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Remarks for diagnosis: Imagosphere Come I

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INTRODUCTION

A new era has arrived! All around, I often hear it said: "I don't understand what is going on, I don't understand why things are going this way." I believe that, at the Chair of Architecture, we do understand what is going on and why, but let us be honest - **it is hard to believe.**

It is hard to believe that a new era is at hand, especially since we are accustomed to the old era. Naturally, every era boasts, through the voices of the people within it, that a new era is at hand, yet now it seems that it has indeed arrived. What allows me to believe this sentence? I would like to share some memories and assumptions with you:

First memory. 1986. Moscow. I am visiting friends and we are drinking tea. A recent emigrant to Holland has come to visit. It is the first time he has been permitted to return to visit his homeland. Along with everything else, he describes the wonders of the Western world to the people gathered around the table and everyone listens in amazement. Somebody asks what will happen next. The visitor thinks for a moment and then grabs a bottle of cognac from the table, saying: I wouldn't be surprised if soon this bottle will have a keypad and the bottle cork will fly off when you punch in the right code. Everyone laughs. Personal computers are just starting to appear in Russia.

Second memory. 1996. Defence of diploma theses at the Estonian State Institute of Art. The computer is no marvel, yet Rasmus Tamme's thesis is one of the first diploma theses that attempts to create a virtual space and to interlink spaces. 'Linking' is a new word. Relatively little of the thesis itself is visible, especially that which we customarily refer to as being architectural. I am a reviewer and I present an apology for the new era that is just about to arrive. I am an optimist and I believe, in ten years, a new era will be at hand, yet, deep down, I think that it could actually take more time.

The year is 2007. We have trouble believing, but we become convinced again every day, that a new era

has indeed arrived. Like the Toyota commercial on Euronews, *this day is today.*

How can this new era be described? It needs a name. How can it be found?

The following come to mind as emotional strokes that create a whole, in an *alla prima* manner:

- Populist politics
- Advertising covering everything
- A world that is evil and does not manage to make ends meet
- Global flows of goods and media
- Digital matrix.

How can these be tied together into the universal pattern? Naturally, every entity that has lost its separate details impoverishes reality, yet also offers opportunities to think of it understandably and abstractly. Two of the more general crystallisations in this nebulous, yet universal, picture of experience are: evil and image. Yet they do not seem to fit together! Nevertheless, they both stand in their places without being ashamed of me.

I consider the word *image* with great interest. We find in the Lexicon of Antiquity: *Imagines* - Representations of ancestors. In the case of Romans, portraits molded from wax as death masks. An actor carried such a portrait at the funerals of higher officials. Representations of ancestors were also carried in the funeral processions of deceased relatives. They were kept in the closet the remainder of the time. Their preparation was closely connected to the making of death masks and has become known as one of the roots of naturalism in Roman portrait art (Lexicon of Antiquity 1983, 142).

We find in a Latin dictionary concerning the word *imago*:

Figure, image, picture, representation, portrait, bust/.../ *imagines maiorum* wax figures or masks of ancestors/.../phantom, figure from dreams, vision, apparition, semblance/.../

But also: reverberation, allegorical picture, metaphor, view, manifestation (Latin-Estonian Dictionary 2002, 538).

The words *imagino*, *imaginatum*, *imaginare* also derive from this - to depict, to express, to reproduce.

While Latin culture uses the word *imago*, it is not found in Greek culture, which enriched Latin culture to a great extent. Picture, pictorialness and depiction nevertheless do exist.

Let us at this point consider words such as:

Εικόνα – eikona – picture, icon, reflection and imagination – μεταφ

Εικονικός – eikonikos – pictorial

Εικόνισμα – eikonisma – icon

Εικονογραφημένος – eikonografemenos – illustrated

Εικονοκλάστης – eikonoklastes – destroyers of icons, iconoclasts

Εικονοστάσι – eikonostasi – ikonostaas – self standing sacred wall

Unlike Roman culture, the concept of *imago* was not desacralised in Greece and it continued to bear its sacred or magic meaning. More precisely, Greek culture transmitted Egyptian tradition, where, during Ptolemy's era, embalming disappeared and the icon appeared in its place - a portrait drawn on a wooden tablet. Early Christianity did not know either icons or the symbol of the cross. Icons are nothing more than pictures of the mortals Mary and the baby Jesus, or of saints. These pictures have become or been made sacred through martyrdom. It was precisely in evolving Byzantium that iconodulism - the worshipping of pictures - spread, and developed into iconoclasm. Later, the Protestant Reformation also went through a similar process. Nevertheless, icons and iconics have been preserved up to the present in Eastern European orthodox tradition. We see the tradition, extending back to Egypt, of honouring the portraits of the deceased in Orthodox and Russian cemeteries.

The function of the icon, however, is entirely different from the image or *imago*. The icon is a gateway to the magical and sacred world that is opened up by prayer or meditation. The meanings of generations that have prayed into icons can be experienced directly as religious ecstasy and their semantic field is relatively narrowly defined.

The *imago* and the *imagosphere* only marginally bear this kind of essence of the didactics of cognition. The archetypical meanings of the *imagosphere* are hidden deep between the modern, alienated surface layer and the nature of phenomena. These meanings remain mostly hidden from the creators and cultivators of *imagos*.

It seems to me that the **ima:gospheric world** is an appropriate name for the new age. Just as we are surrounded by the atmosphere, or as the lithosphere gives us support, so the difficult-to-penetrate and difficult-to-uncrypt *imagosphere* surrounds us here and now.

Not **imagosphere**, but rather **ima:gosphere**, swollen and sensual like the cover photo of *Kroonika* (Chronicle) magazine. This sense of contemporary time contains all that the old Latin word carries with it: the fictitiousness of the world, its subjection to the current of pictorial media, its abandonment of science and rationality. And even the sun has departed into an entirely new sign of the zodiac - Aquarius - after remaining in the Pisces zodiacal constellation for 2000 years.

EMPIRICAL ESTABLISHMENT OF IMAGOSPHERE

Media

Nowadays, the global economy, culture, politics and advertising have amalgamated. If we see the origin of the public sphere, as defined by Jürgen Habermas, as an important attribute of the modern era, then this is something entirely new.

If we consider how the world has changed - take the early Middle Ages for example - we see a situation where public and private were completely compressed. Kings or nobles, their families, power, their bodies, blood and presence were an indivisible whole. This lasted until the late Renaissance. The bank of the Medici, which was also the municipal treasury of Florence, can be mentioned as an example of the interweaving that took place later on. On the one hand, it was a bank that was personal property, and on the other hand, it was a public municipal treasury. These two were intertwined.

Or the family of the medieval master craftsman is another example: the room of the master was his workshop, living room and reception room all in one. His public and intimate matters existed in the same time and space simultaneously. They were united into a complete environment. They could not be separated. The fortunes of his family and his business were one. These two sides began to diverge in the late Renaissance, until the public and private worlds split into two completely, clearly different worlds at the height of modernism.

This was the moment that Habermas described as the origin of the public sphere. This was a change in the structure of what was considered public. New journals appeared - initially letters of merchants, news bulletins that disseminated public information. The invention of the printing press during the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance made a new layer possible: the appearance of public media. Among other things, this changed architecture beyond recognition. It is suspected in architecture that if Lord Burlington had not published catalogues and journals, some aspects of neoclassicism would not have taken place.

The origin of the bourgeois republic, and the separation of the public and the private, accompanied the triumphal progress of the public print media. Some private drawbacks that unpleasantly forced their way into public view were buried out of sight of society in jails or insane asylums as described by Michel Foucault.

Nowadays, a new amalgamation of public and private has come about - its attributes are all manner of tracking systems, including systems for tracking terrorists, which are, in turn, evolving into new information systems. These kinds of systems bring us to the point where soon there will no longer be an intimate sphere. The intimate sphere has become public by nature. Big Brother is the artificial laboratory of this intimacy, from which this type of media has already broken out. The tabloids inform the public of the most intimate facts of private life. The bodies of athletes, for example, are public, since the nation and consequently the people are paying for them. This is observable from the public knowledge of Kristiina Smigun's menstrual cycle and to the nuances of Fazekas's urine sample of doping scandal.

The truth about public bodies must be public knowledge.

Post-modernist society has thus done away with the gap between the public and the private. Tracking systems can be extended to each individual so that every person can be identified in detail. I recently saw a documentary film about the identification of goods. Each package has its own individual identification code. It is always possible to ascertain where goods are being transported in the world at any given moment using GPS.

Nowadays, if one goes from the Academy of Arts to the Town Hall Square (Raekoja plats), several cameras observe that route. This environment is already active in terms of observation. Somebody is watching us and we are happy, in the naive hope that Big Brother is protecting us from evil.

In some sense, we have crossed the threshold of a new era. **New digital-technological systems** are the foundation for this new era amalgamation of the private and the public. **I would refer to this as a digital platform.** Whatever phenomena of life we may study, in close up they are subordinated to the digital platform. The analogical-causal, where the relationship between cause and effect is at least theoretically open to the observer, is losing its primary essence. The result of this is a decrease in the sphere of direct experience of existential life.

As Hans Georg Gadamer describes: "Being present does not simply mean being there along with something else that is there at the same time. To be present means to participate. If someone was present at something, he knows all about how it really was.... Thus watching something is a genuine mode of participating. Here we can recall the concept of sacral communion that lie behind the original Greek concept of *theoria*. *Theoros* means someone who takes part in a delegation to a festival.... *Theoria* is a true participation, not something active but something passive (*pathos*), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees." (Gadamer 1997, 124-125)

The prevalent function of the digital platform and the dependence of the world on the screen dehumanises the human existence. We communicate a great deal with our friends online, but through a screen. I could write this lecture on paper but I choose to write it on a screen. We communicate with the people close to us by telephone, which involves the disassembling of language into electronic particles and putting them back together again. Photographs of gatherings are again only on the screen. The contents of our evening shopping cart are digitally stored somewhere and become an *imago* if I connect them with a discount card that bears my name and other data. It is funny that the card functions even though I present false data on it.

