

RAUL MEEL
CV 2019

THE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF THE PRIZE WINNERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRINT BIENNIALS

During the heyday of print graphics (1960–1980) Raul Meel was a member of the International Club of the Prize Winners of the International Print Biennials, No 81, 1972. Raul Meel was the only Estonian artist who was a member of this Club. The Club invited the winners of the main awards to the world's 11 most important graphic art competitions; over 400 graphic art exhibitions took place across the world.

Raul Meel. Curriculum vitae. Introduction

Raul Meel was born on 2 March 1941 at Reino farm in Jalase village in Harju County. Painter and graphic artist, sculptor, installation and fire-performance artist, prose writer and visual and sound poet. Beekeeper: Raul Meel is convinced that observing the life of bees has also led him forward in observing the happenings of poetry, art and life in general.

He studied to be an engineer-electrician. He worked as an electrician 1959-1961, as a tare weigher 1962–1987, as a master in an experimental graphic art studio 1987-1990, and after that as a freelance artist.

He was a persona non grata in art during the Soviet era, although still known beyond the Iron Curtain. During the heyday of graphic art, he was the only Estonian artist who was a member of *the International Club of the Prize Winners of the International Print Biennials**, No 81, 1972 (the Club invited the winners of the main awards to the world's 11 most important graphic art competitions; over 400 graphic art exhibitions took place across the world).

Raul Meel is found in the Top Artists list at *Angel Museum*, USA.

Member of Estonian Artists' Association.

Key exhibitions:

1972, Venice Art Biennale, curator's exhibition; 1979, *New Talents and Ideas of World Art* (37 artists, art critics' award) Boston, Massachusetts, USA****; 1989, personal exhibition at GKM gallery, Malmö, Sweden; 1992, personal exhibition at Kuopio Art Museum, Finland; 1993, exhibition *Modern Masters of World Art*, Seoul, South Korea; 1994, *Raul Meel and Leonhard Lapin*, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambresis, France; 1997, personal exhibition *Vita aboriginum* at Tallinn Art Hall, Estonia; 1997–1999, *Cartographers*, Zagreb (Croatia), Warsaw (Poland), Budapest (Hungary), Maribor (Slovenia), Middelburg (Holland), 52 artists (drawings and print art); 1999, personal exhibition at Latvian Foreign Art Museum; 2000, *Realities and Utopias* (eight painters), The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, New Jersey, USA; 2000, personal exhibition at Oulu Art Museum, Finland; *Fire in Modern Art*, Pedvale Open Air Art Museum, Talsi, Latvia (fire-installation & -performance, 11 artists, 1st prize); 2004, *Ilya & Emilia Kabakov and Raul Meel* (installations), Tallinn Art Hall, Estonia; 2010, personal exhibition *Estonian dialogue in Henry Van de Velde's Art Library* (visual and sound poetry), Gent, Belgium; 2011, *Books of Great Beauty*, Roger Raveel Museum, Machelen-Zulte, Belgium; 2012–2013, XXX Council of Europe Exhibition *The Desire for Freedom. Art in Europe since 1945*, the German Historical Museum, Berlin, Germany; Palazzo Reale, in Milan, Italy; Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, Estonia; the Art Museum MOCAK in Cracow, Poland; 2014, 16th Tallinn Print Triennial, Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia; *Raul Meel. Dialogues with Infinity*, Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia; 2015, Biennale Internazionale *Di carta paper made*, Schio, Vicenza, Italy, as a guest of honor and, so to speak, as the „godfather“ of the 2015-2016's exhibition; 2016-2017, *Faces of Europe*, seven chapters (7 theme shows), Europeana 280, digital virtual museum*****; 2017, *Symmetric worlds - reflected symmetry* Ylo Sooster, Juri Sobolev, Tõnis Vint and Raul Meel, Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, Estonia;

2017-2018, *Techne*, The National Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; 2018, one-man-show *Grand Concert*, Pärnu Art Museum, Estonia; 2018, *Baltic Book Art Biennale*, Sankt Peterburg, Russia. Altogether more than 600 general and group-exhibitions, and more than 100 one-man-shows and 26 fire-performances.** and ***

Written:

Raul Meel has published (until the end of 2019) altogether over 300 books and albums: he has written books and albums in more than 50 languages.

