influence their buyers’ views and perceptions. In effect, souvenirs often depict and stress the traditional and/or stereotypical elements of local society and culture with purpose.

In my paper I will analyse the fabrication process combined with meanings attributed to the souvenirs – handicrafts made exclusively by local crafters – offered to the guests in the Ööbikuoru Centre in Rõuge, South Estonia. These handmade objects are a part of tourism practices and experiences in Rõuge, but more importantly, an essential way of self-expression and -fulfilment for the crafters themselves.

Research into Stone Age use of quartz in Estonia

Ulla Kadakas

National Heritage Board of Estonia

People living in Estonia during the Stone Age had the possibility to use local flint and quartz as raw materials for making small tools; the first was used mainly in the mainland and the second in coastal areas and islands. Other minerals and rocks (quartzite, porphyrites, granite etc) have also been used, but in marginal amounts. Bigger tools (adzes, axes, chisels) were made from rocks with large crystals. These were first worked in splitting technique and finished by polishing.

Stone tools, their making and usage has been studied to some limit in Estonian archaeology, but thorough analyses of technology and usage have not been made yet for several reasons. The aim of this paper is to give an overview of the study of tools made in splitting technique in Estonia; the main emphasis is put on quartz findings, but by necessity, flint objects will also be discussed. Secondly, general trends in analysing stone tools will be presented briefly. Finally, I will give an overview of the results of the preliminary analyses of quartz findings from the Late Neolithic settlement site at Vabaduse Square (Tallinn) and, using this as a starting point, the perspectives of studying the quartz (as well as flint) findings from Vabaduse Square, but also from other Stone Age settlement sites, will be discussed.

Estonian home in transition: Comparison of the 1930s, 1960s and 1990s

Anu Kannike

Tallinn University, Estonia

This paper addresses the methodological challenges of studying contemporary material culture by looking for long-term patterns that have emerged in normative discourses, debates and everyday practice concerning the home in critical transitional periods. Instead of focusing on disruptions caused by political cataclysms and their immediate consequences on private space, I am primarily interested in mechanisms and agents ensuring cultural stability. Although the concepts of modernisation, innovation and (at times) westernisation dominate in the public discourse concerning domestic environment, they were sometimes used as camouflage for preaching alternative, traditional values. And, vice versa, under the cover of the notion of 'home', an essentially conservative concept of middle-class origin, modern forms of art and architecture were introduced. For both political and commercial reasons positive symbols and values connected with the home ('natural', 'private', 'cosy', 'authentic' etc) have been instrumentalised, following stable patterns. The comparative perspective proposed also enables to better understand the basic strategies of adaptation to cultural changes by personalising private space.

Embroidered artworks: Objects, messengers of status and subversion, from cliché to singular writing

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My research centres on questions related to the use of embroidery in the field of contemporary art: how and why artists have been introducing it in their creative process and thus their exhibited artwork in the last decades.

Embroidery is, firstly, a medium of artistic expression but, much more than that, a truly singular writing. What roots does this writing claim? It is generally acknowledged that the concept of embroidery, due to the fact that it is an embellishment or ornamentation, originates from body tattoos. Although its exact origin is unknown, embroidery has evolved both domestically and professionally through the centuries. We will see that embroidery has served also as a particular educational instrument for girls in countries of the Western world. And to what extent has this apparently harmless instrument been aimed at shaping the young feminine mind.

As writing, the presence of embroidery in art implies, first, the intrusion and subversion of a craft in an artistic environment leading to a questioning of the opposition arts-crafts. And secondly, the study of the meaning of manual labour, more specifically in needlework, and the attached symbolism of the needle and thread.

We will journey in some works of Ghada Amer (Egyptian artist in New York) or Tracey Emin (Anglo-Turkish artist in London), who have been using embroidery to expose their personal life stories in the form of autobiographical embroidered artworks.

The meaning of grave goods

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Grave goods are much more than just things in graves. They are the result of a deliberate act by the mourners and, as such, they are loaded with symbolic and emotional meanings. Potentially, grave goods are very rich in information, containing allusions to the deceased person, the mourners, as well as about their wider cultural context, religion and social system. However, tracing the meaning of ancient grave goods is complicated. Their meaning is seldom unambiguous and there is the danger of overinterpreting them.

I am trying to find a middle ground between two approaches, one of which emphasises the primacy of the object's utility function and the second argues that the meaning of the artefact is arbitrary and entirely dependent on the context.

As a case study, I have chosen one particular type of commodity used as grave good, which clearly have a utilitarian role in everyday life, yet at the same time have throughout the history also had a strong symbolic meaning. In my paper I will discuss the occurrence of keys as grave goods in diachronical and synchronical perspectives. My main focus is on the exploration of the change of the meaning of the artefact in time and space, and on examining how the changes in meaning are related to the changes in the form of the artefact and in burial contexts. I will demonstrate how a single type of artefact may be a symbolic object to several social groups, whereby each group interprets the symbolic meaning of the keys in different ways. At the same time, all of these meanings contain some references to the practical function of a key to open, close and protect.

The visual form of newspaper as a guide for information consumption

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The newspaper is intended for information transmission. However, the newspaper is not only a source of information but also a material container of information. Readers look at the newspaper and deduce from its physical form and appearance how to consume the information it contains. Hence, the visual form of information (e.g. the size of the page, topical sequence, habits of segmentation and illustration) is the most important factor. These factors tell us implicitly how to use the newspaper: what is the expected reading path, how to interpret the information. In short, the visual form of the newspaper is an implicit guide for information consumption.