For a couple of months now, a mellow and low male voice has invited me to Sampo Bank to discuss my bank contracts. This is not a man, as I discovered in conversation with a young bank teller; rather, it is the 'bank's contact centre'. As if some anonymous character has lent his voice to a machine. The answer to my question of why I had to physically come to the bank (I naturally went out of curiosity in preparing this lecture) was more than strange. "Yes, and you can change everything personally on the bank's homepage in 'e-life'". Even my signature is no longer mine, but rather it is digital - and soon that digital signature that is identifiable by a number and a card will indeed be much more real than me and the letters (*pookstav*) I have formed with ink.

Gutenberg's Galaxy

The word 'letter' takes us to the next subject - the written word. The Estonian word for letter - 'pookstav' is directly derived from *book stav* - a book mark, a cut - probably an old Germanic word. Marshall McLuhan deduced the changes brought about by the printing press, which he fondly referred to as Gutenberg's galaxy, when he considered the birth of the new era in the book he wrote in 1962.

He wrote: "When technology extends *one* of our senses, a new translation of culture occurs as swiftly as the new technology is interiorised." (McLuhan 1995,40)

This sense is the sense of sight, in which the verbal context of language, or that based on hearing, is alienated from its original form - the living word. This takes place mostly in Western Europe and North America. The first alienation takes place through the adoption of written letters as replacements of phonetics. This impoverishes and destroys the variety and multi-valency of language.

The alphabet is an aggressive and militant absorber and transformer of cultures (McLuhan 1995,48).

The increase of visual stress among the Greeks alienated them from the primitive art that the electronic age now reinvents after interiorizing the *unified field* of electric all-at-onceness. (McLuhan 1995,63)

A wonderful word - *all-at-onceness*. In 1962, nobody knew what *online* meant. Yet the simultaneous appearance of everything and the universe is also in this online condition nowadays in the sense of didactic cognition.

Nevertheless, tactile and personal self-expression still remain in manuscripts. Writing and existence are inseparable. Cultural identification still survived in both antiquity and the Middle Ages. The manuscript had a tactile and existential composition. Holding a manuscript in one's hands was a solemn and sacred act. The author's hands had touched it, or at least the writer's hands, who had to be the author's researcher, interpreter, editor and publisher.

Manuscript culture is conversational if only because the writer and his audience are physically related by the form of publication as performance (McLuhan 1995,84).

The printing press brings ultimate seclusion with it: The invention of typography confirmed and expanded the new visual stress of applied knowledge, providing the first uniformly repeatable *commodity*, the first assembly-line, and the first mass-production (McLuhan 1995,124)

Thus Gutenberg's galaxy created an entirely new situation - the synthetic mode of cognition that had evolved primarily in the context of language and in the natural landscape in traditional cultures was replaced initially by a literate, and thereafter, a literary way of cognition, from which a new media evolved over time - journalism, which combined unified records, pictures and advertising. Radio and television compressed this into a completely amalgamated new environment - the environment of the mass media.

Thus the essential parts of the imagosphere have been built up. The apparent and illusive method of depiction is gradually attaining a more prominent position. Transition to the digital platform and its new applications is only a question of time. The digital platform allows the existing parts of the imagosphere to amalgamate into a synthetic whole. Quantity grows into a new quality.

A perfect little cell of the imagosphere accompanies us everywhere - **a small instrument** that makes telephone calls, takes photographs, sends e-mails, plays music and does a host of other things. The screen accompanies us everywhere - **a membrane or filter** through which we communicate with the world. The city, its houses, billboards, monitors etc have also formed this kind of filter.

In terms of learning and cognition, though, a new and very interesting situation is developing. The speed of contact within the media is making the message ever shorter. Jeffrey Olick wrote in a recent issue of the weekly cultural newspaper *Sirp*:

"If you visit a good library and peruse the lists of loaned books, you can see that most of the books have not been taken out by anyone for years because there are simply too many books. As Paul Valery wrote: modern man is interested only in what can be shortened into a summary. Yet we also simply have a practical need for brief summaries, so that now there are already registries of textual registries." (Peiker 2007,13)

Simultaneously with the shortening and simplification of the message, it overlaps with an entirely new phenomenon - advertising. When man learned to speak, he learned to lie because words are only representations - imagos. When man learned to write, he also learned to falsify.

Information, messages and advertising are indistinguishably placed on top of each other in the imagospheric world. The weekly newspaper *Eesti Ekspress*, which immediately set about inculcating and discovering the new world in 1989, was undoubtedly present at the birth of this imagospheric era.

The constitution of the imagospheric world is also good news: it was announced on August 1st 2007 that well-known media mogul Rupert Murdoch had bought the Dow Jones publisher that published the *Wall Street Journal*. Naturally, the mogul gave assurances that the newspaper would remain independent in the future as well.

The imagosphere has become a separate living organism that spreads out in all directions.

Personal Imagosphere

Thus a complete reality has come about, where imagos replace processes, phenomena, people, things and everything else. This imagosphere is established in every location where the digital media network floats. It is eager to go along with you even on vacation. It is vigilant and awaits the moment that your gaze happens to rest on a computer, telephone, newspaper or television. Advertising becomes personal.

It does not matter that your personal data is secret. Personal advertising searches for and finds the preferences of your Internet browser, rummages through your key words, and starts threatening and sending junk mail.

The individuality of the digital platform inevitably leads to the individualisation of the imagosphere as well. Its central institution is a new media phenomenon - blogs. The quicker and more skilled politicians have their own blogs. This is a new way to make yourself visible.

As is customarily said, they communicate at the grassroots level. Edgar Savisaar has written:

"Political blogs became popular in Estonia prior to the last election. Then they were somehow in fashion. Nowadays the initial enthusiasm has cooled off, but I believe that blogs will remain in politics as a direct means of communication. The Internet has changed political communication altogether. This has been a revolution in the field of communications. As a result of this, discussion and the exchange of ideas are continually speeding up."/.../

Blogs are like online memoirs. Professor Leo Gens used to warn us that the memoir is the most dubious literary genre of all. Who would want to create a disagreeable or foolish impression of them-selves? This impression must always be good and personal. Savisaar:

"I have promised the readers of my blog that I will try, to the best of my ability, to write about animals and people, cultural phenomena and sciences, something besides politics. The message below is a step in this direction.

The news is that my German shepherd Othello took his first steps yesterday on the difficult path of education, similarly to many Estonian children, who in just over a week's time will also set out on the path of education on 1 September - some for the first time, some for yet another in a succession of many years." (<http://savisaar.blogspot.com/>)

A good friend of mine, who writes a regular blog and uses it to administer his school, believes that soon people will not even be able to get work if they do not have their own blog.

IMAGOSPHERE'S THEORETICAL CONSTITUTION

Simulacrum and hyper-reality

After my first attempt to cognitively describe the imagosphere, I began in earnest to seek authors who had previously considered these kinds of phenomena. I found an excellent endorsement from Jean Baudrillard, who, in 1981, had already, with great foresight, written about events visible today. Back in the days when only visionary optimists dared dream of a market economy in Estonia (Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacres et Simulation*. Paris 1981).

I was fascinated by five themes in Baudrillard's writings that, to some degree, help us to progress in describing the nature of the imagosphere and also explain its continuous evolution:

1. The simulacrum as a crystallisation of a representation or imago and a way of acting in contemporary society.
2. The alteration of new media.
3. The identity of advertising and politics.
4. The new reality of goods and department stores.
5. The replacement of science fiction with hyper-reality.

First of all, there is an escalating destructive power of imago, which draws its energy from the relationship of meaning between the representation and the original:

"Thus the destructive power of the representation, the power that destroys reality, the power that destroys its own original has always been at stake, just as the icons of Byzantium could destroy divine identity. This destructive power is countered by the dialectic power of the representation, the power of Reality to convey the visible and comprehensive. All Western religions and beliefs are engrossed in this bet of depiction: could the sign refer to the depths of meaning, could the sign *replace* meaning, and could something - God, of course - be the security deposit for this exchange? Yet what if God himself could also be simulated, that is reduced to signs that bear witness to him? Then the entire system would lose its footing and it would, itself, also be nothing more than a gigantic simulacrum - not unreal, but a simulacrum. This means that it would never be possible to exchange it for reality. It would change itself only into

itself in an endless chain, which has no fixed points or boundaries anywhere." (Baudrillard 1999,14)

Baudrillard's typology for cognition of representations describes quite well the ever-growing proportion and universality of imago. If depiction attempts to swallow up the simulation into itself, interpreting it as a false depiction, then the simulation surrounds the entire building of depiction as if it were a simulacrum itself. In Baudrillard's opinion, the phases of depiction may be as follows:

- it reflects deep reality
- it disguises and distorts deep reality
- it disguises the *absence* of deep reality
- it lacks any kind of connection to any kind of reality: it is its own genuine simulacrum.

