

Patching Together a Thousand Pieces.

Tombstones of Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church: History, Restoration and Layout in the Exposition of the Niguliste Museum in the 1970s

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This article is dedicated to the questions of conservation and exposition of tombstones in Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church undertaken under the guidance of the art historian Mai Lumiste in the 1970s. The restoration of these grave markers is analysed in the wider context of conservation methods and practices in Soviet Estonia. In addition, the article addresses the issues of the conservation and exposition of tombstones in other churches in Tallinn. An overview of the history of and research on these grave markers is provided, including their fate and reception before the conservation work in the 1970s.

Walking around in the Niguliste Museum in the former St Nicholas' Church, we can see tombstones from the medieval and early modern periods in the floor and on the walls. These grave markers have been a historical and integral part of the ecclesiastical space for centuries (figs. 1, 2). Generally, however, we do not think about why they have survived in this condition and whether, and to what extent, their current layout corresponds to their original location(s).

The collection of the tombstones of Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church was one of the most prominent in Estonia before World War II.¹ Almost all of the church furnishings remaining in the building were destroyed in the bombing raid in March 1944; all the tombstones in the church were also damaged² (figs. 3, 4). The fate of the damaged tombstones was uncertain for almost a quarter of a century after the war. Restoration of the stones, which were in very poor condition, was started in the early 1970s on the initiative of the art historian Mai Lumiste. Currently, the Niguliste

1 E. v. Nottbeck, W. Neumann, *Geschichte und Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Reval*. Bd. 2. *Die Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt*. Reval: Franz Kluge, 1904, pp. 145–173.

2 M. Lumiste, R. Kangropool, *Niguliste kirik*. Tallinn: Kunst, 1990, pp. 56, 60.

Museum exhibits over a hundred tombstones or their fragments from the 13th–17th centuries, forming the largest collection of its kind in Estonia.³ What makes the story of the restoration of the tombstones unique is the fact that never before had stone carvings in such bad condition been restored so extensively, nor has this been repeated since. This was also methodically highly complicated undertaking.

Before focusing on the restoration of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church, it's important to point out that the church, left in ruins in World War II, was one of the two parish churches of medieval Tallinn, and its furnishings made it one of the most magnificent churches on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. Although the lion's share of the artworks of the church, indicative of the bygone glory of the Hanseatic merchants, was destroyed completely in the last great war, some of the masterpieces were salvaged, including the *Danse macabre* by Bernt Notke and the magnificent retable of the high altar from the workshop of Hermen Rode, both from Lübeck, from the end of the 15th century.

The renovation and reconstruction of St Nicholas' Church was started in 1949 and lasted, with intervals, till the beginning of the 1980s, culminating in 1984 with the opening of the building as a branch of the Art Museum of Estonia.⁴ Mai Lumiste joined the restoration project in 1970, after the work had died down in the 1960s. She occupies a unique position in the conservation history in Estonia as one of the leading authors of the concept of restoring and rebuilding St Nicholas' Church. The rebuilding of the church lasted for over thirty years, making it one of the most significant objects of restoration during the Soviet era, and reflecting the methods and principles of restoration of that time. Mai Lumiste's concept was based on the idea of recreating the ecclesiastical building as close to the original as possible by exhibiting its clean spatial form, at the same time paying attention to exposing the different stages of its construction.⁵ Despite the conversion of the former church into a museum, the primary goal was to recreate the original spatial layout.

A separate issue is the ideology of rebuilding a church ruin and the question of the hierarchy of the objects selected for restoration in Soviet Estonia. In 1947 St Nicholas' Church appeared among the 256 objects on the first list of architectural monuments protected by the Estonian SSR. The importance of the building and its restoration is also proved by the fact that St Nicholas' Church was one of the nine architectural monuments of Soviet Union-wide significance located in Estonia,

3 Extensive overview of the research and historiography on medieval tombstones: M. Loit, *Keskaegsest surmakultuurist ja hauatähistest reformatsioonieelse Tallinna kirikutes ja kloostrites*. – Vana Tallinn XVII (XXI). Tallinn: Estopol, 2006, pp. 17–21, notes 2–32, pp. 171–172. In addition to the historiography presented in the aforementioned article, material on tombstones of the early modern period has also been published in the past decade: S. Mäeväli, *Matustest ja hauatähistest Tallinna toomkirikus*. Tallinn: Morgan Stuudio, 2004; K. Kodres, *Über ein Bildmotiv in der Sepulkralkunst im Nachreformatorischer Estland*. – *Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte im Baltikum. Studien zur Kunstgeschichte Kurlands*. (Homburger Gespräch 24.) Kiel: M. C. A. Böckler-Mare Balticum-Stiftung, 2008, pp. 67–84.

4 The history of restoration of St Nicholas' Church is briefly summed up here: M. Lumiste, R. Kangroopool, *Niguliste kirik*, pp. 56–58.

5 J. Maiste, *Denkmalpflege in Estland. Die Suche nach Identität*. – *Nordost-Archiv. Zeitschrift für Regionalgeschichte*. Neue Folge 1997, Bd. 6 (1), p. 305.

as determined by the Architectural Committee of the Soviet Union.⁶ Even though St Nicholas' Church was restored as a museum, the former ecclesiastical building proved to be an ideologically complicated object. Yet, the entire concept of restoration and the adjustment of the church to be used as a museum was entrusted to specialists in the field.

