Preenactment

THE HOUSE OF LEAVING

Merike Estna



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Merike Estna in her studio. May 29, 2025, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo: Ana Hop

Of Mice and Femme: Year of the Wiccan

Estelle Hoy



Merike Estna in the garden of her studio with her children, Kōu and Lumi. August 9, 2025, Mexico City, Mexico. Photo: Aime Estna

"If you slip or have a minor fall, don't allow yourself an instant's pause. Find your pace again the moment you get up. In your mind, take careful note of the circumstances of your fall, but don't let your body linger over what happened. The body constantly tries to draw attention to itself by its shiverings, its breathlessness, its palpitations, its shudders and sweats and cramps...once it understands that it will inspire no pity for it that way, then it comes into line and obediently accomplishes its task."

René Daumal, Mount Analogue



She was a mediocre mistress, just a bed on a floor in San Pedro de los Pinos, an overweight pet mouse named Miguel with a very bad memory and barely suppressed desire to fuck a candle. The last time she'd bought bedding was from Dulce, a Mexican craftswoman living on Av. José Morán near the theatre with seats that creaked and years-old gum stuck to the underside. Tapestry and quilting fountained from Dulce's shop, traditional embroidery, woven carpets in ardent orange, and carefully glazed ceramics that had no business in Merike's home. Miguel was a free-range mouse and roamed the apartment, tail clipping objects – utterly inconsiderate. Yes, it was best she didn't purchase ceramics. I'm on the absolute verge of having a point here.

Merike was an Estonian painter who moved to Mexico City in 2022, with barely a Peso to rub together, living on eggs and El Parnita. She made a point of never talking about Diego Rivera or male painters, just in general, but he'd come up often, as all male artists tend to do. She'd change the subject, veering into fun facts about mythological Dionysian Nymphs or Peradam, a transparent, allegorical gemstone that reveals rare knowledge to committed disciples in Daumal's book *Mount Analogue*. She did this with maximum *esprit de corps*. "A knife is neither true nor false, but anyone impaled on its blade is in error." Merike could think of one or two conversations – or artists – she'd like impaled.

TAL VEZ ESE DÍA,
ESE INSTANTE,
ESE SENTIMIENTO,

Ese Día (detail). 2023. Acrylic, oil on canvas. 150×200 cm

Ese día

Ese día pensé que la forma como entraba la luz por la ventana te favorecía, pero eras tú quien la favorecía, le dabas forma. La gravedad de tu cuerpo la atrajo desde el sol.

Tu cuerpo como una catedral por la mañana, le marcaba un hermoso recorrido, bajaba por tus arcos, recorría tus patios y vibraba con el sonido de tus campanas, tu belleza es como la de ciertas catedrales, que al entrar la luz en la tarde por sus vitrales ilumina el alma. Subía por tus crestas y valles, acariciaba las flores de tu cuerpo que despertaban al alba, tus ojos como gotas de rocío reflejaban la profundidad del mar.

Tal vez ese día, ese instante, ese sentimiento, al viajar a la velocidad de la luz, se alargue infinitamente hasta la eternidad.

Poem by Merike Estna's husband

Ocean



Ocean (detail). October 10, 2025. Acrylic on canvas. 300×990 cm. Exhibition opening day at Tartu Art House, Tartu, Estonia



Ocean. October 10, 2025. Acrylic on canvas, 300×990 cm. Exhibition opening day at Tartu Art House, Tartu, Estonia

I have worked with living painting for quite a few years now—painting as floor, painting as a picnic blanket, painting as a flag or a robe or a towel. Suddenly though, it hit me—maybe painting is the most alive while it is being born. When everything is still possible.
I thought of a painting that is not meant to be finished but rather to stay in process for the rest of my life and I called it Ocean.

This thought made me very happy.
So, whenever I exhibit Ocean, I paint it during the days the exhibition is closed to the public.
For now, I have shown it only once, in Tartu Art House, Estonia in autumn 2025. I went to the gallery to paint every Tuesday, when it was closed.
I learned straight away that it is a challenge to show a painting being born, to show the process in its ups and downs and in full honesty. I, like most painters, have learned to aim for a perfect product, to dream of a masterpiece. With Ocean, I had to learn to let this go, to embrace the moment and the not knowing, to embrace chance and imperfection.