Baudrillard briefly characterises the result of this kind of partition as follows: "In the first instance, the depiction is a *good* semblance - the depiction belongs to the sphere of sanctity. In the second instance, it is a bad semblance - from the sphere of evil. In the third instance, it pretends to be a semblance - it belongs to the sphere of sorcery. In the fourth instance, it no longer belongs to the sphere of semblance at all; rather, it belongs to the sphere of simulation." (Baudrillard 1999,14-15)

Precisely the latter condition best describes the situation of saturated imagosphere. Chat rooms/'second lifes', and 'rate mes' also definitely belong to the same category. Here we do not know if we are holding a conversation or flirting with our neighbour, or even with his hundred year old mother-in-law. The individual becomes *Avatar*, which often lives a much more real life than the person does. All of this is accompanied by the establishment of rules by the webmaster or host. In this kind of life, thrills take the place of experiences. Historicity is permanent only in the logs of spy computers. Culture founded on language gives way to primitive Anglo-America-based computer language. Broader associations based on culture split up into ever-smaller interest groups. The simulacrum has created a completely new reality. The imago of the latter again starts to demolish the new reality reflected by it.

Baudrillard also describes the dissolution of media into everyday life. The digital platform has now given it awe-inspiring dimensions:

"We no longer live in a society of spectacles, which situationists speak of, or in the particular kind of alienation and suppression that goes with it. The media itself is no longer recognisable, and the intermixing of the medium with the message (MacLuhan) is the first important formula of this new age. There is no longer media in the direct sense of the word: it is now intangible, dissipated into reality and broken, and even the assertion that actuality has been changed by it can no longer be made.

This kind of intrusion, this kind of viral, endemic, chronic, frightening media presence without the possibility of avoiding its consequences /.../." (Baudrillard 1999,50-51)

"Information devours its own content. It gobbles down communication and society, and does so for two reasons. 1. Instead of transmitting something, *it uses up its strength on staging transmission*. Instead of creating meaning, it uses up its strength on staging meaning. /.../2. In the shadow of this sharpened staging of communication, means of mass information and forced information continue to disintegrate society with irresistible force." (Baudrillard 1999,121-122)

Thus the media does not carry out collectivisation on the digital platform, but rather the complete opposite is true: society dissolves into atomic parts, each of which has its own personalised, custom-made news and entertainment portal. The idea is that all states of meaning have been swallowed into a single dominant form of media. The media alone create events - regardless of what the content of the message is, whether conformist or horrifying. The media contain meaning and counter-meaning within themselves. They manipulate society in every direction. Nobody is capable of controlling this process. (Baudrillard 1999,123; 127)

There is yet one more historical attribute of the establishment of an imagosphere under the all-embracing quality of the media digital platform, and this is advertising. It follows a path of temporal evolution. We live in a period that is characterised by the absorption of all virtual means of expression by the advertising means of expression. All original forms of culture, all defined languages are absorbed by it because it lacks depth. It is momentary and forgotten after a moment. This is the

"triumph of superficial form, the lowest common denominator of all meanings, the ground elevation of meaning. It is the triumph of entropy over all possible tropes. The lowest form of the energy of signs." (Baudrillard 1999,131)

Advertising and propaganda really intensified, in Baudrillard's opinion, beginning with the October Revolution and the global crisis of 1929. Both were mass languages that were derived from the mass production of either ideas or goods. Their initially separated registers gradually converged with each other, and they bore within themselves the stamp of imago becoming empty of meaning. Propaganda becomes a means for marketing and selling guiding principles, politicians and parties containing their own certain 'image signs'. Propaganda converges with advertising as the only model for starting a great and real guiding principle in this competitive society: goods and trademarks. (Baudrillard 1999,132)

The global, and at the same time individual, power of the imagosphere to command attention has changed modernist representative democracy without bringing about new forms of participatory democracy. People nowadays cannot be bothered to listen to the debates of politicians. They cannot be bothered to delve deeply into the platforms of the parties, and politicians are grateful - the only question is how and where to get money for advertising.

Instead of the political face, we have the grotesque imago, where the kind of glasses worn is sometimes more important than the message, or the colour green is more important than the object. And while Plato scornfully noted that democracy brings the most skilled liar to power, nowadays the one who buys the best advertising made by the most skilled liar comes to power. Unfortunately, this is ordinarily also dependent on the amount of money available. Money can be used to buy a suitable imago, which is separated from reality by an impenetrable PR wall. Everyone can afford to obtain the body of a politician as long as they have enough money to pay for their actual Avatar - their imago.

"The society that is present everywhere, absolute society, which has finally materialised in absolute advertising - this means that society itself is also completely dissolved. Society as a spectral trace on

all walls in the simplified form of social demand, which is immediately satisfied by the echo of advertising. Society as a screenplay and we as its frenzied audience." (Baudrillard 1999,133)

"In this manner, all of society and its social life is devalued into a commercial-monetary relationship. The old saying is quickly transformed: tell me what you buy and I will tell you who you are. Buying and selling become the central means of existing in the imagospheric world.

It is no coincidence that advertising, after being the instigator for a long time of the implicit economic type of ultimatum that tirelessly proclaimed and repeated: 'I buy, I consume, I enjoy', nowadays repeats in all manner of forms: 'I vote, I participate, I am present, I am involved'- a paradoxical mirror of ridiculousness, a mirror of the insignificance of all manner of *public* meaning," (Baudrillard 1999,136)

Commercialisation has grown to such a scale that goods also define the emerging spatial structure: "Signposts within a radius of thirty kilometres point you in the direction of those large distribution stations that hyper-department stores serve as, in the direction of the hyperspace of goods, where a new kind of sociality evolves in various senses of the word. The hyper-department store is already a model at a higher level than factories and traditional institutions of capital. It is a model of all future forms of controlled socialisation: the reunification of all dispersed functions (work, leisure time, eating, health care, transportation and media culture) of the body and social life into one homogenous space-time;/.../." (Baudrillard 1999,113; 115)

"The hyper-department store as a *nucleus*. The city, and not even a modern city, can no longer swallow it into itself. The hyper-department store establishes an orbit in which agglomerations move. It is an *implant* in new formations, as a university or factory sometimes is - no longer a 19th century factory, but rather a decentralised factory that settles in the suburbs without disrupting the orbit of the city, /.../." (Baudrillard 1999,116).

Toward the end of his book, Baudrillard also discusses science fiction as a change in literary genre. He considers James Ballard's book *Crash*.

In Baudrillard's opinion, *Crash* is no longer fiction or reality. Imagospheric hyper-reality destroys both (Baudrillard 1999,181). Ballard published a new book entitled *Kingdom Come* in 2006. It is much like an homage and proclamation after Baudrillard's conceptual revelation concerning hyper-department stores. Ballard's dystopia in his writing acquires a threatening tonality in its possibility and depiction of the colours of the times - a hyper-realistic depiction has become a script of likely future developments. The action takes place in a suburban hyper-department store called the Metro Centre. In its description, it is almost identical to the suburbs of the globalising world and its *retail village*.

"A terrace of small houses appeared, hiding in the shadow of a reservoir embankment, linked to any sense of community only by the used-car lots that surrounded it. Moving towards a national south, I passed a Chinese takeaway, a discount furniture warehouse, an attack-dog kennels and a grim housing estate like a partly rehabilitated prison camp./.../"But they feel different" Carradine's eyes seemed to glow. "That's why our customers come here. The Metro-Centre creates a new climate, Mr. Pearson. We succeeded where the Greenwich Dome failed. This isn't just a shopping mall. It's more like..." "Religious experience?" "Exactly! It's like going to church. And you can go every day and you get something to take home." (Ballard 2007, 6; 40)

Yet Ballard's story does not end with descriptions of the contemporary spatial structure and cult of consumer goods. He shows how the mass media becomes a mass movement, which in turn becomes mass violence. The mall marshals and football players become members of the people's militia, and they in turn become storm troopers. Whoever is not with us is against us. 'Us' and 'them'.

"The suburbs dream of violence. Asleep in their drowsy villas sheltered by benevolent shopping malls they patiently for the nightmares that will wake them into a more passionate world...I had seen the flag as I drove into the town, the cross of St George on its white field, flying above housing estates and business parks. The red crusader's cross was everywhere, unfurling from flagstuffs in front gardens, giving the anonymous town a festive air." (Ballard 2007,3.8)

PRACTICAL REALISATION OF THE IMAGOSPHERE

Putin's Russia

It is, of course, a coincidence that Ballard's mass-hypnotised mob resembles Russia's semi-state youth organisation *Nashi* in terms of the colours of their flag. Ballard's plot is precise in everything else. While, in the case of Estonia, we see the establishment of a quietly settling imagosphere, the building up of Russia is a major workshop of imago with its systematic and deliberate plan.

Sergei Kovaljov (Kovaljov 2007) provides a convincing overview of the functioning and transformation of the imagosphere that interests us in Russia at the beginning of the 21st century. His main question is: why has Putin and his manner of governing achieved such widespread popularity, against the background of which he was re-elected?

Kovaljov points out the three most widespread fundamental reasons. First, Putin's first election was not a vote in favour of him but rather against his opponent. People voted against the disorder and 'democracy' of the Yeltsin era. Secondly, the president's advisors carefully left the impression that this was a democratic president trusted by the people. Thirdly, Kovaljov also considers nostalgia for the Soviet past to be the reason for Putin's popularity.