The present paper will interpret the evolution of visual form of newspapers in the context of information consumption. The analysis is based on the core Estonian language newspapers from their introduction in 1806.

In conclusion, during the last two centuries the visual form of Estonian newspapers has become more and more intensive. It has begun to assist the readers and to guide their informational choices. The evolution can be divided into four stages.

1. The *linear newspaper* equalises information. It expects an interested reader and does not give any visual clues for determining the importance of the reported events.
2. The *linear newspaper with a feuilleton* equalises information but also segments it, and gives several starting points for reading.
3. The *non-linear hierarchical newspaper* shows that all information is not equally relevant and gives clues to evaluate the importance of events.
4. The *non-linear focused newspaper* classifies information into pre-designed compartments and hints that the relevance of events is known in advance.

In each of the above stages, journalists increasingly process information: at first, they segment it, then contrast, hierarchise, and focus it. As a result, the role of the visual form of the newspaper is prioritised. It becomes more intensive, imperative, insistent, and pressing. The promotional elements (headlines, visuals) get more space at the expense of the (body) text. The content becomes visually determined as visually attractive themes are preferred. Finally, the visual form or the package of information becomes dominant. The content of newspapers is produced to fit into a pre-made package. The package has become an end in itself.

Things in a culture of remembrance: Oral history and journalistic discourses on ‘material life’ in the era of ‘mature socialism’

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This paper investigates the emergence of the discourse of everyday life in the era of ‘mature socialism’ (1960-1980s) in Estonian press during the first decade of the 21st century. Following Carolyn Kitch’s observation of the intersection of oral historical and journalistic discourses in journalism’s memory work, this paper sets its focus on how the strategies of dealing with material shortages in the era of ‘mature socialism’ are depicted and what kind of images of things are revealed in journalistic recollections of ‘the good old Soviet time’. The changing meaning of ‘mature socialism’ and nostalgia is problematised within the context of the mnemonic paradigm of normality.

The difference between the way the period of mature socialism was remembered at the beginning of the new century and during the previous decade is best characterised by the widespread use of the term *nõuka-aeg* (‘good old Soviet time’). The transition from talking about the repressive Soviet era to reminiscing about the good old Soviet time is exemplified by the campaign for collecting memories that was announced at the beginning of 2004 by the publishing house Tänapäev and the newspaper *Postimees*, and has to date resulted in the publication of the books *Soviet Times and People* (2004), *Soviet Schools and Students* (2006), *Soviet Border and Life Behind Locked Doors* (2009), and *Soviet Army and the Estonian Man* (2010). The articles about the curious memories from the late Soviet period published in *Postimees* and *SL Õhtuleht* also contributed to the public discussion about the Soviet past. All this points to the fact that the dominant discourse was changing and people preferred to use humour for interpreting their Soviet past (as a period that did not conform to contemporary norms), while avoiding the subject of the repressions of the Soviet occupation regime.

This paper takes a closer look on this shift of meaning of mature socialism by analysing the special section in *SL Õhtuleht* (2004) devoted to „Soviet shortage memories“.

Changes in space: Interpreting the Helsinki Observatory

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Interpreting a historical building requires understanding its history, knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the site and also knowing its stories and collection. The Helsinki University Observatory is definitely a landmark historical building with a story to tell, but its renovation to a multi-purpose visitor centre raises many issues as to the future accessibility of its collection in the original context.

This paper discusses interpreting the purpose-built yet historical house of the Helsinki University Observatory and how its collection can be interpreted in the future exhibition at the new visitor centre. The Helsinki Observatory is a fascinating building and its history and scientific instruments make it an unusual monument to science. When interpreting the Helsinki University Observatory, there are several aspects to consider; it was built for the purpose of astronomical science, but it was also a home where people slept, ate, played and so forth. It is a place where stories can be told and most of all it is a place where objects can be exhibited in their original context.

Other old observatories internationally have already faced the same situation the Helsinki Observatory is currently going through. The buildings are getting too inadequate for the demands of modern astronomy and the astronomical activities have to be transferred to more modern premises. For comparison, the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, Tartu old Observatory and Stockholm Observatory are included in this study to provide a wider view to the old observatories and their renaissance from scientific facilities into museums. Even though the Helsinki Observatory will become mainly a visitor centre instead of a museum, it will have however its own display presenting the history of the observatory and astronomy. Collections related to astronomy are not a common sight at museums and might therefore be less well known for the bigger audience. The new visitor centre has plenty to offer to a wide audience with the rich history of the observatory and the related museum objects and instruments.

Slip-pers-pective: Everyday objects as the markers of spatial hierarchy

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In the tradition of landscape research that sees ‘landscape as a text’, that is, a sequence of identifiable signs, ordered according to some grammatical rules and pragmatic purposes, the work of the researcher often consists of identifying individual meaningful landscape elements as signs of something. While this definition has originally been born out of a relatively straightforward modernist or linguistic understanding of the text and the act of communication, the idea of some significant marker elements in landscape that embody the semantic load for the competent members of the society, can also be fruitful for the more phenomenological approaches and the cultural semiotic understanding of the text.