The contribution of Mai Lumiste to the Estonian history of art mostly concerns the architecture and renovation of St Nicholas' Church, and her research on the Tallinn *Danse macabre* and Netherlandish altarpieces. Much less is known of her work in studying and restoring the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church.⁷ The main reason for this is the fact that most of her research in this area is still in files, as texts of manuscripts and handwritten notes.⁸ Her exhaustive notes, however, give us an idea of the extent of her work in the archives.⁹ Also, it is not frequently remembered that restoring the tombstones in the 1970s and 1980s was a part of the renovation of St Nicholas' Church that received a great deal of criticism and generated a lot of passion, reaching even the pages of newspapers.

The goal of the present article is to reconstruct the course and analyse the reasons behind the restoration and exhibiting of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church, and the concepts and methods employed in the 1970s. The article also attempts to place the work done in St Nicholas' Church in the larger context of the general methods and practices used in Soviet Estonia, posing the question of whether or not the same principles were followed regarding the restoration of St Nicholas' Church and the works of art there (tombstones).

A short history of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church and their study is necessary to illustrate the fate of the grave markers and attitudes to them before restoration in the Soviet times and their repositioning in the floor of the church. This will also provide background to explain why such decisions were taken in the 1970s. The article also touches upon the practices of restoration of tombstones based on the work done in the churches of the Tallinn Dominican friary, the Bridgettine convent and the Tallinn Cathedral.

6 A more detailed review of restoration and cultural politics in Soviet Estonia: K. Kodres, *Restaurierung und das Problem der nationalen Identität. Paradoxa der sowjetischen Kulturpolitik in Estland*. – Nordost-Archiv. Zeitschrift für Regionalgeschichte. Neue Folge 1997, Bd. 6 (i), pp. 241–272.

7 Mai Lumiste's legacy and bibliography summed up: J. Kaljundi, Mai Lumiste (23. mai 1932 – 12. jaanuar 1983) loominguline pärand. – Kunstiteadus. Kunstikriitika 6. Tallinn: Kunst, 1986, pp. 291–298.

8 M. Lumiste, Niguliste kirik. Antoniuse kabeli hauaplaatide paigaldamine. Tallinn: ENSV Ministrite Nõukogu Riiklik Ehituskomitee, Vabariiklik Restaureerimisvalitsus, 1973. Manuscript. Archives of Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department (hereafter TKVA), inv. N5, item 250C; M. Lumiste, Ettepanek hauaplaatide pro fragmentide paigaldamiseks pikihoone, koori ja Väikese kabeli põrandatesse ning maa-aluse vestibüüli seintele. Kõide III-9. Tallinn: ENSV Ministrite Nõukogu Riiklik Ehituskomitee. Kultuurimälestiste Riiklik Projekteerimise Instituut, 1979. Manuscript. TKVA, inv. N5, item 250B.

9 M. Lumiste's manuscript 'Niguliste põhja-eeskojas säilinud hauaplaatide loetelu ja kirjeldus seisuga 1969. aasta jaanuaris' with notes from secondary literature and archival sources is kept in Tallinn City Archives (hereafter TLA), coll. R-242, inv. 1, no. 247.

The history of and research on tombstones of Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church

Being buried inside a church was a privilege in the medieval and early modern periods. Usually the deceased were interred in cemeteries outside of churches. Purchasing a burial chamber in a church was expensive and only the wealthy could afford it. The hierarchy of the locations of burial chambers in a church was a matter of utmost importance. The most prestigious were, as a rule, in the chancel and in the vicinity of altars. As grave markers, tombstones were located on top of the burial chambers, forming the surface of the floor of the church (fig. 5).

The tombstones that are and were situated in St Nicholas' Church mostly date back to the 14th–17th centuries. Mostly tombstones from the early modern period, the 16th–17th centuries, have survived. The majority of them had covered the burial chambers of wealthy Tallinn citizens. However, many of the preserved tombstones once belonged to the town's trade and crafts guilds. The majority of the associations of craftsmen and citizens of Tallinn were responsible for providing their members with final resting places. In St Nicholas' Church, there were altars and/or burial chambers belonging to the Great Guild, the Brotherhood of the Black Heads, the St Canute's Guild, butchers, furriers, shoemakers, etc.¹⁰

The re-use of tombstones and burial sites was a widespread practice for centuries. As a rule, purchased burial sites were hereditary. When, however, there were no heirs, the church had the right to sell the burial chamber to new buyers. Besides commissioning new tombstones, ones already in existence were used, which the new owners had re-carved. The oldest preserved tombstone in St Nicholas' Church is dated 1309, and is currently located in the chancel. This tombstone was re-used later.¹¹

There are no records of the medieval layout of tombstones in St Nicholas' Church. The earliest records and a list of the tombstones that have survived were started in 1603.¹² On the initiative of the church warden Jobst Dunte, the tombstones were numbered and information about the owners was written down. The numbering was started in the chancel and ended under the tower. In the 17th century, there were 180 burial sites and tombstones in the church, each of which was numbered. A special book, kept until the end of the 18th century, was created to show the ownership of the tombstones. There was a separate page for every burial site, stating the number of the site, the owner(s) and changes regarding ownership.

