

**MA TEAN,**

**MIS OLI  
EILE OLI**

**HOMME**

**Johannes Luik**

**I Know What Was  
~~Yesterday~~ Tomorrow**



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Nii jõuame viimase, aga mitte vähem tähtsa käsitluseni monumentaalsusest: juhuslikkuse juurde. Kas tänapäevane monumentaalsus võiks seisneda juhuslikkuses või õigemini mittekavatsuslikkuses? Johannes Luige praktikas puudub ülistus eseme püüdlustele muljet jätta, pigem on tegemist eheda hoolitsuse ning austusega loomisprotsessi suhtes, lubades nii protsessil ja juhusel põimuda. Lõppude lõpuks viidatakse monumentaalsusele kui millelegi silmapaistvalt olulisele või õigemini rabavale ning rabav tähendab ootamatult muljetavaldavat. Üllatusmoment on juhuslikkusele olemuslikult vajalik.

Templisse sisenemine, sipelgad ereda juulipäikese all, nende hoolas töö ning meie juhuslik kohtumine näivad sisaldavat mingit uut liiki monumentaalsust, mis jääb pikalt meelde. Sellist, mis eemaldub klassikalisest võimuväljendusest. See kujundab ümber ruumi, meediumi, mida Johannes Luik kasutab elavalt. Aladel, millele on antud need omadused, on potentsiaal paljastada hämarala isikliku ja kollektiivse, tugevuse ja tundlikkuse, täpsuse ja sattumuslikkuse vahel. Värske omadussõna, mida tasapisi ruumis taasavastada.

## THE ANTS IN THE SPANISH SUN (ON NEW MONUMENTALITY) LAURA DE JAEGER

‘Look! A gem, lighted out in the middle of the Andalusian fields. That must be the Alhambra!’  
‘The maintenance took most of the budget, as the object requires specific care.’  
‘His low voice in the first recording made him question the rock ‘n roll, while it haunted others.’

Empuria Brava’s. At least, that is what I am used to calling the remnants of Empuries, an ancient trading city located on the Mediterranean coast of Catalonia. It must be the first time I’m writing this name down! About every summer since the age of 4, my parents, sister and I would get into a 1999 Volkswagen Passat Break and head towards the North of Spain. The ruins I am referring to are one of the sites we would revisit almost every

year. Abandoned in the early middle-ages after both Greek and Roman ruling, excavations laid bare different temples, a variety of buildings straight out of Hellenistic periods, countless mosaics and wall paintings... When setting foot in one of those temples as a 6 year-old, whether it was the one for Artemis or Asclepeus, it leaves a lasting impression. The stone, the mass of the building, its material. It feels monumental. Yet what sticks around most from the temple are the massive ants. Have you ever seen ants in mid-summer in the North of Spain? Gigantic. Crispy, black, reflecting the burning sun with ease. At least twice as big as in Flanders, though just as fast. How vividly I remember the ants. They were surprisingly impressive.

Monuments occupy a significant place in public debates as they shape our space and collective historical understanding. They are located on the crossroads between spatial experiences and memories. The monument itself though has been countered and reacted to since modernity by several (art) historians, such as Mumford and Kraus, as well as more recent writings by James Young. Those again

preceded the intriguing reflections of the Estonian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019. As with every other adjective, monumentality derives from its noun. Here, the ants make me wonder: how does this adjective change in times of weak and counter monuments?

I recognise three aspects that deal with the quality of monumentality, which allow me to reflect on a shift in our understanding of the adjective. Let's begin with light. Naturally structuring our daily rhythm, light has artificially been employed to make things visible. To be remarked. In this context, it functions as the finger which points out the monumentality of something. It highlights (such as the Alhambra). As monumentality is often defined as impressive, a marker towards its relevance is indispensable. A nuance on this, on the contrary of the 'lumière' of the Alhambra, is visible in House (2019). Johannes Luik's remake of Johannes Sr's built playhouse does not intend to show the classical impressive character of the copy. The wooden house, which seems to be slightly elevated through the light, is monumental in its gesture.

By the means of a personal memory, it evokes a shift in time, softly raising a personal space to collective questions on materiality and its influence on commemoration. A different direction can be experienced through *Memory from the future* (2019). While a scenario, a set, a situation or rather the space is covered with white linen, a source of light peaks through. As every object of the set is meant to be only vaguely recognised, and thus abstracted, it is challenging to abstract light. It seems as if the light on the other hand activates a process of shaping (or rather de-shaping?) possible memories. Where *House* (2019) evokes a monumental quality in the personal memory shifted through time, *Memory from the future* (2019) proposes the monumental to be shaped by the viewer, and thus questions who is the one to create the impressive. The work reflects on potential. And what is more monumental than a transfer of potential?

A second treatment of monumentality is exactly its treatment, or in other words its direct care. If something is impressive or outstanding, it asks us to care for it. As the weak monument and counter monument intend

to oppose the power position of the classical monument, both concepts of weakness, counter and power include a certain care. I recognised care in the different creatures inhabiting the work *Liminal* (2021). Luik finds a pallet, a functional material, and decides to care for it – gently taking it apart and restoring, pointing towards both a possible (unknown) past and (yet unknown) future. Through adding an ornamental value, he tilts the object a little further. Raises it. There is a delicate treatment of construction materials throughout his oeuvre that feels monumental. It treats the support, the functional, and thus shifts that support towards the subject. An impressive treatment of the under-impressed. This attitude comes from a genuine interest in materiality, and so we arrive at the last, but certainly not least deal of the monumental: the accidental. Could the monumentality of the contemporary be an accident, or rather unintended? There is no praise for the pretence of the object in the practice of Johannes Luik, rather a genuine care and respect for the process of creating, allowing both the process and chance to intervene. After all, monumentality is referred

to as something outstandingly significant, or rather astounding, and astounding means surprisingly impressive. The element of surprise is essential to accidentality.

Entering the temple, the ants in July's sun, their care for work and accidental meetings seem to possess a new monumentality that lingers. One that steers away from the classical expression of power. This reshapes space, a medium that Johannes Luik lively employs. Areas treated with these qualities have the potential to bare twilight between the personal and collective, strength and delicacy, precision and serendipity. A fresh adjective, slowly rediscovered in space.