

# Estonian Academy of Arts: for creativity! Development Plan 2016–2020



## **Estonian Academy of Arts: for creativity!**

### **Development Plan 2016–2020**

In the Development Plan of the Estonian Academy of Arts (herein-after the EAA or the Academy) for the period, 2016–2020 the Academy defines its mission, vision, strategic objectives, and policies until the year 2020. The starting point of the Development Plan is the state of play in the year 2016, and it takes into account the goals and priorities set in the national and sectoral strategies.

## **I THE MISSION**

The Estonian Academy of Arts is the main educator and developer of the arts, design, architecture, art history, heritage and arts education professionals in Estonia; the promoter and introducer of visual culture and an important driver of the Estonian society. The teaching provided by EAA is modern and interdisciplinary, creative and exploratory.

## **II VISION**

Through our alumni, faculty and students, we are the central Estonia and significant international creator, designer and interpreter of art, visual culture and living environment; and the essential enriching actor of the cultural environment and quality of life.

### III BASIC VALUES

**Creativity** – we value creativity, innovation, and independence. We respect the high-level creation of the teaching staff as one of the sources of learning.

**Individuality** – we encourage the individuality of each member of the Academy and enable substantive idiosyncrasy. We see the faculty members as mentors who encourage independent thinking of the learner and support their progress.

**Professionalism** – we value professional mastery, which ensures the quality of the intellectual and material environment. Our members are characterized by a demanding attitude towards their creative and research activities, and continuous self-development.

**Critical Thinking** – we value the analytical mindset, reflectivity and the constructive contribution in the societal development. We see great potential in art promoting the public debate. We act as if we notice the possibilities for making life in Estonia more dignified and sustainable.

**Openness** – we value openness within the Academy and in dialogue with the society to prevent attenuation and aloofness. We promote cross-cultural cooperation and the resulting synergies.

### IV STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- To operate in a new modern academic building in an interdisciplinary, international and cooperative manner.
- To contribute to the development of the society academically and creatively, and to be a learner-centered and sustainable teaching and research institution.
- To be the leading competence center in Estonia and an internationally recognized center in the main academic areas of responsibility.



Internationally renowned footwear company Camper chose EAA's Department of Leather Art for their first workshop in Northern Europe. Throughout one week, six local and six Nordic students worked under the supervision of Jumpej Ushiana, senior designer at Camper, Adriana Rodriguez, design director at Camper and Catharina Hartmann, shoe technician at Camper. (Photos: Henno Luts)

## V THE MAIN ACADEMIC AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The priority research areas for the subsequent years are as follows:

### Socially Engaged and Autonomous Art

The world and the society around us demand from each citizen ethical, economic and political decisions, which must rely on the understanding of the functioning of the socium, the economic environment, and their background systems. Today's art helps to make sense of and explain these processes on both the societal and the individual level, thus supporting decision-making. We adhere to the concept of art as a social commentator and critic and the individual as a free creator and thinker. We consider important the artist's contact with society and the feedback from each of its members. We receive feedback through artistic events, through active participation in the discussion on cultural and social issues, through our creative practice, media, and participation in various decision-making bodies. For us, both the high level of creation which is based on the traditions of Estonian and international art, as well as the ability for creative thinking and analytical approaches are critically important. In our activities, we treat the individual as a full member of society and value, among other, subcultures and minorities while examining their cultural concepts and outputs, their history, their reception and their impact in the modern society. We attach importance to the analytical approach to an individual and the society, and the independence of an artist as a creative person.

### Inclusive Design

Relying on user-centered thinking, we are engaged in identifying, mapping and resolving problems and problem complexes through design processes. Inclusive design is focused on the development of a sustainable world, solving social problems, intelligent materials and materials research. We wish to contribute to the development and the implementation of new business models, development of sustainable products and services, and to support the development of policies promoting eco-innovation in Estonia as well as globally. Our goal is to encourage the creation of an inclusive

living environment that would take into account the needs of the society and community members, on the global developmental scale as well as the individual level of the daily human living. Accomplishing this goal requires the linking of heritage technology with modern technology, development of alternative materials, material compositions and smart specialization, taking into consideration the needs and expectations of small user groups when developing niche products and services and the use of appropriate skills in the international business scene.

### Innovation of the Living Environment

Spatial and material cultures and the resulting artificial environment frames almost all of our daily activities, both in private life, socially and in business. The fact that it is constantly being updated is the indispensable prerequisite of cultural, technological and economic changes, but also their inevitable result. As for the innovation of the living environment, the crucial role belongs to the architect, the interior architect, and the designer who mediate technological and materials innovations and synthesize them into an intelligible, well-functioning and sustainable environment. The high-level architectural education, which includes urban design, architecture, interior architecture, design, innovation of technology and economy, will advance the competitiveness of the entire society and the country.

In addition to thoroughly standardized and regulated architectural education, and competent spatial planning, adept development effort and research are necessary for history, theory and practice of urban construction, architecture, interior architecture and design. The technology-based applied research carried out at the Academy is mostly based on linking of information technology to organization and sustainability of spatial environments.

### Studies in Soviet Culture

Estonia's current social, cultural and economic processes are closely connected to our recent past, the Soviet experience. The art, design, built and material environment as well as art history writing of the

Soviet period are important sources in the conceptualizing of and dealing with this experience. With the perspective of Estonia and the Baltic region, we wish to interfere and contribute to the international field of Soviet studies, thus creating new knowledge as well as developing and expanding the research methodologies. Besides high-level basic research in humanities, our strength lies in practice-based methods – artistic research projects, studies in cultural heritage as well as curatorship and museology practice. Our broader focus is on Soviet culture as an important influence in today's culture consciousness and its formative significance for contemporary Estonia. By explaining the Soviet experience, we wish to promote intercultural dialogue in society, where the past is, at times, considered in contradicting terms, and thus contribute to the integration processes.