The first visual source of the layout of the tombstones in St Nicholas' Church is from 1765. A detailed plan of location and an accompanying list was made then to preserve a better overview of the tombstones and their owners.¹³ According to

10 A. Mänd, Kes on kes Niguliste pealtari retaablil. – *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi* 2009, kd. 18 (1/2), p. 31; A. Mänd, Suhted kirikuga ja usulised kombetäitmised. – *Tallinna Suurgild ja gildimaja. Peatoim.* T. Liibek. Tallinn: Eesti Ajaloomuuseum, 2011, pp. 81–82, 92–94.

11 E. v. Nottbeck, W. Neumann, *Geschichte und Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Reval*, p. 165; M. Loit, *Keskaegsest surmakultuurist...*, p. 55. A shield and a date 1669 were carved in the middle of the flagstone in the 17th century. According to the text it belonged to Jürgen Kraus and his heirs and was located in the south aisle of the church in the end of the 19th century.

12 TLA, coll. 31, inv. 1, no. 318.

13 TLA, coll. 230, inv. 1, no. B.I., fol. 16.

the index that follows the list of 1603, the number of tombstones had risen to 195. The earliest known ground plan of St Nicholas' Church, including the furnishings, was made in 1691 by Heinrich Julius Woltemate.¹⁴ Comparing the two plans, it can be seen that there were burial sites and tombstones in the entire area of the nave; however, most of them were located in the passages between the pews. Only in the western part of the nave, in St Anthony's Chapel and the North Hall did the burial sites cover the entire space of the floor.

A decree of Empress Catherine II from the end of 1772 forbade internment in churches in the Russian Empire. In reality, it took effect a few years later. In 1774 the Tallinn Town Council allotted some land in Telliskopli to the congregation of St Nicholas' Church for a cemetery. The last person to be buried in St Nicholas' Church was Peter August von Holstein-Beck, who died in 1775.¹⁵

Many tombstones were removed from the chancel of St Nicholas' Church in the late 1840s in the course of restoration and renovation. The removed tombstones and their fragments were used to fill the floor in the North Hall.¹⁶ In 1884 two rows of tombstones were removed from the floor of the nave of St Nicholas' Church due to the instalment of pipes for heating. Initially they were going to be destroyed, but this plan was abandoned by order of the pastor of the congregation, Justus Nikolaus Ripke. Several of the tombstones were placed on the wall at the entrance to the church.¹⁷ Also dating back to the end of the 19th century is a historical overview of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church, compiled by Eugen von Nottbeck, which was published in the book *Geschichte und Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Reval*. A thorough description of 93 tombstones was provided, supported by drawings.¹⁸ This list is shorter than the earlier and later ones, since the pews blocked access to many of the tombstones. It also does not list the fragments of tombstones. Photos of the interior of St Nicholas' Church from the late 19th and early 20th centuries show that the majority of the area of the nave was covered by a wooden floor. The floor of the chancel, having been restored in the mid 19th century, had been raised and was covered with new flagstones. The tombstones were, therefore, visible mainly in the western part of the nave, in St Anthony's Chapel and in the North Hall.

In 1926 the heating shafts under the floor, next to the walls of the nave, were renovated and the basement of the sacristy was converted to a boiler room. Drawings by Nikolai Paulsen originate from that time and they also depict the burial chambers next to the walls of the nave and the chancel.¹⁹ In the course of rebuilding, a few tombstones were removed.

On 9 March 1944 St Nicholas' Church burned during a Soviet air raid. Almost all of the furnishings inside the church were destroyed. A few years later the vaults

14 National Archive of Sweden (hereafter RA), Livonica: Gen. guv. i Estland A. J. De la Gardie t. K. M:t 1692 2/1, bl 5.

15 M. Lumiste, R. Kangroopool, Niguliste kirik, p. 55.

16 E. v. Nottbeck, W. Neumann, *Geschichte und Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Reval*, p. 145. About the restoration works in the middle of the 19th century see H. Üprus, *Restaureerimistööd Niguliste kirikus aastail 1847–1850*. – *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur* 1970, nr. 3, pp. 20–24.

17 M. Loit, *Keskaegsest surmakultuurist...*, p. 50.

18 E. v. Nottbeck, W. Neumann, *Geschichte und Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Reval*, pp. 145–173.

19 RA, Helge Kjellins baltiska samling, 720987, 34, 1–9 St Nikolai kyrka, Tallinn (Reval).

collapsed, breaking most of the tombstones in the nave. The grave markers in St Anthony's Chapel and the North Hall were in a better state. The archival and photo material from the post-war decades gives us an idea of the terrible condition of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church.²⁰ Of the nearly two hundred tombstones, only a quarter, or approximately 50, had survived by 1969.²¹ The salvageable grave markers were those that had broken into bigger pieces; however, most of the tombstones had been reduced to rubble.

