





# DEAR FRIEND,

I have to admit that I have been secretly dreaming of the opportunity to write this letter. Or just to have this favourable time and occasion, in terms giving it my attention, and of course getting yours in exchange, taking a moment for structuring my thoughts and feelings as well as the delight it might bring to you. As I am writing this letter, Kadri is sitting next to me, as she has been for years now. So I will also forward her gratitude to you for taking an interest in what we have been doing all this time.

(Five incoming phone calls later)

We are writing this letter while having feedback meetings amongst our close colleagues, with whom we are about to finish the fifth edition of the very same Tallinn Photomonth contemporary art biennial you asked about. It really has been a great journey—orchestrating the complex maze of people, artworks, ideas and organisations into a coherent narrative for all the different audiences. Despite my endeavours, I might remain a little unorganised and fragmented in this letter, as I am constantly being interrupted by calls, emails and other requests coming in.

(Kadri leaves to give an exhibition tour)

That seems to be life nowadays, which you must have experienced yourself during all of your current and previous occupations. It's mad how common it is for a cultural worker to have many positions, and due to that even more disturbances.

Kadri just returned, laughing: "They wanted to know why there are no photos on the wall." Ah, the never-ending story about visitors concerned with (no) photos at Tallinn Photomonth.

After another temporary withdrawal of my attention to you, which this time was brought about myself so that I could get another unrelated idea out of my system and tell it to Kadri across the table, I can now return to the task of writing this letter and have to yet again remind myself where was I, both in my thoughts and here in words.

Yes, yes, I understand that telling you all this also fractures your reading, as you might also have different diversions going on around you at this given moment and this letter is not helping at all! But I do consider you a wise and compassionate friend who also shares the same difficulties in professional life. Maybe we will talk about it over our next dinner—the rules of distraction, who's allowed what, when and to whom.

(A couple of short team meetings later)

Having said all that and coming back to your letter after a few slices of cake and a big cup of coffee, and, of course, some more irrelevant small talk in today's office, I'm getting closer to answering your question and also feeling the feverish excitement taking over.

Opening Tallinn Photomonth in the beginning of September seems like ages ago. So much has happened in between. We have wondered how so many activities could fit into one day. Looking back, time

seemed to be elastic, expanding to much longer days than 24 hours can accommodate.

The plentitude and extent of all the events in the programme (and there were so many), every single one supported by even more maneuvers to make everything happen, the opening of the biennial feels like, paradoxically though, the beginning of this week.

Indeed, now at the end of it, the 2-month-long course looks to have compressed itself into a weeklong event. The Escher-like complex and sometimes surreal situations have now, in our heads, been flattened into more simplistic images, like a dolly zoom effect has been used on our experience.

Understandably, whenever we answer to "How was it?", our answers must always be simplified versions of our experiences, again applying the same mechanism of evening out.

(After a late lunch meeting)

To be honest, it is challenging to look back and find the most important perspectives for evaluation. What and how can we measure? It seems that three international group exhibitions at Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn Art Hall and Kai Art Center, and 50 events later, we both have one prevailing feeling: pride. We feel proud to know all these amazing participants, to have seen these events in Tallinn and to have had so many guests coming to town. We both consider that these moments and conversations are gratifying. How often do we tell each other compliments, constructive comments and show up to events to say "great job"?

You probably know what I mean when I say it has been a very rewarding and enlightening experience. These gratifying moments help us all get through the long days. To be more specific, having an event with so many partners and opinions and decisions can help discipline one to become a better host, an improved expert, and a more compassionate colleague, considerate family member, thoughtful traveller and focused manager.

(Replying to some urgent e-mails)

I think we have also briefly mentioned that this was the second as well as the last time for the two of us to run the biennial. Kadri just commented that weirdly it's not at all sad. And I agree. We take this opportunity to ask you, if you happen to know anybody interested in being on the team for the next edition in 2021 and steering the upcoming (ad)venture?

In order to take some distance and provide ourselves with different perspectives, we have to wait for the next edition to come to life and then evaluate what the biennial has achieved and how. Then both we and the broader contemporary art field can judge the legacy we inherited and passed on and see the results of the encounters that happened at the biennial.

YOURS TRULY,  
LAURA & KADRI