

# The Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle: The Interrelations of Contemporary Art Projects and the Local Environment

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The Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle is the largest and most active interdisciplinary cultural and art centre in landscape surroundings in Latvia. It has a dual focus aimed at safeguarding the natural features of the cultural landscape and creating inspiring conditions for diverse creative activities. Since the early 1990s, the Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle has acted as a creative laboratory and as a kind of beneficial oasis for those developments of contemporary art which have been stimulated by artists' willingness to investigate new possibilities of metaphorical and spatial relationships with landscape and the processes of nature.

Among the participants of different thematic programmes, symposia, seminars and other events organised at the museum, there are visual artists, poets, musicians, actors and film-makers, as well as scientists, researchers of folklore and mythology, geographers, and specialists in landscape studies and cultural history. Such a broad diversity of contacts and exchange of ideas concerning practical, as well as semiotic, aspects of landscape and its elements supply a favourable conceptual framework for those creative trends which are realised in various site-specific objects, signs and installations. At present, contemporary visual art programmes, projects and open-air symposia occupy a dominant position in the context of all the other activities of the museum. The image of the Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle, its specific character and the inner atmosphere of the place are created by those inspiring activities, works and impulses which are rooted in an on-going dialogue of contemporary forms of art and the exceptionally impressive landscape environment.

The Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle is situated in the Western part of Latvia, called Kurzeme or Kursa (also Kurland or Curonia in ancient texts), 120 kilometres from Riga. With its unique geo-historical elements, its rich vegetation and historical background, Pedvāle is one of the most valuable and beautiful landscape territories in Latvia. Its territory covers about 200 hectares of land,

which stretch on the left bank of the primeval valley of the Abava River near Saibile, which is a typical small town of Kurzeme. The Abava Valley is a unique land formation shaped during the Ice Age, through the interaction of several glaciers. The landscape is rich in well-preserved geological and geo-historical elements. It still bears the traces of the tectonic changes caused by the streams of glaciers and processes of the period when the Baltic Lake regressed. Quite close to the Firkspedvāle manor house, the central building of the museum, a picturesque ravine stretches, at the bottom of which a small rivulet flows. Along the steep pathways which lead through the ravine, different art works and installations are placed. The flat, rounded slopes of the open spaces of the territory also form a remarkable setting for various sculptures, installations, earth art objects and other contemporary works. There are neither fences nor any other elements marking or dividing separate sectors. Vast fields, meadows stretching out and forests at the horizon may be conceived of as a peaceful and stately background and a continuation of the central territory of the museum, where the art works are presented.

The Open-Air Art Museum at Pedvāle was founded in the early 1990s by Ojārs Feldbergs, who is one of the leading contemporary sculptors in Latvia. In 1991 the suggestion to establish a new type of landscape and art centre was discussed with the local administration, and Feldbergs's proposal received a positive response. In 1992 the conceptual framework of the museum's functions was elaborated, cleaning of the territory of the Rambulīte Ravine from debris was undertaken, and consultations with specialists of regional development programmes started. The ideas concerning the projects and programmes of the museum, presented by Feldbergs, were rather willingly accepted by the local administrators and his plans were also supported by the central governmental institutions.

In 1992 the land allocated as the museum's territory became Feldbergs's private property. During the initial period of its development, the museum was officially registered as an individual agricultural enterprise – the country farm 'Pedvāle'.

Such a privately owned art and cultural centre, with a rather strange legal status, could appear in the general context of the privatisation process, but it was also a unique and innovative formation of the transition period when, after abandoning the strictly administrated unitary political and economic system of socialism, new, bold and sometimes unexpected private initiatives became possible.