Ocean (detail). October 14, 2025. Acrylic on canvas. 500×990 cm. Second painting session at Tartu Art House, Tartu, Estonia

Ocean (detail). October 14, 2025. Acrylic on canvas. 300×990 cm. Second painting session at Tartu Art House, Tartu, Estonia

Ocean (detail). October 21, 2025. Acrylic on canvas. 300×990 cm. Third painting session at Tartu Art House, Tartu, Estonia



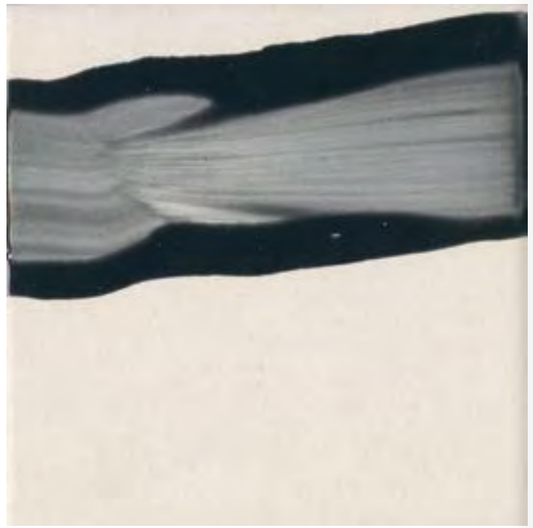
Ocean (detail). November 4, 2025. Acrylic on canvas. 500×990 cm. Fourth painting session at Tartu Art House, Tartu, Estonia

Four Acts from the House of *Leaking* Sky

Keiu Krikmann



Diogo Passarinho Studio. Architectural vision for *The House of Leaking Sky*. 2026



Floor tiles for *The House of Leaking Sky*. 2026. Scans of hand painted ceramic tiles. 9.6×9.6 cm

Anticipation (April)

Last week, an artist moved in. Naturally, she didn't come alone—there are people moving, placing, pushing, pulling, bringing, setting up, and putting down. But she really moved in. In addition to her work, she brought her trinkets, her tools, her man, her children—her whole life.

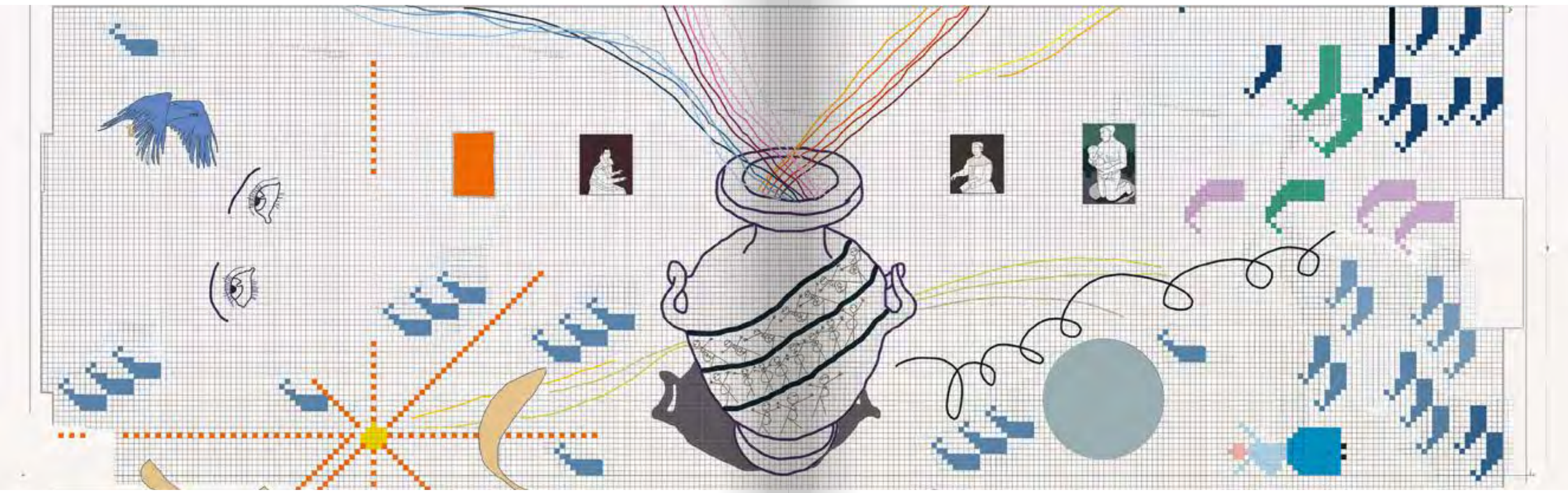
It's not that it's ever been quiet in this quarter, whether in a church, military hospital, warehouse, boarding school, community center, or playing field, the poor and the wounded, students and believers, workers and boarders, have been welcomed here for over a century—I have seen it all. In the midst of the construction, there is a new tension in the Patronato—a hesitance that emerges ahead of disruptions to daily routines. However, behind this cautiousness, curiosity always hides. The new agreements have been made and signed, all parties informed. Now, all that's left to do is to start living the contract and ease into the new rhythm.