The question of restoring the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church arose once more in the early 1970s, with Mai Lumiste emerging as the chief author of the concept of restoration of the church. Her first notes and lists of tombstones of St Nicholas' Church, relying on thorough archive materials, originate from 1969.²² In 1972–1976 tombstones and their fragments were collected from the nave, St Anthony's Chapel and the North Hall, and the work on their restoration was started. Based on Mai Lumiste's reports, 55 tombstones were placed in St Anthony's Chapel and 32 in the nave; the fragments of tombstones were not mentioned. According to the catalogue of tombstones of St Nicholas' Church from 2002, compiled by Mari Loit, 109 tombstones and their fragments were incorporated into the floor and walls of the church.²³

Restoration and layout of tombstones of Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church in the 1970s

Today St Anthony's Chapel presents the most authentic picture of how the tombstones were once located in St Nicholas' Church. The tombstones renovated in the 1970s were incorporated into the surface of the floor in accordance with Mai Lumiste's designs. The plan she suggested for the restoration and layout of tombstones in St Anthony's Chapel was developed in 1973.²⁴ The text explains in detail the layout principles of the tombstones; the methods of restoration, however, were only described briefly. The suggestions were backed up by a thorough list of the tombstones placed in the floor of the chapel, based on archive materials, including their owners and original locations (figs. 6, 7).

The condition of St Anthony's Chapel required full reconstruction of the floor. Yet, unlike the later floor layout of the nave, the situation was made easier in the chapel as there were no heating and ventilation shafts or electrical cables planned under the floor. Since the tombstones of St Anthony's Chapel had escaped the

20 Tallinn tules. Dokumente ja materjale Tallinna pommitamisest 9./10. märtsil 1944. Toim. J. Kivimäe, L. Kõiv. (Tallinna Linnaarhiivi toimetised 2.) Tallinn, 1997, pp. 175–179 (Estonian State Archives (hereafter ERA), coll. R-364, inv. 1, item 124, pp. 30–34). The War Damage Act of Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church from 1945 names 65 destroyed tombstones from the 14th–17th centuries. Niguliste hauaplaadid I. TKVA, inv. N 5, item 305A; Niguliste hauaplaadid II. TKVA, inv. N 5, item 305B. Photos of tombstones by Teddy Böckler in 1960 and 1961.

21 M. Lumiste, R. Kangroopool, Niguliste kirik, p. 60.

22 TLA, coll. R-242, inv. 1, no. 247.

23 M. Loit, Tallinna Niguliste kiriku hauaplaatide kataloog. Tallinn, 2002. Manuscript. Collections of Art Museum of Estonia, p. 4.

24 TKVA, inv. N5, item 250C.

wartime destruction with less damage and were still mainly situated in the chapel, determining their original location was easier. Moreover, the locations of the grave markers there had not been as extensively changed over the centuries as in the nave. It was, therefore, possible, relying on archival research, to place many of the tombstones in their original historical locations. In the text of her suggestions, Mai Lumiste emphasises that the floor of the chapel was to be restored following the traditions of covering church floors with tombstones. The almost 200-square-metre floor was covered with 39 tombstones that were almost intact and, in addition, 16 smaller fragments. All of the tombstones that were originally from St Anthony's Chapel were left in their original locations. Nine tombstones from the North Hall (marked with Es on the plan) and two from the nave (marked with Ks on the plan) were added.²⁵ The layout plan also shows the use of a few smaller fragments of tombstones from the nave. No new stone material was used when placing the stones as closely side by side as possible. Fragments of old stone plates were used as connecting pieces. An important element in the layout was placing the 'less attractive' tombstones in the more frequented areas of the floor. The figurative grave markers were not incorporated into the floor; the same principle was used later in the nave. For example, the tombstones of Adam Schapfer and Alexander von Essen, originally located in St Anthony's Chapel, were placed in the vestibule, on the back wall of the memorial chapel of Peter August Friedrich von Holstein-Beck.

The tombstones were laid out in the floor of St Anthony's Chapel in east-west and north-south orientations.²⁶ The underlying idea in the chapel was that only the tombstones whose original locations had been ascertained were to be exhibited in their exact spots.²⁷ The history of the tombstones of St Nicholas Church showed that several of them had changed ownership in the course of centuries and their locations had been, for different reasons, changed during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The restoration and carving of the stones was done by three men: Rein Kaur, and father and son August and Oskar Vasar. Although the file of suggestions does not contain information about the restoration methods of the tombstones, the knowledge exists thanks to personal memories and a few references in archives.²⁸ As the tombstones were in extremely poor condition, broken and occasionally only 3–5 cm thick (the normal thickness was approx. 15–20 cm), it was decided to put them together on concrete bases in metal frames (approx. 12 cm thick) to preserve their original shape. The stone fragments were glued together, and cleaned of dirt, paint and plaster spatter. The assembling of the tombstones occurred on the principle of putting together a mosaic. A concrete base was cast upon a frame with metal fittings, on which the pieces of stone were then laid out. Two types of adhesive mastic were used in restoration. The repairs were chiefly done with a mixture of sifted

25 TKVA, inv. N5, item 250C, fol. 1.

26 M. Loit, *Keskaegsese surmakultuurist...*, p. 45. Although in a traditional burial the person's head was towards west, there are cases of Christian burials in the north-south orientation in Estonia.