Kovaljov examines this last reason thoroughly, revealing the nature of new and old myths and their establishment as a populist and all-encompassing mystery that I would describe as an imagosphere. These myths can be brought forth as follows: **the myth of the enemy, the myth of victory, and the myth of imperial might.**

Let us, first of all, consider the myth of the enemy. This is an age-old way of achieving internal unity and identity. The nucleus of the myth lies in contrasting us against others. If everyone wants to destroy us, then we forget our differences and injustices, and confront the enemy. Secret police services, known by various names, have been this uniting, and at the same time hidden and mysterious, force in Russia. Putin is their representative in terms of his career and education. Kovaljov writes:

"Thus, guided by nostalgia, they chose a KGB colonel as their leader. He, in turn, restored the myths that the Soviet secret police have propagated ever since the times of the *Cheka*: the country is besieged by enemies and has been infiltrated by a 'fifth column'. This role has currently been attributed to nongovernmental organisations, especially those that have dealings with journalism and human rights/.../"(Kovaljov 2007)

One of the most striking examples of the myth of the enemy has been Russia's campaign of hostility against Estonia, where 'us' and 'them' are differentiated by all possible means. One of the forces carrying out the campaign of hostility was the 'nongovernmental' youth organisation *Nashi - Our Own Kind* in direct translation.

"The new generation that has grown up under the influence of Putin's mythology is altogether frightening. In my view, gangs of youths that rush wildly through subway stations chanting 'ROS-SI-JA! ROS-SI-JA! (RUS-S-IA! RUS-S-IA!)' on Victory Day (9 May), when Russia celebrates the end of the Second World War, symbolise this. They do not realise that they behave the same way as fascists - on the contrary, they consider themselves the grandchildren of Hitler's conquerors./.../"(Kovaljov 2007).

Next, let us consider the myth of victory. When the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, the central idea of unity was the exceptionality of Russians as the chosen people - right here is where the workers' revolution was won and this is where the new was to begin - the worldwide revolution. Lenin wrote a long justification of this, how revolution could win in a separate, backward country that differed significantly from what its European comrades imagined. In order to consolidate Stalin's power, it was clear that political realities did not make it possible to keep up the myth of worldwide revolution any longer, and thus mass repressions began to find and destroy the internal enemy. The final phase of this, prior to the beginning of the Second World War, became a true theatre of the absurd, of which a great deal has been written. This continued after the war in occupied territories with the killing and deportation of enemies of the people and saboteurs, in the spirit of class purity. Yet in the course of these repressions, the foundation was laid for a new myth of unity - 'the new, historic union of peoples - the Soviet people'.

This was marked by the new Russian constitution of 1936, yet developed conclusively after the war. Stalin began the fusion of the Communist Party and officials of the state apparatus into a ruling 'nomenclature'. This grew to ultimate completion in the era of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. While the myth of the 'Soviet people' was pointed toward the future (new cities, new land, new field crops and so on) during Khrushchev's thaw, we must agree with Kovaljov that, during the Brezhnev era, this myth was legitimised mainly by the past.

The answer to the question, "Who are we?" was as follows: "We are a people who have had to endure inhuman suffering in the twentieth century, but nevertheless have managed to vigorously march on from victory to victory. We suffered unprecedented losses during the war, yet under the leadership of the Communist Party, we saved the world from the clutches of Nazism. And thereafter, we found the strength within ourselves to create a superstate, to be the first to put a man in space, and to achieve nuclear balance with the other superstate, the USA." (Kovaljov 2007)

The foundation of this myth was war and the commemoration of the victims that perished in it. Stalin's repressions were diminished or concealed from Soviet history. Collectivisation and famines, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the violence involved in the formation of the Soviet Union and the socialist block of countries was removed from this history.

The myth of the 'Soviet people' collapsed with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. While the former socialist nation-states and republics of the union could draw upon their history and oppose communist ideology, 'the citizens of Russia, the largest remnant of the superstate, were left up in the air, as it were. Their national identity was confused (Kovaljov 2007). Putin modernised the national identity by shifting the idea of victory into the forefront. The sufferings of the Soviet people, communistic phraseology and tragic notes were removed. Thus a powerful myth of victory came about, accompanied by a communistic imagosphere: former Soviet symbols were restored: the Stalinist anthem, the red victory flag with the hammer and sickle, and so on. The helmet and greatcoat of the Soviet soldier became part of *Nashi* symbolism. This gave rise to the characteristic painful attitude towards the mentioning of the Tartu Peace Treaty and the removal

of the Bronze Soldier Monument in Tallinn - the historical treatment of two occupations disrupted the myth of victory when it was written in the Tartu Peace Treaty that Russia guaranteed the independence of Estonia forever.

The third myth is comparable to the myth of victory but is more like a vector pointed to the future - the myth of imperial might. The Chechnya wars, unexplained acts of terrorism, and political murders have been put to use in order to establish this myth. The murders of Zelimhan Jandarbiyev and Aleksandr Litvinenko clearly took place with the knowledge of Russia's special services. The actual perpetrators of other murders and acts of terror are not even very important from the point of view of our lecture. In the opinion of Kovaljov, the authorities did not even try, by way of investigation, to refute these suspicions that were spreading about them. The public expressions by Putin himself about 'flushing the privy toilet' and the 'circumcision' of foreign journalists only confirm the proclamation of the fetish of raw force in criminal slang.

"By 2004, the idea of 'absolute power' and 'secret services' had essentially amalgamated with the two-headed eagle of the monarchy and the Soviet anthem. /.../ Putin's team quickly carried out the most important task, namely taking over control of television. When this was accomplished, the entire country was flooded with constant, all-encompassing propaganda, which was much more skilful, effective and satisfactory to everyone than Soviet propaganda had ever been. The mass media constantly hurls ideas into the air connected with Putin as a charismatic ruler who leads the people to rebirth, and of Putinism as the guarantee of stability and order. Thus imperialistic values have been hammered into social thought." (Kovaljov 2007)

Analysis of Putin's Russia allows us to see, in simplified form, how the imagosphere takes shape. First of all, suitable core myths that partially conceal the past and promise the future are created. Thereafter, they are clothed in popular or nostalgic 'liturgy' and 'iconostasis', and finally, means for their massive implementation are found.

As a person who has seen a great deal, Kovaljov's conclusive view of this process is thoroughly pessimistic. He believes that the young people of Russia are under the influence of Putin's propaganda

and that the ultimate objective of the political establishment presently in power is the complete uprooting of European mechanisms for the transfer of power and the strengthening of the Byzantine model of succession. He ends his overview with the following words:

“I am afraid that there are few among us who will live long enough to see the re-germination of freedom and democracy in Russia. Yet it is nevertheless worth bearing in mind that the 'mole of history' digs his tunnels outwardly without being noticed” (Kovaljov 2007).

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Remarks for diagnosis: Imagosphere Come II

Jüri Soolep

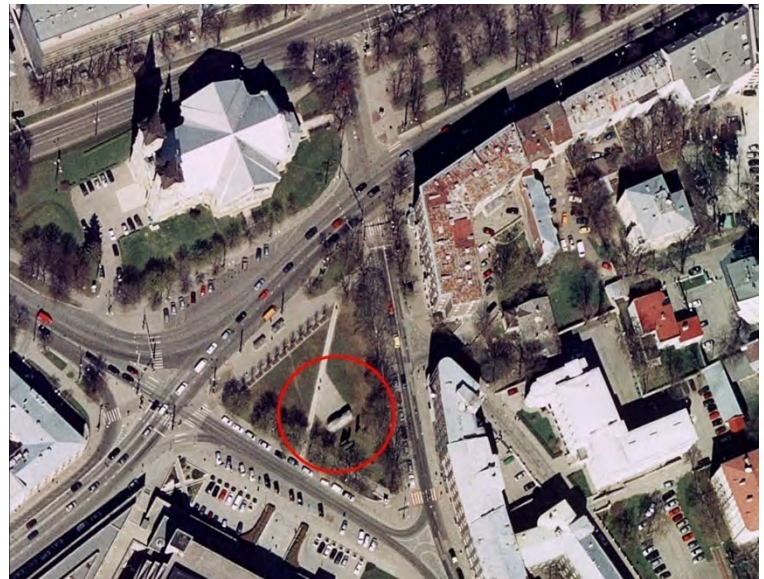
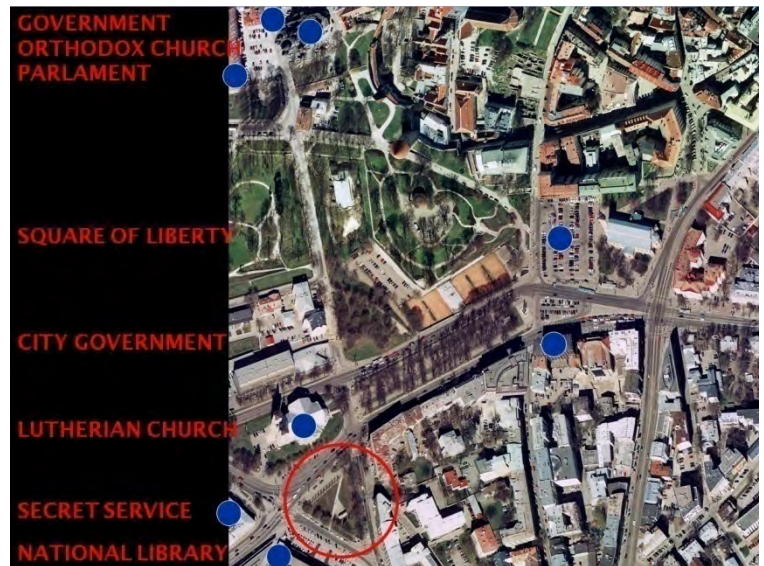
The article is based on the lecture course *Contemporary Problems in Urban Design*, held at the Estonian Academy of Art in the autumn semester of 2007

In my previous lecture, I left off at the practical realisation of the imagosphere and examined how it is built up in Putin's Russia. I relied on Sergei Kovaljov's treatment of three core myths – **the myth of the enemy, the myth of victory, and the myth of imperial might**. They are analytically plausible and experientially convincing, yet the question arises, how nevertheless are they realised in practice. What are the energetics and mechanics of building an integral imagosphere? How is the imagosphere connected with architecture or space?