The idea of creating a multifunctional art centre in landscape surroundings grew in the general context of Feldbergs's creative interests. Since the beginning

of his creative career in the early 1970s, he had focused his attention on looking for a new and extended approach to art/landscape and landscape/art relationships. Some of his programmatic concepts and activities echoed general tendencies of the green thinking and strivings of those American and European artists who, since the second half of the 1960s, had introduced new strategies and new forms of expression for their creative investigations and projects in landscape areas. Feldbergs's vision of landscape as a highly valuable treasure and almost sacred element of ethnic and individual identity was also influenced by the traditions of national culture, by mythological and cosmological concepts of existence and relics of pantheism in folklore. He knew and shared those sometimes openly idealistic interpretations of native landscape motifs and rural life which had appeared in Latvian literature and traditional visual arts during the period of national romanticism and also in the 1920s and 1930s, when the cultural policy of the state promoted the development and thoughtful cultivation of rural regions and landscape territories.

In the early 1970s, after his graduation from the Art Academy of Latvia, Feldbergs was the first Latvian sculptor to start to depict trees, clouds and other landscape elements in his granite sculptures. In 1987 he installed a solo exhibition in the House of Sculptors in Riga and exhibited a set of granite sculptures, in which typical landscape elements and buildings of a Latvian farmstead and its environment were shown. This thematic group of granite sculptures was his homage to those thousands of traditional farmsteads which were devastated, abandoned and lost during the Soviet period, when the natural character of landscapes was neglected and drastically altered by the rough methods of melioration, by changes in territorial planning introduced within the united system of collective farms, and by several other unfavourable factors.

Feldbergs's solo exhibition marked a programmatic turning point in his thinking and creative ideas. He had demonstrated his intention not only to depict separate landscape elements but also to create a complex image of the traditional rural environment which contains different layers of symbolic meanings, memories and associations. One could feel that the artist was aware of the painful problems which called for safeguarding and protecting the character of country landscapes and traditional elements of the peasant lifestyle. The granite sculptures, which were created as symbols of man's collaboration and unity with the world of nature, needed a calm and natural landscape atmosphere around them.

At that time, soon after the above-mentioned exhibition, Feldbergs decided to find a place in the countryside where he could install a permanent exposition of his granite sculptures and invite other artists to create and present their works. He knew that it would be a new and specialised type of landscape park or museum, which would act as a favourable place for artists' initiatives and would also be able to attract the attention of tourists and other visitors.

In 1989 Feldbergs visited several modern art museums and open-air sculpture expositions in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Germany. In 1991, being one of the finalists in the Henry Moore Grand Prize competition in Japan, he had an opportunity to visit Japan, where his composition of granite sculptures *Four Elements of the World* (1991) was installed in the Utsukushi-Ga-Hara Open-Air Museum. The impressions and practical knowledge received during these study trips offered opportunities to compare different types of such museums and various management models. He studied and analysed the existing methods of presenting art objects in open-landscape settings. It was an inspiring experience, but one could not copy or borrow those management methods and spatial solutions directly. Each landscape territory requires its own approach.

At Pedvāle, the necessity of revitalising the lands and safeguarding the indigenous features of the landscape, its geomorphic formations and historical buildings, had to be carefully balanced with the contemporary art activities and facilities for tourists.

When Feldbergs became the owner of the land and the multi-functional project of the Open-Air Art Museum was launched, he wanted to revitalise not only the landscape but also the traditional lifestyle of peasants and local habits of farming, so that artists and visitors who came to Pedvāle could get acquainted with the natural atmosphere of country life. During the first years of the museum's existence, attempts were made to develop crop-growing, gardening and even cattle breeding. Such a complimentary co-existence of the dweller-oriented model of development with those functions which were aimed at satisfying the needs of artists and visitors seemed, theoretically, to be a new and promising approach. Practical realisation of it was not an easy task. Ecological farming methods and attempts to restore the traditional lifestyle of country dwellers were not economically efficient. It was too complicated for an artist to solve the management problems of agricultural activities, and this part of the initial plans had to be left aside. The territory in the central part of the museum, which was used for

growing crops and vegetables, was turned into a natural meadow. Now it serves as a large-scale exhibition space for placing different site-specific objects. Since the mid-1990s, art and culture programmes have played a dominant role among other functions of the museum. Artists' projects, open-air symposia, seminars and other art events quite often have received financial support through the project competitions of the Latvian Culture Capital Foundation.

