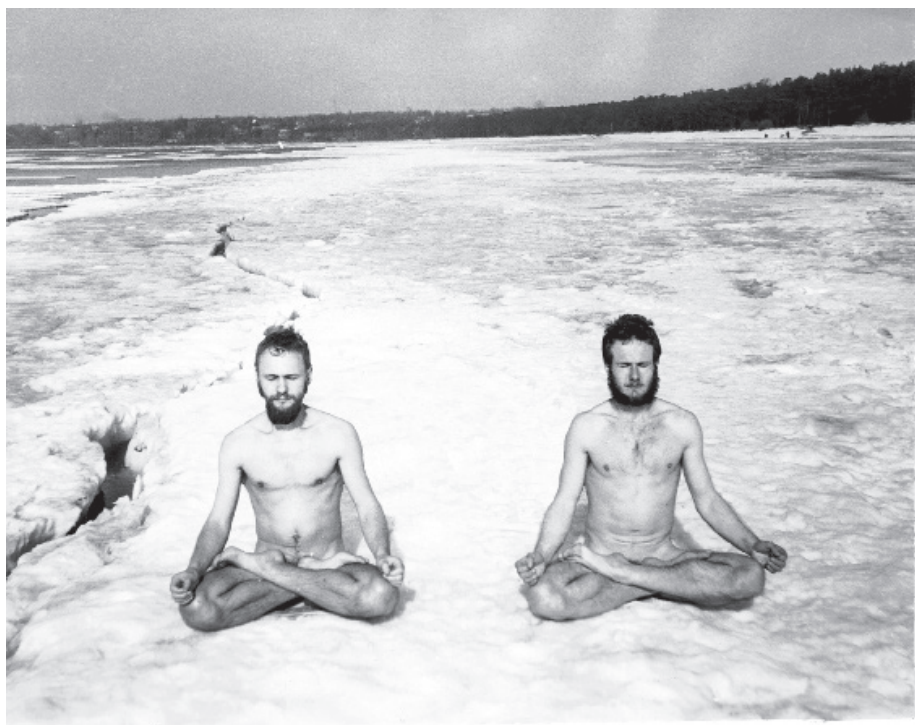


# SOVIET HIPPIES

THE PSYCHEDELIC UNDERGROUND OF 1970s ESTONIA



CURATED BY KIWA AND TERJE TOOMISTU  
JUNE 7 TO AUGUST 3, 2014

Cover image: Vladimir Wiedemann and Dmitri Petrjakov meditating on snow in Tallinn, 1982. © From the collection of Dmitri Petrjakov

The hippie movement, which converted hundreds of thousands of young people in the West to the cult of “peace, love and freedom” during the 1960s and 1970s and shook the entire world, also had an impact on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Coveting Western freedoms and spiritually inspired by the cultures of the East, a counterculture of flower children developed in the Soviet Union, which was disengaged from the official ideology and expressed itself through rock music, the cult of love, pacifism, actual and cosmic travel, and a physical appearance that was considered unacceptable for Soviet citizens.

The Khrushchev Thaw (1956-1964) that followed Stalin’s repressions brought a breath of fresh air to some places in the Soviet Union. In Estonia, the so-called Soviet West, foreign radio broadcasts kept people updated on the happenings elsewhere in the world. Young minds were enthralled by iconic hippie-era albums from the West that were illicitly distributed and the knowledge that their contemporaries in the “free world” were rocking in the spirit of the slogan “Make love not war.” The stagnation that accompanied Brezhnev’s rule did not leave much room for hope or personal freedom. Thus, against the background of contemporary politics, the generation that grew up in the late 1960s could not do anything but accept the fact that the world was one big lie and it was better just to deal with your own things.

The hippie movement in Soviet Estonia was not a clearly defined phenomenon, but rather an explosive youth culture with a perception of life that would unite vagabonds and academicians.

However, the mere trend toward hippie fashions, long hair and great rock concerts was enough to make the Soviet authorities see a political threat that could subvert the regime.

The more absurd the reality, the more fanatical Soviet flower power became. They created their own world in the shadow of harsh rules and repressions, and opposed the ruling system through symbolic expression.

By focusing on the manifestations of the hippie movement in Soviet Estonia, this multidisciplinary exhibition presents an alternative view of global hippie culture and gives a different perspective on the Soviet era. In our approach we have also included individuals from Estonian music, art, and literature worlds who ignored or opposed the official socialist code of behavior.

- Kiwa and Terje Toomistu, Curators

**Kiwa** (Kiwanoïd as sound artist) is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Tartu and Tallinn in Estonia. His work concerned with cultural codes extends from conceptual objects to total audiovisual environments, including painting, installation, video, performance, sound art, scenography, text and books. Exhibiting since 1995, his work has been featured in exhibitions and festivals in Europe, America and Asia. He lectures at the Estonian Academy of Arts and has worked as a curator since 1999.

**Terje Toomistu** is a writer, documentary filmmaker and anthropologist, with interests in cross-cultural processes, queer subjectivities, and cultural memory. She is a PhD Ethnology student at the University of Tartu and this year was a Fulbright scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. She has co-written a novel *Seven Worlds*, 2009 about spiritualities in South America and is one of the authors of the documentary film *Wariazone*, 2011.

