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HUNT: and Mälk

Before starting writing about HUNT:, the new book by Kadri Mälk, I spent a week in the rehearsals of a performance as an artist. Bringing a performance to stage is complex teamwork. In a good team, everybody provide their creative contribution. Light engineer, sound engineer, artist, choreographer, producer, graphic designer, technical staff, dramatist. They all offer their own ideas and methods as well. But there is still another figure, called director. The director takes all these pieces, splinters, additions, fragments, proposals, methods, variations, and creates a single whole. The director has a vision. They surround themselves with the best from the best. Followers, with whom they need not speak out full sentences during discussions. Capturing frequencies with whiskers is enough. The director makes decisions. Takes or leaves. And when browsing the book HUNT: I understand that also a collector passes through the similar process. They supervise and combine a very personal set. Selected works of the selected. As a collector, Kadri has taken her director's work to a still further level. She has chosen a photographer, hundred companions, co-thinkers, the publisher. Instead a performance, the result is the book published under the auspices of the renowned publishing house Arnoldsche Art Publishers.

With subconscious systematic approach, Kadri has created her own school. When travelling around the globe, one can hear the stories about deep dark soul of Estonian jewellery. Soul-dark depth. Darkness of the depth of a soul. People even do not know that they speak not about Estonian jewellery, but Mälk's school. For a small nation, formation of identity and creation of myths of peripheral outer world has existential meaning. Precise control by the cardinal has pushed lots of artists to stages. Is it my reproach, homage, accusation, or running with wolves? Probably all.

Just like a performance cannot consist only of the director, a school cannot consist only of the ideologist. A resonance is needed. Amplification through collision and reflection. Resonance is not forced trembling. It is free flickering. Anyone can sing their own song, but through the counterpoint, different voices form harmony. Kadri's collection is not eclectic. It is dominated by a harmony with dark shade. "Net of hearts all over the world", says Tanel Veenre. Alluring. The net of hearts has common bloodstream. Blood never sleeps, as Kadri often says.

The jewellery in Kadri's collection match the aesthetics of dark school. Cryptic objects veiled with mystery. When taken off the neck or chest, they leave a perceptible spot of sweat and blood, which crystallizes into salt upon drying. As she says, she has eaten pounds of salt with those she has chosen into the book. Silent tragic of cold sweat. The jewellery selected by Kadri are heavy. Here, I do not mean physical weight. Lightness can also be depressing. You start to diffuse, like a cloud of helium released from a burst balloon. Kadri is a tragical woman. She needs diver's boots, to resist drama tornados. Black anchor chain around the neck. Extra weight on the chest, fixed with a pin. Silver chains on hands. Jewellery as consolation. As Kadri says: All human feelings and states – compassion, love, empathy, sadness, loneliness, forgetting, leaving – are present in jewellery. The oscillating frequency of our senses, our curiosity, our vulnerability, our need for beauty and harmony, our need to oppose – it's all there. A piece of jewellery has the power of a promissory note allowing us to take a step back from the grind of our everyday life.

Uncompromising individuality of Kadri is simultaneously captivating and deterring. I remember, when in my early academic years I once heard an Estonian clergyman and military officer Einar Laigna saying to Kadri Mälk: "Men are afraid of wise women. Kadri, you should know that". I am sure that when speaking of wisdom, he did not mean the knowledge of textbooks. Kadri has said that she chooses jewellery for her collection "blindfold". With innocent glance. Through understanding and recognition. The path is now fixed between the book covers, but as the last words of the last page say, "...the hunt must go on".