

# Flo Kasearu confronts domestic violence against women in Tallinn



Courtesy Flo Kasearu. *Photography: Hedi Jaansoo*

The Estonian artist's raw and urgent exhibition, 'Cut Out of Life' in Tallinn, offers a platform to domestic abuse survivors

At Tallinn Art Hall, the largest solo show by Estonian artist Flo Kasearu spotlights one of the most acute and poignant issues of our time: domestic violence against women.

This is undoubtedly a challenging subject to broach, but one of which the artist has a good understanding. In 2009, her mother Margo Orupõld founded a women's shelter in Pärnu, Estonia, one among a wave of refuges to open across the country since the early 2000s. Kasearu's exhibition, 'Cut Out of Life', tells the stories of some of the women who sought help.

Kasearu is perhaps best known for her site-specific art project *House Museum* (Majamuuseum), which – as the name suggests – is both the artist's home, and a work of art addressing labour and gentrification. Her socially charged, wide-ranging practice spans [performance art](#), video, photography, [painting](#) and installation, interrogating topical subjects with an experimental approach.





Above and below: Exhibition view of Flo Kasearu, 'Cut Out of Life', at Tallinn Art Hall. *Photography: Paul Kuimet*

Kasearu has imagined 'Cut Out of Life' in chapters that trace the steps survivors often take to reclaim independence from abusive partners, combining individual narratives with collective views and those rooted in Estonian history. Under the Soviet Union – from which Estonia only gained independence after its dissolution in 1991 – the role of women was complex: they were expected to maintain economic independence, while remaining socially reliant on men. Though the exhibition centres on women in Estonia, these are potent themes beyond its borders. Last year, the UN described a global increase in domestic abuse as a 'shadow pandemic' running in parallel to Covid-19.

The themes Kasearu is confronting are immense, significant and timely. In the main hall, a forest of house plants in various stages of decay nods to the fragility of domestic space. Elsewhere, surreal, almost bodily chair



sculptures are both inviting and unnerving. This is a show as striking for its aesthetic variety as its piercing subject matter.





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Within her juxtaposed blend of media, where readymade objects are armed with new meaning and films narrate deeply personal experiences with universal potency, there is, remarkably, room for humour. As Cathrin Mayer, curator of the exhibition says, 'With an abundance of conceptual thought, wit, and humour, this show addresses the very serious and acute problems around domestic violence and follows the journey of women on the course of regaining independence and self-determinacy.'

Kasearu's distinctive blend of political rhetoric and subversive wit frames these women not as victims but as empowered, critical and resilient voices questioning one of the most pressing and devastating issues of contemporary times. §