

Tallinn is a very composite city. Throughout its history, it has been characterized by irregular development, a varied pace of building and the continuous cultural interruptions of the modernist era: liberation from the Russian tsarist regime in 1918, a brief, 22-year period of independence followed by 50 years of Soviet occupation, the structural creation of the 1990s and vigorous integration with the European and global world in the 21st century. The latter has seen a period of economic growth and construction boom accompanied by advantages and drawbacks.

# Tallinn: Collage city

ESTONIA (EE) — TEXT: TRIIN OJARI, ILLUSTRATION: HARMEN VAN DER HORST

Despite its architectural diversity, the main (tourist) attraction of Tallinn is still the medieval old city centre, which has been upgraded recently through building on empty sites left by the destruction wrought during World War II. The bastion area around the old city and the adjacent streets became the place where the new city centre was established at the beginning of the 20th century. Here, important cultural symbols (theatres, the art hall) and the apartment buildings and offices for enterprises in the popular style of functionalism were built. Since the 1990s, the concentration of the city centre and the active growth of suburbia have progressed rapidly, allowing the city to expand more than ever before. By the beginning

of the 21st century there were almost 30,000 inhabitants living in the new suburban residential estates at or around the borders of the city. The birth of the real city – with high-rise buildings – has been distinctive and left a strong image on the Tallinn's skyline, best observed from out at sea. There are new 20- to 30-storey commercial buildings competing with the graphically beautiful medieval church spires. After Estonia regained its independence, the new economy, new aesthetics and new understanding of public space would be vigorously manifested throughout its urban space; for this reason, changes to the urban space over the past two decades have been significant. In the city centre, quite a number of Soviet

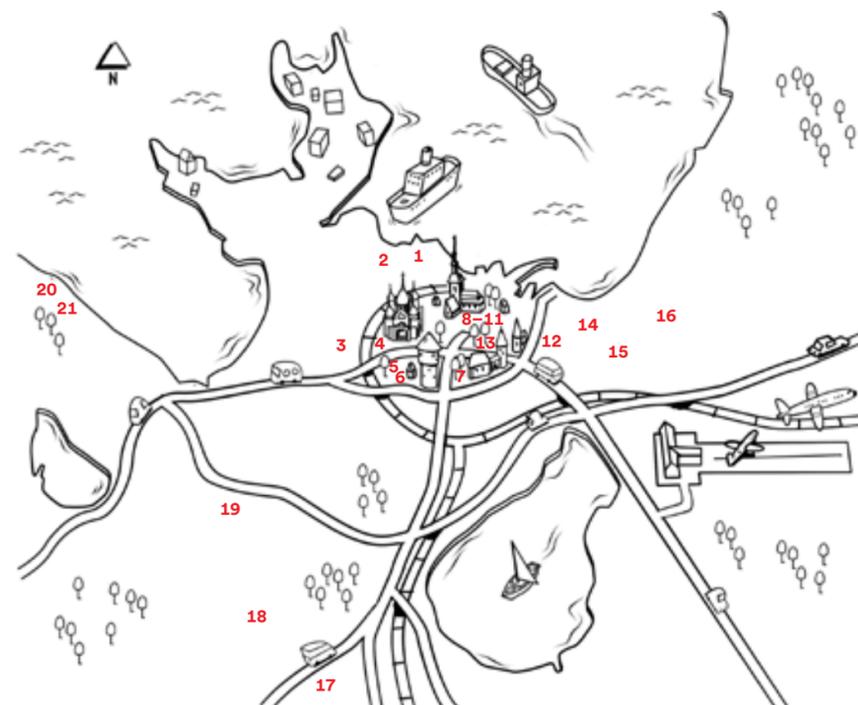
buildings (including buildings of architectural importance) have been demolished or reconstructed, and a new generation of architects has taken over the scene. The high point of Tallinn's construction boom lasted from 2006 until 2008; later there have been added single architecturally fascinating buildings. Although the intention of this guide is to highlight developments from the past five years, it also includes some buildings from the recent boom years as points of reference.