Inside (*uchi*) and outside (*soto*) are cultural categories that have been very widely discussed in the case of the Japanese society. Apart from functioning as linguistic and social categories on all levels of the society, they are also spatial categories that often give a very graphic expression to the inclusion and exclusion policy of the group. Frequently, small ‘innocent’ objects, such as household slippers, can indicate the hierarchy between the spaces and the rights for passage, and the ‘rite of slippers’ comes to bear a significative load bewildering for foreigners. The presentation will bring some examples of how such everyday objects show the way in Japanese everyday landscapes, both in public institutions and private households.

Handmade culture

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‘Crafts’ mean both concrete products and the process of making them. Products are made up of their physical properties, functional features, and cultural meanings. Meaning is assigned to a product through a culture-bound process. Ideas are transferred from culture to the product and then perceived as passing to the person who uses the product. Handmade products are often so strong that they convey also their makers’ meanings, like values, skills, material used and the process of making them. Once it belongs to the user, the product begins to lead a life of its own; the user makes it his or her own.

Many of my examples are taken from clothing. Clothing is a very explicit conveyor of meaning, since clothes are worn daily, both in private and in public. The ideas linked with clothing are directly related to their function, i.e. the purpose for which a certain item of clothing is used will affect how it is interpreted and the value it is assigned. Clothes have a function-related material value and symbolic value, and they are rich in semantic content. The examination of handmade bags reveals something about people’s relationship with an important means of practical life control. While acting as a vehicle for carrying things, at the same time hiding and protecting them from curious eyes, they also play an independent role as visible accessories telling something about their users. The user—bag relationship may also be viewed as an example of an exciting human—product relationship. The meaning may be far more valuable than the object itself, and we therefore cherish many seemingly useless objects that no longer serve any practical purpose.

To interpret the material, I have developed an essence analysis of the product. Handmade value is about human relationship and authenticity. For many people, it is essential that products are ethically made and they last and are culturally, socially, ecologically and economically sustainable. The story of handmade process and the artisan also makes the product special and interesting. Handmade value is created by artisans’ values, imagination, creativity, skills, materials, stories and human relationships.

The body as evidence. Materialised violence from the 12th–13th century exemplified by a case study of a mass grave from Southern Estonia

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During times of peace, archaeology as a discipline has endeavoured to adopt a more peace-oriented approach, conducting detailed studies into the daily lives of ordinary people. However, for a number of years now, the issue of violence among prehistoric populations has been a popular topic of investigation. The steady increase in archaeological evidence has doubtless played a crucial role in refining our understanding on the topic (Guilaine & Zammit 2005: iix). In Estonian archaeology, different artefacts and features, such as weapons, fortifications etc, have been considered as indications of violence in the past. From the 13th century onwards, there are written sources that depict our history in many ways as a violent one. To us, the most direct evidence of violence is the *human body* or what is left of it. Therefore, the aim of the present paper is to introduce the possibilities of *archaeoethanatology* and *archaeopathology* in decoding material culture and finding meaningful practices behind it. The ideas of reconstructing practices from prehistoric times are exemplified by a newly (2010) discovered *mass grave* (outcome of violence) of *ten men from Veibri*, South Estonia.

An archaeoethanatomical approach combines the knowledge about natural processes of decomposition and decay of the human corpse with detailed archaeological fieldwork and analysis (Duday 2009). This explicitly crossdisciplinary approach, which requires familiarity with both human biology and archaeological field work, allows the biological anthropologist/archaeologist to reconstruct details in the mortuary practices.

Every living organism is endangered by diseases, and humans are no exception in this respect (Manchester 1983: xi). Palaeopathology is the scientific research into diseases of past human populations, and it studies the populational and evolutionary interaction between humans and their diseases (White & Folkens 2005: 309). In the present paper, less emphasis is put on diseases and more on the analysis of the injuries that were caused directly before the death.

The questions addressed by the paper are as follows:

- (1) How can the methods of archaeoethanatology and palaeopathology be applied in reconstructing past practices?
- (2) What kind of events (battle scenes) took place directly before the creation of the mass grave of ten men at Veibri?
- (3) What kinds of weapons were used to slaughter the ten men in the mass grave?
- (4) How was the mass grave created?
- (5) Why did such an event take place at all?

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Beware of dreams come true: Valuing the intangible

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In this paper I discuss the relationship of tangible and intangible things within a culture. By focussing on a particular ‘thing’ – the ‘American Dream’ – I draw out more general conclusions about the value of the intangible. In its consumerist dimension, the myth that is the American Dream itself critically involves the acquisition and consumption of things. Turning to the use of the American Dream in political advertising, I show how political appropriation first formalises, and then restricts and inhibits, the fluid re-imaginings that sustain it. Mythscapes (Bell 2003) are an undervalued resource for identity formation, being both receptacle and source. The American Dream (and, by extension, other national identity myths) is reduced through political ‘branding’, making tangible and concrete what, for the individual, is richest when left embodied in private imagination (Tilley 2006). Using the metaphor of the template, I suggest that such branding results in a reduction in the capacity of the myth to hold multitudes of meanings.

