

VILLEM RAAM 100

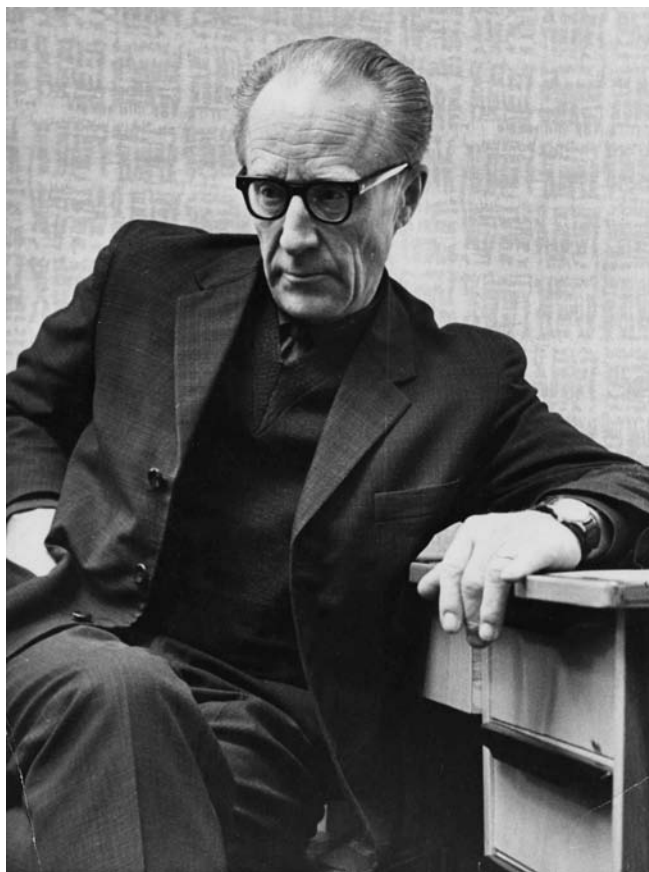


Fig. 1. Villem Raam in the late 1960s. Photo by Boris Mäemets, Archives of the Estonian National Library (Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu arhiiv).

The second volume of the *Baltic Journal of Art History* is dedicated to Villem Raam (1910–1996). Villem Raam was an art historian, conservator and preserver of cultural heritage, whose role in post-war Estonia cannot be underestimated.

His academic research began in the late 1930s, was forcefully interrupted for fifteen years in Siberia and continued, after his return in 1956, until the last years of his life. He was actively involved in building archaeological fieldwork, as well as practical conservation-restoration. His main interest was medieval ecclesiastical architecture, but his field of study ranged from medieval everyday objects to contemporary art. He published over sixty academic articles (including a dozen abroad) and several books. Due to the limited publishing opportunities during the Soviet period, about 130 research reports remained in manuscript (now mainly kept in the Archives of the National Heritage Board). Besides this, he tirelessly worked with the wider public promoting cultural heritage in newspapers, radio, television and through excursions.

The articles in this volume are dedicated to Villem Raam. The first one, by Kaur Altoa, examines the contribution of Villem Raam to the study of medieval architecture. The rest of the articles deal with topics related to the interests of, or research by, Villem Raam. Tiina Kala studies the everyday management of the building fabric of St Nicholas Church in Tallinn in the 15th and 16th century. The ruins of St Nicholas played an important role in the life of Villem Raam, since his working place in the 1950s – the Scientific Restoration Workshop – was literally situated in these ruins. He was likewise involved in the rebuilding of this church and its conversion into a museum of church art instead of a museum of atheism, as initially planned. The conservation, restoration and reconstruction work lasted for over thirty years and its execution probably gave much matter for thought about the church building process in the Middle Ages, which Villem Raam studied in the case of several other churches.

The articles by Jaan Tamm and Villu Kadakas report on the building archaeological finds in Pirita and St Michael's Tallinn convents and in the Jõelähtme church. Pirita was one of the main research objects of Villem Raam and, in this article, Jaan Tamm has relied heavily on the excavation reports from Pirita by Villem Raam. Villu Kadakas had the opportunity to continue the research started by Villem Raam decades earlier of the exceptional Jõelähtme church. Anu Mänd writes about two medieval seals; these particular objects were not studied



Fig. 2. Villem Raam in the ruins of Pirita nunnery in 1979. Photo by Vyatcheslav Polunin.

by Villem Raam, but his interest in lesser arts is well known (for example in connection with the finds from Pirita). The last article of this volume, by Krista Andreson, analyses a wooden crucifix from Kolga-Jaani. One of the starting points of this study is likewise a

paragraph in Villem Raam's book on medieval wooden sculpture. All this shows that the legacy of Villem Raam is still very significant and there is a lot to learn from his thorough working methods, his argumentation and his academic language – even if today we don't always agree with his conclusions.

In the section on sources and documentation two new archaeological finds are presented: a medieval dwelling from Tartu by Aivar Kriiska, Raido Roos and Kaur Alttoa, and a medieval weapon by Ain Mäesalu.

To add a more personal touch, the volume ends with two (little pieces of) memoirs about Villem Raam by his foreign colleagues and friends Lars Olof Larsson and Knut Drake.

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