

PATAREI, PATAREI, PATAREI

By Sanne Flyvbjerg

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Translation: Cecilie Qvistgaard

It exudes historic desolation, my generation. It exudes virtual fascination and the dream of what is new. The conceptual, the immaterial, the intellectual. Projects, processes, surfing, links. Broadness, rhizome, change, negotiation. Never very much point of origin. Rarely drilling, immersion, points and position. Materiality and body.

I explore Tallinn for Soviet remains, chasing history, to switch off the analytic brain and feel the body's position in the space. Feel the architecture's effect on my body, the ground under my feet, the air on my skin. Feel history through the architecture and try to think along new lines through the old, to feel history and not leave it behind me. Not constantly to think forward, to think outside the box, but to let the stories of the antiques reveal themselves. There are only a certain number of antiques. There are only a limited number of historic remains that we can dig out. And these fossils of the past still have a vibrant potential.

I am standing in a burning Linnahall by the ferry terminal, on the broad brutal top of agglutinated concrete blocks. Perhaps on top of the helicopter pad. I cannot see the stairs falling down in both ends, and I am floating above the water, under the scorching sun, next to the city. I am without a banister and am subject to something landing on top of me. Only once in a while punctured by Finnish tourists finding their way to the ferry, Tallinn – Helsinki.

At the foot, I find a concrete bench under a number of large trees that throw relieving shadows in the midday heat. There is a bit too much rubbish here. A bit too many cigarette butts and vodka bottles. It takes me fifteen minutes to calm

down. The body felt unsafe on Linnahall's stairs, both up and down, and yet I was drawn by its hyper-mannerist disappearing acts and opaque stair systems. Blind alleys, first up, then down, and I ended in a deep well by some kind of garage doors. Broken glass everywhere. Massive stairs without banisters and with such small steps that I had to lean to the opposite direction of the stairs. Constantly felt that I was falling.

I have to go on writing in the present tense, also about Patarei. Particularly about Patarei. I walk along the city on a hot summer day, the spires of the medieval city are soon framed by the city wall behind me. I walk towards Patarei Vangla, an ancient building, but serving as a prison since 1920. I turn down an overgrown driveway, past the watch tower and into the entanglement of green grass and rusty barbwire. Outside the prison, an elderly woman steps out of a small house, arranged as a diminutive living-room with a stool in the middle. I pay 15 kroner and am allowed into the prison yard on my own. There is no protection, no child-friendliness, no information, no analytic foreground. Just buildings and the body feeling space.

Straight ahead are the locked two-storey walking cages. To the right, a sign to the hanging room. It is a small room with a board across a hole in the floor, which the prisoner falls into when he is executed. I cannot walk right up to the hole for fear of falling in.

To the left of the yard is the open building and I step into a desolate dream scenario. A staircase that I do not whether I can step on. But no barriers, so I walk ahead. To both sides, there are dark corridors with water on the floor, and the fluorescent lamps in the ceiling soon stop. I have to turn around, fettered by the stickiness and the dark and the memories that are not mine. The next floors show prison cells, a library, operation rooms and all the left material. Damp mattresses, books, operating equipment. Books about Stalin's great power. Paint hanging down from the ceiling in long flakes. Potted plants still in their pots, but having withered and become transparent, flat threads down the pot. As fictive furniture. The prisoners' pictures on the wall of regional farms, smiling models

and woolen bear cubs. And I walk between it all, wearing sandals, clattering and resonating. A medical record is placed on top of a fridge. A hand soap holder is fitted on the wall in the office where one leg of the chair is broken. Nervous by every new room, I fear that the door will slam if I walk too far into the cell structures. It turns and turns and I often look over my shoulder in order to be able to find my way back. The corridors continue and continue, and now I turn around in an angle where the cells have a sea view. Summer blue sky through black bars. At the viewpoint by the slope, two men are emptying a trailer with beverages, which they are filling into a fridge. I walk faster now, back through the corridors, persecuted, now that I know that I want to go out. I step into the heat and pass the elderly woman who smiles and says that I must remember to see the view before I go. I walk to the outer side of the prison and see the ferry sail towards Helsinki. The two men tell me that they are making preparations for a music festival the same evening, and that I am welcome to join. Right above the stage, I can see Linnahall as a grey spot between the ferries and the city.

And then I turn around and walk away. Walk and walk, away from Patarei. My legs walk themselves with me, and without me. At the same time, I have forgotten my body and moved into something resembling survival, and yet I am still lung, skin, wide-open eyes in the prison. Clamminess on the inner side of the skin, having penetrated the pores, into the fine-meshed trees of the lungs and out through the tips of the twigs. Into the blood streams.

I only met one other person during my stay in Patarei, and we crossed each other on a staircase. She also had wide-open eyes and clasped her bag into her body. I said hello, and she said: "I am really scared". When we separated two minutes later, it was with a sense of community. Of having shared an altogether extraordinary space.

I turn away from the glossy pictures, away from the utopias and feel the material of reality and its imaginary push. The desolate building of unexplored routes, where all pores of the body are open and prepared to fight. Where you really

absorb. Where you are reminded that time not only heals but also ruins memories and buildings and materials.

I dream of exchanging experience with the places of the past, the desolate places, the abandoned places. The ruined, the dropped places, comprising knowledge and threads back to the past. Historic roots, though also unpleasant memories of what did not work. Or does not work any longer. What became history. And then build a work of architecture that integrates the spaces of the past. That dares to use the body and let itself be surprised and pulled outside the paper. To become a bit irrational, a bit insistent and use the imaginary potential of the confusion. Let yourself be drawn by the labyrinth, to build it and let it be architecture on line with what is fully functional. The rational. The analysable and ready-organised. Give yourself up to adventure and dreams, not of virtual dissolution and the ultimate interface, but of the potential right here, in the close, the material, the embracing space. A room that exists for the body and is not just beautiful in the visionary aesthetics. I dream of bowing my head in under a staircase and be surprised that the room seems larger than I had expected.

I attach a photo. Not an old photo but the photo of something old, of something used. The agent is a humid space, a captivating space. It is not an ideal space in itself. But it can bring architecture a step further than form and function. It can remind us that architecture should be measured in relation to the body, and can be measured on the body. That the extraordinary parameter lies right here in reality. And that dreams often gather momentum from a claustrophobic absorption.