

FOREWORD

A seminar "Place and Location" was held at the Estonian Art Academy on 4. December 1998, initiated by a study group of applied aesthetics and semiotics of art called "Language and Mind", financed by the Estonian Science Foundation. Papers presented at the seminar have been assembled into this book; a few articles on the same subject have been added: Arnold Berleant's "The Wilderness City: An Essay on Metaphorical Experience", delivered at the Estonian Art Academy about a year after the seminar, Kaia Lehari's "Metaphoric Townscape", and Vappu Vabar's "Keep Your Heart".

The aim of the seminar was to study man's relationship with the environment, proceeding from the practice of signification: how does man define and signify his surroundings, and what is the role of language in these processes. The subject's relations with the environment, the problems of its mediation and immediacy are some of the focal points in the history of philosophy. Continuity of the environment needs to be fixed at certain points, the discrete is perceived more easily than the continuum. When focusing on the interests of man, "place" is a good starting point. But a number of questions pop forward here: is it mediated by material agents or abstract concepts, can the "place" be described as *topos*, do the different domains of art, environmental aesthetics, literature and linguistics come into contact in this notion? These are principally the problems that have given rise to the seminar, which has been set as interdisciplinary from the very beginning; literary and art critics, as well as linguists, participated in it. Perhaps one of the key words, connecting all these fields, is environmental aesthetics, which is an interdisciplinary, yet not quite established area of research.

The leading research methods of environmental aesthetics are the analytical and phenomenological approach. In the analytical method usually focuses on the object, the place itself as an abstract, mathematically defined notion. Nature is treated as an objective reality outside man. Landscape is a view or a panorama

that opens in front of his eyes, a visible segment of nature. The environment is an exterior physical reality contrasted to the subject, based on the dichotomy between culture and nature, man and the environment.

The phenomenological approach emphasises the relationship between the object and the subject. Space is seen as artificial and abstract, the basic notion is "place" – concrete, real, significant, experienced by man. The meaning is created in co-operation between the senses, memory, imagination and thinking. Nature is maternal to man, it is important that he belongs to nature. Culture and nature are in symbiosis. Generally, landscape is the part of the environment experienced by man. But landscape and the environment can also be used as synonyms, they are never seen as opposed to man, but as including, penetrating, embracing him. Man creates the environment, the environment creates man.

The papers were read either in English or in Estonian, the book is also in both languages. The papers that were originally in English have not been translated into Estonian, but the papers in Estonian appear in English as well.

We would like to thank all the authors and other people, who have helped to compile this book for their patience and goodwill. Special thanks to Vappu Vabar, Marika Liivamägi, Eric Dickens, Linda Uustalu and Piret Viires.

Editors