The space I now share with the artist, a basketball court in a former church, is now becoming something else entirely—an artist's studio. On the vast floor, boxes are being stacked and rearranged, making lines and circles, things are being unboxed, appearing, disappearing, and reappearing again. Frames, tools, canvases, and crates of tiles, tiles, endless tiles. An entire floor of them is being laid, their rectangular pattern almost reflecting the grid of the net protecting the frescoed ceiling. The glazes bring new colors and the sheen of freshly fired plates replaces the dullness of weathered floor. As the tiles are laid, one by one, an array of motifs and faces appear. The artist oversees everything, she moves and points, decides and doubts, and finally sets things in their place with resolve. Installers and assistants move with her in a choreography mostly devised before they ever even arrived in Venice.

I can see the anticipation of the Biennale opening shimmering in their bones as they move quickly from place to place. But I myself never leave here—the outside concerns me little. I watch as the new infrastructure is being built and, for now, I live in the house of leaking sky.

Acclimation (May)

Countless people have now come and gone. First, those who celebrated at the opening, then those who came to observe the artist work. Many still keep coming and going. The artist and a few others have stayed. She's in her studio with her assistants



Merike Estna. Sketch for painting as floor on 25,000 ceramic tiles for *The House of Leaking Sky*. 2026











Quinta. 2023. Acrylic, oil on canvas. 61×45 cm

Resisting Closure. Painting as World-Making

Natalia Sielewicz



Lavinia Fontana. Family Portrait. 16th century. Oil on canvas. 105×85 cm. Pinacoteca di Brera

To love, Barthes writes in *A Lover's Discourse*, is to wait—a vigil that he names, provocatively, as feminized. At first glance, longing appears steeped in passivity, a quiet surrender to absence. Yet Barthes insists otherwise. Love, he argues, is not inert but charged: it asks the ever-present self to be shaped by the one who is perpetually not here.[1]

Waiting, then, is not emptiness but labor—an emotional workmanship of desire, where yearning becomes an active, neurotic force, and absence presses constantly against the heart, giving love both its ache and its form.

I wonder how this grammar of waiting might relate to the business of painting, a praxis rooted in time and desire, both gendered and feminized. Painting (*pittura*), after all, is a feminine noun in Italian, yet its artistic profession was historically bound to lineage and gender: to class, to men, to family. It passed most often from father to son, or along the male branch of kinship, and so the women who entered art did so almost always as daughters—admitted by birth rather than choice. Confined to the domestic sphere, their access to artistic education was narrow and fragile, shaped by prohibition as much as by possibility.

In studios and academies, students spent long hours drawing, painting, and sculpting the male nude—spaces that in Italy were bluntly named *accademia del nudo*. Respectable women were not permitted to look upon naked bodies, let alone study them. Nor could they travel freely, to encounter works of art that, in the era before museums, might have altered their vision and allowed a style of their own to emerge.

Those few women who did paint, with a handful of exceptions, were steered toward the lowest rungs of the academic hierarchy: still lifes, modest genre scenes, landscapes, portraits of the

1 See Becca Rothfeld, All Things Are Too Small, London: Virago / Apple Books, 2024, p. 53

socially unremarkable. Their works were often small—miniatures contained within the limits imposed upon them. For most women with artistic longings, creation could take place only in quieter forms: in weaving, in lace, in embroidery, where ambition was softened into ornament and desire was stitched into cloth.

"It is a sin to do nothing," my grandmother used to tell me when I was a child, and so, in the rare moments when she was free from the relentless demands of running the household, she would sit down to make something with her hands, usually traditional Estonian craft.

This is how Merike Estna described to me a childhood memory of visiting her grandparents in rural Estonia during the summer—a time shaped by labor, restraint, and quiet acts of making. I cannot help but to think of Penelope at her loom, patiently braiding silence, longing, and time into a single, unending garment. Staying busy with desire is what women are taught to do so well.

Throughout her practice, Estna has persistently blurred the historical boundaries between what has traditionally been defined as "high art"—oil on canvas, easel painting, artistic autonomy—and what has been relegated to "craft," such as textiles, ceramics, embroidery, and domestic or functional objects. By painting on furniture, carpets, clothing, ceramics, and other materials embedded in domestic space, she challenges the elitism that has long shaped painting, particularly its alignment with notions of individual genius, permanence, and mastery.

At the same time, her work reveals a profound engagement with time itself. Estna continually pushes toward open-endedness, imagining painting as something that might bleed beyond its formal boundaries, remain unfinished, or require ongoing care. Her works fold back upon themselves the duration of time invested in sustaining them, making maintenance, repetition, and endurance part of the painting's meaning. She gently unravels the codes by which we orient ourselves: vertical no longer promises a body, nor horizontal a landscape. In her work, direction loses



Jacopo Tintoretto. The Origin of the Milky Way. 1575.
Oil on canvas. 149×168 cm. National Gallery, London

its authority. Scale is tampered with, usefulness quietly desecrated—a painted canvas drifts toward the softness of a picnic blanket, while a textile spread across the floor opens into painting as a lived dimension rather than a surface.