We can find a certain guiding thread in Manfredo Tafuri's introduction to the book *Theories and the History of Architecture*:

That architectural criticism finds itself, today, in a rather difficult situation, is not a point that requires much underlining. To criticise, in fact, means to catch the historical scent of phenomena, put them through the sieve of strict evaluation, show their mystifications, values, contradictions and internal dialectics and explode their entire charge of meanings. But in the period we live in, mystifications and brilliant eversions, historical and anti-historical attitudes, bitter intellectualisations and mild mythologies mix themselves so inextricably in the production of art that the critic is bound to start an extremely problematic relationship with his accepted operative practice, particularly in considering the cultural tradition in which he moves. In fighting a cultural revolution there exists an intimate complicity between criticism and activity.¹

These words describe the current media situation even more pointedly than Tafuri could have suspected nearly 30 years ago. Their full meaning has surfaced only now when the different traditional parts of the media sphere that surround us have become more dense and amalgamated into one unified field. This unified field prevents us from differentiating media channels any more: news video, feature films, documentaries, newspapers, television, the web, etc. All these different media, media structures and genres are compressed into the digital platform and surrounded by a screen, usually of our personal computer. This is a new and powerful environment where "mystifications and brilliant eversions, historical and anti-historical attitudes, bitter intellectualisations and mild



mythologies” intermix into an inseparable whole. And this is not by chance; rather, it is purposeful and with someone’s benefit in mind.

I would like to consider two cases that permit the sufficiently detailed analysis of the attempt to build up an imagosphere. Both are associated with space and art: the story of the Bronze Soldier monument, and the Russian propaganda film *НОЧНОЙ ДОЗОР*. I probably cannot manage to “explode their entire charge of meanings”, yet if we manage to bring out even some of those hidden patterns, then that is at least a start, especially for the younger generation that has forgotten or altogether lacks the key words for understanding Soviet propaganda.

Bronze Soldier from the Beyond

In April of 1945 at the end of the Second World War, Soviet soldiers and officers were buried in Tõnismäe hill. Their dead bodies were brought together from many different places. The reasons and times of death have remained obscure. There were 12 bodies in total. The circumstances of their deaths are unclear and in this context they are not important either. It is quite likely that they did not perish in active combat.²

In May of 1945, a competition was announced for a monument and open space around it at Tõnismäe, which was to be called “Liberators’ Square”. Initial plans were to erect the monument on Victory Square, the present day Liberty Square, from where the sculpture of Peter I had been removed after Estonia won its independence. The new plan for the monument was prepared according to drawings by architect Arnold Hoffard-Alas and the sculpture was made by Enn Roos in 1947. As Hoffard-Alas’s student Tõnu Virve wrote, the conceptual basis of the monument is the portal to the realm of the dead.³ Indeed, persons familiar with the history of architecture see characteristic portal known as pylon in front of Egyptian temples in the proportions and pilasters of the limestone abutment.

It is also known that pylons were ordinarily the stage-by-stage introduction to the sacred room of the temple. In Latin, *pylae* means a narrow mountain path, and the portal at the entrance to the Acropolis in Athens is named *propylaea*. The latter term means preceding the portal, and the ancient temple *prostyle* – a pediment with columns – evolved from this (*propylon*).

In 1964, a so-called eternal flame was added to the monument. A short gas flame rose from a small angular pit in the middle of a bronze five-pointed star. The vegetation and arrangement in the green area around the monument has changed several times throughout the course of its existence. Only the evergreen trees have retained their positioning.



The liberators' monument was an obligatory urban altar in all Soviet cities. Its supposed meaning as stated in the conditions of the competition was:

in its essence, the monument has to represent the growth of patriotic feeling in the Estonian people and their battle against German fascists. The monument must represent the friendship of peoples and the memory of the brave sons of the fatherland who gave their lives in battle against the enemy.⁴

Regardless of the apparent atheism of soviet power, the square was a highly charged sacred space. This became particularly apparent after the eternal flame was added. The eternal flame is one of the oldest metaphors for remembrance of war in Indo-European culture – “inextinguishable honour” – *kleos aftiton*⁵ and originally, a composition with five-pointed stars and the eternal flame was on the back of the pylon as a bronze relief. The ritual of the place itself was connected to compulsory political liturgy on 9 May and on 22 September (the official date of the end of WWII in the USSR, and the official anniversary of the capture of Tallinn respectively).

Let us first of all consider sacralised space on the background of Greek orthodox theology and the Byzantine imperial tradition. What does the nature of sacred space evolve into and what is needed to activate it? The book *Hierotopia* that was published in 2006 and considers the creation of sacred spaces in Byzantium and Russia, gives us a reference point.

As a number of scholars recently realised, the most significant aspect of relics and miraculous icons was the role they played in the creation of particular sacred spaces. In many cases relics and venerated icons were established as a core, a kind of pivot in the forming of concrete spatial environment. The milieu included permanently visible architectural forms and various pictures as well as changing liturgical clothes and vessels, lighting effects and fragrance, ritual gestures and prayers, which every time created a unique spatial complex. Sometimes the environment could form itself spontaneously, yet there are several examples when we are able to speak of deliberate concepts and elaborated projects, which should be considered among the most important historical documents.⁶

The term “hierotopia” consists of two Greek words: *hieros* (sacred) and *topos* (place). The meaning of this concept could be formulated as follows: *Hierotopia* is the planning of sacred spaces as a certain special form of creative work, and also a field of historical research that deals with working out and analysing specific examples of such creations.⁷

Thus, the term *ta hiera* denotes the sacrificial act, sacrifices were *hiera kala*, and they were

offered on the *hieroi ... bomoi*; the priest who presided over the mystery of sacrifice was *hiereus*, the victim was *hiereion* and the verb of his action was *hiereuo*. Beneveniste derives other qualities of *hieros*, such as movement and liveliness, swiftness and vitality, from a comparative study in the examination of the word. Finally, circularity was associated with things of *hieros*, among which exemplary remains the image of the judges sitting “in the *hieros* circle”.⁸

The central importance of hierotopic projects was their dynamic nature. Material form was only one and not always the most important part of the spatial whole that was in constant motion. Performability, dramatic changes, and the absence of fixed clichés created a **vivid, spiritually intense and specifically dominant environment**.⁹

It is important to understand that the Tõnismäe complex as a “portal to the beyond” with its “guard”, “avenger” or “mourner” in front of it had a clearly iconic structure. Aleksei Lidov writes about this kind of structure in Byzantium:

The “paradigm of the flat picture”, still dominating in our minds, does not help to establish an adequate perception of the spatial imagery and of hierotopical projects. It seems that crucially significant in this respect is to recognise the spatial nature of iconic imagery as a whole: in Byzantine minds the icon was not merely an object and a flat picture on panel or wall, but a spatial vision emanating from the depiction into the environment in front of it and existing between picture and its beholder.¹⁰

The most characteristic attribute of Byzantine hierotopia is also the participation of the experiencer in the spatial design. The experiencer functions within the image as if he or she was an integrated element of it – a pre-planned component. Spatial experience mixes with descriptions, light, aromas, movements and sounds to form a unitary whole. Furthermore – the experiencer, who has collective and personal memory, spiritual experience, and knowledge of the iconic process, participates in the creation of this spatial image. The collective nature of creating a new spatial image must be emphasised at this point. At the same time, this image exists in objective reality as a dynamic structure, changing its elements according to individual experience in procession – some aspects of spatial nature are accented and some remain hidden for a certain time.¹¹

/.../ medieval “concepteurs”, as a rule, reproduced not planning, architectural forms or decorations, but the image-idea of the particularly venerated sacred space, recognised by contemporaries and included into the new context. We still do not have a proper language to operate with image-paradigms that challenge

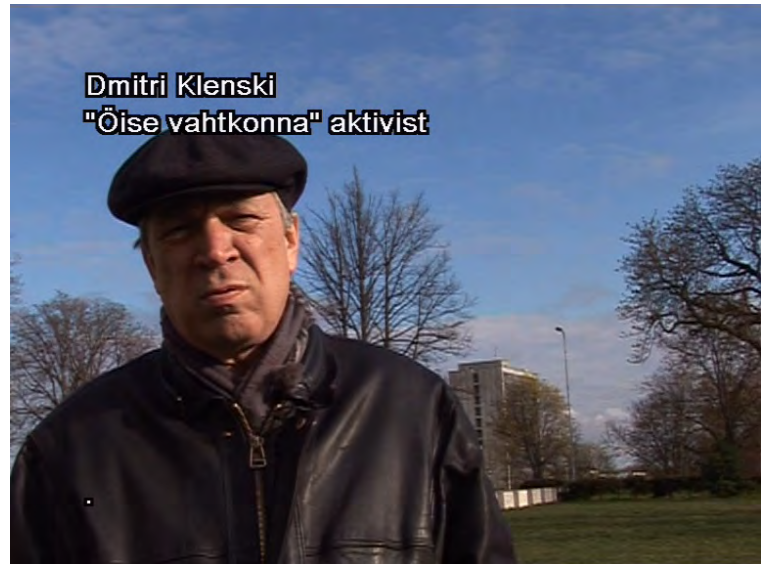
our fundamental methodological approach to the image as illustration and flat picture.¹²

As a living being a hierotopical project could change in time: the original concept-matrix was subject to development and additions, the concept itself was sometimes transformed according to new ideologems.¹³

Yet the existential identity and meaning of value of many ordinary Russians have inevitably fused in the iconic space of this monument – the death of fathers and grandfathers, and Victory Day as the end of personal experiences and ordeals. Thus Stalin united after the war the personal existential energy and memories of Russians with the collective imagosphere, which had a clear political structure, a canonised political form (the red flag, gilded pentagram, the hammer and sickle emblem, and so on) and its corresponding iconic matrix. It goes without saying that the victims of Stalinist repressions were also counted as losses of the Great Patriotic War. This kind of personal existential attitude did not emerge in inhabitants of territories that were forcibly occupied and incorporated into the USSR; rather the opposite is true – hostility developed toward both the sacralised space and its political form.