27 TKVA, inv. N5, item 250C, fol. 2.

28 Mai Lumiste's reply to Ülo Puustak's inquiry, 1977. TLA, coll. R-242, inv. 1, no. 157, fol. 51; Recollections of Rein Kaur. Written down by students of the Department of Cultural Heritage and Conservation of the Estonian Academy of Arts, supervised by Isabel Aaso-Zahradnikova, Head of Sculpture Conservation Studio. Tallinn, 2010. Manuscript in the ownership of the author.

limestone dust and white or grey cement. Hot mastic, comprised of resin, limestone dust and stearin-paraffin, was used for smaller repairs.²⁹

The leading principle was that all repairs had to be clearly visible, meaning that the original would be easily identified. New areas, such as the corners of the tombstones, were restored only in the general form. The repairs made in the course of restoration can, therefore, still be observed. The lifting and moving of the tombstones was done by hand. The heavy plates, weighing from 500 to 1500 kilos, were moved on rollers. The tombstones of St Anthony's Chapel were, to a large extent, re-carved. The main reason for this was the poor legibility of the worn-out and patched stones. According to Rein Kaur, this was done only on the edges of the ornaments, leaving the bottom surfaces of the decor untouched. On several tombstones, the missing parts of the decor and the original design were marked with slightly accentuated contour lines (figs. 8, 9).

While the floor of St Anthony's Chapel was almost entirely covered with tombstones, partially proceeding from their original layout, the later spatial solution in the nave and other areas from 1979 was different. The main reasons were primarily technical: there were heating shafts next to the walls of the church, maintenance tunnels under the floor and electrical wiring around the pillars. Also, the flagstone floor was already being installed. The exposition of the museum, mainly presented on the walls of the nave or in the vicinity of the pillars, had to be considered. The list contains 32 tombstones, with a total area of approx. 83 m², and describes their extremely poor condition prior to the restoration. Several of the broken stones had had their corners and edges chopped off. By that time, the late 1970s, the restoration of the tombstones had already been started, with 14 of them already put together on metal frames.

Mai Lumiste explained the solution in the nave, referring to the historical tradition of changing the location of the tombstones in the course of centuries, the lack of space and the art historical value of the stones. The majority of the tombstones in the nave were worn out and partially illegible. Unlike the stones in St Anthony's Chapel, they were not re-carved. Figurative tombstones were placed in the room under the tower and on the walls of the first vestibule. Lumiste stated that placing the tombstones in the entire floor of the church between flagstones would 'help enhance the historical colouring of the room'.³⁰ She also emphasised that the only possible place to exhibit the tombstones and their fragments was St Nicholas' Church. Similarly to the solution used in St Anthony's Chapel, all the larger tombstones were restored on metal frames cast with concrete. Today this can easily be observed on the stones attached to the wall with metal anchors. This method also enables the tombstones in the floor to be lifted, if necessary.

29 This type of mastic was also used when repairing stone stairs.

30 TKVA, inv. N 5, item 250B, fols. 1-2.

Criticism of the restoration of the tombstones of Tallinn's St Nicholas' Church and restoration practices of tombstones in Soviet Estonia from the 1960s to 1980s

Questions regarding the methods of restoration of the tombstones in St Nicholas' Church arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, mainly regarding the work done on the tombstones of St Anthony's Chapel. The harshest criticism was directed at the re-carving of tombstones and whether this had been done in accordance with the principles of cultural heritage protection and the Venice Charter of 1964.

The topic of authenticity arose in post-World War II Europe in the context of extensive restoration and renovation. By the 1970s, the Venice Charter, addressing these problems, had become the fundamental text used on a daily basis by the Estonian heritage protectors and restorers. Most widely quoted was an extract from Article 9 of the Charter: 'It (restoration) must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp.'³¹ Even though the architectural restoration of St Nicholas' Church largely followed the ideas of the Venice Charter, critics stated that the restoration of the tombstones had ignored the principles of the document. The question of the partial reconstruction and authenticity of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church also reflects changes and shifts in concepts of restoration during the Soviet period. While from the 1950s to 1970s avoiding reconstruction was preferred, the 1970s to 1980s were characterised by 'stylistic restoration and reconstruction', aiming at aesthetic uniformity. The mid-1980s saw a turn towards restoration distinguishing between the old and the new and a renewed valuing of authenticity.³²

In 1979 an article was published by Fredi Tomps, the Head of the State Inspection of Architectural Monuments, on the restoration work in the Old Town of Tallinn, containing severe criticism of the restoration of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church. Tomps says in his article, 'One can not overlook the great mistake made in covering the floor of St Anthony's Chapel with carved tombstones. All the carvings of great artistic value from the 16th-18th centuries have been re-carved. This has reduced the historical and artistic value of the stones to nought, and nothing will prevent the brand new carved inscriptions in the floor from wearing out again.'³³

In retrospect, it is still possible to say that other than the re-carving of the original decor, the work was largely done following the articles of the Venice Charter.³⁴ In the course of reconstruction, the original volumes of the tombstones were observed, the new areas were clearly distinguishable from the originals and the new decor was accentuated by thin markings only. When answering the criticism and official inquiries³⁵ Mai Lumiste presented and explained the chosen methods briefly

31 J. Maiste, *Denkmalpflege in Estland*, p. 305.

32 K. Kodres, *Arhitektuuripärand: ideoloogia, poliitika ja tegevuspraktika*. Manuscript for *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*, vol. 6/II (forthcoming in 2014). Manuscript in the ownership of the author.

