

Alongside museums and galleries, most major cities boast an artist's former home, now open to the public after their death. In New York, Louise Bourgeois's apartment is about to fulfil this role. According to recent reports, it is going to be 'exactly how she left it' when she passed away, in 2010. Since 2013, Tallinn has also had its own publicly accessible artist's house-museum, founded by the then twenty-eight-year-old Flo Kasearu, who in many ways follows Bourgeois's old dictum: I am using the house – the house is not using me.



me of Sir John Soane's Museum in London. The latter's ingenious display systems and clever use of crammed space were designed by the architect himself during the early nineteenth century, creating a place with an epic atmosphere. The wit and the literary qualities notwithstanding, Kasearu has at the same time firmly grounded her project in a mundane local fabric where neighbours come by for coffee, people place notices on the doorpost declaring an interest in renting an apartment in the house and she takes part in the annual street festival.

Having inherited a restituted wooden house dating from the 1910s in Tallinn's Pelgulinn district and finding it a challenge to maintain and in other ways care for, the young artist decided to turn it into an art project: one with plenty of room for the loving mockery of museological manoeuvres. Kasearu installed a museum café and a giftshop offering the official guidebook as well as mugs, matchboxes and postcards. The self-proclaimed 'museum' archives and storage facilities are specially constructed cupboards placed in the attic; the same space also holds 'an interactive urban installation' – a flap in the roof that allows for both ventilation and a view of the city. In the basement is a workshop where small creations reflective of the creative industries of Estonia are fabricated – most eye-catching is a standard glass jar adorned with fake flowers. A sandpit with toys installed in the back of a real pickup truck makes up the children's corner, and the museum library is placed in the restroom.

Kasearu's *House Museum* performs the emulation of the established artist's house-museum in great detail. However, unlike most buildings preserved as an artistic homage, this one is inhabited by the artist herself, who lives there with her family and a couple of friends. As a consequence it has a functional feeling (enhanced by the presence of a sauna in the garden, which can be booked by anyone). The shoes placed outside the tenants' doors, for example, are not part of an installation: they are simply too dirty to be worn inside.

While sharing a certain level of eccentricity with Kurt Schwitters's 1920s *Merzbau*, especially the slide that allows quick movement from the first floor to the ground floor, Kasearu's *House Museum* mostly reminds

## HOME WORKS

In the first of her 'GWANGJU SERIES' of columns, written as she assembles work for the South Korean biennale's September opening, artistic director *Maria Lind* visits the 'HOUSE MUSEUM' of Flo Kasearu in Estonia

The house itself is a trace of Estonia's twentieth-century geopolitical situation: having been built by Kasearu's great-grandparents roughly a hundred years ago, it was subsequently expropriated by the Soviet state and then returned to the family during the 1990s, following Estonia's independence. Today, the degree to which the museum is embedded in its locality extends to issues of real estate and property relations, of gentrification and other forms of urban development. To own and maintain a big house is demanding on many levels. However, even the challenges brought about by this can prove fortuitous: the necessity of replacing the roof turned out to provide the perfect excuse to make a video filmed from a drone, showing how the handymen fold the tin into giant 'paper airplanes', a homemade defence measure. This occurred right at the time when Russian fighter jets started to fly into both Estonian and Swedish airspace.

This is where the constant force of entropy enters: despite the artist's ambition to use the house rather than the reverse, the museum

is full of references to threats like fire, plane crashes, storms and – slightly less likely – tsunamis. A series of pencil drawings by Kasearu depicts numerous such hazardous scenarios in a manner that would surely have received Robert Smithson's approval. Like any artist's house-museum with dignity, it contains a monument to the artist in question. In this case a bust filled with seeds that will grow and give true expression to the artist's relentless creativity. While at the same time destroying the bust itself.



from top Flo Kasearu, *House Museum*, 2013–ongoing; collection of artefacts in *House Museum*. both images Courtesy the artist

Flo Kasearu will participate in the 11th Gwangju Biennale, 2 September – 6 November