Another mandatory religious altar in Soviet cities was dedicated to the “unknown soldier”. Pioneers and communist youth had to visit it. It sometimes also served as a victory monument. This kind of spatial structure can be interpreted as a “missing cemetery” – a traditional part of cultural and residential identity. In the vast territory of the Soviet Union, where the mixing of nationalities at shock work sites and in utilising natural resources was state policy for fusing the “Soviet people” into one whole, it was impossible to visit the graves of your forefathers. A popular Soviet tune expressed this with the words: “my address isn’t a house or a street - it is the Soviet Union”.

Thus the “unknown soldier” replaced place-centred identity, and Russian-speaking newlywed couples went there to lay flowers and take photographs. This was also an old Eastern Slavic pagan custom. The core of the myth (*dedy, dzjazdy* – forefathers, grandfathers)¹⁴ in its original form, including drinking vodka and eating eggs, was a **symbol of resurrection (*anastasis*)**. The latter has also become a part of the customs of Fenno-Ugric tribes in areas where orthodox Christianity is predominant. The Bronze Soldier fulfilled this function splendidly. Collective political liturgy, and the existential and cultural identity of the individual are reunited. That is why the sacralising fact of the burial was needed but not the place-specific locations of the graves. They would have personified the space of the monument and hindered the general functioning of the collective political iconic space. The burial itself was only an



initialising, sacralising act and the locations of the graves on Tõnismäe were of no importance.

Thus the monument functions primarily as a spatial icon of the imagosphere. First of all, it is a gate to the nether world – a portal. Secondly, it cuts a *temenos* – meaning “our land” in direct translation from Greek – out of abstract space and time. And this land is figuratively soaked with blood. Just before martial law was declared in Poland in 1981, Andrei Gromyko said at a Politburo meeting: we lost 600 000 men in Poland, there is no way we are going to give it up. “*Temenos* soaked in blood” is expressed as an extraordinarily simple and effective metaphor at the level of state geopolitics. If Jaruzelski had not declared martial law and forcibly silenced the Solidarity movement, Soviet military invasion would have ensued. Thus Stalinist monuments were not merely objects of personal and emotional commemoration of the dead, but a specific sacred border outpost system. They could and had to be defended by threat of military violence. In a private conversation, the head of the Russian garrison in Tallinn warned the mayor of Tallinn not to touch the monument in precisely the same kind of context.

Supporters of the monument were against the reburial of the dead for these kinds of magical reasons. This kind of structure of meanings also explains the concern, incomprehensible to common sense, of a Russian Duma delegation over whether the monument was dismantled for transportation or not. One member of the Duma said: “But the sculpture has welding marks on it, which means that the symbol of victory has been cut to pieces”.¹⁵ Cutting the monument to pieces is, of course, a powerful magical symbol referring to the destruction of icons, which has nothing to do with technical instrumental logic in the logistical scheme of moving the statue.

Vladimir Paperny describes the magic of sculptures in his book *Architecture in the Age of Stalin*:

/.../ in front of the new Mechanisation Pavilion was to stand a twenty-five-meter-tall, reinforced-concrete statue of Stalin. When the statue was almost completely assembled, the directors of construction (almost all were from the NKVD) demanded that the main constructor of the exhibition S. Alekseev, crawl inside the hollow statue to verify that no saboteur had placed a bomb there./.../ A small opening remained up above on Stalin’s back, and Alekseev was to be lowered through it. Alekseev was struck by an idea: to take a small model of the statue with him and place it within the big one. Representatives of the NKVD liked the idea: They lowered Alekseev inside holding the statue and a lantern. There was no bomb there. Alekseev deposited the model, they pulled him out, and the opening was sealed up. Both statues stood, with one inside the other, until 1954.

This is also a purely mythological event. It is not necessary to keep a model of statue after the statue has been erected; but no one dared to destroy this model because, from the perspective of the culture, this could cause harm to the large statue and by association to the leader himself. Even preserving it would be to risky; it was like the egg where the evil sorcerer, Koshchei the Immortal, hid his own death in Russian fairy tales.

/.../ Finally it cannot be ruled out that the very idea of placing an identical object within the object itself comes from the traditional Russian *matrioshka* nesting dolls. Tradition here is relative, insofar as these were introduced to Russia from Japan at the end of the nineteenth century; but it is not by chance that they survived.¹⁶

The euphemistic designation of the monument itself, “bronze soldier”, nominally contains two semantic fields: first Alexander Pushkin’s character “*The Bronze Horseman*” – *mednyi vsadnik*, and second, *The Stone Guest*. Both are known by their return from the nether world or coming to life or awakening like *daidalon*. In both cases, injustice brings the avenger to life. An organisation of monument supporters with the ethnonym *Notchnoi Dozor* threatened that the bronze guest will visit every Estonian member of parliament.¹⁷

За ним несется Всадник Медный
На звонко-скачущем коне;
И во всю ночь безумец бедный.
Куда стопы ни обращал,
За ним повсюду Всадник Медный
С тяжелым топотом скакал.

(Upon the pavement, fiercely tossed;
And by the moon, that palled lighter,
Having stretched his hand over roofs,
The Brazen Horseman rides him after –
On his steed of the ringing hoofs.
And all the night the madman, poor,
Where’er he might direct his steps,
Aft him the Bronze Horseman, for sure,
Keeps on the heavy-treading race./.../
Translated by Yevgeny Bonver, March, 2004 - March, 2005)

Yet in the case of an iconic spatial system, there is one more important distinction that opens up its energy supply.

In both classical and Byzantine Hellenistic culture, it was believed that everything was in a process of constant change. Space and movement were directly experienced together – this was the lasting paradigm of thought and imagination in Greek culture. Choreography is based on paradigm and the presumption that there is a dynamic connection between the words *chora* (*cho’ros*) and *choro’s* that create (generate) *hieros* things (sacred

things). Choreography means “writing in space” or “writing (in space) with dance” /.../.¹⁸

Chora (*choros*) is commonly translated as space, to distinguish it from the place (which is *topos* in Greek). But there is a sense of movement contained in the Greek word *chora*, which is linked to the verb *choreo* having two senses: first it means to withdraw (give way), to make room for another, like in the *Homeric Hymns*: “The earth gave way from beneath (*gaia d’enerthe choresen*)”. The sense is of withdrawing, while inscribing the space in its withdrawal. *Choreo* means also to go forward, to be in motion or in the flux, like Heraclitus said when he referred that nothing in the world remains still, but rather everything moves (*panta chorei*). According to the context the word *choreo* indicates either a movement with the sense to go forward, or to retreat, withdraw or recede, in both cases having the effect to “make room for”, generating a particular kind of space.¹⁹

On the other hand, the ancient Greek word *choros* bears the idea of collective coordinated movement (like activity, dance), or collectivity in movement (choir) as in *choros aston* (dance of the stars) or *choros meliton* (dance of honeybees). This movement is often specifically ordered in circular form. In earlier times, *choros* meant a dance floor, a term that evolved metonymically from the location (*choros*) where the choir danced.²⁰

Plato describes the creation of the universe in his dialogue *Timaios* as the transition from the rational and invisible world (the world of Existence) to the visible cosmos (the world of Genesis) where *chora* is the third substance (*triton genos*). *Chora* precedes creation; it is invisible because it is fundamentally amorphic. *Chora* is the cosmogonic space of genesis; it is the midwife of creation, a matrix or vessel. /.../ Yet it does not remain in those phenomenal bodies that come into contact with it. Nevertheless, *Timaios* refers to the appearance of *chora*, its visible manifestation, where the verb *phainesthai* means “to be manifested”, “to show (oneself)” or “to become visible” (50b-c). *Chora* becomes visible episodically only in motion when bodies collide with it. Only visible bodies can leave visible traces.²¹

Icons have their own specific space that exposes *chora* and not *topos*, says Nikephoros (the patriarch of Constantinople) when he uses the verb *ekchoreo* when speaking of the inscription of an icon (*graphe*). In the interpretation of Marie-Jose Mondzain, the iconic *chora* is an extension of space, where *choreo* simultaneously means both the encompassing of space as well as containing something, meaning that the state of being contained, and that within which content is contained, coincide. Mondzain interprets that the point of contact or its spatial limit is a *zone*, which in Greek refers to a mantle or the contact surface



between the mother's womb and the child, which manifests the "Word without dimensions" into visible form (*aperigrapto* Logos).²²

According to Nikephoros, iconic drafting (*graphe*) is similarly a visible trace of *chora* in space that exposes itself completely only in a place that is imagined (*hennoesei*), yet needs to be played out in a liturgical performance when it becomes comprehensible.²³

Chora's iconic space, says Mondzain, is more unfathomable than simply sacred places and saints because it contains the entire universe. /.../ Yet it is also that which we call a "sacred place" and "sacred space". /.../ **Conversely, sacred space is the kind of space that is liturgically empowered, created in the present moment, and experienced in its true centre.**²⁴

Thus the gathering and movement of people belongs within the iconic structure of the monument. The icon acquires its true power in ritual movement. When the Russian troops left Estonia in 1994, it was as if the monument was left hanging. Until then, the presence of the Russian garrison had protected it. The Estonian government organised an architectural competition to redesign the monument. The aim was to reduce the presence of Stalinist liturgy and to rephrase the nature of the monument into a memorial of the entire Second World War. The results of the competition were not implemented. Only the diagonal path from the winning entry leading to the National Library was built, visually reducing the triangular field of the monument. The memorial tablets bearing names and Soviet attributes had already previously been removed. The monument lost its intensity and it seemed destined to be forgotten as a historical artefact in an urban park.

