



Kärt Ojavee (b. 1982) is an artist and designer who blends new technologies with traditional craft. Her approach to textiles is conceptual, exploring their historical significance and potential for future development. In addition to her academic research and material innovation, she is also a musician, and creates stage designs and costumes.

In 2013, Ojavee defended her PhD thesis, *Active Smart Interior Textiles: Interactive Soft Displays*, which focused on developing a series of hybrid materials and interactive textiles that merge traditional and cutting-edge technologies. Her work often incorporates electronic components that explore future possibilities, emphasizing materials that evolve over time. Ojavee is particularly interested in the transformation of materials and their dynamic relationship with the surrounding environment, highlighting the symbiotic interaction between the two. Since 2014, she has been a senior researcher at the Estonian Academy of Arts. In 2024, she became a professor in the Textile Department and began leading the MA program *Craft Studies at the same institution together with Juss Heinsalu*.

A

ASHTRADE

Sourced from the residue of oil shale mining in northeast Estonia, the installation comprises material and photographic elements derived from a site where 230 million tonnes of ash form an uncanny mountain range 800 hectares in size. Here hills rise to compensate for the loss of extracted sedimentary rock, oil shale, from which electricity is produced.

As a striking contrast to this vast and artificial sublime shaped by large-scale industrial processes, two human hands are seen carefully crafting ash into precious beads. The worth of these unusual jewels of Earth resides in the meditative attention with which they have been made, each one different from the next. Upon closer investigation the pearls, reminiscent of prayer beads, reveal themselves as depositories of future materials. Like kernels, they await to be unlocked in an alternate future that may be our own.

Studio Aine has researched the ways in which the hills of residue, previously considered hazardous, are being reconsidered in view of novel, carbon neutral technologies. Namely, the latter enable the extraction of minerals and metals from the ash. In light of global resource scarcity, these mountains may now be envisioned as future currency, due to be traded fraction by fraction, bead by bead, between those industries that are in need of critical raw materials. The project highlights the shifting notion of what constitutes waste as opposed to value, whilst also foregrounding those who steward these desolate, wounded landscapes.

TO SPIN, TO CRACK, TO BIND

Association for Culture and Education KIBLA / Ulica kneza Koclja 9, Maribor / www.kibla.org / Production: Peter Lubej / Exhibition Design: Annika Kaldoja and Merilin Tee
Graphic Design: Pierre Satoshi Benoit / Supported by Estonian Cultural Endowment of Estonia, The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, The Municipality of Maribor
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The detail of a view of the residue plateau, captured in a time-consuming textile technique, has been juxtaposed with an industrially made tapestry, creating a link between the aesthetic landscape and the use of the material. For the artist, it is visually and content-wise related to Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*. The era, the landscape and the figure in that painting are from a wholly different context, but there is a discernible dialogue between the two situations and periods.

Year: 2021-2024 / Materials: oil shale ash, blue clay, various yarns / Technique: jacquard fabric, hand woven tapestry, ceramic glazing, glass melting, authors' techniques / ASHTRADE is an ongoing project that started in 2021 from a collaboration with Studio Aine (EST) and was continued by Kärt Ojavee since 2022. / Photo: Anu Vahtra / Experiments with ceramics in collaboration with Jaan August Viirand. Experiments with glass in collaboration with Andra Jõgis

B

SAVE AS

The presented objects are a detail from a large scale installation that was first shown in 2018. A large fabric hanging in the middle of the gallery splitted the space in a diagonal line. The asymmetrical arrangement was a nod to a modernist tactic often employed by the early 20th century textile designers like Annie Albers and Liubov Popova. (1) The establishment of a relationship between textile art and design and industrial mass production, that was the basis for these women's practices, is also the starting point for "Save As". If the birth in the 1920s of ideas about textile design in an industrial age served as one of the axes for the installation, then the other one is represented by the choice of materials familiar to a 21st century consumer: PVC, kevlar, glass fibre, optical fibre and carbon fibre. Thus, the installation was stretched between these axes in an attempt to think and work through the current realities of textile production.

