

On the History of Cultural Heritage and Conservation in Estonia

Dedicated to the 100th birthday of Villem Raam

The current special issue of *Studies on Art and Architecture* contains articles on the history of the preservation of cultural heritage and conservation in Estonia. The immediate occasion for this publication is the centenary of Villem Raam (1910–1996), one of the leading figures in Estonian art history and conservation.

As with art history, the disciplines of heritage conservation feel the need to look back and deal with their history. Written interpretative texts form a minority of the sources, and thus it's mainly the empirical data that can be analysed, calling for even more thorough analysis. The questions who? what?, and especially why? and how? have not yet been answered. Likewise, the study of the local practice in a wider context is still to be undertaken.

This issue attempts to improve the situation. Naturally, only some aspects of this history can be covered here and the published articles are not comprehensive in their coverage of their respective subjects.

Medieval murals in Estonia have been studied from the art historical viewpoint; their preservation and conservation have only been mentioned briefly. The article by Hilikka Hiiop and

Anneli Randla gives a brief overview of what has been done during the last hundred years and concentrates on the controversial conservation work of Viktor Filatov in the 1970s, analysing his work in its historical as well as wider methodological and theoretical context.

The article on plan structure typology of historical small towns in Estonia in the Middle Ages and during the Swedish rule by Lilian Hansar is the first attempt to collect and investigate some extremely complex source material. From the preservation perspective, these layers of plan type development are the main factors in the formation of present conservation areas. This article is, in a way, an introduction to the next by Riin Alatalu on the creation of conservation areas during the Soviet era, which examines the values which influenced, consciously or unconsciously, this process.

Mariann Raisma's paper concerns the recent past and touches upon the change of paradigm in Estonian museums during *Perestroika*. An answer is sought to the question of why the museums, which were 'on the frontline' of the *Singing Revolution*, lost all significance a few years later.

This special issue concludes with an article on the complexity of authenticity by Jukka Jokilehto. Authenticity is one of the key concepts of modern conservation (for instance, it is one of the two conditions any property must meet before it is included on the UNESCO World Heritage List), but its meaning is still heavily debated.

Anneli Randla