Feldbergs himself, with his keen and thoroughly cultivated contextual vision, acts as the main planner and coordinator of the programmes and processes. He solves the fund-raising and management problems, but at the same time all art and other activities at Pedvāle are permanently open to new ideas and contextual realisations suggested by those Latvian and foreign artists who are participants in regularly organised symposia and seminars. The general strategy is democratic, but to a certain extent the visual image of the museum's territory and its flexible and dynamic creative atmosphere constitute a system which has been developed by a single artist. Feldbergs, being a sculptor, conceives of the landscape as an impressive large-scale sculptural object, which has to be presented to spectators so that they may feel the character and special atmosphere of each place and each spatial situation. Feldbergs often says that he conceives of all the processes connected with the development of the museum as a large-scale happening or succession of happenings. Unexpected, alternative solutions and new view-points, which reveal intricate semantic interpretations of the concrete landscape situations, may always appear. The flexible and innovative approach also refers to different rituals, especially fire rituals, happenings, actions, performances and other staged events, which are regularly organised at Pedvāle and which disclose improvised, processional links with the local environmental context and separate objects.

The inventive atmosphere has inspired artists who create their works there to reveal meaningful and often unexpected relations with the specific character of different landscape situations. Such an approach, which presents a concrete fragment of the landscape as an integral element of creative expression, was convincingly implemented by several leading Latvian installators during the first open-air symposium *Firkspedvāle Conversations '94*. The participants in this symposium made several site-specific objects and interventions in the Rambulīte Ravine, a land formation with a very unusual spatial configuration, where the thickly growing trees, bushes, steep slopes and the winding flow of the rivulet create a somewhat mysterious atmosphere.



Figure 1] Ojars Feldbergs, The Sun of the Summer Solstice.



Figure 2] Ojars Feldbergs, The Screen of Nature.



Figure 3] Eric Schwarzbart, The Ritual Place.



Figure 4] Līga Henriņa, [www](http://www).



Figure 5] Kalvis Zālītis,  
A Ferryman.



Figure 6] Marts Erdmanis,  
Pedvarephone (The House of  
Ears).



Figure 7] Laura Feldberga, The Children of Captain Grant.



Figure 8] Laura Feldberga, Along with Birds.



Figure 9] Raul Meel, The Burning Animal – skeleton after the fire ritual.



Figure 10] Hanna Joddi,  
The Rim of the Volcano.



Figure 11] Hanna Joddi,  
The Rim of the Volcano.



Figure 12] Kārlis Alainis,  
A Pathway.



The common concept of the site-specific orientation of artists' ideas and their creations was worked out by Ivars Runkovskis, the curator of this symposium and one of the most authoritative protagonists of innovative trends of contemporary art in Latvia. He stated that each landscape situation had to be conceived of as an always new and direct place for investigation. When specified by contextual artistic signs, objects or interventions, the situation creates a new relationship and a new point of view. The borders between the audience, the performer and the object become uncertain. The created works, in such a sensitively defined context, are like catalysts in a new spiritual contact between the person and environment. They are at the same time breakthroughs in the familiar landscape and linking elements in a chain of logical and emotional attitudes.

Runkovskis felt that such an approach would open unexpected possibilities for a complicated interplay between *fields* (signs, symbols, forms) and introduce elements of play in this newly revealed reality. He was convinced that the visualisation process, in the context of such a strategy, would be only the first step. Such forms, objects and landscape elements are open to different interpretations, and they may also attain ritualistic functions.

These theoretical explanations were published in the catalogue of *Firkspedvāle Conversations '94* (Feldbergs, Runkovskis 1994: 2). It was the first such landscape art project where a team of participants created their individual works in a definite area. Artists used different strategies to define the metaphorical and contextual character of their objects and the forms presented by them contained some elements typical of their styles and previous experience. Ojārs Pētersons, for example, made softly rounded plastic forms of a bright orange colour and attached them to the trunks of several trees. These interventions looked like natural protrusions, but they could also be conceived of, in the context of greyish tree trunks and green leaves, as intensive elements, as signs or signals from another sphere of meanings. In order to feel the personal touch of the artist's message, one has to know that intensive reddish-yellow is a kind of symbolic leitmotif or label in Pētersons's vision and his form-building practice: most objects, forms and installations created by him are orange in colour or contain elements of this colour. In this case the metaphorical context includes the inevitable effects of entropy and changes caused by atmospheric conditions. Now, after several years, when the orange colour has gradually faded, these interventions have become hardly noticeable and they look almost like genuine natural forms.