Choosing the time consuming method of hand weaving on a loom instead of using industrial machines, allowed the artists a close proximity to the hi-tech industrial materials and a prolonged period of discussion, thinking and experimenting. Developing the idea of shaping or saving something into a form, the artists continued experimenting with materials, gradually introducing variations. A seemingly insignificant change in the thickness of a yarn, for example, produced very different results. These variations were then cast into a simple form of a Frisbee, a process of imitating by hand the creation of a mass produced object.

(1) Christina Lodder talks about the concept of "sdvig" – a shift or dislocation – in 'Liubov Popova: From Painting to Textile Design', Tate Papers, no.14, Autumn 2010, <https://www.tate>.

org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/14/liubov-popova-from-painting-to-textile-design, accessed

Year: 2018 / Developed and made together with Johanna Ulfsak / Material: carbon fibre, Kevlar, reflective yarn, glass fibre. / Technique: hand weaving / Text: Alina Astrova

C

UNDEFINED USEFUL OBJECT 23 I

Hypnagogic and hypnopompic phenomena—auditory and visual illusions or hallucinations that occur either as one falls asleep or before waking—have long been a source of inspiration and insight for artists. For instance, the writer Mary Shelley famously drew inspiration from a dream for her creation of the character Frankenstein. Similarly, in *Undefined Useful Object 23*, the emphasis lies on the sounds and stories that reached the musicians during their sleep, which they later transformed into their artistic works. For example, Paul McCartney famously heard the song 'Yesterday' in a dream and initially believed it was a childhood tune that had resurfaced in his mind. In this installation, a reimagined version of a song by the English band The Police—also inspired by a dream—appears alongside 'Yesterday.' The piece invites viewers to perform it using a mechanically operated 'music box.' The ceramic 3D-printed object featured in the installation was crafted by Lauri Kilusk.

Year: 2023 / Material: 3D-printed ceramics, crater glazing, light reflecting vinyl / Text: Sandra Nuut

D

UNDEFINED USEFUL OBJECT 23 II

UUO 23 II explores the connection between light and biological rhythms through the use of ancient inventions like the magnifying glass and gears. Light plays a crucial role in regulating the circadian rhythm, signaling when to be awake and when to rest. Nerve cells in the human eye detect environmental cues, such as light, to keep the body's internal clock in sync. The light-diffusing textile, adorned with a subtle digital print inspired by flowing streams and moving light beams, transforms into an analog clock. A circle of light moves across the curtain, marking the passage of time in a captivating, visual way.

Material: light diffusing polyester fabric brass, aluminium, glass, wood, electronics / Text: Sandra Nuut

E

EPISODES 1, 2, 3 AND 8

What makes one fabric valuable and another one worthless? The importance of a piece of textile will be defined not only by the man-hours spent for producing it or by the rarity of the material but largely by the fact how we attach value to the fabric. How does the attached value depend on the material of the fiber, the technology

of textile production or the colour? Attributed or immanent value, in turn, can direct the course of world historical events. The desire by European upper classes for comfortable cotton and sleek silk was one of the engines that motivated the rise of capitalism as a global economic system and that enthused European countries to colonize Asia, Africa and America. What are the qualities allowing a piece of white fabric to be associated either with peace and benevolence in some places, with abundance and supremacy in other places, and in yet other countries to be used as a bride token, a detonating fuse or simply a towel? The way the three pieces of fabric with radically differing purposes woven together at the exhibition "Episodes 1, 2, 3 and 8" hints to the loss of their social distinction and return to the initial state of mere fabric-being.

1
One long stretch of white fabric can symbolize pureness, benevolence, foresightedness, compassion and many more qualities, especially in Tibet and Mongolia. Even if historically these shawls or khatas have been made of silk, today polyester and cotton have also become common. Khatas – these treasured, long, white fabrics – are offered for good auspices on important occasions such as weddings, funerals, childbirth, graduation, or simply when guests arrive or leave. In several parts of West-Africa and Melanesia, a large piece of white cloth functions as currency that can be also used for paying bridewealth. But what makes a piece of cloth valuable – resistance or fugacity?