What once stood upright learns to lie down. What was meant to be used asks instead to be looked at, lingered on, or stepped into. Painting slips its frame and posture, settling into space like a presence—intimate, wayward, and difficult to place.

For her presentation in Venice, Estna reclaims painting as this slippery mirage—a practice that resists closure and unfolds through time. She begins with a bare canvas laid directly on the floor, inviting the public to gather around to watch its slow awakening. The painting is not unveiled as a finished object but grows slowly, in plain sight. This gesture of gradual growth out of nothing while occupying the space carries a subtle defiance. It calls to mind the figure of the pittore senza opera—the painter without works—a shadowed type who haunted earlier centuries, most often embodied by women whose oeuvres were absorbed into patriarchal workshops or erased from official chronicles. Marietta Robusti Tintoretta was one of them: a Venetian painter-poet who dressed as a boy to work beside her father, Jacopo Tintoretto, in the heat of the family atelier. Her paintings circulated without her name, her skill credited upward; she died in childbirth before she had the chance to fully step into the light of her own authorship. Yet, as Jutta Sperling notes, scenes of reproduction appear almost compulsively throughout Jacopo Tintoretto's work—births, lactation, wet-nursing, and circumcision generously populate his biblical and mythological paintings.[2]

Standing beneath the frescoed ceiling of the Estonian pavilion—once a church, now a community centre—I found myself thinking of Tintoretto's *Origin of the Milky Way*, which recounts the old myth in which Jupiter seeks to secure immortality for his infant son Hercules, born of the mortal Alcmene. To achieve this, he places the child at the breast of his sleeping wife Juno,

2 Jutta Gisela Sperling, Roman Charity: Queer Lactations in Early Modern Visual Culture, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016, p. 73.

hoping divine milk might grant godhood. When Juno wakes and pushes the infant away, the milk that sprays upward forms the Milky Way; the drops that fall to earth become lilies.

It's a striking contradiction: men who could not paint themselves as the allegory of Painting (hear hear *femme-pintura*!) felt entirely entitled to depict women's bodies reproducing, as though it were neutral ground rather than lived experience. In this light, Marietta Tintoretta's disappearance from art history feels less like forgetting and more like a patterned removal—as if the world could accept women giving life to images, but not signing them. The sky leaks light and milk, but never her name.

During our travels together across Estonia, Merike and I encountered a folk song connected to myths of birth and world-making, which offered us another cosmogenic story, yet this time with more reparative undertones. In the song, a group of maidens decide to rake the sea—an impossible, poetic gesture of labor directed at the primordial waters. A "blue-spotted wonder-bird with grey teeth" is born from the detritus the maidens toss back into the sea, who flies to land and reaches a bush in a simple yard. From its eggs come juniper on the hill, a stone in the field, a star in the sky, the Moon, then the Sun. The song links domestic rituals (raking, sweeping) with cosmo-genesis: what begins as women's labor yields the celestial bodies and the natural landscape. These myths tell of a mother's labor on a cosmic scale. Think of it as everyday feminism. Creation is not thunder or command, but the slow choreography of care: tidying, gathering, feeding, letting go. In both, creation emerges from quotidian labor, an ongoing rhythm of maintenance, echo-ing how mothers and caregivers sustain life through continuous, repetitive labor that rarely seeks recognition.

Estna gently braids together meditations on motherhood and the lineages of women artists who carved paths toward artistic self-determination. As a working mother herself, she often folds complex iconographies of care, lineage, and inheritance into her practice, moving between gestures of nurture and acts that verge on matriphagy.

Consider, for instance, her spider in *Black Lace-Weaver* the mother dissolves from within, offering her liquefied body to her young, who consume her as their first, nutrient-rich meal. In this sacrificial exchange, survival becomes an inheritance, and the next generation steps forward, sustained by the body that made them. In Estna's spider-mother, one might detect an echo of Louise Bourgeois's great arachnids: maternal figures whose strength lies not only in protection but in the quiet work of making. For Bourgeois, the spider honoured her tapestry-restorer mother—a patient weaver, mender, and keeper of fragile structures. In Estna, the spider extends this lineage into the biological realm: the mother liquefies herself to feed her young, turning the act of care into a bodily offering. In both, the web,



Merike Estna. Black Lace-Weaver. 2025. Acrylic and oil stick on canvas and wood, chains, glass. 290×190 cm

or net—a figurative symbol that populates many of her paintings—can also be read as a metaphor for artistic practice: an architecture spun from the body, endlessly repaired, and inherited by those who come after.

The delicate thread linking her practice to those who came before her, those who laid the groundwork for a transhistorical continuity, is central to the artist's thinking. Another such figure is Lavinia Fontana, who, unlike Tintoretta, became the first woman in Europe to sustain a long professional career as a painter and to support her family through her art. Working within, and against, the patriarchal and domestic structures of her time, Fontana signed her own works, negotiated her independence, and painted through eleven pregnancies.