Oļegs Tillbergs, another well known installator, whose style is marked by a strong and impressive monumentality of forms, during the symposium built a wooden tunnel placed in a rather high position on the steep slope of the ravine. It was an interactive object. Visitors were allowed to enter the tunnel and from the dark inside of it they could have a look at a fragment of landscape on the opposite side of the ravine; they could see, from above, the flow of the rivulet and layers of earth. The tunnel may be conceived of as a massive metaphorical telescope, a symbolic passage with light and a green world at its end. It is a construction which invites the viewer to focus his attention on impressive fragments and elements of the landscape.

At this symposium, Kristaps Ģelzis presented the composition *Twin Elements* (1994), consisting of two smooth, light blue surfaces, which reflected the sky and clouds in the green surroundings of the ravine.

Juris Putrāms skilfully installed a sheet of shining metal in the natural flow of the rivulet. In this composition, reflections of the sky and surrounding trees also played a certain role. The sheet of metal was reminiscent of the natural surface of water, and its shining smoothness introduced a rather distinct contrast with the natural disposition of sand, earth and stones which covered the natural bed of the rivulet. This delicate intervention acts as a miniature waterfall. When looking at it you can see rushing water falling from a slightly higher position of sheet metal and follow the proceeding direction of the stream along its natural bed.

Ojārs Feldbergs, who was also a participant in the symposium, at that time made compositions of stones raised from the ground and presented in unusual spatial positions.

Two painters, Aija Zariņa and Jānis Mitrēvics, made metaphorical wooden constructions, which served as symbolic frames for definite landscape fragments. Mitrēvics's frames of roughly hewn beams are positioned vertically and placed in the open space outside the ravine. Through one of them visitors can see a view of Sabile: typical one-storey buildings and the trees around them. Zariņa's horizontally oriented winding composition *Sea* (1994) was constructed from alder beams as a metaphor which served as a reminder that the territory of Pedvāle once had been covered by the waters of melting glaciers and the Baltic Sea. The wooden construction, which itself depicted the rhythmical pattern of waves, framed a segment of landscape, in and around which the movement of grass and trees touched by the wind seemed structurally reminiscent of the movement of sea waters.

All these interventions and objects were carefully nestled in specially chosen places. They had to be conceived of not only as art works but as integral elements belonging to the textures and atmosphere of the surrounding environment. One had to be attentive, alert and responsive in order to notice them, to feel their attractiveness, to catch the meaning of the symbolic gestures and conceptual focuses. These works of contemporary art evidently changed the mental micro climate, atmosphere and context of the place. Walking through the Rambulāte Ravine, the new, unexpected experience was truly intensive. Most visitors, spectators and specialists enthusiastically accepted these works and spatial solutions. Professor Janīna Kursīte, an expert in the fields of folklore and mythology, has said that the feelings aroused by the intricate semantic and contextual meanings of objects might be compared with the revelations and experiences of ancient initiation rituals (Kursīte 2000).

Since the mid-1990s the number of different objects, signs and works created by the participants in regularly organised open-air symposia has gradually increased. At present there are about 150 works of contemporary art and also some traditional sculptures placed in different landscape situations around the main paths leading from the Firkspedvāle manor house, the administrative centre of the museum, to the Brinkpedvāle manor house, where indoor exhibitions are presented.

Among the earth-art objects which have become integral elements of the Pedvāle scenery, in a central position not far from the entrance to the museum's territory, one can see a circular composition of specially planted trees, with a boulder in the centre created by Ilmārs Blumbergs, a well-known Latvian stage designer, conceptualist and graphic artist: *The Universe Exists* (1996), the title given to this composition by its author. The proportions of the spatial configuration of this object are somewhat analogous to the circular model of Stonehenge. Blumbergs's work looks truly impressive when photographed from above. Rasa Šmite and Raitis Šmits, two Latvian artists of the younger generation, who are known for their active involvement in experiments with the new media, have created a simple minimalistic land art object called *Funnel* (1995) at Pedvāle. It is a circular pond-like funnel, and the surface of water in it radiates with reflections of the sky. This work is made of elemental natural materials: earth, grass and water.