One of the unique characteristics of Tallinn is the preservation of the 19th- and 20th-century low-rise industrial districts around the old city centre. In these areas, the historicism dwellings are mixed with former industrial complexes that today have become popular spots for creative industries and cultural activities, where restaurants and cafés mingle with studios, offices, flea and fashion markets, ecological shops and all kinds of pop-up workshops and enterprises. Kalamaja, Kopli, Kadriorg and Uus-Maailm are districts that, in terms of both social and constructive aspects, are experiencing the fastest development at the moment. It is here where we begin our walk to discover the newer architecture of Tallinn.

Located by the sea, Kalamaja and Põhja-Tallinn are the districts with the most prolific legacy of industrial and military architecture. Local must-see sights are the old shipbuilding industries on the Kopli peninsula and the dense and cosy historical dwellings of Kalamaja, where today many artists and bohemian types tend to congregate.

The area's most outstanding structure is the seaplane hangars (1), built in 1917 and the first of its kind in the world. Its vast, monolithic concrete shell has since become the home of the Estonian Maritime Museum (see A10 #46), its huge interior housing even the entirety of a WWII-era

‘After independence, the new economy, new aesthetics and new understanding of public space were vigorously manifested.’



**1** ESTONIAN MARITIME MUSEUM SEAPLANE HARBOUR (2012)  
Architect: KOKO architects  
Address: Kütli 17A



**2** RESIDENTIAL BUILDING (2007)  
Architect: Eek & Mutso  
Address: Noole street 8



**3** TELLISKIVI LOOMELINNAK (2011-)  
Architect: Kuu Architects, et al.  
Address: Telliskivi 60A



**4** EESTI RAUDTEE AS HEADQUARTERS (2008)  
Architect: Urmas Lööke  
Address: Toompuiestee 35



**5** FREEDOM SQUARE (2009)  
Architect: Alver Trummal Architects  
Address: Vabaduse väljak



**6** TATARI APARTMENT HOUSE (2009)  
Architect: Martin Aunin  
Address: Tatari 30



**7** CITY PLAZA AND EUROPEAN UNION BUILDING (2004, 2006)  
Architect: Alver Trummal Architects  
Address: Tartu mnt 2, Rävåla pst 4



**8** FORMER CARPENTER'S WORKSHOP OFFICE BUILDING (2008)  
Architect: KOKO architects  
Address: Roseni 7



**9** NEW FLOUR MILL OFFICE BUILDING (2009)  
Architect: HG Arhitektuur  
Address: Rotermanni 8



**10** ROTERMANNI RESIDENCES (2013)  
Architect: Alver Architects  
Address: Rotermanni 10



**11** APARTMENT BUILDING (2009)  
Architect: Kosmos architects  
Address: Aia 4



**12** SYNAGOGUE (2007)  
Architect: KOKO architects  
Address: Karu 16



**13** BALTIC FILM AND MEDIA SCHOOL (2012)  
Architect: Salto architects  
Address: Narva Road 27



**14** ART MUSEUM OF ESTONIA (KUMU) (2005)  
Architect: Pekka Vapaavuori  
Address: Weizenbergi 34



**15** APARTMENT BUILDING (2005)  
Architect: 3+1 architects  
Address: Koidula 24



**16** APARTMENT BUILDING (2006)  
Architect: Künnapu & Padrik architects  
Address: Liikuri 8A



**17** THE BLACK HOUSE (2010)  
Architect: Martin Aunin  
Address: Valguse 17



**18** LÖVI PARK APARTMENT BUILDINGS (2013)  
Architect: Alver Architects  
Address: Hiiu-Suurtüki 4



**19** TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY (2009)  
Architect: AET architects  
Address: Akadeemia tee 15/1



**20** PRIVATE VILLA (2010)  
Architect: Emil Urbel architects  
Address: Merirahu 76A



**21** MERIRAHU APARTMENT BUILDINGS (2007)  
Architect: Rein Murula architects  
Address: Merirahu 2, 4, 12



**20** PRIVATE VILLA (2010)  
Architect: Emil Urbel architects  
Address: Merirahu 76A



**21** MERIRAHU APARTMENT BUILDINGS (2007)  
Architect: Rein Murula architects  
Address: Merirahu 2, 4, 12



**21** MERIRAHU APARTMENT BUILDINGS (2007)  
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## (Tallinn: Collage city)

Estonian navy submarine. In addition to the Maritime Museum, Patarei – the massive old marine fort – is easily recognizable. Built in the mid-19th century, it served as a prison for over a century. At the moment, new use and reconstruction possibilities are being researched for the heritage-protected complex. There are many examples of mingling new and old architecture in the fast-developing Kalamaja residential district, for example, the **residential building (2)** on Noole street. The region's new centre is the **Telliskivi Loomelinnak ('creation campus') (3)**, a former industrial complex that has undergone step-by-step renovation by private investors. Its cafés (F-Hoone, Pudel, Pokaal) and flea markets have become quite popular. These are mainly new types of development projects that tend to preserve the somewhat wild and creatively instructive environment without standard solutions, merging non-profit enterprises with more commercial businesses.