He has mostly written books of concrete and visual & sound poetry: *Päris nimed /Propper names, 1968, 1970, 1988, 1996; ... Conspectus of the Past, 2002, autobiography.*

Solomon's Song of Songs, 2010, visual poetry & sound poetry (considered one of the most original and beautiful books in the world; purchased for the rare manuscript and book collection of Herzog-August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Germany).

In the Schio town (Vicenza, Italy) in Palazzo Fogazzaro the reading room *Sale Raul Meel* with a permanent exhibition of his books, albums and works of print graphics is opened.

Selected awards:

4th Prize and 3rd Prize at the Cracow Print Biennial (Poland), 1972; 2nd Prize at the Frechen Print Biennial (West-Germany), 1974; art critics' award at the exhibition *World Art Competition: New Talents and Ideas* (Boston, Massachusetts, USA), 1979; *Reklamteknik AB Annual Art Award* (Sweden), 1989; *Kristjan Raud Award* in 1989 (Estonia); *Eduard Viiralt Award* in 1989 (Estonia); South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' award at the exhibition *Modern Masters of World Art*, Soul, South Korea, 1993; cultural award of the Estonian Republic 1995 and 1998; 2011, 2. prize at the X Baltic States Biennale of Graphic Art, Kaliningrad-Königsberg (Russia); Estonian Culture Capital for the Visual and Applied Arts Foundation – *Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015*, *Estonian Culture Prize for lifetime Achievement in 2015*; Gold Medal / *Lifetime Achievement Award* at Biennale Internazionale *Di carta paper made*, Schio, Vicenza, Italy, 2015; Grand Prix, *Baltic Book Art Biennale*, Sankt Peterburg, Russian FR, 2018. In addition more than thirty prize-winnings with less significance.

Selected publications:

Roger Pierre Turine. *D' Art et De Estonie. Pour Saluer Raul Meel*, Alentours, Editions Tandem, 1993, Gerpennes, Belgium (the series presents one outstanding person in culture either in art, literature, theater, film, music or architecture); Danielle Gillemont. *Raul Meel, une physique de la peinture*, *Le Soir*, 1/6/93, French; 2000, Jane A. Sharp. *Realities and utopias: Abstract Painting in the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Non-conformist Art from the Soviet Union*, New Brunswick: Jane Woorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, USA; Juhani Salokannel. *Valtoja vastaan*, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 01.95.2004, Finland; Anu Allas. *101 teost Eesti Kunstimuuseumi kogudest* (Raul Meel. *Laulev puu*, 1969, 1970), Eesti Kunstimuuseum, 2004; Ants Juske. *Külmetav Eesti kunstnik: 60 tähtsamat teost läbi aegade* (Raul Meel. *Konkretiseerimine*, 1968), *Eesti Päevaleht*, 2006; USA Art Museum yearbook *Zimmerli Journal*, Fall 2006 No 4, published on pages 88-103: Jeremy Canwell's essay *System, Terminus, and Time: The Mystical Art of Raul Meel*; Ruta Čaupova. *The Open Air Art Museum at Pedvale: The Interrelations of Contemporary Art Projects and the Local Environment*, 2012, Pedvale, Latvia, File: kp6_18_caupova.pdf; Art Museum of Estonia, KUMU Art Museum, 2014, *Raul Meel. Dialogid lõpmatusesega. Dialogues with Infinity*; Jan Kaus. *Seostaja lõpmatus*, *Sirp*, 31.07.2014; 2014, Otso Kantokorpi, *Lajien synty*, *Taide 4-14*, Helsinki, Finland; 2017, Raivo Kelomees, *Meta-references in media arts and the interactive instantiation of non-digital artworks*, *Technoetic Arts*, Volume 35 Number 3, UK, USA; 2019, Kimmo Sarje, *Raul Meelin typografinen runous*, *Tiede & Edistys* 1, Finland.

***Nota bene. CLUB**

I was a member of the Club of the Prize Winners of the International Print Biennials (CLUB).

The winners of 11 main biennials in the art world at the time could be invited to become members of the CLUB. The top exhibitions were: a) Krakow, b) Ljubljana, c) Tokyo, d) São Paulo, e) Bradford, f) Liège, g) Paris, h) Grenchen, i) Banská Bystrica, j) Lugano and k) Venice. The aim of CLUB was to establish and maintain the prestige of the main awards in graphic art.