Landscape parks, cultural centres and open-air art museums, where outdoor expositions of sculptures, installations and site-specific objects are presented,

choose different strategies of contacts with artists and for obtaining new works. Some of them invite world-famous artists, whose names and works may almost automatically attract visitors' and specialists' attention. So, for example, the famous open-air contemporary art museum Europos Parkas in Lithuania, which was founded in 1991 by the Lithuanian sculptor Gintaras Karosas, has managed to include in its permanent exposition large-scale works by such exclusive, famous contemporary artists as Magdalena Abakanowicz, Sol Le Witt and Dennis Oppenheim.

At Pedvāle greater attention is paid to developing contacts with young artists. Several experienced sculptors and installators from the United States, Denmark, Finland, Estonia and other countries have created their works there, but groups of students from universities in the United States have also enriched their experience working in the landscape surroundings. Among the participants in annual project competitions organised by the museum, there are many young artists.

The open-air symposia and seminars usually have a motto or a common theme. In 2001 the mega-programme *Prime Elements of the World* was launched for the following four years. According to this programme, in the year 2001 the element was Fire and the season's sub-programme was called *Fireland*. Artists created different objects and signs that revealed symbolic meanings of fire, as well as fire sculptures, and organised fire rituals and performances. In 2002 the theme of the sub-programme was Water and the programme was entitled *Water Supply*. In 2003, when the element was Air, several interesting interactive objects were made. In 2004 this large-scale project ended up with the sub-programme *Territory*. It was Feldbergs's idea to realise such a many-sided thematic project. He himself had treated the theme of the four elements in a composition of his granite sculptures, and he expected that other artists also would find new and inspiring ideas and solutions devoted to those fundamental categories, which could be presented as images, metaphoric motifs or symbols and could also be used as substances from which objects and art forms could be created.

Most of the works made during recent years are grouped in the central part of the museum's territory, in the open space of the meadow stretching around the Firkspedvāle manor house. The atmosphere there is different from that in the Rambulīte Ravine, where art works were not presented as exhibits but as integral interventions in the landscape. The objects and installations made for this rather large and open space are mainly three-dimensional constructions, some of them

of a rather large size. There are also objects and spatial compositions, made of different elements, which have their own inner ritual space. Such an approach was implemented by the Danish artist Erik Schwarzbart in his work *Ritual Place* (2001), a circular composition of vertical, rough wooden forms, with a boulder in the centre (Fig. 3).

Among the successful works created by young artists, the installations of Līga Henriņa, Kalvis Zālītis, Marts Erdmanis and Laura Feldberga should be mentioned. All of them have received their professional education at the Art Academy of Latvia, and working in the landscape has become one of the branches of their creative interests. The spatial composition *WWW* (2003), made by Henriņa, is installed not far from the entrance to the exposition territory (Fig. 4). It introduces, in the context of the landscape, a symbol of the Internet, a sign coming from a completely different virtual sphere. The expressive contrast of the associations connected with those from two far away worlds produces a vivid poetical image. The composition is simple and straightforward, made of a soft, responsive material, of such commonplace found objects as blue jeans, which are hanging on a rope between two vertical posts. In the green grassland, seen against the background of the sky and caressed by streams of air and wind, this composition seems to radiate the youthful energy of a cheerful 'Hello!'. Līga Henriņa is also a graphic artist with excellent drawing skills. In her spatial compositions, she demonstrates a refined feeling for linear elements and rhythmical nuances.

Kalvis Zālītis graduated from the Department of Scenography of the Art Academy of Latvia. His composition *Ferryman* (2002) was installed in the year when the symbolic element was Water (Fig. 5). It demonstrates the artist's perfect feeling for the relationships of the object with the character of the surrounding space. The image is descriptive as well as symbolic. A figure made of light materials is placed in a boat, and his work, supported by a construction of beams, is raised high in the air. This object is placed in the meadow near the Rambulīte River, and it seems that the boat, with a man in it, is floating in the air across the stream.

