

Lightning in a bottle

The restoration of Kõltsu Manor in 2010 was a major event for heritage conservation and architecture enthusiasts.



Text: Karin Paulus

Photos: Tiit Veermäe

It is not often that a building in disrepair, or more precisely a timber building, is so gracefully restored. I would like to add a touch of colour by saying that the youngest and one of the smallest manors in the Keila region is like Estonia, which Estonian president Toomas Hendrik Ilves compared to a pristine and small wild strawberry, which is hard to spot but one of the best things ever.

The timber-framed summer residence on the shores of the Gulf of Lahepera dates back to the von Uexkülls – it was built here in the 1890s by Baron Otto von Uexküll's widow, Benedicte. Known at the time as the Wellenhof (German for 'Wave Mansion'), the stately building was not the only one in the area – already then, a variety of villas were being built in the area, a tradition that continued during the time of the Republic of Estonia through the Soviet period and into the present day. The idyllic nature by the sea has inspired the works of many creative people, such as the most famous Laulasmaa holidaymaker, world-famous composer Arvo Pärt.

The architect of the building is unknown and it has been suggested that both the master builder and the contractor played an important role. The building is a sweet picture-postcard fairy-tale castle built in the spirit of famous 19th century

historicism. This means that inspiration is taken from a historical style (e.g. Gothic, Baroque) or several approaches are mixed together. The best-loved example in the world is probably the Neuschwanstein Castle (1892) of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, made famous in popular culture by Disney cartoons and amusement parks. Compared to the palaces of kings, Kõltsu is quite small, but also picturesque – the house is vividly articulated, adorned with a staircase tower, saw-cut gables, and corner chains. The walls of weatherboarding are a lighter shade, while the fittings are dark green. The opulence is accentuated by the Art Nouveau glass veranda, a synonym for the good and modern life of 20th century Europe.

When renovating the building in 2007, architect Jüri Irik (1961-2017) and interior architects Kaire Kemp-Tišler and Ea Andla (ArtAku) were given



a relatively free hand by Kapitel. The result was that the building still has the feel of a residential building, where it is possible to organise grand events like in the 'good old days', comfortably accommodating fifty people. While in recent decades it has been common practice for everything new to be clearly distinctive and of a different design, in the case of Kõltsu a different approach was taken. The aim was to achieve harmony, and so everything that has been added is on the same wavelength as the old and the stately.

On the ground floor, there are two halls, the dining room with its original wainscot ceiling and the 19th-century tiled stove from the Turku tiled stove factory in Finland, which are considered to be the highlights of the halls. In the White Hall, on the other hand, there is a new cream fireplace from Oldschool to match the name. The floor

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is restored with a gorgeous parquet floor with a wind rose, and the ceilings are naturally decorated with chandeliers. The manor is oriented towards hosting cultural events, seminars and receptions, both in the building and in the garden. So it is no wonder that Prime Minister of Estonia at the time Taavi Rõivas had dinner with German Chancellor Angela Merkel here in 2016.

More new things will be added in the outbuildings (the manor steward's house, the stables), designed to better serve the concerts and parties organised there. For example, guests praise the toilets in the robust limestone building, which are a far cry from the traumatic moments experienced when visiting a traditional outhouse.

Kapitel has paid a great deal of attention to the park, where the solution has been created under the hands of the masters of landscape architecture Ülle Grišakov and Triin Järve. So the result is neither

petit bourgeois nor pragmatic, but respectable and surprising in its diversity. Classical design principles and small forms, such as fountains, have been introduced. The manor garden is also spectacular all year round, and the autumnal colour and winter magic proudly play out.

The natural location or, in other words, the views from here, have been perfectly positioned. A small bandstand has also been positioned so that the pool glows blue behind it. From the garden you can hike along paths and bridges, through the forest park and to the sea, which was also an argument in the 19th century for why people loved to rest here. The wrought-iron fences and gates were made by Heigo Jelle, the best known in his field. The bronze sculptures in the manor garden are the work of the colourful Seaküla Simson and Paul Mänd. It is fair to say that the Uexküll's Kõltsu manor is, in every respect, a beautiful home for culture today!