33 F. Tomps, *Restaureerimistöödest Tallinna vanalinnas*. - *Ehitus ja Arhitektuur* 1979, nr. 2, p. 46.

34 International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments (The Venice Charter 1964), http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

35 Inquiry by Ülo Puustak, Head of the State Conservation Board of the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR from 15 November 1977. TLA, coll. R-242, inv. 1, no. 157, fol. 50.



1.

Interior of St Anthony's Chapel in the early 20th century.
Photo Tallinn City Archives.

Antoniuse kabeli sisevaade 20. sajandi alguses.
Foto Tallinna Linnaarhiiv.



2.

Interior of St Anthony's Chapel in 2010.
Photo Art Museum of Estonia.

Antoniuse kabeli sisevaade 2010. aastal.
Foto Eesti Kunstimuseum.



3.

The nave and chancel of St Nicholas' Church in 1944.
Photo National Heritage Board.

Niguliste kiriku pikihoone ja kooriruum 1944. aastal.
Foto Muinsuskaitseamet.



4.

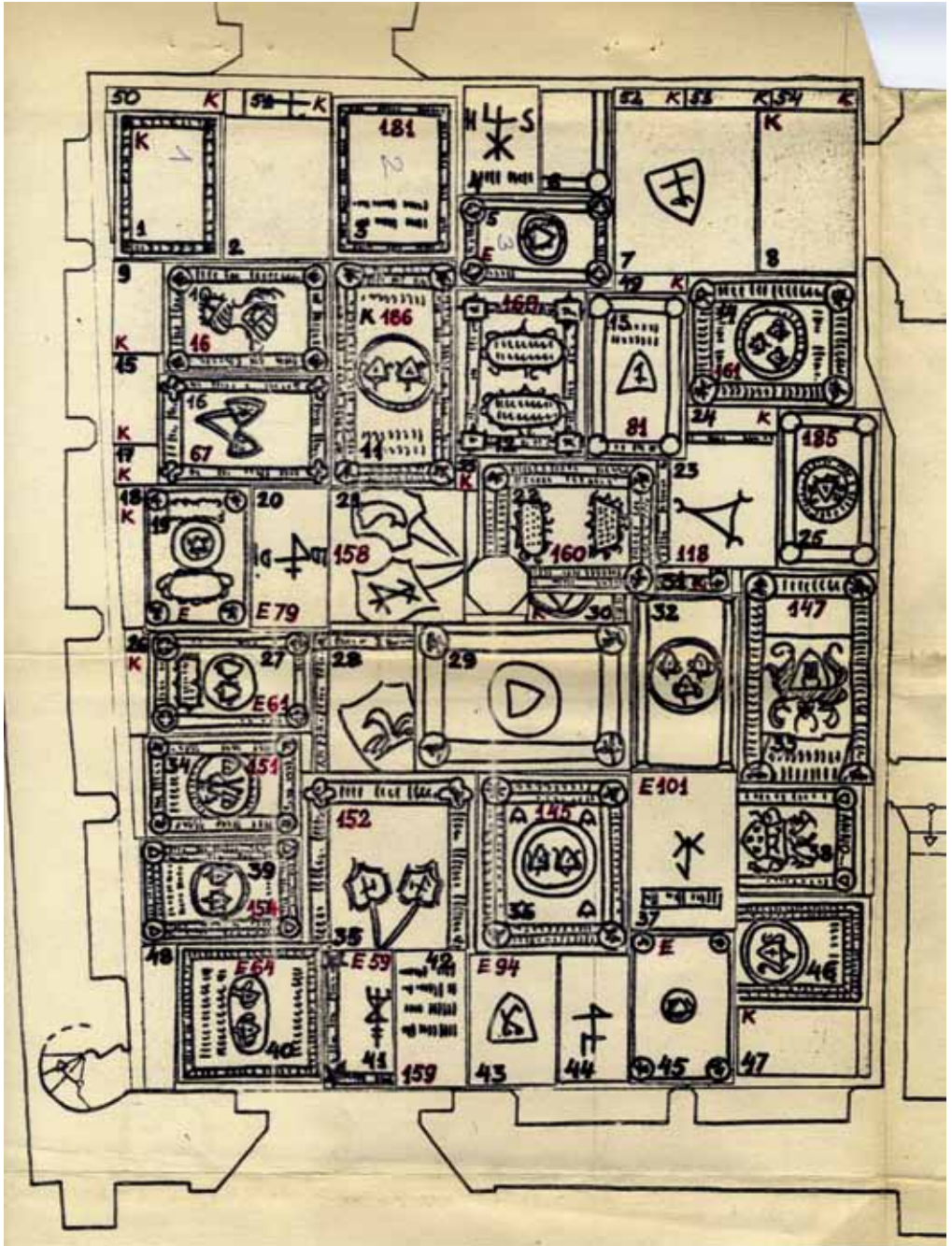
Broken tombstone from the northern aisle of the church before restoration (1970s).
Photo Archives of Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department.