Through the slow aggregation of work, Estna pushes back against the long erasure of women from art history. By inviting the audience into the unfolding of the work itself, she unsettles entrenched divisions about where art—and by extension, where women—are permitted to exist. The boundary between public and private, studio and home, what was once coded as male territory and female territory, begins to loosen. In her hands, the domestic is no longer a secluded corner but part of the same field as politics, labor, and art-making.

The spaces women were once told belonged to them in secret begin to open into the world, while the spaces once reserved for men soften, become porous, and are quietly renegotiated. The old discourse of love as waiting, and as a feminized form of endurance, returns here as a form of care bestowed upon a painting that grows to the limits of the pavilion. Neither battle scene nor landscape in service of the nation-state, the work arrives slowly: first through spills and leaks, then through the weight Ωcanvas is worked lying down and standing up, touched in both horizontal and vertical orientations, tended to as something that, like desire, must be kept alive.

Madonnas

In 2023, I was pouring paint in my studio in Mexico City, when I suddenly realized the paint had formed the shape of mother with a child. The flowing substance felt exactly how I had started to feel about motherhood. It expressed having a child as a cosmic explosion.
I started looking at historic paintings of the mother and child more closely and the further back I looked, the more I saw paintings of the Virgin with a child. After becoming a mother, the way I looked at those Madonnas shifted. The person started to disappear, becoming almost abstract. My Madonnas and child have no face, they could be anyone and everyone—a person who takes care and maintains love with labour.



Nightfall (detail). 2024–2025. Acrylic, oil and oil stick on canvas. 390×290 cm



Love. 2023. Acrylic, oil on canvas. 150×100 cm

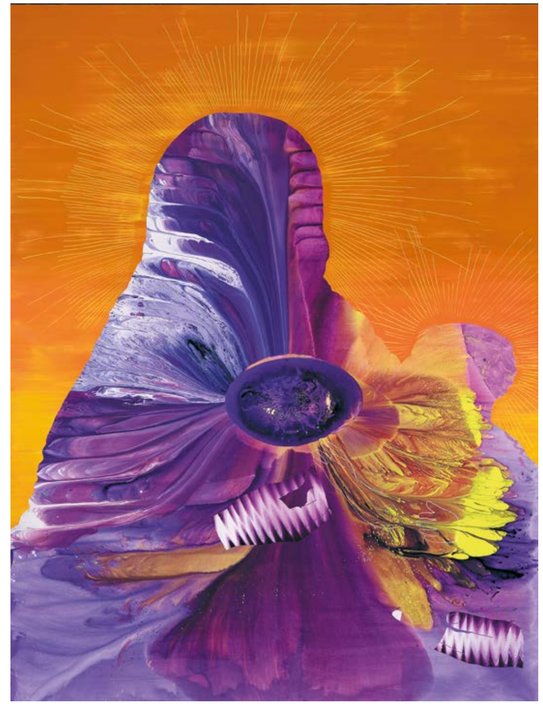




Night sky. 2023. Acrylic, oil on canvas. 45×61 cm (left). A Star. 2023. Acrylic, oil on canvas. 150×100 cm (right)