*Soviet Hippies* has been previously exhibited at the Estonian National Museum, Tartu; Moderna Museet in Malmö, Sweden, and Uppsala Konstmuseum in Sweden.



© Villu Järmut, c.1967



The member of a psychedelic rock group Suuk Hain Salujärv in their rehearsal room in Tartu.  
Photo © Tiit Kõobi, 1976

June 29, 1970

To Comrade V. F. Duvanov;

According to available information, there are no dangerous organized groups of teenagers and young people in Tallinn, the capital of the Republic, and Tartu, the University City, or in the other larger cities, whose goal it is to systematically commit breaches of public order or terrorize other nationalities, but the potential for such groups to develop does exist.

The young people that spend their free time on the streets usually congregate in their neighborhoods around a "leader", often based on nationality. Dissension sometimes develops between these groups with the connivance of various elements that are inclined toward hooliganism and nationalism. In the summertime, young people gather on the streets and other places, and there are lots of so-called "long-hairs" among them. Their appearance – long hair, outlandish clothing – and a sloppy manner popularizes degenerate Western "fashions".

During the last two years, but especially in 1969, the habit of imitating Western "hippie" fashions in a vulgar way has increased. Some of the young people have started wearing long hair, which in some cases even reaches the shoulders. The first to adopt these fashions have been the poorly educated constant club goers, including a steadily increasing number of working class young people. Most of these "long-haired" young people lack any philosophical platform of their own or any special ambition to look like "hippies" from capitalist countries. Most of those who are among the local "hippies" lack any serious political ideals and their links with the Komsomol and other social organizations are weak. Their interests extend no further than the "novelties" that originate in the West – "beat" and "pop" music, original branded clothing, hanging around on the streets, and booze-ups that are accompanied by orgies and breaches of public order.

There are also cases when these young people deal in "speculation", have lost contact with the older generation ("we are misunderstood") or are inclined towards depression (because of weak health or abnormal family situations, etc.). An analysis of the negative processes among certain young people reveals that the impact of Western propaganda, the imitation of Western influences, which are abetted by personal contacts with foreigners, are at the top of the list. Young people are acquiring more and more modern transistor radios. They not only listen to music but also to broadcasts in Estonian and Russian (Voice of America, BBC, etc.).

Thus, after the Voice of America promised to send colored photos of the American astronauts to anyone who wanted one, letters from the Estonian S.S.R. were also received by the radio station. Most of the letter writers were teenagers aged 14 to 17.

The fact that the weak influence of their families has a negative impact is no less important. Cases where the parents do not view their children's behavior critically are not infrequent. They think that hanging around, hooliganism and imitating Western "fashions" poses no problem at all.

Statistics show that worker families comprise the majority of these inferior families.

To date, the battle of the Komsomol organizations with the unhealthy processes among certain types of young people has not always been successful. With the help of Komsomol organizations, a list and photo collection of the "long-haired ones" is being compiled by the Internal Affairs Departments of the Tallinn District Centers.

The administrative bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Komsomol have been instructed to carry out additional actions that would deal with researching, exposing and recording these groups and carrying out preventive measures.

Secretary of the Central Committee of the Leninist Young  
Communist League in Estonia

/A. Purga/



The photographs and videos in the exhibition are organized by these subjects:

## SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality played an important role in the hippy worldview. Simultaneously with the New Age movement in the West, interest in Eastern religions, mysticism and yoga also developed in Estonia. If in the West hippies searched for other spiritual paths that transcended the limitations of institutionalized religion, in the officially atheistic Soviet Union any spirituality was an alternative, providing an option to escape gray daily realities. Knowledge was disseminated primarily by samizdat (self-published) publications and spiritual gurus (Uku Masing, Mihkel Ram Tamm, Gunnar Aarma). Spiritual attitudes were also formed by new perspectives related to consciousness research, Jungian psychoanalysis, and the developing possibilities of virtual reality.

## PSYCHEDELIA

Hippies were seekers. The psychedelic subculture expressed in art, music and literature were concerned with a “different kind of reality”, opening the “doors of perception” and distorting understandings of objective reality by challenging a consensual bourgeois worldview. Experimenting with various states of perception allowed the Estonian hippies to escape Soviet reality and strive toward a sense of freedom.



Mathematician Jaan K.  
posing as a yogi, 1979.  
Private Collection





## MUSIC

The spirit of the hippie era was closely connected to music. To some extent, the wave of psychedelic rock music in the West also arrived in Estonia where youth listened to iconic albums of the hippie era that were acquired on the black market, copied onto tapes, and exchanged. Despite numerous restrictions, concerts and festivals still took place that attracted visitors from other Baltic countries and even further away.

## SOCIAL PRESSURE

Although in general hippies had no motivation to subvert Soviet authority systematically – their protests were passive – the power elite saw them as young people “infected” by Western influences, and as social parasites whose activities posed a political danger. This resulted in several measures designed to rein in the youth: strategic harassment by the KGB, strict limits on cultural activities, censorship, expulsions based on appearance, involuntary treatment in mental hospitals, etc.