Kiriku põhjalöövīs asunud purunenud hauaplaat enne restaureerimist (1970. aastad).
Foto Tallinna Kultuuriväärtuste Ameti arhiiv.



5. Burial chambers in the eastern part of the nave in St Nicholas' Church in 1965.
Photo National Heritage Board.

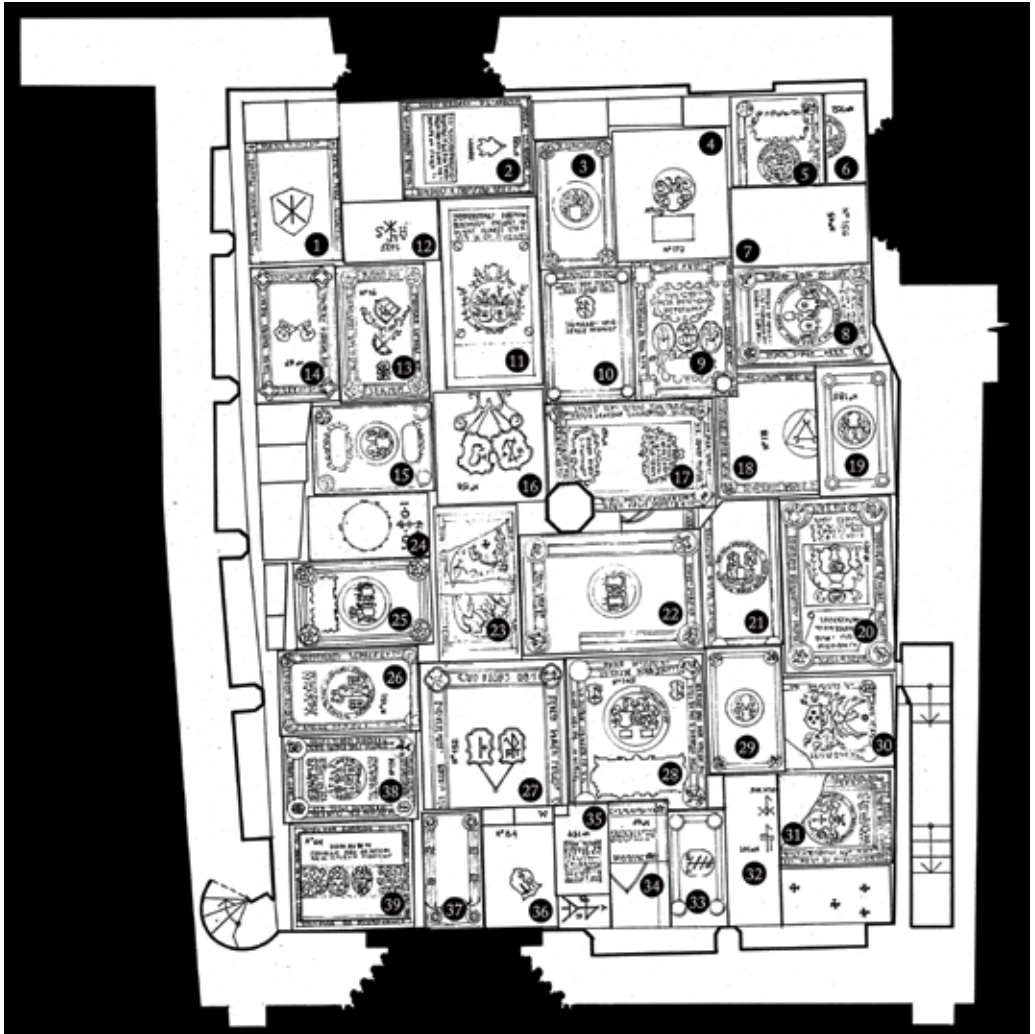
Hauakambrid Niguliste pikihoone kesklöövi idaosas (1965).
Foto Muinsuskaitseamet.



6.

Draft plan of the placement of the tombstones in St Anthony's Chapel (1973). Archives of Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department.

Antoniuse kabeli hauaplaatide pörandasse paigutamise visand (1973). Tallinna Kultuuriväärtuste Ameti arhiiv.



7.

Final plan of the placement of the tombstones in St Anthony's Chapel (1984).
Art Museum of Estonia.