The building of a new imagosphere in Russia, however, achieved its resonance in Estonia as well, which is constantly within the sphere of influence of Russian television channels and for which the Estonian government has not succeeded in creating a balancing or neutralising Russian-language media channel. From the standpoint of this lecture, it is interesting to refer to the point of view that the news format of television channels allows political boundaries to become blurred and emphasises ethnic and cultural space of experience that is in constant communication with the "great homeland".

Meetings of war veterans at Tõnismäe began gathering steam again in 2003. This began to be referred to as the strengthening of Russian identity, one part of which was hostility towards Estonian state. These gatherings had grown quite large by 2006 and had clearly become opposed to the nation of Estonia, to which the public hostile attitude towards the blue-black-and-white flag referred. The gatherings took place under Soviet red flags and imperial Russian flags.



Apparently in fear of the potential for a demonstration arising from the commemoration of victory in 2007, the Estonian government dismantled the monument in April and reburied or sent to Russia the remains of the 12 soldiers and officers found. The monument itself was taken to a military cemetery less than two kilometres away.

The defenders of the monument led by the Night Watch organised a demonstration in Tallinn's Old Town and at Tõnismäe, which boiled over into mass unrest and violence that lasted two nights.

The Tõnismäe monument and the liturgy accompanying it built up a sacred iconic space with these kinds of results. While initially **it could be expected that its absence in the imagosphere would become even more important than its presence**, then this did not happen in actuality. Instrumentally dug up soil, the removal of the portal as a focal point, and the prohibition of the accompanying liturgy destroyed the sacred space completely. This space went together with the monument.

Heidegger writes:

Here the earth itself and the subterranean come into relation with sheltering and concealing. The essential connection between death and concealment is starting to appear. For the Greeks, death is not a „biological“ process, any more than birth is. Birth and death take their essence from the realm of disclosiveness and concealment. Even the earth is the in-between, namely between the concealment of the subterranean and the luminosity, the disclosiveness, of the supraterranean (the span of heaven, *οὐρανός*). For the Romans, on the contrary, the earth, *tellus, terra*, is the dry, the land as distinct from the sea; this distinction differentiates that upon which construction, settlement, and installation are possible from those places where they are impossible. *Terra* becomes *territorium*, land of settlement as realm of command. In the Roman *terra* can be heard an imperial accent, completely foreign to the Greek *γαῖα* and *γῆ*..²⁵

Here we see a clear difference between the functioning of the Latin imago and the Greek icon. By dismantling the “portal” and removing the monument, the Estonian government operated here definitely within the framework of the imperial Latin imago.

The monument still functions as an iconic space at the military cemetery but its communist and imperial semantic field is buried under the much greater spatial energy of the necropolis. Here it is a memorial in the direct sense of the word.

At this point, let us return to the violent unrest that took place along with the removal of the monument. We find the difference between how



the imperial Roman *terra* and the orthodox *temenos* function by examining the depiction of the Last Judgement Day in two different cultural languages.

Resurrection has a somewhat more complicated, or more precisely speaking, a more nebulous structure of functioning in the orthodox tradition. Anastasis (ἀνάστασις, from the verb ἀνίστημι means to rise, to rise again, to stand up; the Latin root is *resurgo*, from which *resurrection* is derived) is its original term in the Greek language. It is further associated with words like:

ἀνάστασις - *anastase* - resurrection, rising

ἀνάστατος - *anastatos* - disorder

ἀναστροφή - *anastatoma* - destruction

Compare this to the Estonian word *anastaja* - conqueror, victor by force.

While in the Latin tradition, Christ's resurrection (*anastasis*) and the final judgement (*deësis* - sitting on the throne, from which the frequent medieval main church portal theme evolves - the Last Judgement Day) are separated into two different processes, in the orthodox tradition it continues to denote both the resurrection of Christ and the final judgement itself. Yet this act is presented in a vague manner (*hetoimasia* - preparing the throne) as preparation. Only an empty throne or enthronement is often depicted. What will start to happen is uncertain and violent events can be anticipated.

The Gospel of Matthew 25, 31-46 explains the Latin tradition in simple terms:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." /.../ Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one

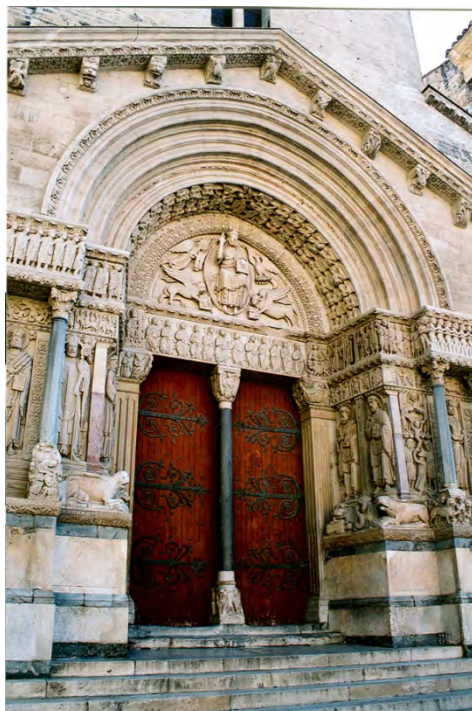


of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”
And these will go away into eternal punishment,
but the righteous into eternal life.’

This dramatic yet clear course of events is a frequent sculptural theme of the tympanum of the main portal in cathedrals. Let us consider two such portals: the Cathedral of St. Trophimus in Arles, and the Abbey of St. Denis in Paris.

Christ sits on the throne of judgement on the tympanum of St. Trophimus, the evangelists are around him, a choir of angels and the Last Trumpeters are above him, and the apostles are under his feet. We see sinners doomed to the fires of hell at the left hand of Christ on the side frieze. They are in chains and are headed for the eternal fire. The Whore of Babylon and demons are recognisable behind the corner. Correspondingly on the right are the chosen ones in their everlasting life.

The tympanum of the main portal of Abbey of St. Denis is also built up similarly. We see a chosen girl with a glowing lamp at the right hand of Christ entering the gates of heaven. A banner is in Christ's hand bearing the explanation *VENITE BENEDICTI PATRIS MEI* – come, ye blessed (chosen) by my Father. And on his left hand, *DISCEDITE A ME MALEDICTI* – depart from my presence, ye damned. This is illustrated by a fallen girl with an extinguished lamp being dragged into Hell. (*Venite benedicti Patris mei, possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi. Discedite a me maledicti in ignem æternum, qui paratus est diabolo, et angelis ejus.* Both sentences are from Matthew 25)



**“Portarum quisquis attollere quæris honorem,
Aurum nec sumptus, operis mirare laborem,
Nobile claret opus, sed opus quod nobile claret
Clarificet mentes, ut eant per lumina vera**

**Ad verum lumen, ubi Christus janua vera.
Quale sit intus in his determinat aurea porta:
Mens hebes ad verum per materialia surgit,
Et demersa prius hac visa luce resurgit.**



We find an altogether different kind of picture in the Horezu Abbey in Romania. The entire entrance wall below the column portal depicts the polarity of heaven and hell. We see above the church door a picture of the patron saint and his female companion and above that picture an empty throne – waiting for the judgement. A book and a cloth bearing a bird allude to the arrival of Christ as Judge. The book and the cloth are attributes of *hetoimasia*. The cloth is presumably a judge's robe, for example. A torch of fire or blood ordinarily begins from the throne and ends in the mouth of a monster. The entire part of the fresco on the left-hand side depicts horrors of hell. It is not quite clear whether the judgement has already taken place or whether it is yet to come, even though the end result is at hand. It leaves the impression of ultimately undetermined violence.

Like it or not, the deaths of Soviet state leaders come to mind. They were kept secret. The army or part of it was always placed in a higher state of combat readiness, as if expecting an unexpected attack caused by the leader's death.

Thus the violence or threat of violence of the iconographic apparatus of the Bronze Soldier monument has been originally programmed into it on several different levels. Liturgical movement, which is programmatic yet the evolution of which is not predetermined, is an inevitable part of the structure of this kind of iconic space.





Night Guests

The group *Nochnoi Dozor* was the organised activator of the iconic space of the Bronze Soldier.²⁶ It is quite probable that this name itself is taken from the Timur Bekmambetov film *НОЧНОЙ ДОЗОР* – *Night Watch*.²⁷ Let us consider what kind of iconography their self-identification is founded on.

Bekmambetov's film *НОЧНОЙ ДОЗОР* was completed in 2004 at the *Pervõi Kanal* film studio, which belonged to the Russian government. The film was based on the book of the same name by Sergei Lukjanenko. Both the film and the book proved to be very popular in Russia and abroad.

The action of the film takes place in contemporary Moscow, which is a battleground in the struggle between good and evil. The film is made in a certain style of “magical realism”, where everything seems to be everyday and ordinary, yet events themselves are totally unreal. To a certain extent, it resembles the film language of Andrei Tarkovski's film *Stalker*, where everything is also ordinary and has acquired an unworldly meaning, or the atmosphere of Mihhail Bulgakov's book *Master and Margarita*.