## TRAVELING

The hippie movement in the Soviet Union was cosmopolitan in nature. People of different nationalities were linked by common values, passive protests against Soviet authority, and lifestyle. One of the fundamental principles of the hippie worldview was to strive for a sense of freedom discovered through inner exploration as well as a wayfaring and rambling lifestyle.

## KEY PLAYERS OF THE SOVIET HIPPIES MOVEMENT

### ALEKSANDER MÜLLER

1947-2013

Rock'n'roll legend, poet, blues singer, protopunk provocator and free mind. His house in Tartu was a famous gathering place for bohemians and artists.



*Til our next funny meetings in the communal grave!*

### RIHO BAUMANN

1952 -

Educated in physics, one of the first DJs and rock promoters in Estonia, he is the living symbol of hippie and rock culture.



*Hippies are the ambassadors to infinity.*

### AARE LOIT

1953 -

Life-long hippie, legendary traveller, computer programmer and now in a guru state.



*You don't need an external means as much as a consciousness that is capable of change.*

### ALEKSANDR DORMIDONTOV

1950 -

Central figure in the Soviet hippie movement, a tailor famous for making forbidden hippie trousers. Nicknamed by KGB as "president of hippies". Trouble with hair since 1969.



*Lenin didn't invent rock'n' roll. That was his trouble.*

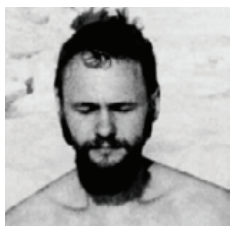


### PAAP KÕLAR

1954 -

Iconic drummer and founder of experimental jazz-rock groups Psycho and Radar. Nowadays organizes adventure tourism and flies daily with paramotors.

*It is possible to stay independent of this shit.*



### VLADIMIR WIEDEMANN

1955 -

Writer, magician, business consultant and author of many books about occult hippie underground in 1970s. Practiced magic to destroy soviet system.

*They [spirits] said I was the center of the world. Oh, really? The creator of the whole universe. Oh, shit!*



### JOHNNY B. ISOTAMM

1939–2014

Cult poet and dissident who was 7 years in prison in Siberia. He was called the “first hippie in Estonia”.

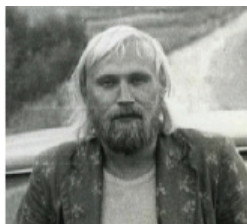
*I – the absolute emperor and pope of all the locos fags epileptics pickpockets poets prima-donnas buddha muhamed christ and anacharsis clootz - all in I*

## JAAKKO HALLAS

1948 -

Translator, book editor, specialist on history of religion, mysticism and esoteric systems.

*Hedonism of the mind is most important.*



## AVE ALAVAINU

1942 -

Poet and lifelong bohemian, stubborn and sincere spirit. People do not exist

*Power belongs to woman*

*And all the wells are dry*



## JUHAN HABICHT

1954 -

Educated in theoretical mathematics; beat and cyberpunk writer, translator and editor of an online archive of sci-fi literature.

*You can open doors and find out what's behind them. But it's probably different for everyone.*



## ENN TEGOVA

1946 -

Artist, painter and founding member of Estonian artist group Visarid ("rebels").

*We raised ourselves to a higher level from society. We dealt with the otherworldly.*





### PETI

1959 -

Poet, zen-prankster and inner space traveller.

*Schizophrenia is going on / Shamans banged drums / Black and gloomy world / Children looking for homes.*



### PÄÄRN HINT

1943 -

Poet, bohemian, traveller, irritator of bourgeois consciousness. Role model for other hippies.

*i am here to let my songs cry/ to let my songs be the sun/ from this endless blue sky/ hiding in the soul*



### URMAS ANDERSON

1953 -

Music lover and specialist on Western rock of the 1960-70s. Guitar hero from the psychedelic rock band Suuk (1972-1977).

*I never let anyone stand on my head.*



### NEEME LALL

1964 -

Artist, psychedelic painter and rebellious mind.

*Christ & hippies - through some sort of unconscious sensations in this mix there was some kind of higher and honest, noble and true power.*

## EXHIBITION CREDITS

Research and text: Kiwa and Terje Toomistu

Photographs from the collections of:

Urmas Anderson, Riho Baumann, Mikhail Bombin, Peeter Brambat, Juhan Hammer, Mart Ilves, Andrus Kerstenbeck, Valdek Kiiver, Jaan Klõsheiko, Tiit Kõöbi, Mishka Maniac, Jüri Müürissepp, Peti, Dmitri Petrjakov, Anneli Räni, Tõnu Tormis, Andres Valkonen, Aivar Vilipere, and Vladimir Wiedemann.

Video production: Kultusfilm

Producer: Liis Lepiks

Directors and video editors: Kiwa and Terje Toomistu

Camera: Tõnis Liivamägi and Andreas Press

Sound: Björn Norralt

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333 CHESTERFIELD AVENUE, NORTH VANCOUVER BC, CANADA V7M 3G9

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