

KOKO architects was founded in 2000 by Andrus Kõresaar and Raivo Kotov. The office grew rapidly through numerous competitions and commissions. At first, these included dwellings, cafés, and clubs. Spas and hotels in Estonia and neighbouring countries followed. Meanwhile, KOKO also pursued their true fascination: rethinking old buildings, such as Fahle House. More recently, KOKO has created museums and exhibitions, like Tallinn Seaplane Harbour. Presently, KOKO is working on several housing developments and public projects.

The Young Architect Prize Was Awarded To Alumni Of The Estonian Academy Of Arts

On 12th of February at the General Assembly of Estonian Association of Architects held at the KUMU art museum President Toomas Hendrik Ives announced the recipients of the Young Architect Award: Raivo Kotov and Andrus Kõresaar of the architectural bureau KOKO. The work of Toomas Paaver in shaping the local architectural scene was also highlighted with a special prize of the Estonian Association of Architects.

"The award, serving as encouragement for young architects, is meant to recognise both our great architectural heritage as well as the strong architectural education. It is an award to creativity and free, courageous thinking," says president Toomas Hendrik Ives. "Just as today's nominees, all the recipients so far have always been eager to express their opinion and speak up. In addition to the courage to create, an architect needs to have the courage and strength to stand behind their ideas and creations. Who else than you knows that your work is like an everyday piece of public education, meant to bring contemporary solutions to the people."

"The YAA is a great recognition in the area of architecture especially as it is not centred around a single object or building, but serves as an acknowledgement to our whole young team. It is a very important stimulus for an architect to know that their work is valued," said Raivo Kotov, recipient of the Young Architect Award.

"As in our daily work we are often faced with a situation of limited resources and options, the better it makes us feel when the work and ideas realised gain some attention. We are grateful for this recognition," said the recipient Andrus Kõresaar.

KOKO architects turn TV tower to an experience centre and the Seaplane Hangars to an exhibition centre.

Company KOKO arhitektid has been the winner of the public tender for the idea and vision of reconstruction of two major projects in Tallinn: Tallinn TV Tower and Seaplane Harbour.

Both objects have a historical background and are unique monuments of architecture from an engineering and technical point of view. The Tallinn TV Tower is a free-standing structure with an observation deck, built to provide better telecommunication services for the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics rigatta event. It is Estonia's highest building at 314 metres but designed to meet requirements the viewing platform at a height of 100 metres, closed to the public since 2007. The complex was constructed between 1916 and 1917 as the Naval Fortress and is an unique architectural monument to demonstrate engineering 20 years ago.

KOKO architects had an idea to turn the tower into an experience centre and the hangars into an exhibition centre for Estonian Maritime Museum. Both projects have been approved by the Estonian government and the city of Tallinn.

The reconstruction of the tower has been a long process. The requirements for the reconstruction of the tower have been supported by the National Endowment for the Arts Fund's programme for development of national importance. The main goal is to copy something what is there in a creative way.

Noore Arhitektide Liidu konkursi võitsid Andrus Kõresaar ja Raivo Kotov

Eesti Arhitektide Liidu korraldatava Noore Arhitektide Liidu konkursi võitsid sel aastal Andrus Kõresaar ja Raivo Kotov. Konkursi korraldaja on Arhitektuuribüroo KOKO Arhitektid, mille juht on Toomas Hendrik Ives. Tüüsi toetab Eesti Arhitektide Liit. Konkursi auhinnaks on 1000 euro. Konkursi võitjate teadmised ja oskused on väärtuslikud ka Eesti Arhitektide Liidu jaoks.

"Noore arhitekti preemia oma olemuselt on varasemast preemiast, sest alati on teiste objektide eest. See preemia keskendub inimestele ja annab tunnustuse selle eest, et nad on teinud head tööd," sõnas Andrus Kõresaar. "Seda on raske kasutada ka muusikate ja detailide jaoks. See on kindlasti suureks abiks rahaliselt tegeva liitumisele ja loominguks ongi see keevik." "Eile Kõresaar ja Kotov võitsid preemia vastavõtmiseks Raivo Kotov ja Andrus Kõresaar. "Tervehoone", et nende ettepanekud pidi püsima 50 ringis.

Eestis on KOKO Arhitektid üks neist, kes on suutnud luua nii arhitektide välismaal keegi otsustades ning ja tunnetuse teha samal laadil. Kõresaar ja Kotov on nimega arhitektid, kes on teinud palju suurt ja väikest, mis on nende jaoks väga oluline. Nad on teinud palju suurt ja väikest, mis on nende jaoks väga oluline. Nad on teinud palju suurt ja väikest, mis on nende jaoks väga oluline.

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Since its start in 2000, KOKO architects has evolved on the tides of developments in Estonia, employing an intriguing combination of graphics and modest servitude, and literally building an identity for a new nation with new sense of self-esteem. It garnered them the Young Estonian Architect Award 2015, but it didn't make them overconfident. 'We believe in layers of time, and not so much in permanence.'