The plot of the film is quite simple: it is the personal drama of Anton, the main character, in the struggle between good and evil. The Day and Night Watch have agreed on a temporary truce but it is ruined when the Great Prophet is born – the Other. He is Anton's unborn son Yegor, whom Anton is willing to sacrifice in order to win back his unfaithful wife. Things go wrong by the end of the film and his son joins the forces of evil. In the second part, the entire process is returned back to the beginning.

The plot and adventure are not so important from the point of view of this lecture. Rather, the way Good and Evil is presented and the imagosphere that is depicted in the film is much more interesting. I presume that this is probably rather difficult to decipher for people who have not come across the Soviet sign system. Let us consider it more closely.

Let us begin with the name itself. One of Rembrandt's best-known paintings *Night Watch* depicts a military association in 16th century Amsterdam. These military organisations, originally organised by city quarters in Amsterdam as land armed forces, soon became political parties. The municipal government election system made it possible to rise to high political positions only through these organisations. As their military function receded, these associations became more and more like clubs, corporations and parties. The painting *Night Watch* was painted for the headquarters (*dolen*) of precisely one such



organisation.²⁸ The painting is a characteristic example of the commercialisation – only those members of the watch were made recognisable in the picture who bought a place for themselves in the painting.

The painting and the name of the film do not coincide by chance: a repro of this Rembrandt painting flashes in the film as a reflection hidden behind Anton's bed and thus it undoubtedly has a certain meaning. The Night Watch, then, is originally a paramilitary organisation. Its task in the film is to maintain order to restrain the licensed activity of evil. Vampires represent evil. The Night Watch has flashlights and automobile headlights with special light for killing those vampires.

The Day and Night Watches are the personifications of good and evil. The entire first film reveals their clear mutual opposition. By the end of the second film, everything is formally right again.

The dichotomy of good and evil is expressed in everything visible. Firstly location. The forces of evil reside and operate in the *Kosmos Hotel*, which was a gathering place for high-class prostitutes in the soviet era already. Luxurious banquets and receptions take place in the hotel. The female hero of the forces of evil performs here at a huge rock concert. The headquarters of the forces of good are in an official office building with a granite sign on the door that reads: *ГОРСВЕТ*. Above the name is the Russian coat-of-arms with the two-headed eagle, which connects its image with the state. *Gorsvet* is an abbreviation of the Russian-language expression *gorodskoi svet* – light of the city. It is just one letter away from the former term *ГОРКОБЕТ*. This means *gorodskoi soviet* – city council. This is the Soviet-era municipal government, which carried out the administration of the city in accordance with the general guidance of the city's Party committee. Thus the headquarters of the forces of good has multiple meanings and is simultaneously the municipal government, a public bureau, and a state structure. In addition, it is also a "closed type of joint stock company". The municipal administration centre has its own "information centre" that watches tomorrow's news (via website Regnum.ru) and prevents accidents. The office of the leader of the forces of good is recognisably similar to the office of a Soviet director. There is a bank of telephones on a long T-shaped meeting table. Everything is a little bit worn but is prominently "Soviet era". At the same time, the chief of the forces of evil sits in the hotel playing video games and does business by satellite telephone.

The leader of the forces of good Geser (evidently an allusion to the name Caesar, *tsar*) is dressed in a white shirt and a suit. His antipode Zavulon (with a biblical theme, the Jewish patriarch or ruler



Zabulon, who operated in the vicinity of Nazareth) wears an undershirt and a woollen cap (like petty criminals of soviet era working as dealers and illegal money changers - *fartshovshiki*) or the opposite - a designer suit of a high class businessman. We also find out from the end credits that Geser had been a deputy minister of the USSR (*zam-ministra pri CCCP*).

The dichotomy continues in automobiles, women and clothing. The women of the forces of good are homely, dressed in simple clothing or work clothes. Olga, for instance, has been an owl for 100 years and does not know how to dress in modern clothes. The women of evil, however, are unattainable sex idols in short skirts and high heels, *femme fatales* with satanic faces.

The forces of good go about in wadded jackets and overalls with the name of their firm *ГОРСВЕТ* on their backs. They are clearly the working class. The bad guys wear designer clothes or expensive brand of sports clothes.



The automobiles used by the forces of good are especially nostalgic and patriotic. They are Soviet lorries made (presumably) from converted GAZ-53 vehicles with magical powers to jump and accelerate to the maximum. The lorries are painted yellow like the soviet gas emergency vehicles used to be. Even the number on the side of the lorry resembles the word GAZ and connects them in spirit with the Russian government's media and economic giant ГАЗПРОМ – *Gasprom*. The forces of evil drive only expensive Western European sports cars (Audi).

Thus two forces are presented, two classes that are in constant struggle. They are “simple working folk” who gather at night as voluntary auxiliary militia units to do good – the *Nashi* – **our** people. And the others are **them** – businessmen, profiteers, owners, jet setters. Identity, which has its own specific attributes, form and ideology are combined with visible class hostility.

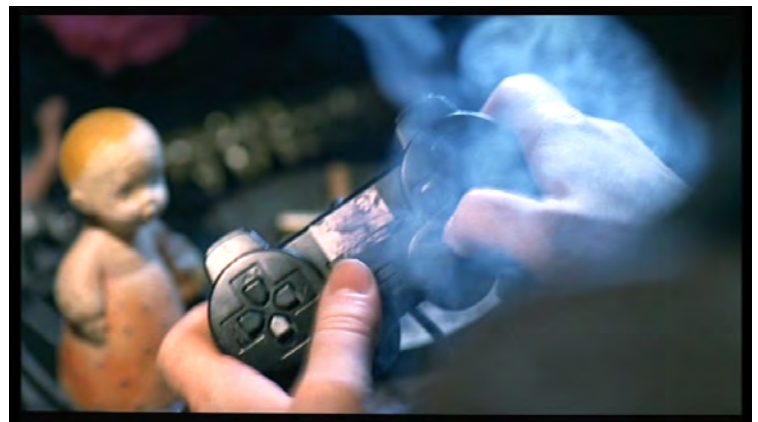
It is difficult not to see a specific political-technological imagosphere behind this adventure film, which allows today's positive hero to join and identify with the sufferings and mission of the Soviet people. Just as the rehabilitation of the Soviet anthem and the red flag at the state level does the same in Russia at the level of state policy.

Thus by the time of the events at Tõnismäe, the “awakened” Stalinist icon and liturgy, the poles of good and evil, the discontent of the Russian-speaking population, the personal existential memories of Russians, etc. had all accumulated and only a spark was needed to ignite the fuse and unfortunately blow up the charge.



The digital platform allows different elements of the imagosphere to amalgamate into a powerful synthetic whole. Quantity transforms into a new quality, convenience gives way to simplicity. The little cell of the imagosphere is a personal, mobile means of communication and media – a small instrument that makes telephone calls, takes photographs and videos, sends and receives e-mail, plays music and broadcasted audio and video files, and does many other little operations like parking your car. The screen accompanies us everywhere. It is a membrane or filter through which we communicate with the world, through which the world takes shape for us. A restaurant or pizza bar exists if the navigation system finds it. Streets and roads are passable if the satellite navigation memory knows them and traffic jams have been downloaded in the morning. Houses, roads and the city are covered with billboards, which form the exterior portion of this membrane.

Thus a complete new reality emerges, replacing processes, phenomena, people and things with filtered images. The question is, who determines the content and format of the image?



The illustrations are screenshots from two films: *Bronze Night: the Russian Riot in Tallinn*. Liiv, Urmas E. Kanal 2. Tallinn 2007 and *НОЧНОЙ ДОЗОР (Notshnoi Dozor)*. Bekmambetov, Timur. OAO Pervõi Kanal 2004

Repro of Rembrandt from:
Field, M.D. 2007. *Rembrandt*. Sinisukk.

Photos are by author.



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- ⁴ Kaasik, pg. 15.
- ⁵ Mihhail Lotman. *Märulisemiootika eesti pealinnas* (Riot Semiotics in the Estonian Capital). – Postimees, 2 May 2007.
- ⁶ Lidov. – Hierotopia. 2006: 32
- ⁷ Lidov..... 2006: 32.
- ⁸ Isar, 2006:59
- ⁹ Lidov, 39.
- ¹⁰ Lidov, 40.
- ¹¹ Lidov, 41.
- ¹² Lidov, 43.
- ¹³ Lidov, 44.
- ¹⁴ Lotman 2007.
- ¹⁵ Raivo Poom. *Vene duumasaadikud "leidsid" pronksmehelt tükeldamise jäljed* (Members of Russia's Duma "Found" Traces of Dismemberment of the Bronze Soldier). – Eesti Päevaleht, 10 May 2007.
- ¹⁶ Vladimir Paperny. Architecture in the Age of Stalin: Culture Two. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. pp. 158,161.
- ¹⁷ Mihhail Lotman, op.cit.
- ¹⁸ Isar 2006, Hierotopia. 2006:60.
- ¹⁹ Isar, ibid.
- ²⁰ Isar, ibid.
- ²¹ Isar, ibid, 61.
- ²² Isar, ibid, 63.
- ²³ Isar, ibid, 64.
- ²⁴ Isar, ibid, 65.
- ²⁵ Heidegger. Parmenides. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. pg. 60.
- ²⁶ See also Urmas E. Liiv's documentary film *Pronksiöö: Vene mäss Tallinnas / Bronze Night: the Russian Riot in Tallinn*. Tallinn: Kanal 2, 2007.
- ²⁷ НОЧНОЙ ДОЗОР (Notshnoi Dozor). Bekmambetov, Timur. OAO Pervõi Kanal 2004.
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