The Telliskivi quarter is separated from the old city by the railway, and the central station of Balti jaam is the largest transportation node of the city. Its Soviet-era modernist station hall was joined recently by the Shnelli Hotel, designed by Muru Pere Architects, and the **Estonian railway headquarters (4)**, designed by architect Urmas Lõoke. This new building with its glass facade clearly turns its back to Kalamaja. When moving on via Toompuiestee street, one reaches the heart of Tallinn: **Vabaduse väljak (Freedom Square) (5)**, designed by Alver Trummal Architects as the winning entry of a public competition. The main square of the city gained its modern spatial solution in 2009 – an interesting, multi-layered and modern urban landscape has been created on the granite pavement with mobile platforms for sitting. Tatari street, located quite close to Vabaduse väljak, presents architecture from different eras, including Tatari 21B, the most gorgeous (and romantically decaying) example of Art Nouveau architecture in town. Opposite this pearl, situated in the depth of its plot, is a Cor-Ten steel and wood-covered **apartment house (6)** that has been skilfully fitted into its historical surroundings. Not far from here lies Tallinn's 'new city' with its high-rise hotels, banks and various commercial buildings along the beginning of Tartu maantee street. The construction of this block of glass-enveloped buildings began at the end of the 1990s and, in addition to the SEB Bank headquarters (Raivo Puusepp, 1998) and the SAS Radisson (Künnapu&Padrik, 2001), local landmarks include the slender, 22-storey City Plaza and the **European Union Building (7)** at Rävåla 4, with its fifteen-metre console creating an original 'urban glamour' stage underneath. When walking from the city centre towards the sea, one passes the Rotermanni quarter, another old industrial area that has become a magnificent example of the successful union of historical and modern architecture (see A10 #20). The development of the area is based on the complete urban planning project by Alver Trummal Architects, which was approved by the city's national heritage office. All the buildings here are designed by various top architects from Estonia. One cannot help but notice the complex of four dwellings by Kosmos Architects that has different facade solutions connected to each other by an artificial 'hill' hiding a shopping mall beneath. There is also the **Laudsepa töökoda (8)** – previously the Rotermanni Carpenter's Workshop – by KOKO architects, with three glass office towers on top of its roof, and the warm-coloured metal facade and protruding windows of **Uus Jahuladu (New Flour Mill) (9)** by HG Arhitektuur. The most recent addition is the **apartment building (10)** at Rotermanni 10 by Alver Architects, the facades of which reflect the aesthetics of the surrounding industrial landscape. Construction still continues in this area and, following the completion the quarter, it stands out as a unique development, even by Scandinavian standards, with residential and office areas being innovatively mixed within old and new

architecture. A bit further from here, in the direction of the old city, is an **apartment building (11)** on Aia street. Its expressive, sharp forms are surrounded by the relatively hectic environment characteristic to the edge of the old city. Initially, the idea was to rebuild the entire quarter to give it a modern look, but today this luxury apartment building remains the only one of its kind.

When proceeding from Rotermanni to Kadriorg, a brief stop should be made at the **synagogue (12)** on Karu street; a small, arched building resembling a casket yet still an effective example of its type, having a wood-panelled hall with 105 seats at its heart. On Narva maantee street is also situated the Tallinn University campus. Its main building from the 1930s faces the street, while the new premises of the **Baltic Film and Media School (13)** by Salto architects, again the result of a public competition, hides in the courtyard (see A10 #52). The building's entrance was designed as a huge stage, and stepping inside it to experience its attractive environment – modern studios and classrooms, as well as public spaces in the form of stairs – is a must. The park in Kadriorg is one of the largest recreational areas in Tallinn, surrounding the palace built by Peter the Great of Russia and including the new building of the **Art Museum of Estonia (14)**, designed by Finnish architect Pekka Vapaavuori, which opened in 2005. There are also several modern dwellings of high architectural quality on Weizenbergi, Poska and Koidula streets; the latter's **apartment building (15)** by 3+1 architects is especially noteworthy. At the far end of Kadriorg there is an elevated area of natural limestone along the coast, atop of which is the largest Soviet-era residential district, Lasnamäe. The new apartment building constructed in 2006 at **Laagna tee (16)** forms an underlying metaphysical supplement to the otherwise totally concrete environment.