The boom of graphic art in the early 1960s brought about numerous annual exhibitions, biennials, triennials, etc. The founders of the elitist CLUB reasoned that with all these exhibitions the most important awards were in danger of being overlooked. The members of the CLUB included: Miro, Moore, Spacal, Rauschenberg, Fontana, Warhol, Stella, Rosenquist, Lichtenstein, Friedlaender, Adam, Saito, Debenjak, Hamaguchi, Schumacher, Hockney, Hartung, Chillida, Maraz, Tapiés, John, Johns, Soulages, Yoshihara, Sugai, Appel, Caprogossi, Guitet, Alechinsky, Kirchner, Anderle, Alviani, Vedova, Vasarely, LeWitt, Bayrle, da Silva, Manessier, Manignier, Pasmore, Morellet, Riley, Lachovicz, Richards, Rusha, Segui, Francis, Kimura, Kleiva, Ondaatje, Böckman, Noda, Matta, Matsumoto, Maurer, Jemec, Jones, Tillyer, Winner... Not all of them are primarily known as graphic artists, several are better known as painters, sculptors, installation artists... In 1972 I was sent the official CLUB list of members which vanished without a trace somewhere in the Soviet postal system; I learned about the list only later in a letter. When I was enlisted the CLUB had been active for 8 years and had 80 members. Each year a dozen or so artists were admitted. In the Soviet Union only two artists had qualified – one very loyal to the authorities, and myself.

The members have occasionally arranged exhibitions of their works. In 1972-73 one such exhibition toured the significant art centres: Paris, Amsterdam, London, New York, Sao Paulo... I was able to send some pictures to that exhibition, which later became totally impossible.

In the course of time some of the above-mentioned biennials have lost their significance, the others have acquired a new meaning, and many new important exhibitions have emerged. Art life has changed a lot: my information here suits to measure the international art life of the past, to be more exact – 1964-1979.

****Nota bene. New York MoMA**

In January 1977, the head of the graphics department of the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) visited Tallinn. He was accompanied by his colleague from the Leningrad 'Hermitage', along with two men who introduced themselves rather vaguely; these were probably the eyes and ears of the KGB.

The high official of the MoMa had requested a meeting with me, and they did not dare refuse him; this is how these people came to my place. I showed them my serigraphy prints from the series *Beneath the Sky*, which I spread on the floor.

The man in charge of the MoMa graphics department chose eight pictures that made up an integral ensemble and wished to buy them for the permanent collection of his museum. Since according to the rules or custom of the Soviet Union, MoMa could not buy the work from me directly, it was agreed (orally) that at first the work would be bought by the 'Hermitage'. It would then be exchanged for the graphics of the celebrities of American art in MoMa, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Frank Stella and James Rosenquist. I was obliged to deliver the chosen pictures to the 'Hermitage' in the course of the next month.

At the agreed time I travelled to Leningrad, but could not even get past the guards of the museum. I was allowed to phone the deputy head of the graphics department, because the head himself was away. The deputy, an intelligent woman with a pleasant voice, promised to look into it. I was to call her again next day. There were no vacancies in any hotels (or so I was told), so I spent the night at the railway station; it was impossible to sleep, as the militia kept waking everybody up. Next day, the nice voice on the phone told me that the ideological secretary of the Leningrad district responsible for the 'Hermitage', had written on the paper concerning our exchange his resolution, *Ne sovetuyu!* (Not recommended!)

Not Recommended, could not be altered; it could be done only by the main ideologist of the Communist Party, Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov...

*****Nota bene. *New Art from Soviet Estonia***

In 1978 Eda Sepp, in co-operation with Glen Cumming (from the Art Gallery of Hamilton), attempted to organise an exhibition “New Art from Soviet Estonia” in Canada for the year 1979. The organisation “Mezhdunarodnaja Kniga” who represented Soviet art internationally and held the sole right to sell such art had already allowed the works chosen by Sepp and Cummings to be transported to Moscow in preparation to be sent on to Canada when the whole operation was halted (according to information forwarded to me by Eda Sepp), by a protest sent to Moscow from Tallinn!

I can understand how it must have irritated the artists in Estonia who were officially ‘accepted’ at the time when 74 of my works (50 serigraphies on paper and 25 acrylic paintings on canvas) were to be displayed at this exhibition, while not a single work of artists such as Evald Okas, Eduard Einmann, Ilmar Torn, Enn Põldroos... had been requested. This could not possibly be permitted.