Hands of Love. 2023. Acrylic and oil on canvas. 150×100 cm



Nightfall. 2024–2025. Acrylic, oil and oil stick on canvas. 390×290 cm



Nameless. 2025. Acrylic and oil stick on canvas and wood. 290×190 cm



Murder. 2023. Acrylic, oil on canvas. 61×45 cm

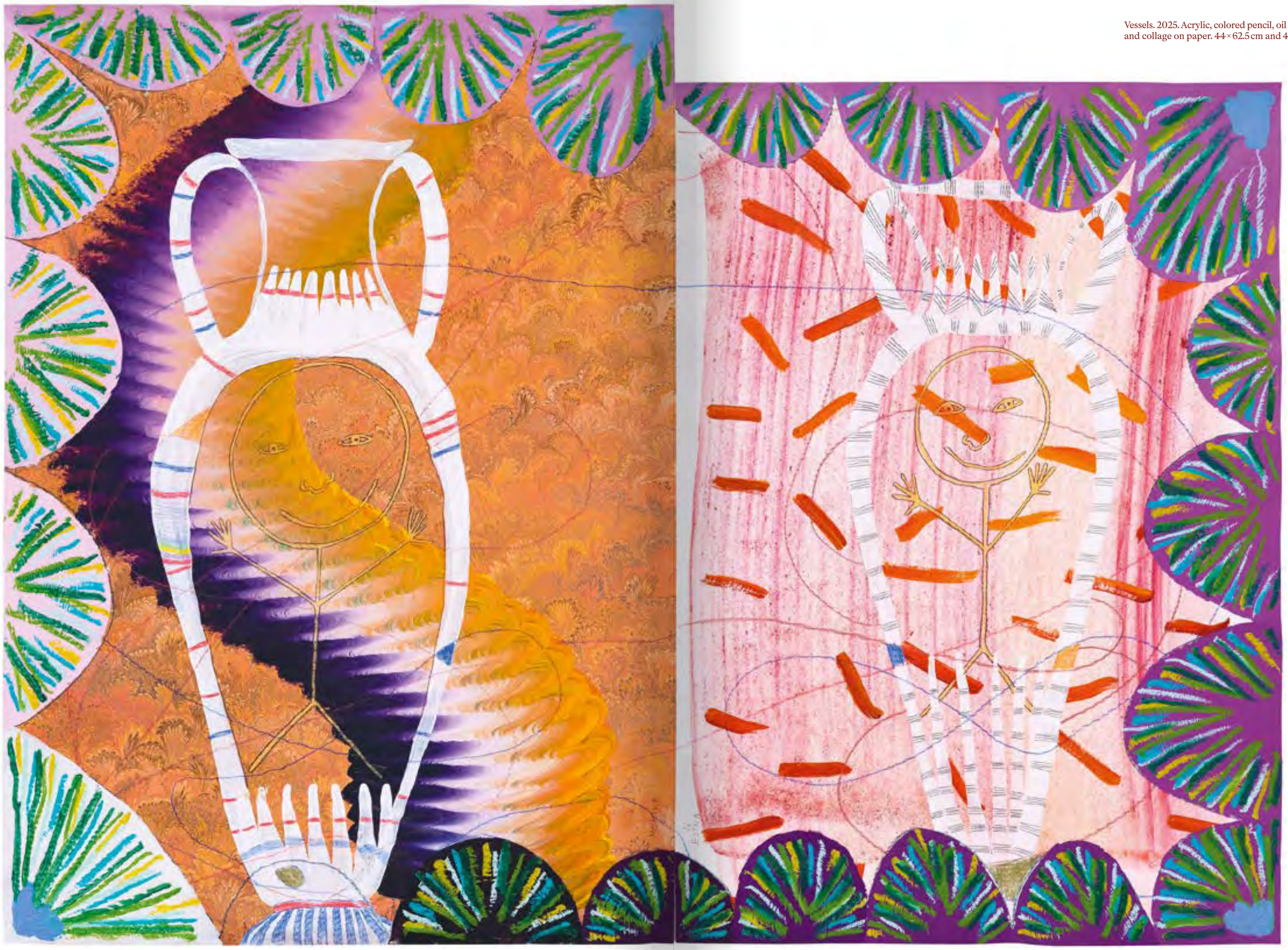
Merike Estna – A Process in Several Movements

Maria Arusoo

You have reached the end, or have you? Perhaps you are somewhere in the middle, reading the final pages of a chapter. This is not a book about one exhibition, but rather one a chapter in a much longer process—it is a thing in itself, a preenactment, where fiction and fact, past and future, blend together, with Merike Estna's work as its epicenter.

There are more chapters and they extend in both directions in time. For the moment, we start in January, 2026 in Tallinn. We are in Merike Estna's studio, located in the former ARS Art Products Factory. In Soviet Estonia, ARS was a unique phenomenon, where all fields of design and applied art came together with the aim of bringing these arts closer to the people, as it was said at the time. Today, ARS Art Factory is a large studio complex, where painters, ceramic artists, photographers, musicians, costume designers, and many other artists work. ARS also provides the facilities that support Estna's layered and multimodal practice. While outside the temperature has dropped to -20°C, the kiln in ARS's ceramic workshop has reached almost 1000°C and the first 850 out of the total 25,000 glazed tiles that will cover the floor of the Estonian pavilion at the 61st Venice Biennale have just come out. At this moment in time, the work is scattered across the workshop in thousands of small fired and unfired pieces, worked on by Estna's assistants. Finishing strokes are being made on several fronts and the artist keeps busy. Through the large windows, the rare winter sun shines in. Everywhere on the studio floor are pairs of painted works, in which vessels, stick figures, waves, and abstract forms have been sketched onto Venetian marbled craft paper, including shapes that can be recognized from wedding rugs; references to historical women painters, motherhood, and processuality; as well as the occasional skeleton or hand, recurring motifs in Estna's previous works. A special edition of twenty-two paintings is in the making—at once a rehearsal and a sketch, but also a thought process on paper. This series will not be exhibited in Venice, however, it is here that the artist can test ideas for the

Vessels. 2025. Acrylic, colored pencil, oil pastel, print and collage on paper. 44×62.5 cm and 49×70.5 cm



Vessels. 2025. Acrylic, colored pencil, oil pastel, print and collage on paper. 44×62.5 cm and 49×70.5 cm



Timeline

1980

Born in Tallinn, Estonia into a family of photographers.