Van Leeuwen (2008: 130) has identified “two crucial issues in the social semiotics of contemporary visual communication”. The first is the need “to move away from accounts of specific semiotic modes such as language, image or music, towards an integrated multimodal approach”; the second is the need “to integrate the study of semiotic modes with the study of the normative discourses that regulate their use”. I argue that the American Dream myth is multimodal in its make-up and as such touches upon not only a linguistic narrative, but a soundscape and a landscape. In contrast to the linguistic modes, the musical and visual modes are often seen as more resistant to translation and description (and are therefore relegated to a lower status). The paper concludes with a consideration of DeNora’s (1986) suggestion that instead of trying to force musical analysis into linguistic boundaries, we view all modes in more of a musical vein, and celebrate – rather than fear – the impossibility of translation (Joseph 2010).

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Hard matter: Stones in Finnish-Karelian folk belief

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One of the highly intriguing aspects of folk belief is that it often also covers mundane things and renders them into objects with remarkably surprising qualities; even the most commonplace objects and matter are incorporated into mythology and intertwined into the praxis of what we might term 'ritual'. This paper addresses one of the most simple objects within the sphere of Finnish-Karelian folk belief – an unworked stone – which, when viewed in its own cultural context, transpires to be laden with both intrinsic and transposed power. This power was harnessed to serve objectives related to such diverse walks of life as, for example, cattle herding, love affairs, and healing. Stones were used as offerings to supernatural beings when appealing for fishing luck or a successful journey, but they could also function as tokens for extorting supernatural beings. It is interesting that stones were, in certain circumstances, to be taken from already existing constructions such as sauna stoves and field cairns, but there were also other norms to be followed with respect to the original residing place of stones. It was, therefore, far from unimportant where the stones should be brought from, and the biography of them could consist of quite diverse stages when it came to their function and meaning. These examples attest that the way archaeology perceives many stone remains is anachronistic and oversimplifying: we often view them in their totality, as unchanging cairns with a single function, when it might be more accurate to acknowledge that the meaning and the biography of single stones in them could have been more complex. And, most of all, the significance of a single stone in a cairn might have been equal to or even exceed the significance assigned to the aggregate.

Middle class identities in the eighteenth century: How did things shape the thirteen British colonies?

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The eighteenth century saw a consistently rising consumption of material objects in England and her Thirteen Colonies: more people than ever before could choose to purchase more things than ever before. Inspired by anthropology and sociology, historians began to see these material objects as signs. This means that somebody's fashion, furnishings or eating utensils could communicate a specific social status. Taking this into account, I argue that eighteenth century British goods were more than only material artefacts in the Thirteen British Colonies but meaningful signs that were part of a behavioral transformation of consumers. Along with this behavioral transformation a distinct middle class identity emerged; this identity was created and manifested by material objects. On the basis of individual documents, I will show that things shaped the identity of middle class consumers and thus of the middle class in the Thirteen Colonies.

Examining the middle class is particularly fruitful because within certain financial restraints, this group of people was able to decide consciously for or against purchasing material objects. Having the choice of participating in or abstaining from a certain material culture constitutes a basic precondition for connecting identity – the relation that emerges through the contact with one's social environment – to material objects because otherwise, one would not have the agency to shape one's identity through purchasing particular goods.

My sources will be individual documents, such as diaries and travel reports, from individuals of the middle and the upper class. The main advantage of these sources is their authenticity regarding the contemporary cultural contexts. By using individual documents, I can directly observe how individuals perceived objects and how they put themselves and others into relation with these objects. Thus, I will be able to see how individuals of the middle class identified themselves and others with material objects, as well as how individuals of the upper class described lower class consumers in relation to themselves and material objects.

Travelling furniture: How experiences and memories of living in Diaspora are materialised in a Jewish woman's life-narrative.

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When doing research on experiences of living as a Jew in Sweden, I have found that diasporic belonging is often mirrored in the artefacts that are regarded as meaningful and worthy of memorialising by the narrators. This paper aims to further explore this area and investigate how a female Jewish migrant in her written narrative, by the use of things (material and imaginative), positions herself in a Jewish Diaspora while simultaneously creating and maintaining her own identity.

The written life-narrative is part of a larger body of material of oral and written narratives by female migrants, collected from two different sources: interviews with Jewish women who have migrated to Sweden and The Jewish Memories, archived at the Nordic museum in Stockholm. The overall purpose is to investigate how memories of migration and experiences of living in Diaspora materialise in narratives by female Jewish migrants in Sweden. The scientific aim is to explore how identities and diasporic communities are maintained and reproduced in the dialectical process of narrating and materialisation.

Orthodox icons in religious and secular cultures (case studies from 20th and 21st century Estonia)

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An icon is primarily an object of religious worship: it serves as a mediator between God and the believer; it fulfils a protective role in the household, functions as an essential material object in rites of passage (especially in weddings and funerals). Starting in the late 19th century, however, the traditional icon starts to become an object of conservation efforts: a dual process of discovery of authentic Byzantine art and safeguarding icon-painting from the invasion of new technologies of mass reproduction is born. Traditional icon-production, some centres of which were in the Baltic territory (Latvia and Estonia) among the Old Believers, has been affected by the process of icons becoming a part of the national heritage. The Old Believer iconography is ‘discovered’ in the 1920s–1930s by the Russian émigré community in Europe and by the Western public as part of the movement towards appreciation of traditional Byzantine art. The interest in icons during the era of Modernism takes icons out of their sacred context, turning them into objects of study, aesthetic appreciation, and symbols of folk culture. It is however the sacred origin of the icon that endows it with trans-aesthetic values and symbolic capital which other objects of art lack. For example, the professionals who deal with icons (art collectors, dealers, museum workers), on the one hand, present themselves as the guardians of icons who can appreciate the icons’ true value better than the believers. But on the other hand, they produce a pseudo-religious culture that surrounds icons, exchanging stories about miracles and unusual events related to these objects, as well as treating icons as symbols of national culture. Thus, the religious context in which icons are produced and used cannot be disregarded even when the icon is placed in the secular environment. The paper will use the case studies of Estonian icon-makers Frolov and Sofronov and their impact on the ‘sacralisation’ of the Russian icon in the West, the analysis of the art-collecting, acquisition and exposition of icons in late Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Marked with stuff