There are very few hidden deeds in this world that remain a secret forever. And so I received news, with only a few years’ delay, about who of the Estonian artists badmouthed my art the most fervently at that time. Yet I will not pay them back with equal measure now: let them live and remember – if they remember.

******Nota bene. *World Art Competition: New Talent and Ideas***

1979, *World Art Competition: New Talents and Ideas*, Boston, Massachusetts, USA (37 artists); art critics award.

For all 37 chosen artists it was equal to winning a prize, and any other awards were not handed out.

Estonian cultural flow did not

Estonian cultural flow did not understand, did not wish, was not able to carry into the world the 1968-1973 works of Raul Meel, the concrete poetry works which were noticeably explorative in the contemporary world culture.

Today in Great Britain, University of the Arts London / Chelsea College of Art and Design, ongoing research covers different areas from concrete poetry to digital art.

For example, Maria Mencia's thesis:

From Visual Poetry to Digital Art:

Image-Sound-Text Convergent Media and the development of New Media Languages, 2003.

The illustrations of this thesis (Fig.6-9) present the works of a Canadian poet-artist (1968-1974), and comparing those to Raul Meel's works one might say that the Estonian man might have been a step ahead and also poetically-artistically no worse than the works of the Canadian artist. This comparison here is presented merely to illustrate the fact that the wider cultural history, as it reached into the works like Maria Mencia's, has significant gaps due to the many incapacities of our own Estonian cultural flow.

Nota bene. The study of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian art distribution. Stefanie Reetz. The University of Dundee, Scotland, UK

In the 5th of July 2005 art history Master Stefanie Reetz from Britain (The University of Dundee, Scotland, UK) arrived in Tallinn to meet with Raul Meel, according to the initial plan, it was intended to write art scientific doctoral study, about art in the Baltic States. She had studied two years about the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian art spread in Northern, Western and Central Europe, the US, Canada, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. In her thesis topic determination/refinement of research work Stefanie Reetz found that about Raul Meel's art there is of three and a half times more information than about anyone else of the artists in the Baltics. With this knowledge Stefanie Reetz, focused her doctoral thesis about Estonian art.

*******Europeana 280 virtual museum**
***Faces of Europe*, online exhibition, 2016-2017**

The *Faces of Europe* is a unique online exhibition that explores a different aspect of Europe's artistic heritage through the eyes of artists and their inspirations.

Towards abstraction is our seventh and final chapter (80 works) of *Faces of Europe*.

This chapter explore how artists deployed avant-garde styles in the genres of portraiture, landscape and folk art, on a path to total abstraction.

Chapter seven includes 12 works selected from amongst the 29 participating countries. Below, you'll find of these works presented listed by country in alphabetical order.

Austria, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien,
Richard Gerstl, 1883-1908,
Schönberg family, 1907;

Cyprus, State Gallery of Cypriot Contemporary Art,
Adamantios Diamantēs, 1900-1994,
The Planters, 1932, 1933;

Estonia, Art Museum of Estonia,
Raul Meel, 1941,
Singing Tree, 1970-1990;

Estonia, Tartu Art Museum,
Malle Leis, 1940-2017,
Young Gardeners, 1968;

Germany, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart,
Oskar Schlemmer, 1888-1943,
Concentric Group, 1925;

Ireland, Irish Museum of Modern Art,
Mainie Jellett, 1897-1944,
Four ElementComposition, 1930;

Latvia, Latvian National Museum of Art,
Jānis Ferdinands Tidemanis, 1897-1964,
Girl in a Folk Costums, 1930;

Lithuania, M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art,
Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, 1875-1911,
Sonata No.6 (Sonata of the Stars) Allegro, 1908;

Luxembourg, National Museum of History and Art,
Joseph Kulter, 1894-1941,
Tête de Clown, 1937;

Netherlands, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag,
Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944,
Avond: De rode boom, 1908-1910;

Poland, National Museum of Krakow,
Stanisław Wyspiański, 1869-1907,
Apollo. Copernican solar system, 1904;

Romania, Galati Museum of Visual Arts,
Victor Brauner, 1903-1966,
Portrait of the poet Ilarie Voronca, 1923.