



## Screening Soviet Standards: Estonian Collective Farms and Postmodern Architecture

Dr. Andres Kurg, Senior Researcher, Institute of Art History, Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn

Lunch Lecture, presented by The Center for the Study for Europe, Department of History of Art and Architecture, and Prof. Sophie Hochhäusl, Boston University.

**May 3, 12.00-1.00 pm, Pardee School of Global Studies, 121 Bay State Rd., Room 126**

Co-moderated by Ewa Matyczyk, PhD Candidate, History of Art and Architecture and PJ Carlino, PhD Candidate, American and New England Studies.

**Abstract:** The 1970s and the early 1980s have in the Soviet history retrospectively been termed as the “era of stagnation”: a period of stalling economy, lack of reforms and repression of democratic initiative. This sense of stasis has been further underlined by frequent representations of the era’s building production that show uniform mass housing areas, filling the entire country with same-looking prefabricated panel structures.

My talk will counter this stereotype by focusing on Soviet Estonian rural co-operative farms – *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy* – that maintained their economic efficiency in these years and reused their profits to build large-scale culture houses, office buildings, kindergartens, schools and recreational sanatoria on the seaside resorts. New architecture, often in dialogue with the emerging postmodernism in the West, became for these collectives an important means for self-representation and differentiation; some *kolkhozy* even opened their own design offices, providing work places for radical young architects.

Finally, I look at the idea that postmodernism anticipated the societal and political changes of the late 1980s: How did the postmodern architecture of the early 1980s relate to the emergence of the national liberation movements in

the Eastern bloc, which led to the so called “velvet” revolution and to the “singing” revolutions in the Baltic countries?

**Andres Kurg** is Senior Researcher at the Institute of Art History, Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn. His research explores the architecture and design of the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and 1970s in relation to technological transformations and changes in everyday life as well as its intersections with alternative art practices. He studied art history at the Estonian Academy of Arts and architectural history at University College London. He has published articles in *AA Files*, *ArtMargins*, *Journal of Architecture*, *Home Cultures* and contributed to several collected volumes and exhibition catalogues. In 2008 he co-edited *Environment, Projects, Concepts: Architects of the Tallinn School 1972-1985*. He recently co-curated “Our Metamorphic Futures. Design, Technical Aesthetics and Experimental Architecture in the Soviet Union 1960–1980” in Vilnius National Gallery of Art and Estonian Museum of Applied Art and Design (2011–12). He has received research grants from the Graham Foundation, EU “Culture” program and the Getty Research Institute. In Spring 2017 he is Visiting Senior Researcher in European Studies at Yale MacMillan Center.