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In Anglophone landscape studies, the material gets easily overlooked, Cosgrove (2006) states; since then, though, the focus has shifted from the pictorial back to the material. He advocates for paying attention to the material as it could give insights into both the pictorial and the dwelling of the landscape. Similarly, Widgren (2004) has called not to stop one's research at forms in the landscape, but also study the processes, functions and contexts of the forms.

This paper elaborates from three independent case studies that all focus on wooden objects in Estonian rural landscape: large wooden village swings (Pungas et al. 2009), milk trestles (Palang and Sooväli-Sepping 2011), and lookout towers (Printsman et al. 2004). All these can be viewed as rather unique for Estonia. They have all been erected to mark a spot on the terrain (as Estonia lacks orography), and all carry more value than just their primary function. These landscape markers are usually not fundamental buildings but *bricolage*, making them ephemeral when not purposefully maintained. Swings have persisted for a while, milk trestles have disappeared in the 21st century and lookout towers have been erected mainly in the 2000s. Their temporal span allows drawing conclusions about them as symbols for changed socio-economic and cultural conditions, where alienation sets forth in relation with nature, land, and countryside. How come these wooden things attract social encounters?

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Flexible minds and flexible chairs: Constructing future users and offices during a design process

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I examine how potential users and the ergonomics of an office chair are socially constructed during a design process. I am concerned with how shared visions of users and of modern office environments shape the design of a chair and thus contribute in materialising the visions themselves. These visions work as fruitful tools to organise design knowledge and to create a shared conception of the aims of the project. However, the visions also actively shape reality and contribute to bringing the visions into being.

The product and the design process are examined through data that consists of interviews with a designer and other relevant actors, as well as recorded discussions of meetings of a project team in a company which is specialised in producing ergonomic office furniture. In addition, relevant documents are also used as data. The methodological approach is drawn from discourse analysis and actor-network theory.

The analysis of the data shows that the specialty of the design project is constructed by invoking a polarity between a new vision and an old-fashioned view. This contrast argument works as a justification for the new product, even though a closer analysis shows that the visions are not always as distinct as we are led to believe. These opposing visions are utilised to justify the product's innovativeness. In the data, ergonomics is continually constructed as a part of the old model which is deemed as old-fashioned thinking. Ergonomics is so closely associated with the old model that it becomes impossible to talk about it without being interpreted as talking inside the old model of office work and environments. In the paper, I analyse how the chair can be seen as a materialisation of the new vision. The future of office work is constructed as a creation of innovations by sharing ideas together and being constantly on the move in an office space where everything and everyone is staged or branded to be seen even from outside the building.

Meaning and power of pieces of clothing and footwear according to ethnological and Latvian folklore data

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Latvian folklore materials contain a huge number of archaic and pre-Christian perceptions, beliefs and evidence of peasants' social and everyday life. Combining these data with the history of clothing and footwear allows understanding the long-forgotten symbolism of things.

This paper uncovers the symbolic meaning of pieces of clothing and footwear and how people used to empower things by connecting them to their wearers. It looks at how people believed they could affect others or take over some of their abilities by using their garments. The paper discusses the role of clothing and footwear as the 'second skin' of their wearer. It also reveals the much greater symbolism of every particular garment, as well as general powerful perceptions connected to people's dress.

The author uses Latvian folklore material, such as folk beliefs, folk songs, sayings, tales, and magic formulas. Looking at these texts in connection to the historical development of not only clothing and footwear but also other everyday objects, crafts and family traditions allows linking the evidence that appears in folklore to specific periods of Latvian history. Even though most of the evidence relates to the 14th–19th centuries, traces of much older perceptions can sometimes be found.

The paper concludes that in the process of researching clothing and other simple everyday objects, it should be considered that in the earlier centuries, things used to have more functions and meanings than simply the practical one. In particular, this regards the research of colours, ornaments and other design elements of things.

Interactive visualisation, waste and affects

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Rapid urbanisation and the rise of consumption have created various problems related to waste and waste containment. The concerns about litter challenge the clear distinctions between society and nature. Waste is much about (re-)drawing the boundaries between inside and outside. Waste can be seen as matter-in-excess simultaneously combining semiotic, material and social entities/flows. The developing collectives associated with organisation of litter can suggest a (virtual) change about ecologies of living-together. This paper elaborates the approaches to understanding 'spaces of interactive visualisation' and affects related to expressed waste assemblages. The study focuses on encounters in collective events that indicate singularities and change in ongoing socialisation. We can see the emergence of (temporal) collectives that bring new questions to politics. The paper includes multi-site stories and embodied practices of an international civil initiative and of a public art project, both related to waste issues. These two examples both share processes of participatory visualisation as the basis to evoke translocal concerns.

