



Tõnis Vint, *Untitled (Sunset at Sea)*, 1966, ink paper, 14 x 14".
TALLINN

Tõnis Vint

TEMNIKOVA & KASELA GALLERY

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Despite his local reputation as a veritable guru of unofficial art and media in Soviet-occupied Estonia—a reputation that earned him at least seven years under twenty-four-hour surveillance—Tõnis Vint (1942–2019) managed to never get into any direct trouble with the authorities. An artist, theorist, designer, and salon organizer, Vint devoted his life to the dissemination of information derived from a vast range of visual and semiotic systems at a time when the Baltics were mired in a deep and prolonged political aesthetic stasis and exchange with the rest of the world was prohibited almost entirely.

“Guided Randomness: Early Ink Drawings by Tõnis Vint” showcases a handful of his experiments on paper. These meditative, abstract compositions, framed in pairs or spread out across a table, feature a wide range of geometric structures and freehand line patterns rendered in black, blue, and red, with occasional spots of green to strike a harmonious balance. Ingenious in their purity and simplicity, they reflect Vint’s academic research into Eastern calligraphic traditions, tantric symbolism, and ornament systems in Baltic folk art, as well as his tenure as the graphic designer of the art almanac *Kunst*. Vint aspired toward a synthesis of not only artistic genres and periods but aesthetic and philosophical traditions, culminating in a kind of transcendence of geography, spatiality, and time through the visual itself.

Vint’s work draws comparisons to the 1980s-era APTART movement in Moscow or, even earlier, the Italian-accented, Buddhist-informed Punto movement of the 1960s. It is no coincidence that, like Vint, both these movements formed in the long shadow of the Cold War, reacting to cultural and geopolitical isolation with lyrical meditations on human connectedness.

— Jeppu Ugelvig