### **Cultural Heritage Studies**

In a rapidly changing world, tangible and intangible cultural heritage created by the previous generations plays a major role in shaping the human world and the state and national self-perception. At the same time, what is valued as heritage, the concept of cultural heritage and the understanding of the methods of preservation and interpretation of heritage, are continually transforming. This creates a necessity for versatile heritage studies that would integrate the know-how and methodologies of various disciplines and incorporate a broad spectrum of cultural phenomena and artifacts. Our broader goal is to contemplate and convey heritage in the contemporary world, to make it accessible and comprehensible to a wide audience, to introduce the local cultural heritage abroad and to ensure heritage preservation. We focus primarily on the tangible heritage – historic buildings and built environments, objects and material environments (including works of art). We concentrate on both heritage construction and the sociology and heritage conservation, on the sustainability of the historic environment as well as materials and technology research. We wish to be one of the key provider and coordinator of such research and teaching in Estonia.

### **Art Education**

The contemporary world uses images more and more to communicate. Thus, art education will form the basis for visual comprehension and the free use of visual language. Art education, which takes into account the formative potential of the art regarding identity, supports the child's development and growth into a creative adult who is accompanied by visual culture throughout their life, and for whom the phrase "lifelong learning" has a personal and important meaning.

Our goal is to reduce the gap between the contemporary art scene and the general and hobby education. This calls for art education that deems important the questions and concepts of the contemporary art world, where alongside manual skills, the diversity of worldviews, opinions, and media is important. It is essential to understand the language of art and perceive art as an open dialogue partner. Our target is to train versatile art education professionals adhering to the modern principles of education science who would operate as spokespersons in a narrower field of art education.



Based on her research on upcycling methods, senior researcher of the Faculty of Design, Reet Aus has established an upcycling clothing label, a platform called Trash to Trend that unites upcycling designers, and an online waste mapping database ([www.reuse.ee](http://www.reuse.ee)). In 2015, the Nordic Business Report selected Reet Aus as one of the Top 20 Women in Business in Northern Europe. (Photo: Herkki Erich Merila)



In the last couple of years, the study of Soviet culture has emerged as one of the central research areas in EAA. Here, senior researcher and director of the Institute of Art History and Visual Culture, Andres Kurg, explains the history of Linnahall, the landmark of Soviet architecture in Tallinn, to participants of the interdisciplinary project “The Second World Urbanity”. (Photo: Steven Harris)

## VI DEVELOPMENT STIMULI

**An empowering environment** – the biggest expectation of the EAA students and staff, is to move to a new academic building where the academic, creative, research and development activity is interdisciplinary and innovative.

**Competitive curricula** – we offer internationally competitive education based on the current and future workforce needs. We will develop versatile curricula that follow the latest professional developments, including Master’s studies curricula taught in English.

**Learner-centered approach** – the Academy has ingrained a learner-centered approach to education that values creativity and entrepreneurship, research-based approaches and innovation. Inspiring faculty members, supporting counselors and high-quality learning environments help learners gain independence and develop personal accountability.

**Lifelong and flexible learning** – we are developing a system of continuous education, which alongside with the training targeted to professionals, includes general visual literacy competencies and hobby education, aiding people who wish to continue their education or retrain and change their profession. By developing flexible forms of study, we are creating better conditions for the learners acquiring higher education while working and are taking into account the educational needs of people with disabilities and risk groups.

**International focus and openness** – in student mobility we see a significant development impulse to enable individuals to acquire the best practices and skills. We value international experience and encourage our members to use the opportunities created. Co-learning and cooperation between students with different cultural backgrounds contribute to the integration process. We consider important the interest in, and tolerance of EAA members coming from foreign

countries and are looking for ways to recruit international students and lecturers.

**Digital learning** – the digital era requires the effective use of modern technology in learning and teaching. We support the development of digital competences of our members and integration of the digital culture in the learning process.

**A hotbed of creative people** – we train professionals in art, architecture, design and humanities whose professional activity helps to shape and maintain a viable, open and diversified cultural environment and a society that values creativity. The works of EAA members are of high-level, visible and accessible to the public.

**Boosting Estonian society and economy** – we will continue to strengthen cooperation with the public sector and enterprises, and promote the creative industries projects. We support the introduction of sustainable consumption and production models, the use of local materials and know-how. We contribute to making cities and smaller settlements inclusive, safe and adaptable and to the preservation of cultural heritage. We offer to broader target groups opportunities for developing creativity and improving employability.

**Pioneering center of excellence** – we promote research in our main academic areas of responsibility and encourage interdisciplinary endeavors. Alongside research in humanities, we advance artistic research, analytical conservation, and architectural research based in research of spatial development. We work closely together with research and development institutions and universities around the world, participate in associations, networks and cooperation projects uniting various specialties, and launching new ones.



Product design alumnus Mihkel Masso's innovative sauna heater Drop, designed as a study assignment, won the prominent Red Dot Award in Product Design in 2015. Huum OÜ, the Estonian company that manufactures the heater, outdid its sales targets by 400% within the first year of production, excelling on the international market. (Photos: Erik Riikoja)



## **VII IMPLEMENTATION AND MODIFICATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Action Plan of the University is annually drawn up on the basis of the Development Plan of the EAA. The Development Plan is discussed and, if necessary, adjusted by the University Council. The Development Plan and the Action Plan constitute the underlying basis for preparation of the budget of the Estonian Academy of Arts.



**ESTONIAN  
ACADEMY OF ARTS**  
Architecture Design Art Research

**Estonian Academy of Arts 2016**