Temporal layers

ESTONIA — TEXT: INDIRA VAN 'T KLOOSTER, ILLUSTRATION: KLAUSTOON

Between KOKO's office and the house belonging to Andrus Kõresaar, who together with Raivo Kotov is one of the studio's two partners, is a tiny door. It's invisible to those who don't know it, set in the kitchen behind the dustbin. One must bend deeply to go through the door, designed to function like an Alice in Wonderland transformation, crossing from one world to the other. Says Kõresaar, 'It's so small on purpose, so that every time I enter it, I undergo some sort of transformation from private life to work, from work to private. Since I do this three or four times a day, you understand how important it is.' The story is illustrative of the way KOKO works. They feel comfortable in transforming big historical complexes. They have this way of adding something subtle and personal, and there is always a sense of relativity and humbleness, as if to illustrate that they are just one of the many tiny passers-by in many layers of time.

Having regained independency (as the Estonians prefer to phrase it, rather than having become independent) in 1991, the nation was ready for its first appearance at the World Expo, the Expo 2000 in Hanover. The commission was won by KOKO architects, comprising a recently graduated artist and an architect not even out of the academy. After all, what is better for a young nation than to be represented by young talent? Now the country is preparing the centennial celebration of the existence of the Estonian nation (ignoring Russian and German supremacy between 1918 and 1991), while pressure from Russia is again clearly tangible at the Baltic borders. KOKO is looking for ways to expand their practice outside Estonia, in Norway and Finland, for example, both countries that have heavily influenced Estonian architecture. And to close the circle, KOKO has recently completed the interior of another national pavilion, this time at Expo 2015 in Milan.

For what reason did you win the World Expo competition in 2000, do you think?

We proposed a maritime theme to connect to the naval history of Estonia, and maximum visibility so as to stand out between all the other countries. The result was a flowing movement high above visitors' heads, an undulating forest of fir trees symbolizing sea, woods, and movement. The spectacular result was an instant success: 2.7 million came to visit the pavilion. For us, 'movement' has become a recurring feature in our work. Not literally, but metaphorically. In this country, every 30 years everything changes drastically. We don't think that

buildings or designs will keep their original functions for much longer than that.

Yet you have done some high-profile transformations like the Fahle House (2007) and the Rotermann Carpenter's Workshop (2009). Will these again change function in 30 years' time?

We have seen so many changes in Estonia that I am inclined to think so, yes. In 1995, I made a series of photographs in the ruins of the Fahle Factory, a famous paper factory in Tallinn. The state of decay was such that I called the series Purgatory. I strongly believe in the flexibility of societies, people, and buildings. My office is in this complex now, my art, my drawings, as well as my house. All established in different time frames.

The Rotermann Carpenter's Workshop has been restored, transformed, and renewed in a joint effort by government and private investors. It was also your first project to receive international recognition. Most of all, it probably underscores your belief in flexibility.

The Rotermann Quarter is a 19th-century industrial area that became highly toxic after a nuclear accident in a factory nearby in 1957. During the Soviet era, the buildings deteriorated to the point that Tarkovsky, the famous film director, decided that this utterly forlorn place was ideal for a movie he had in mind. *Stalker*, partly filmed here in 1979, became a masterpiece. In the movie, the Rotermann Quarter was a mysterious zone, an area where an experiment had gone wrong, or powers had gone beyond control, although it remains unclear what had actually happened. Now, some 30 years later, it is this fashionable place with shops, apartments, bars, hotels, and high-quality public space. So my answer would be yes, indeed.

In both projects, as well as, for example, in the English College Sports House and the Tallinn Synagogue, graphics play an important role. How, exactly?

In Rotermann, the three towers have a deliberate techno-futuristic signature to convey a sense of modern and self-conscious, vigorous architecture, but basically they were designed to avoid harming the historical walls of the building. Graphics are usually a means to make a coherent design object of the project. We want to complete

projects, like in fashion or the car industry, where there is no barrier between inside and outside in the design.

But it's also a way to give specific meaning to the building itself, like in the synagogue?

In a synagogue, no graphic representation is allowed, but then we found the pomegranate tree. In Jewish tradition, the pomegranate is a symbol of fruitfulness, knowledge, learning, and wisdom. For us, this became the symbol to create layers in transparency: public/private, seen/unseen. To pray in private while still being part of the community. Graphic design is a great 'unifier' in design. In the English College, the graphics work as a toolbox, a family of signs binds the building together.

How did that work at the Seaplane Harbour?

[Laughs] Another project on the verge of collapse that we saved! The early 20th-century maritime hangars, with the largest steel concrete shell at the time, measuring 36 by 116 metres, were an utter ruin in early 2000. Shipwrecks were everywhere in the waters outside, the walls nearly gone. It was Lennart Meri, the former president of Estonia, who was really concerned with this magnificent building, but the self-proclaimed owners didn't even allow him on the premises in 2001. In 2009, the restoration finally started. We also designed the exhibition spaces, divided into three worlds: underwater, on the water, and in the air.

This project opened up your office to international commissions. Where are your chances are most promising?

In Estonia, we would like to participate in the recent attention to public spaces. We have beautiful public projects, but we are still reminded of the Russian period in our public space. This needs to change, and we, as well as many other Estonian architects are capable of doing that. We are doing, for example, a mountain hut and a private house in Norway, and the Museum of Technology in Helsinki. The latter is especially important to us: Finnish television helped the Estonians to remain European, and eventually to dismantle the Soviet Union.

What is your primary ambition for the next five years?

We want to take part in both international and local architecture competitions. As a goal, we would like to win an internationally important competition, but we all know it is easier said than done.

