Kaido Ole

Krt

29.08-10.10.2026

These paintings are about BAD things. Not just the today-was-a-bad-day kind of bad, but the bigger, more universal kind that doesn't go away when the next day comes, or even the next month. I don't know how or when these BAD things got hold of me, but for several years now I've been trying to find a way to get them out of me and into my paintings. Some of it even seemed to work, but the BADNESS still kept haunting me. Now, painting these works filled with flames, I felt like things were finally getting a little easier. That's the magic trick of art, isn't it? The works may be about BAD things, but if the works themselves are GOOD, then somehow, in the end, everything is all right. The bad shrinks back down to its proper size, and the world – my world – is back in balance. At least I hope so.

Kaido Ole (b. 1963) lives and works in Tallinn. He studied design and painting at the Estonian Academy of Arts from 1982 to 1992 and has worked at the Academy as a drawing and painting teacher and as a professor in the painting department (2003-2010). He has been a freelance artist from 2010 onwards, having been featured at exhibitions since 1989. In 2003, he represented Estonia at the 50th Venice Biennale, appearing together with Marko Mäetamm under the alias John Smith.

Conceptual painting is at the centre of Kaido Ole's work. Even though his large paintings are intricately calculated and even seem machine-made, he is in fact also interested in mistakes that occur during the handicraft and painting process. Ole's theatrical and controversial plots always combine techniques from different painting styles, from geometric abstractionism to pop art and nouveau réalisme.

Instead of directly tackling current events, Ole's paintings speak about the general power dynamics between people or the artist and the artist's work, but these positions of power are always ambiguous, absurd and even humorous. He uses different characters to act out the conflicts in the plots – besides his own figure and the comicbook-like bubblehead-man, different surrealist assemblage-creatures have appeared since 2012.

Kaido Ole is a member of the Estonian Artists' Association. He has received the Kristjan Raud (1998), Konrad Mägi (2012) and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (1999 and 2005) annual art prizes and the Order of the White Star III class amongst other awards. Ole's works are held in the collections of the Art Museum of Estonia, Tartu Art Museum, Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia, the European Parliament, the ABLV Bank collection for the Latvian Museum of Contemporary Art and the Angerlehner Museum.

Text by Anneli Porri

List of works

First room clockwise

Hi, Death, Is That You? (second version), oil and acrylic on canvas, 160 x 200 cm, 2026

Allegory I, oil and acrylic on canvas, 110 x 90 cm, 2025

Allegory III, oil and acrylic on canvas, 200 x 190 cm, 2025

Allegory VI, oil and acrylic on canvas, 220 x 190 cm, 2026

Allegory VIII, oil and acrylic on canvas, 105 x 75 cm, 2026

Second room clockwise

Allegory IV, oil and acrylic on canvas, 200 x 240 cm, 2025

Allegory II, oil and acrylic on canvas, 190 x 270 cm, 2025

Allegory IX, oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 115 cm, 2026

Allegory X, oil and acrylic on canvas, 300 x 200 cm, 2026

Allegory V, oil and acrylic on canvas, 200 x 240 cm, 2026

Allegory VII, oil and acrylic on canvas, 110 x 90 cm, 2026