2001–2009

Studies at Academia Non Grata (performance);
Estonian Academy of Arts (BA Painting, MA Interdisciplinary Arts); Goldsmiths College (MFA Art Practice)

2009

Estna decides to stay in London to develop her practice; and doesn't leave for seven years.

2003



Kaerajaan. 2003. Oil on canvas. 200×300 cm

Receives an unexpected invitation from curators Eha Komissarov and Hanno Soans to participate in a group exhibition, *Last Hero*, at the Art Museum of Estonia's Rotermann Salt Storage with a 200×300 cm oil painting depicting a naked couple dancing an Estonian folk dance, with the woman wearing the traditional Estonian traditional head dress *tanu*.

2012

Becomes interested in how painting could be a more integral part of life rather than a precious object, and how to include the visual language of traditional crafts and decoration in her pieces, linking painting to work done by women and in domestic environments.



A Very Big Light Blue Painting. 2012. Oil on canvas. 290×190 cm

Traveling with a Painting. 2012. Happening. Photo: Merike Estna



With the positioning of paintings in art history in mind, Estna makes a large-scale painting on loose canvas, carrying it with her wherever she goes. She paints and documents it in different landscapes.

2013



Painting as a Floor. 2013. Acrylic on floor. Peer Sessions Residency, London.

To oppose the idea of a painted ceiling, Estna creates a painted floor at Peer Sessions Residency, Deptford, London, believing this would allow the painting to always remain open, and thus, alive, by offering endless perspectives from which to look at it.



Dream Island. Picnic On a Painting. 2015. Event at Royal College of Art, London, curated by Juste Kostikovaite.

After discussions with her friend and curator Juste Kostikovaite, Estna creates a proposal around the idea of a painting as a picnic blanket—painting as a place for social gathering and exchanging of ideas. The work is realized as an event titled *Dream Island* in the courtyard of the Royal College of Art, London, UK.

2014

Estna continues to consider how to blend painting into the world in a more organic way. This leads her to make winter boots into paintings, so that the boots would naturally be on display everywhere she wears them.



Traveling with a Painting and Boots as Paintings. 2014. Video still



SO SOFT/+PURE. March 8, 2014. Participatory performance: sauna sessions with paintings as towels/robes. Photo: Kasia Mikolajewska

Estna stays at Small Projects art residency, located in Tromsø, North of Norway, an artist run space that also includes a sauna in the gallery. This inspires her to create paintings on bathrobes and towels, culminating with a number of sauna sessions titled *So Soft + Pure*.

Estna has her first institutional solo show at Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn. In the show she further explores the idea of a painting as a garment, creating a series of kimonos as paintings, worn both by exhibition guests and museum invigilators, both inside and outside of the show. Through this gesture, her work spread through the museum as a living, growing organism.



Jackets as paintings as part of *Blue Lagoon*. 2014. Kumu Art Museum. Photo: Mark Raidpere

2016



If You Wanna Cut It You Should Dance and Take It as It's Served. Performance on top of the painting as stage, during the opening night at Hardwick gallery

Expanding on the idea of a painting as a floor, and a place for events, Estna creates a painting as a stage.



If You Wanna Cut It You Should Dance and Take It as It's Served. 2016. Acrylic on board. 122×244×20 cm

Estna visits Mexico for the first time. She has her first solo show at Galería Karen Huber, curated by Octavio Avendaño Trujillo. She also moves back to Tallinn after nine years in London.

Estna reads Boris Groys' book *In the Flow*, which influences her thinking towards painting as a living organism.

2017

Estna continues exploring painting as a stage, a curtain, a rug or a poncho in a show at Kunstraum, London. She collaborates with the dance punk trio Charismatic Megafauna, the project Performances for Pets, and performer Maria Metsalu, inviting them all to perform on her paintings. The exhibition was constructed around the idea of painting as a space for expressing one's beliefs, ideas, and ideals.



Installation view of Fragments from the Shattered Toe at Kunstraum London. 2017. Including the works:

Damage Was Reparable. Acrylic on canvas. 300×490 cm

Toe, Toe, Toe, Go, Go, Go. Acrylic on plywood painting as a stage. 360×40 cm; hand painting on hand tufted wool and artist's hair painting as a rug as a poncho. 200×90 cm



Black Gloves. 2017. Hand painted on hand tufted wool. 200 x150 cm. Photo: Stanislav Stepaško

She tests the idea of a rug as a painting in a duo show with Ana Cardoso, titled *The Seed Can Be Initialized Randomly II* at Temnikova & Kasela gallery in Tallinn. Estna uses marbling to paint on the rugs by hand, and weaves patterns into the work.

2018

Estna is commissioned to make new work for the *Baltic Triennial 13: Give Up The Ghost* by the artistic director Vincent Honoré and his curatorial team: Dina Akhmadeeva, Canan Batur, Neringa Bumbliene, Cédric Fauq, Anya Harrison.