The doll as a fetish in the traditional (folk) culture of Latgalia: A cross-border phenomenon

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The doll is an object of material culture that has an important role to play in different spheres of life: for instance, in games, in mythology, in rituals, etc. It embodies a multifaceted semiotic context, which finds its representation in different folkloristic and post-folkloristic practices.

The doll achieves its “highest semantic status” in customs and rituals, which is the result of the merger of “material” and “religio-mythological” semantics (Bajburin 1981). Since it is linked to different discourses and interacts with different contexts, it plays an intermediary role in socio-cultural processes. It is a certain cross-border phenomena; it manifests the clash of such dichotomies as alive/dead, animalistic/human, and real/artificial and is, therefore, endowed with a great variety of possible connotations depending on the contexts or the methods of its use. The origins of the doll phenomena are to be found in mythology and ritualistic practices, whereas the study of the functioning of the doll in modern post-folkloristic practices enables us to give way to the new interpretations of this cultural phenomenon.

In this paper, the doll is defined as an anthropomorphic and zoomorphic image that is used in any kind of ritualistic and non-ritualistic folklore/traditional practices in the cross-border region of Latgalia.

Latgalia is the Eastern region of Latvia, a place that has a unique cultural and linguistic situation on the territory of contemporary Baltic region.

The paper is based on fieldwork material collected during a scientific expedition to Latgalia (June 2011). The phenomenon of the doll is researched by the means of a complex comparative intercultural method of research as well as using the systematic semiotic analysis.

Museum objects as cultural metaphors

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Beginning in 1980s, the wave of so-called new museology that indicated a re-conceptualisation of the institution of museum and its practices started a shift in the way museums and their contents are seen not as fixed and delimited, but rather as context-dependent and contingent. Present-day museum exhibitions are no longer presentations of a single world-view. The new display forms are more open and ambiguous. Abandoning the monopoly of an organisation based on a traditional scholarly discourse, exhibitions allow for new possibilities through the ways in which they are staged. The meaning of museum objects is seen as situated and contextual, rather than inherent. In a display, objects and documents are being arranged in a way that makes possible different references and relations between them.

In this paper, the meaning-construction of exhibits in a museum display will be observed on the basis of the preparation work of the new permanent exhibition of the Estonian National Museum. The possible ways and means of conceptualisation and contextualisation of objects will be analysed; in addition, the potential weaknesses and drawbacks will also be considered. The paper aims to show how within the framework of new museology the museum is taking up a novel epistemological and ontological position.

The social childhood of new ambivalent objects

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The social biography of things as cultural phenomena can be traced back to their emergence in the expert sphere and introduction into the public sphere where they undergo practical and symbolic ‘initiation’. Serge Moscovici has described the trajectory of an ideological innovation in the society from a scientific idea into widely known social representation (1961). Technological innovations that enter into public use evoke similar representational activity and processes of collective symbolic coping (Wagner et al. 2002). Modern biotechnologies produce new objects with hidden and partly unknown properties which are socially constructed as possibilities and risks. Cloned animals and genetically modified crops are good examples of recently appearing new objects that evoke public response. The focus of our paper is on the process of social representation of some sensitive applications of biotechnologies that produce cloned and genetically modified organisms that can further be transformed into food. The resulting products are subjected to cultural elaboration, redundant meaning production on both the collective and individual levels, evoking collective images that are related to either disgust and fear or optimistic hopes. There are cultural barriers against accepting biological hybrids as unproblematic sources for food – these products are perceived as unnatural, weird and even monstrous, provoking public resistance (Wagner et al. 2006). Our empirical material comprises media analysis (introduction of the topic of mammal cloning in the Estonian media), survey data on the public perception of sensitive technologies (including GM food) and an experiment on the perception of hybridity or mixed essences. The “drama of personal biography of things lies in the uncertainties of valuation and of identity” (Kopytoff 1986). In the case of some new technologies, uncertainty is culturally constructed as the blurred boundary between the ‘natural’ and the ‘unnatural’.

Power, memory and urban space: Negotiating the meaning of public objects in Yoshkar-Ola

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Urban space is full of meanings and messages which are often contradictory. When elites seek to shape social memory through constructing a certain version of history, their attempts take concrete forms in urban space. Architecture, city planning and even the concept of the city itself can be seen as instruments and signs of political domination. At the same time, the so-called ordinary people who do not participate in city planning or erect monuments, modify and construct urban space simply by living in it and investing it with new meanings and associations. This power to define the inhabited space is often exercised unconsciously and challenges the ideological domination of the elites. Foucault's model of power is especially helpful in understanding the complex network of power relations that emerges.

The post-Soviet countries have provided researchers with an abundance of material on ideological and symbolic aspects of architecture, as well as on the way in which social and political changes are reflected in urban spaces. Yoshkar-Ola, a provincial city in Russia's Volga region and the capital of the Mari El Republic, provides a good example of these changes. In the past several years, the local government has initiated large-scale development, significantly altering the city's appearance. The process is still ongoing today, and in several years the city may well be unrecognisable. By interviewing seven residents of the city, I hoped to understand how people process the changes in urban landscape and the elite's attempts to change the mnemonic landscape of the community.