Marts Erdmanis has created two objects. For the Year of Air he made his work *Pedvalphone 2 (A House of Ears)* (2003), which reacts to the sounds of nature (Fig. 6). His second composition is situated in the grassland area not far from the river. He has placed sheets of a reflective material in the grass and, on the smooth surface, which is reminiscent of a water basin, several stones are arranged in an asymmetrical composition, as in Japanese gardens.

Several well-composed objects are presented by Laura Feldberga, a daughter of Ojārs Feldbergs, who is a graphic artist and also her father's principal management assistant. Her largest interactive composition, *The Children of Captain Grant* (2002), consists of several red minimalistic wooden constructions, which can be used as swings even by a rather large group of visitors (Fig. 7). For the Year of Air, Laura Feldberga created a simple pyramidal wooden object of a rather large size entitled *Gone with the Wind* (2003). Visitors are expected to climb on top of it and, standing there, feel the air currents and touches of the wind.

Different pieces of furniture, such as chairs or tables, are quite often used as prototypes of objects for expositions in the open air. Such forms are made of various materials, sometimes monumentalised and presented as symbolic seats, thrones or, in the case of tables, as stone or wooden slabs, in which the archaic character of these essential everyday attributes is revealed. At Pedvāle there are two objects of this kind. Laura Feldberga has made a laconically structured monumentalised bed of light grey concrete blocks, with grass and some plants growing in it. The simple horizontal and static position of the bed's form, together with the upwards-striving rhythm of the green vegetal elements, creates a vivid and poetic image of an intimate home atmosphere exposed to the rays of the sun, the sky, and open space around it. The Estonian artist Villu Jaanisoo has constructed his impressive *Chair 2* (2001) of found objects, barrels painted in an intensive and cheerful blue colour. In the green meadow, with a lot of wild flowers all around, it looks like a majestic and also playful, even slightly ironic, interactive object. One may try to climb into it and look at the surrounding space from a different position.

A number of art works created in the year when the symbolic element was Fire have not survived. These were different compositions made to demonstrate certain forms or effects in the process of being burnt. One of the objects whose strong construction did not perish in fire is the minimalistic composition *Burnt Animal* (2001), by the well-known Estonian artist Raul Meel (Fig. 9). It is a simple, wellproportioned construction of wooden beams which looks like the silhouette of some undefinable animal. Initially the construction was covered with twigs and other dry materials which were burnt. The black skeleton of the mystical animal has survived. In the open green space of the meadow, it looks like an expressive sculptural form. Here we may remember some experiments with charred wood sculptures by David Nash, who considered that charring radically changes our ex-

perience of feeling the forms and texture of wooden objects. Usually one tends to see 'wood' as a warm, familiar and organic material before reading the form: wood seems to be more important; only later do we pay attention to the nuances of form. In the process of charring, the surface is transformed from a vegetable to a mineral – carbon – and one sees the form before the material (Gooding 2002: 27). The surface blackened by the fire acts as an expressive resonator of the traces left by the process of burning. Meel's skeleton-like wooden structure can be conceived of as a metaphor for survival, but there may also be other associations or interpretations.

It should be mentioned that, among the many three-dimensional objects, there are paintings by the Estonian artist Andrus Joonas placed at the entrance to the museum. He is a painter who makes his works so that they can be exhibited in the open and have a contextual dialogue with landscape surroundings.

