



Contemporary Capacity & Future Plans

## **Brief introduction**

During Soviet times Karosta was a closed military base. Today you may take a bus from Liepaja downtown and within some 15 minutes, after crossing the bridge, you will find yourself in an area full of enthusiastically yelling kids, ruined houses and a magnificent orthodox cathedral in the middle. There are around 7000 people living here.

Having started the action in a couple of rooms the **Culture and Information Centre K@2** now manages already a small network of cultural spaces spread around Karosta, the district of Liepaja. Back in 2000 one would call this area a "ghetto neighbourhood", now this place is a must to visit for everybody interested in ongoing cultural processes in Latvia.

A playroom for kids, gallery of arts, multimedia laboratory and sound studio, artists in residence programme and hostel, free internet access, a small film theatre – all these structures are up and working, open to wider public and artists willing to share their experience among themselves as well as interact with society.

Now we would like to take this further and invest into capacity of the *K@2*, gradually turning Karosta into a safe and colourful educational and artistic playground open to everyone.

We intend to develop a strong, regional and international culture centre – **Campus Karosta** – with a harmonious balance between HARDWARE (physical spaces and structures) and SOFTWARE (cultural events, performances, workshops, exhibitions, skills and brains of people etc.).

## **Mission of the organization**

The aim of the organization is to stimulate positive changes in the society of Karosta by means of art, culture, education, integration and cooperation, thus creating an alternative situation to the one that existed before.

**Persons in charge:****Carl Biorsmark**

Chairman of the Board, filmmaker, photographer, artist & the initiator

[calle@karosta.lv](mailto:calle@karosta.lv)

+371-9798224

**Kristine Briede**

Vice-president of the Board, filmmaker, translator and interpreter

[kristal@parks.lv](mailto:kristal@parks.lv)

+371-9375084

**Lubova Kazimova**

Teacher and leader of the Kids Interest Club

[berni@karosta.lv](mailto:berni@karosta.lv)

**Irita Antonjevica**

Public relations

[irita@karosta.lv](mailto:irita@karosta.lv)

+371-9879250

**Santa Mazika**

Art Critic

[maxla@karosta.lv](mailto:maxla@karosta.lv)

+371-9194369

**Aivis Neimanis**

Coordinator of the Audiovisual Department

[aivis@karosta.lv](mailto:aivis@karosta.lv)

+371-9536314

**Peteris Krievins**

Webmaster

[pablo@karosta.lv](mailto:pablo@karosta.lv)

+371-6448371

**Sergejs Nikolajevs**

Maintenance & Construction

[naglas@karosta.lv](mailto:naglas@karosta.lv)

+371-9716774

**Aija Druvaskalne-Urdze**

Gallery "K. Maxla?"

[aija.u@apollo.lv](mailto:aija.u@apollo.lv)

+371-9595131

## Narrative report from the year 2002

As mentioned above, in order to reach the main goals of the organization we are working parallel in two main directions: the first is called "hardware" – that is physical spaces and structures for the organization, and the other is "software", which means cultural events, performances, workshops, exhibitions, skills and brains of people etc.

### **We have been active on local, regional, national and international levels:**

With success we organized **KASTE** – an international, mixed video, photo and performing arts workshop in one of the abandoned Karosta houses in summer. We call this an open-air event as the KASTE house does not have a roof (yet). Certainly more than a thousand people visited the exhibition of artworks that followed afterwards.

With support of Daniel Langlois Foundation and Canadian Embassy we were able to launch the **Media Laboratory** – a physical and also virtual space for youngsters (age 15 to 25) of Liepaja and Karosta to come and experiment with video filming and montage, sound sampling and editing, web-design, computer graphics and other aspects of new media. Thanks to this "digital kitchen" with all its facilities and also wise guidance of the already experienced artists a student from Liepaja Academy, Ieva Arone, was able to attend and participate with her (first) movie in the international One Minute Movies festival in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

For the very youngest inhabitants of the district – children aged up to 16 - we were able to renovate and provide a space that now hosts the **Youth and Kids Interest Club**. It is open every day to any kid, irrespective of his/her ethnic or social background. There is a teacher in the club who runs various classes (cooking, (break) dancing, digital photo sessions, etc.) and assists those kids who need some help in doing their school homeworks and tasks.

As the majority of Karosta people do not speak Latvian, the K@2 in close cooperation with Latvian Language Learning Centre (governmental org.) has found the possibility to organize **Latvian Language classes**. This will improve the level of mutual understanding between residents of Karosta and also help the non-citizens in their language exam when applying for Latvian citizenship.

Another great event was the opening of **the Gallery of Temporary Arts "K.Maksīa?"** and successful realization of the trilogy of exhibitions (CORRUPTION, PROMISED LAND, CONSCIENCE) for which the gallery received *Annual Latvian Award in Arts 2003*. The most important aim of the gallery is to be a platform for people who want realize their own creative ideas and to react on the socially important things immediately, in time, - temporary. On average there are 300 people visiting every exhibition.

Another example of the platform idée is **the Poets House** (maisonette). Three young poets from Liepaja came to K@2 with their dream to organize a meeting place for youngsters who express themselves within the poetry. What we could invest was the renovation of two rooms and heating system installation for them. Since the beginning of 2005 readings of poetry and prose as well as different workshops and master-classes are regularly taking place there. Or in other words – we are providing Hardware for Software to be installed. One more important point is that the interior of the space was designed by one interior design student as her diploma work. It provided both – well done and properly planned

interior for K@2 and a space for experimentation with theoretical knowledge and practical result for the young designer.

