

## **The History of Tallinn Applied Art Triennial 愛沙尼亞應用藝術三年展歷史簡介**

The first triennial of applied art of the Baltic countries was opened in 1979. It was soon to be followed by other triennials - in 1983, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, and in the due course of time organising them became a tradition. Within the context of their time the triennials of applied art of the Baltic States were an important art event that attracted attention also outside the Baltic republics and were visited by leading art theoreticians and art critics from the Soviet Union.

The first triennial was displayed at the main pavilion of the Exhibition Grounds and left a more magnificent impression than any of its later successors, exhibited in smaller pavilions, ever could. The aim of the triennial was plain and simple: each republic was given full liberty and autonomy of judgment in choosing the artists and the fields of art to be represented at the triennial; all three expositions were displayed separately.

Since the third exhibition, to the regulations was added the term whereby the number of participants was limited to 50 artists from each Baltic state. Selecting artists became quite challenging, because the triennials were considered a desirable exhibition venue. Besides the grand prix, several special prizes were awarded. The exhibitions were accompanied with catalogues, except in 1985 and 1991. Customarily, no common theme was assigned. Textile and ceramics predominated as the main fields of applied arts at all triennials.

Since the third triennial, increasingly more and more critical views were being heard: the expositions were called boring and the lack of a clear-cut conception was also considered a downside. At the 4th triennial, it was already sought to subordinate the works to one theme "People from Seaside", yet it largely remained a formal attempt. At the same triennial there was observed the movement in a closed circle and a boredom of one another. There were already made some efforts to turn the triennial a more international affair by involving the works of two Finnish applied artists - a ceramic artist and a textile artist - into the venue. At the 5th triennial participated 5 Scandinavian ceramic artists. No catalogue, no discussion, no advertising. The time was not appropriate for discussing art. The motivation that until then had held the Baltic applied art together disappeared during the 1990s.

The 6th triennial held at the Tallinn Art Building in 1994 marked the end for the triennials of Baltic republics. The number of participants was a mere half of the previous events and probably also a very random one; the circle had come full. New problems were lying ahead. The applied art triennials of the Baltic countries had completed their mission.

However, the creative interaction experienced proved to be a permanent value, the very core of ideas that paved the way to the idea of organising a new kind of applied art triennial in Tallinn. Thus, the new triennial with a comprehensive international scope continued the already developed tradition, being simultaneously a cornerstone for a recent tradition.

The first triennial with a new name and without any geographical limitations was held in 1997. The title of the exhibition "Useless Things" contained simultaneously both the provocation as well as the key to explicating the contemporary applied art. The exhibition aimed at bringing the applied art with an emphasis on the second half of the term before the eyes of the audience; it is primarily an art of objects and materials that presents the ideas and conveys messages, in which case the question of its usefulness or uselessness ceases to exist. The call for triennial was being heard by 304 artists from 26 countries, the international jury selected from among them 79 artists representing in total 16 different nationalities.

In 2000, the theme of the triennial was "Possession" and in 2003 - "Bare Boundaries". As a new event, a day of theoretical lectures on the issues in the Estonian applied art and design and the presentations of the works of participating artists was arranged within the framework of the "Bare Boundaries".

Today the international Tallinn Applied Art Triennial, once emerged from the applied art triennials of the Baltic countries, has developed into an open art forum that deals with promoting the ideas of applied art and design and appreciating creativity in all its aspects.