Material: fusible yarn, paper
Technique: hand weaving

2
In 1939, Vyacheslav Molotov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, declared on radio that the Soviet Union was not bombing Finland as had been claimed by the evil "imperialist" media, but was instead airdropping food aid to starving Finns. As a result, Finns dubbed the PPAБ-3 bombs to which the Soviet planes were treating them "Molotov Bread Baskets". Reciprocating, they offered herra Molotov and Soviet tanks a cocktail to go with the meal — bottles filled with alcohol, tar, potassium chlorate or other flammable substances with a piece of fabric imbued in kerosene as a fuse. When the bottles were used again in Maidan and BLM protests, an old question arose again -- what fabric makes the best fuse – thick or thin, linen or cotton?

Material: linen, paper
Technique: hand weaving

3
Hugo Grotius, the father of International Law, stated in the early 17th century that according to well established custom, the waving of a white flag should be interpreted as an explicit sign of surrender and offer to parlay. To achieve its purpose, the flag needs to be visible. It seems to make sense,

therefore, to use the largest and cheapest piece of cloth around. But what to do when no bedsheets are at hand? Office workers, for example, might wave the bright white A4 sheets of paper. But what if one has to leave a war zone and only has a towel or a wedding dress to take? Besides, if peace really is the most important thing, then should it also not be demanded and declared with most expensive material?

Material: seaweed, silk, eider dawn / Technique: hand weaving

8
Pileus (or zucchetto, pileolus, submitrale, calotte or soli deo) is a small, round cousin of the beret that protects the heads of churchmen in the Catholic, Anglican and the Syriac Orthodox churches. Initially, the hats were worn to protect their tonsures or shaved bare heads, especially when a mitre was to be placed on top of it. Today, the pilei are worn separately; and according to a tradition initiated in the last century, when the pope is offered a pileus, he will take the one from his head and offer it in return. The small hat is crowned by a screw-like eyelet with a silk shaft that makes it comfortable for the wearer to take it off and put it back. Denunciations of the duplicity of the Catholic church often speak of the commerce of indulgences or orgies thrown at the Papal Palace. Yet would not the luxurious smoothness of this superb textured silk that can only be experienced by select few fingers summarize in its minute form all the harangued secular opulence of religious life?

Material: silk / Technique: spinning / Year: 2021
Exposition displays: Valge Kuup
Texts: Gustav Kalm

F

THE PAST TENSE OF BURN IS BURNED

The work combines algae from the Baltic Sea which will be burned during the exhibition. The forms of the burning elements are casted from fragments of findings collected from the shores of the Sleepy Islands in Iceland. What remains from the burning is a glass in the shape of a teardrop. The ghostly smoke releases an increasing odour from the charred algae, creating a vision of a landscape where the remains of the once lively algae

have become fossils, now releasing energy on their own.

Year: 2023 / Materials: glass, silver, algal incense (Furcellaria Lumbricalis, Fucus Vesiculosus, Juniperus, Bursera Gravelens, resin from Pinus Sylvestris and Genus Abies)

G

THE STORY OF NANOMATERIAL NO. 399

Small particles that can only be seen in nano scale are the biggest magic in the unseen*. Those tiny little specks dance like fireflies, creating its own symphony in darkness. Being small does not diminish their grandeur. But being small offers them freedom. They can slip through cracks, join each other, and make universes. The universe humans can't even fathom. For what though? To whisper secrets. The secrets of life's intricate tapestry. The tiny things are hidden under veils of everyday sight. Though it is not visible, they work in harmony, shaping destiny.

The breakthrough in knowledge and technology that allows us to work with materials on a nanometer scale is interesting because many life processes take place at that scale. Designing at the molecular level will allow us to create materials like nature does.

The Story of Nanomaterial No. 399 presents the results of a year-long project that focused on developing new nanomaterials. The exposition is opening up the material creation and manufacturing processes. Materials that we normally see in a laboratory environment are placed in the gallery space for observation through different scales. The exposition opens up a creative research work that has brought together materials science, machine construction, creative processes, as well as failure and final outcomes of the project.

Author of the project: Kärt Ojavee / Material development team: Anna Jõgi, Katarina Kruus, Kärt Ojavee, Madis Kaasik in collaboration with Exponential Technologies Ltd. and Gelatex Technologies OÜ
Graphic Design: Pierre Satoshi Benoit / Exhibition text: Haeun Kim and *AI / Sound design: Artjom Astrov