One structure that is crossing the border of "suburb" is analytical newspaper dedicated to cultural themes **K.Kultura**. In the conditions of the lack of critical access to the cultural events this is a platform for independent opinion. The newspaper is made as the wall-paper and spread in Liepaja as posters. It helps to reach our audience and to our audience it guaranties paper reading for free. Besides in the web page of K@2 there is special section <http://www.karosta.lv/kkultura/> where everybody can read it and take part into discussion about the theme. Interactivity and feedback is very important thing in that case.

In the year 2002 we designed and started to realize our long-term strategy project - **Cultural Policy: a New Culture Point on the Map of Europe**, which became one of the sub-components for the Arts and Culture Network Program. Now we refer to this strategy as to **Campus Karosta**. Within the framework of this culture policy in the year we put the start to the

**Artists in Residence** program that has so far hosted Lotte van der Berg, Sara Kolster, Derek Holzer, Anne Verhoijssen (*the Netherlands*), Kassys theatre group (*the Netherlands*), Jesper Nordahl, Filippa Arrias (*Sweden*), Joseph Stoehr (*Germany*), Ivars Graavlejs, Liiga Laurenovicha, Andrejs Grants, Elizabete Melbaarde, Ugjis Viitinjsh, Rasa Shmite & Raitis Shmits, Laila Halilova, Andris Egliitis (*Latvia*), Javier Garcia Manzur, Xavier Millescamps (*France*) and several other artists from *Denmark, the Baltics, Great Britain, Belgium, Byelorussia, Georgia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Macedonia... etc... etc...*

In cooperation with Artists in Residence program we have hosted several stop-motion animation workshops for local youth, a french cirkus workshop for Karosta kids, series of lectures on Media Communication in the arts gallery, lectures on cinematography history and known filmmakers and more.

The general aim is to develop a new multi-dimensional, international and interdisciplinary culture point on the map of Europe, hosting a network of cultural facilities spread around the district of Karosta that are all united into one major structure - **Campus Karosta**. This will be in form of a Centre for Modern Arts and an international university of filmmaking, photography and television with approx. 150 students a year.

All the above and also further mentioned and listed activities are open to wider public free of charge, with no ethnic, religious or gender limitations.

There are five essential fields of activities that we would like to mention in respect

#### **I Maintenance and renovation of the immovable property**

#### **II Media Laboratory – an instrument for creative action and integration**

#### **III "K.Maksla?" – a new culture point on the map of Europe**

Launch of the Artists in Residency program.

#### **IV Everyday activities of the [K@2](#)**

- 1) Youth and Kids Interest Club
- 2) Public internet access (free of charge in order to work towards social integration and give the possibility to socially excluded groups)

- 3) Reading – Watching room - a place to read newspapers and magazines. There are people who cannot afford these media, so in step with our “no excluded groups” motto we provide them this possibility as well as watching of feature films or documentaries on DVD and VHS
- 4) Latvian language courses

**V Creating short-term job opportunities (eg. 3 months contract) for unemployed people of the district**

Use of Human Resources in practical works (building, construction, cleaning of the facilities). This is our input into the social integration for people who couldn't otherwise find job. Benefitters are both the organization and the employed people – K@2 creates job opportunities and receives clean premises in return.

**There are three levels on which Culture and Information Centre [K@2](#) functions - the local, the regional and the international.**

On local level we have cooperated with the city council and municipalities, schools and universities, other cultural organizations and independent groups of artists, culture funding institutions and governmental structures and the press, and even managed to involve into the cultural processes the local army forces.

Speaking of international level – we keep an eye on activities of our partners, friends and artists via the virtual networks worldwide such as NICE and Xchange, since the year 2000 the K@2 has been involved in the Art For Social Change programme – a cultural network initiated and developed by ECF. Now the AFSC is gradually becoming more and more independent and self-sustainable and we have developed good links with our partner organizations in *Poland* (Association of Theatre in Education Wybrzezak), *Macedonia* (PAC Multimedia), *Bulgaria* (Red House), *Romania* (Concept Foundation), *Serbia* (REX Cultural Centre and *Estonia* (NGO Creative Centre LOOVKESKUS). We have had some discussion and feel that there is a good ground for cooperation also with not-yet-official resource centres in *Bosnia* (AlterArt), *Montenegro* (Mobil Art) and *Croatia* (Multimedia Centre MAMA).

An example could be the Karosta Kids' photo exhibition in Vilnius (Lithuania), September 2002. The Visual Communications student Ieva Arone who travelled to Amsterdam with her 1 minute movie “Playground”.

Or the workshops in *Topusko* (Cr), *Belgrade* (Yu), *Tirgu Mures* (Rm) and *Stockholm* (Sw) where people from K@2 actively took part, meeting other cultural coordinators and artists from the above mentioned countries. The next meeting is in March in Gdansk, Poland and this (4<sup>th</sup>) gathering of AFSC resource centres is bound together with a regional workshop *Integration-Interaction*. The K@2 has managed to cover travel costs for five Latvian artists who will join this workshop.