This paper explores the connection between urban planning, social memory and power. It questions the invincible hegemony of the elites in the construction of memory and the investment of the city with meaning. It relies on the one hand on de Certeau's idea of 'the planning gaze', which emphasises the power relations implicit in urban spaces, and on the other on Foucault's concept of the power network, as well as Lefebvre's concept of 'representational space'.

Constructing prehistoric Finnishness in the late 19th century

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In the 1870s, J. R. Aspelin built an archaeological narrative of the Finnish wandering from their original Eastern home to the West. He also planned a special museum to display this image of prehistoric Finnishness. A special Finnish identity and a myth of origin were needed to make Finns a people with history. It was also a question of owning cultural heritage and demarcating between what is own and alien. By providing findings with meanings, it was possible to divide them into culture and non-culture.

What were the cultural phenomena Aspelin encountered and what did he consider Finnish and why? How did he build a system of significations to explain the Finnish wandering narrative? What was included and what was excluded? How selective was the planned museum?

The core of Aspelin's explanation consisted of a Ural-Altai Bronze Age culture common for both Western Siberia and the Volga–Kama region. Aspelin saw this culture developing through the Anan'ino culture into the cultures known from the Late Iron Age in the habitation areas of Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia.

The most essential material signs which were considered to be Finnish were triangle ornaments and some animal and human figures. While creating a narrative of the Finnish migration, this visual language was followed from the East to the West. Significations Aspelin gave to other findings were determined by their relationship to this core explanation and the linguistically assumed original home at Altai. So it made Aspelin also exclude from his mind findings which stood in conflict with it. In this way, a basic myth for Finnishness was formed for a century and even longer. The Aspelinian basic view still prevailed in the 20th century, although slightly modified.

This image of Finnishness included a right to own the material remains inside its borders. This proprietary right was to be manifested for domestic and international audiences by displaying certain “things (with)in culture” in a special Finno-Ugric Central Museum in Helsinki, but because of practical realities, the museum never could become as strictly Finno-Ugric it was planned. Thus, a ‘culture in things’ was created only conditionally.

An embroidered royal gift as a political symbol and embodiment of design ideas in 1885

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The Empress Screen was an embroidered dressing screen presented as a gift to the Empress of Russia, Princess Dagmar of Denmark, when Alexander III, Czar of Russia and Grand Duke of Finland, visited Helsinki in 1885. The screen, now in the National Museum of Finland, consists of five panels, each 158 cm in height and 61 cm in width. The basic elements of the composition are coats of arms and plant ornament.

This paper discusses the commission of the screen and analyzes its composition, process of design and embroidery, and its symbolic function. A group of high-society women in Helsinki commissioned the screen. The design was created as a collaboration of artists and architects, and young socialites connected to the Helsinki School of Handicraft, supervised and assisted by professionals, performed the embroidery. The screen is shown to breathe European culture and picture the history and vitality of a nation loyal to the Emperor. It is set in contrast with other gifts given to the Emperor and Empress during the visit. Those gifts reflected Finnish nationalism, while the circles behind the screen were closer to politically liberal European thinking.

The paper concludes by discussing the division of labour in the realisation of the screen. The ideal of William Morris to combine design and implementation in one person was in conflict with reality even in the Arts and Crafts movement. In the late 19th century, crafts did not try to approach art as much in the person of the maker as within the traditional division of labour. Especially in embroidery, the difference between a male 'head' and female 'hands' was clear, and it was argued that the creativity of handicraft was in the implementation of the artist's intention. The paper shows that the Empress Screen was an embodiment of such thinking.

Searching for the meaning: Approaches for common construction materials of the Soviet period

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The limited material choices in the Soviet-era construction market have created a huge amount of buildings looking tediously identical. The asbestos cement plates, calcium silicate bricks and prefabricated concrete slabs still dictate our everyday visual experience. It is the substance we rarely mind; at first glance, it seems absurd that it could be valued. However, everyday architecture and common construction materials of the Soviet period are getting into the focus of conservators and are thereby provoking discussions on which parts of our 20th century built environment should be preserved, and why. Defining these principles requires an interdisciplinary approach, taking into account perspectives from architectural and construction history and from heritage theories, as well as understanding the general socio-economical context of the period.

The aim of this paper is to define the cases in which a common construction material becomes meaningful enough to be preserved. Through the analysis of different uses of materials, the following situations could be presented:

- A 'typically Soviet' construction material turns out to be much older than had been thought in the case of the building in question, and thus acquires a completely new meaning;
- The building has great architectural value and the construction material is a significant part of its aesthetics;
- An unusual presentation of the common material;
- An unusual material looking misleadingly similar to the common ones.

An analysis based on the material substance gives an alternative and complementary viewpoint to the architectural history and enables to decode other meanings of the recent heritage.

Things from the victims and things from the perpetrators of the Nazi-concentration camps

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For a long time, the investigation into the places of the Nazi-dictatorship and especially the concentrations camps and their academic examination has been a subject of interest only to historians. Oral traditions and written sources have been the main basis for this research. But we have to note that the written sources from the Nazis only reflect the perspective of the Nazis themselves, while there are also the testimonies and especially the memoirs of surviving concentration camp prisoners and forced labourers representing their memory. However, the number of surviving contemporary witnesses able to tell their stories about their lives and events in concentration camps is growing smaller each year. In the meantime, it has become common sense that approaches towards the past should incorporate all available sources: written documents of various kinds, oral tradition, images – drawings, but also photos, and material culture.