A symbolic contextual meaning is expressed in Feldbergs's granite sculpture *Screen of Nature* (1997). It is a massive boulder perforated in its upper part. It is placed so that, through the opening in the heavy body of the vertically positioned stone, we can see a panoramic view of the landscape areas which stretch northwards from the plateau of the central part of the museum's territory. Feldbergs says that, being a sculptor for whom stone is the most important natural material and also a symbol, he looks at the landscape through stones and in close connection with those ideas and revelations which he experiences when carving his works in the ancient boulders which were brought to the Baltic Sea area by glaciers. Each boulder is like an individual creature with its own geo-historical biography and with its own field of inner energy. In mythology, stones and trees are classified as mid-level elements of nature, and they are often treated as mediators or mediating instruments for marking or experiencing connecting links between this world of reality and possible other levels and flows of energy. Since the most ancient periods of culture, stones have been used as modulators of space/time relationships. These ancient associations come to mind when we feel a direct and energetically concentrated contact with Feldbergs's stone object, which may be conceived of as a contemporary version of such a space/time modulator. The word 'screen' in the title of Feldbergs's work, and also the rectangular form of the opening carved in the massive body of the boulder, may evoke certain associations with the TV screen. But these connotations only accentuate the archetypal aspects of this metaphorical image. Looking at the landscape framed by the rough mass of the boulder, feeling the texture of the stone's surface formed by the forces



of nature and touching the inner crystalline structure of the stone revealed in the process of carving, we become conscious of the presence of the remote past and perhaps also of a remote future.

The process of creating objects on the site implies an inventive approach, contextual thinking and a careful treatment of materials. The choice of the right place, scale and most favourable spatial position are some of the most important issues. The planning and balancing of the relationships of separate works with the surrounding space and other objects acts as a system which is open to changes. Some objects and forms which are made of impermanent and more fragile natural materials may disappear and new compositions may arise instead. There have been several occasions when the first outdoor compositions created by young artists were not perfect in some aspects of their formal execution. The objects which are more complicated in their construction and tend to be overcrowded with different elements and details may cause certain maintenance problems. These problematic moments, which require flexible organisational methods and additional efforts in the process of maintaining works in an appropriate condition, become more evident with the permanent increase in the common number of different objects and installations. But, if the museum develops its position of being a laboratory for experiments, then such sometimes disputable works and situations are inevitable.

We know that the pioneers of land-art often created their large-scale objects and interventions in remote places. Participants in the Art in Nature movement sometimes choose forests for their symposia and actions. In comparison with such trends and strategies, objects which are created in a cultivated and open-to-visitors rural territory may possibly be classified as a kind of domesticated art in the landscape.

At Pedvāle, artists have realised their ideas mainly as object-makers and also as organisers of performances. The forms of conceptual documentation of works created in the landscape areas, as well as impressions or sensations experienced during outdoor working periods or walks, have not been developed by them. Here we may remember that for such representatives of land-art as Robert Smithson or Richard Long, who created their works in far away places, it was important to ensure certain contacts with galleries or museums where they presented photographs, maps, diagrams, conceptual texts and other materials which came from the sites where they had built their works, or places which they had visited and

investigated. This site/non-site aspect, which has been theoretically formulated and explained by Robert Smithson in his publications and interviews (Smithson 1996: 234–241), was not taken over or actualised by those artists who, working at Pedvāle, had made their objects for a place easily accessible to visitors. The objects and installations presented at Pedvāle have been photographed, and there are videos of the performances and different actions, but this documentation is mainly collected for the museum's archive. There have not been attempts to use this or other documental evidence as independent art works or elements of conceptual presentation to be demonstrated in galleries or exhibitions. It is possible that, in some future programmes or projects, the participation of such artists who work with new technical media may introduce some other contextual approaches which will broaden the methods used for conceptual interpretation of art/landscape and landscape/art relationships.

In January 2005, the territory of Pedvāle suffered rather heavy damage during a violent storm, which particularly strongly affected the western regions of Latvia. Several works were broken, and their restoration might cause certain difficulties. Unfortunately, the *Burnt Animal* by Raul Meel was among the destroyed works. It seems to be almost a paradox that the composition, whose strong wooden structure survived the process of burning and could be looked upon as a symbol of survival, did not withstand an encounter with the force of another primary element: it yielded to blows of the wind. As several other objects and installations also suffered, we might expect that there would be some rather evident changes in the exposition and grouping of objects. This unexpected and extraordinary experience shows that, for works in open landscape areas, such extreme situations and serious risk factors are also a part of those processes which constitute a dialogue with the environment and forces of nature.

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