West from the city centre is Nõmme, one of the most beautiful and treasured residential areas from the 1920s and '30s, where today several modern villas are established – the **Black House (17)**, preceded a year earlier by the White House next to it, both designed by architect Martin Aunin. The **Lõvi Park district (18)** of apartment buildings and private residences is currently under development, and contributes to a complete architectural solution combined with the use of top-quality materials. The Tallinn University of Technology campus is located on the borders of Nõmme and Mustamäe. It is a fine example of modernist architecture from the 1960s, and has been recently complemented with new scientific and innovation centres. In 2009, a new **university library (19)** was added, a building with a simple form whose exterior is covered with a special textile, while the interior is defined by imposing natural motifs.

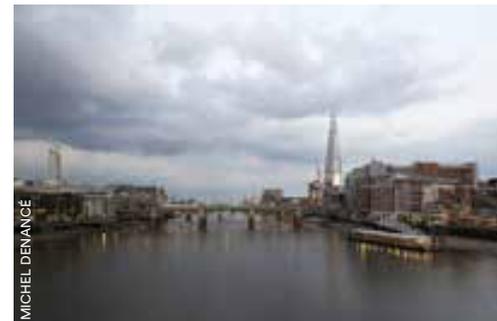
Tallinn is surrounded by a dense suburban belt, and due to a strong tradition of local residential architecture the number of new residential buildings built according to original designs is quite high. One of the most luxurious and simultaneously most complete solutions is the Merirahu district, where fairly strong rules are in place dictating that new buildings, such as a **private villa (20)** by Emil Urbel, must follow a modernist form. The district is bordered with **apartment buildings (21)** designed by Rein Murula that have a complex floor plan with alternating levels and a rich typological variety. In the Rocca-al-Mare district, located between Merirahu and Paldiski street, lies one of the largest shopping and entertainment centres of Tallinn, to which residences and various sports facilities have later been added.

From Merirahu one can walk back to the city centre, half of the route crossing along the waterfront and through the somewhat overgrown yet pleasant green areas, parks and beaches. Taken as a whole, Tallinn is certainly not a very neat and tranquil city. Despite the construction boom of the new era, however, it has maintained that collage-like character so alluring to the modern flâneur. ◀

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

### INTERCHANGE

Joost Moolhuijzen (partner at Renzo Piano Building Workshop), the Dutch wonderkid who was one of the leading architects of the Potsdammer Platz redevelopment merely five years after graduation, and whose latest project is The Shard in London, talks about what he's up to now.



### EUROVISION: BULGARIA

Until recently, Bulgaria did not seem like the most inspiring place for architects. Rows of Soviet-era buildings sit like dominoes in the landscape, and many are crumbling. But that is changing. Prior to Bulgaria's accession to the EU (2007), several young studios had already grabbed the chance to make contemporary architecture. Now, their even younger apprentices carve their way in times of economic and political hardship. Boyka Ognyanova, project and programme coordinator at 'One Architecture Week', Ljubo Georgiev, the festival's director, and A10 correspondent Aneta Vasileva together cast light on the Bulgarian architectural scene.



↑ Raketa Rakia Bar in Sofia by funkt architects, 2013



↑ Two Oaks House in Sofia by OBIA, 2012

### TOUR GUIDE: VENICE

This year, the theme 'Fundamentals: Absorbing Modernity, 1914–2014' takes precedence at the Architecture Biennale in Venice, which runs from 7 June until 23 November. Rem Koolhaas has been appointed its director. A10 correspondent Zaira Magliozzi explores who will tackle his theme, and how.

### SECTION: BRICK

...and much more. A10 #57 will be published 1 May 2014.