



Perhaps best known to tourists for its cobblestoned Old Town, Estonia's capital city of Tallinn stretches well beyond those beloved medieval walls. Situated on the Baltic Sea, the city—which was honored as one of Europe's co-capitals of culture for 2011—provides more than historic architecture and a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. Home to global tech companies like Skype and Transferwise, Tallinn's offerings meet the needs of its developing start-up culture and growing international influx of visitors. This includes a range of world-class art institutions and thriving artistic neighborhoods that feature both local and international artists.

During our visit to Tallinn for the opening of the expansive, experimental [Kai Art Center](#), we took part in the city's annual [Tallinn Photomonth](#) and explored various other art institutions. Photomonth's extraordinary roster of programming brings many venues together, incorporates pop-ups and even includes a short-film festival. Tallinn's [Museum of Photography](#) and [Kumu Art Museum](#) are worthy destinations, as are the [Positiiv Galerii](#) (affiliated with the magazine of the same name) and [T&K Gallery](#) (Tallinn's only commercial contemporary art gallery). But the five venues highlighted below rank among the most enticing we've seen worldwide.

# COOL HUNTING

# COOL HUNTING

Courtesy of Kai Art Center

## Kai Art Center

An art anchor within the waterfront Noblessner neighborhood, [Kai Art Center](#) occupies the spacious top floor of a reclaimed submarine plant in a complex dating back to 1912. Reimagined by KAOS Architects, a firm founded by two women—Margit Argus and Margit Aule—Kai includes an auditorium and education center in addition to the sprawling main exhibition space. The building's other floors will feature a restaurant, bar and co-working space, all to open in the coming months. But it's the center's slate of programming, which will update quarterly, that truly shines.

# COOL HUNTING

programs). Laaniso tells us, “what sets the Estonia art scene apart is that everyone is super-supportive here. It’s a close-knit community.

People are here to help each other out. Most of the key organizations are very small with teams of only a handful of people.” And yet, Kai’s mission to blend local and international artists elevates awareness of Estonia’s scene to a whole new level.

# COOL HUNTING

by David Graver

## Tallinn Art Hall Foundation

An institution comprising three galleries in Tallinn's Old Town, [Tallinn Art Hall Foundation](#) hosts 15 to 17 contemporary exhibitions each year, as well as talks, concerts and other performances. Unafraid to take programming risks, [Tallinn Art Hall](#)'s exhibitions tackle topics occupying the global cultural consciousness. A dialogue between international and local artists unfolds here, whether it's an analysis of technology and its relationship to art or the growing concerns artists have over climate change (featuring work that actually took each artist's carbon footprint into account).

# COOL HUNTING

by David Graver

## National Film Archive

As the name suggests, the [National Film Archive](#) (otherwise known as Rahvusarhiivi filmiarhiiv) employs archivists and curators to sort through, categorize and preserve film, photo and audio from Estonian history. With film footage dating back to 1908 and plenty of newsreel, amateur works and more, their archive is both diverse and substantial. However, the building—which was formerly a jail—plays hosts to exhibitions of materials discovered within and re-contextualized. For instance, visual artist Aap Tepper's *10 Photographs from Restricted Collections* calls attention to serene images of nature that were once classified as sensitive material and banned by the Soviet regime.



# COOL HUNTING

# COOL HUNTING

Still from Yang Fudong's "Moving mountains," courtesy of Fotografiska Tallinn

## Fotografiska

Opened earlier this year, [Fotografiska Tallinn](#) continues the expansion of the [Stockholm-born art organization](#)'s mission to foster artistic communities around photography. The large Tallinn complex, which occupies many buildings and includes an exemplary rooftop restaurant and bar, rises up in the popular Telliskivi neighborhood. Curation, of course, is regarded with the utmost concern and the recent Alison Jackson and Yang Fudong exhibitions demonstrate the museum's forward-thinking approach. As with other Fotografiska locations, the Tallinn destination maintains long opening hours, from 9AM to 11PM most days. This allows so many more people the opportunity to see the work and take in the stunning compound—and thankfully so.

# COOL HUNTING

Detail shot of Edith Karlson sculpture courtesy of EKKM

## Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia

Home to the riveting (but now complete) Tallinn Photomonth contemporary art biennial, this year entitled *When You Say We Belong To The Light We Belong To The Thunder*, the multi-level Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia (known as [EKKM](#)) spearheads groundbreaking seasonal exhibits. This independent venue offers free admissions to visitors and often puts Estonian artists front and center. As with Tallinn's other institutions, it also hosts events (and parties) that seek to get people excited and talking about art.

*Hero image of Raphaela Shirley's "100 Pink Smoke Candles (twice)" by Tõnu Tunnel, courtesy Kai Art Center*

# COOL HUNTING



fashion, and hospitality, with further specialization in watches, spirits and cocktails. David represents Cool Hunting around the world at events including Baselworld, Milan Design Week, Miami Art Week, Tales of the Cocktail and New York Fashion Week, as well as gallery openings, product launches and cultural happenings.

## POSTED IN CULTURE

[ART](#), [ART EVENTS](#), [ART FESTIVALS](#), [ART GALLERIES](#), [ART MUSEUMS](#), [BALTIC NATIONS](#), [CLASSES](#), [ESTONIA](#), [FOTOGRAFISKA](#), [GALLERIES](#), [KAI ART CENTER](#), [MUSEUMS](#), [TALLINN](#), [TALLINN ART HALL](#), [TELLISKIVI](#), [WORKSHOPS](#), [YANG FUDONG](#)

[← BRASS SVANTE WATERING CAN](#)

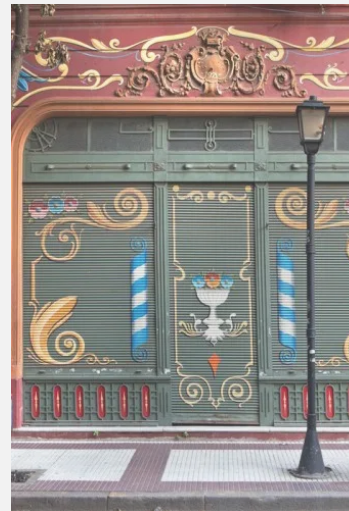
[MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE ADDS YAYOI KUSAMA BALLOON >](#)

## Related

MORE STORIES LIKE THIS ONE



"The Art of Being Good"  
Exhibition at the Tallinn Art Hall



Five Art + Design Destinations  
in Buenos Aires



Yishu 8



Off The Wall Art

# COOL HUNTING