For several years now, contemporary archaeology has been studying this topic and there have been several excavations in the former concentrations camps in Poland, Germany, Austria, but recently also in the Netherlands, on the Channel Islands, and in Norway. A huge number of objects have been recovered and they give us a special insight into the objects the perpetrators used and the objects the victims had at their disposal. They give us the possibility to learn more about the prisoners and the perpetrators.

Objects like the camps themselves including the barbed wire, the camp walls, the crematoria and many other things can be seen as intentionally-built symbols of Nazi power. But a lot of things can be related to the victims: they represent their powerlessness, oppression and humiliation, but possibly also their self-assertion. Objects with engravings (names and ornaments) show a little bit of personalisation, individuality, they might represent a little hope that still remains and a will to survive.

In this paper, I would like to talk about the material culture of the former concentration camps, the possibilities to allocate the things to the victims and to the perpetrators, the meaning of the things related to the structure of Nazi terror, the meaning of the things related to the victims and their strategies of surviving by appropriation, obtaining and personalising things.

Another topic will deal with a historical perspective: the things from a former concentration camp not only have a meaning to the victims and perpetrators during their time of use; they also have a special meaning for us today in a historical perspective.

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Condition of ‘singular plural’ or the construction of cultural history of design

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The research objects of design history are ‘material things’ which are of interest also in other disciplines of humanitarian research, for example, art history, science and technology studies, sociology, anthropology, and others. As Kejtill Fallan has put it in her book on historiography and methodology, design history should be reassessed and written as a “culture history of design” instead. Specific methodologies of other disciplines that design history has evolved in close contact with can be only partly useful here, because they focus on aspects related to the cultural history of design, leaving out other aspects. The distinguishing aspect of this particular discipline is that it simultaneously ‘speaks about the objects’ and ‘speaks through the objects’, meaning that not only is the object in its materiality and completeness important but the numerous ongoing reflexive processes and narratives that it encompasses should be taken into consideration as well.

In my paper, I will try to explore the notions of ‘singularity’, ‘plurality’ and the construction of the ‘singular plural’ as a useful methodological outline for dealing with material objects in their complexity and design objects in particular.

The main problem which stems from the art-historical background of the definition of the design object and its research is the problem of categorisation. Firstly, in practice, the manufactured – by hand or by machine – functional object is regarded as inferior in comparison to a work of art. Its inferiority is defined by the ‘lack’ of something, some essential traits (lack of uniqueness in the industrially produced objects, lack of a subtle intellectual content in functional objects of craftsmanship etc). The situation is made even more complex by further categorisation into strictly divided sub-fields as required by historically established fields of research, e.g. research should be done based on the materiality of the object, its functions, means of production or specific time and location brackets. This approach can be described by the ‘singularity’ of the research object: the material thing; one researches a specific set of similar things, framed by particular markers etc. This approach leaves out of the description of other – possibly vital – aspects of the object that do not comply with the definition and thus it also fails to see the picture in large. An opposite approach tolerates the plurality of the research object: a set of things can be clustered around contingent, even idiosyncratic markers. In this case, the validity and the binding power of the generalisations can be problematised. In order to overcome the drawbacks of these two approaches, a third condition is created: the singular plural, the paradigmatic case that represent the rest of the set (e.g. a car as the paradigm of motorised, mass produced vehicles). In practice, it would materialise as a more inclusive and fluid design history.

But in order to get to the cultural history of design, one should overcome the dominance of art-historical – supposedly atemporal and natural – categorisation. Through the lens of art history, one paradigmatic case downgrades another paradigmatic case on the grounds of its supposed inferiority (the lack of essential properties as it was mentioned previously). Therefore, it is necessary not only to focus on the singular plural in order to overcome the singularity of the current researches in design history, but also to look into the ‘grey zones’ and marginal cases that the construction of this singular plural leaves behind. Wittgenstein’s idea of “a concept with blurred edges” (*Philosophical Investigations*, §71) might be useful

here as it elevates the object from the sphere of utilitarian calculation with its advantages and shortcomings to the sphere of phenomena, where one encounters the object in its total presence and ethical uncertainty.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Raivo Aunap (University of Tartu), Dmitri Gerasimov (Russian Academy of Sciences), Aivar Kriiska (University of Tartu), Merle Muru (University of Tartu), Alar Rosentau (University of Tartu), Dmitri Subetto (Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia)	Stone Age human occupations and post-glacial development of the Baltic sea in Narva-Luga klint bay area
Anastasiya Ilchanka (University of Tartu)	“Bears bumped off the bee-keeper”: Yury Luzhkov dismissal joke cycle
Krista Karro (Tallinn University)	Research of things, landscape, and people: Iron Age lakeside landscape by Lake Peipsi
Marju Kõivupuu (Tallinn University)	Natural sacred places: Values and the protection
Elo Liiv (Tallinn University)	Thing’s (a) home as our home
Martin Malve (University of Tartu)	A case of late congenital syphilis from Tartu dome church, Estonia, dated to the end of the 17th or to the beginning of the 18th century AD
Aimar Ventsel (University of Tartu)	East German punk: Rebellion against unemployment
Vadim Verenich (University of Tartu)	Semiotics and legal reasoning

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