An Egg, a Larva, a Nymph (detail), 2018. Glaze painted tile. Baltic Triennial 13: *Give Up the Ghost*, Tallinn Art Hall. Photo: Stanislav Stepaško

She develops the idea of painting on floor tiles with the work *An Egg, a Larva, a Nymph*, which combined a painting on 4200 ceramic tiles, some painting on canvas and nine paintings on ceramic vessels.



Installation view of An Egg, a Larva, a Nymph. 2018. Painting on ceramic tiles for a floor. 840×450 cm; painting on canvas 200×300 cm; nine paintings on ceramic vessels, beeswax candles and performative presence. Photo: Karel Koplimets

She also explores the possibilities of including smell: sculptures as candles made out of beeswax and burned during the exhibition, as well as planting white lilies on to the gallery floor, in a solo exhibition at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, Latvia, titled *Disposable Gloves Guide*. She looks into possibilities of recycling or reworking her artworks.



Exhibition view of Disposable Gloves Guide, including tree trunks, serpents and other animals. 2018. Acrylic on plywood. Paintings as stages and benches, nine paintings on top of tree trunks, 120x120 cm, hung at various heights or leaning against the wall; two paintings hung on top of tree trunks, 120x30 cm. Kim? Contemporary Art Center, Riga, Latvia.





Red Herring, November 17, 2017. Picnic on a painting. Art In General New York, US.
Photo: Maria Baranova

Estna reworks the idea of a painting as a picnic blanket and develops a large acrylic painting that could be hung in a gallery space as a curtain or used as a picnic blanket during performances of the work *Red Herring*, which was shown in several locations including Kiasma Art Museum in Helsinki, Finland and at Estna's duo show with Maria Metsalu *Soft Scrub, Hard Body, Liquid Presence*, curated by Maria Arusoo at Art in General, New York, USA.



Kneeling Banana/Angel Flew Over My Head on the 7th Floor Above the Seabed. 2017. Acrylic on canvas. 300×490 cm. Painting as a curtain used also as a picnic blanket for the performance, Red Herring. Photo: Stanislav Stepaško

2019

Experiments with the idea of a canvas as a modular composition and painting as a transformer in a newly commissioned work *Ocean of Endangered Times*, for a solo show at Moderna Museet Malmö, titled *Ghost of the Future, Filled with Memories of the Past*, curated by Andreas Nilsson.



Ocean of Endangered Times (detail), 2019. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 600×400 cm.
Photo: Stanislav Stepaško







Ocean of Endangered Times (detail), 2019. Oil and acrylic on canvas. 600×400 cm.
Photo: Stanislav Stepaško



Exhibition view of Ghost of the Future, Filled with Memories of Past with performative presence. 2019.
Moderna Museet Malmö. Photo: Helene Toresdotter/ Moderna Museet

2021

Explores the idea of painting as a book and makes four window murals for the show *Nightfall* at Publics, Helsinki, Finland, invited by Paul O'Neill.



Nightfall. 2021. Acrylic on paper. Hand painted sixty-two page book, hard bound. Photo: Niina Lehtovuori

Estna creates her first artwork exploring the theme of motherhood, *I'm an Empty Vessel*, as part of duo show *Borderlessness* with Jaime Lobato at Temnikova & Kasela gallery in Tallinn. The work shows a vessel with a ghost in its belly.

Exhibition view of Nightfall. 2022. Publics, Helsinki. Photo: Niina Lehtovuori

2022

Estna begins living between Mexico City and Tallinn.



Estna has a solo show, *Soil Will Not Contain Our Love*, at Kai Art Center, Tallinn, Estonia, invited by Karin Laansoo. She explores the idea of painting as a tattoo on wood, and burning the canvas as a visual language, whilst also reworking many of her existing artworks into a mini-retrospective, including paintings as rugs, as ceramic vessels, as tiled floors, as tables or benches or platforms on which to sit, paintings as dividing walls, painting on glass and painting as stained glass, painting as a bath and painting as shelter, and painting as perishable.





Exhibition views of Soil Will Not Contain Our Love. 2022. Kai Art Center. Photo: Anu Vahtra

2025

Starts working as Head of Curriculum and Visiting Professor at MACA – MA Contemporary Art at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

Creates exhibition *Ocean* at Tartu Art House, where she explores the existential coexistence of life and death, as seen through the perspective of motherhood. As part of the exhibition, Estna creates a multi-canvas work that will be continuously painted during future exhibitions until the artist's death. The exhibition partly functions as a preenactment to *The House of Leaking Sky*.

2026

Estna represents Estonia at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with the exhibition *The House of Leaking Sky*.

This book is published in conjunction with the exhibition *The House of Leaking Sky* at the Estonian Pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

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