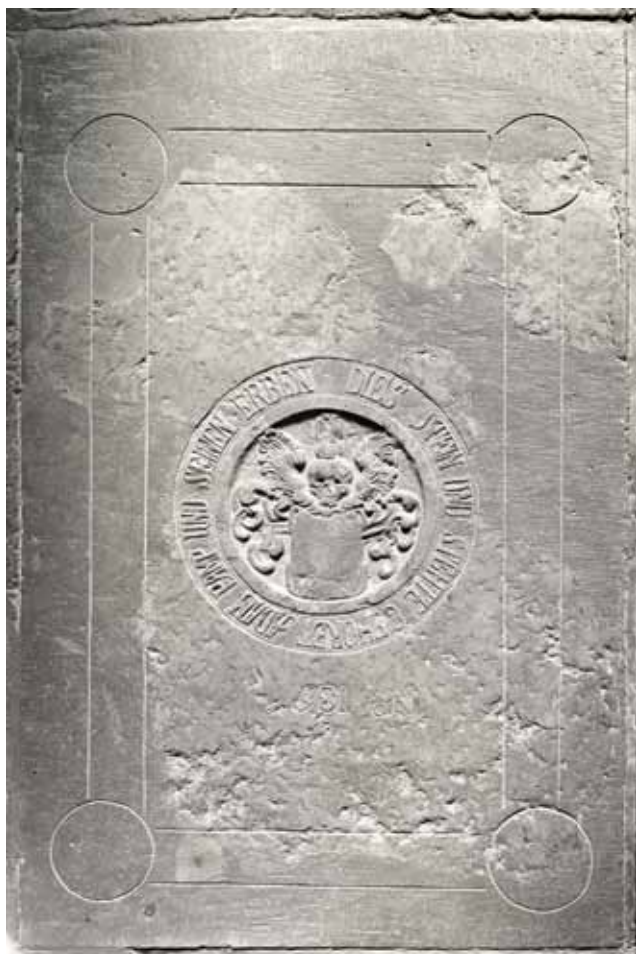
Antoniuse kabeli hauaplaatide põrandasse paigutamise lõplik plaan (1984).
Eesti Kunstimuseum.



8.

Adam Pampe's broken tombstone before restoration.
Photo Tallinn Culture and Heritage Department.

Adam Pampe purunenud hauaplaat enne restaureerimist.
Foto Tallinna Kultuuriväärtuste Amet.



9.

Adam Pampe's broken tombstone after restoration.
Photo Art Museum of Estonia.

Adam Pampe purunenud hauaplaat pärast restaureerimist.
Foto Eesti Kunstimuseum.



10.

Tombstone of Johannes Ballivi on the wall of the southern aisle in St Nicholas' Church.
Photo Art Museum of Estonia.

Johannes Ballivi hauaplaat kinnitatuna Niguliste kiriku lõunalövi seinale.
Foto Eesti Kunstimuuseum.

and explained the nature of the work carried out. In restoring the tombstones, their art value, conservation and further use were prioritised.³⁶

Functionality was another complicated issue. Article 5 of the Venice Charter stressed the socially useful purpose of conservation and preservation of monuments. In Soviet Estonia, however, restoring some monuments for their original purpose was no longer possible. Therefore, St Nicholas' Church, and the Kuressaare and Narva Castles were restored as museums; several manor houses became central offices for collective farms, schools or representational buildings.³⁷ In regard to the tombstones, it has to be emphasised that, to a large extent, their functionality was preserved.

The discussion on the layout of the tombstones in St Nicholas' Church continued. The way of exhibiting the tombstones, which had raised questions, was explained by Mai Lumiste as follows: 'The preserved tombstones in the floor of St Matthew's (Anthony's) Chapel and the North Hall were under discussion. The majority of them inside the church had been destroyed. Since it was decided to turn the North Hall, with its relatively new floor, into the main vestibule of Niguliste Museum, there was objectively only one way to keep the traditional floor of tombstones in St Matthew's (Anthony's) Chapel as inherent a component of the historical architecture of the interior as the walls and the vaults.' Most of the tombstones in St Nicholas' Church are located in the floor; however, some of them, especially the figurative, are located on the walls. Especially the latter, vertical presentation raised questions. Mai Lumiste based this presentation on historical traditions. In addition to a number of examples from Europe, she pointed out that the tombstone of Johannes Ballivi had been exhibited for centuries on the outer wall of the North Hall of St Nicholas' Church³⁸ (fig. 10).

While in discussions the re-carving of the tombstones received the largest amount of criticism, other questions later also arose. In 1981 the newspaper *Sirp ja Vasar* (*Hammer and Sickle*) published a critical review by artist Heinz Valk regarding the restoration of the tombstones and chandeliers of St Nicholas' Church.³⁹ Even though most of the criticism was targeted at the re-carving of tombstones, surprisingly the conservation of the entire tombstone collection was criticised, including exhibiting them only in the Niguliste Museum. Heinz Valk wrote, 'The layout plan for the exposition should have been drawn up before the floors were cast, including in the plan the locations of the tombstones, to prevent people from walking on them. However, in the pre-Olympic turmoil,⁴⁰ the primary goal was the temporary opening of the Niguliste Museum and the floors were laid out hurriedly, without a collegial discussion with art historians. And so, we stand on top of art without knowing where or where not to step.' Although Valk referred to the historical tradition of the tombstones laid out in the floor, he did not consider following it to be

36 Mai Lumiste's reply to Ülo Puustak's inquiry. TLA, coll. R-242, inv. 1, no. 157, fol. 51.

37 K. Kodres, Arhitektuuripärand: ideoloogia, poliitika ja tegevuspraktika.

38 Minutes of the meeting of Council of Restoration. 7 February 1978. TLA, coll. R-242, inv. 1, no. 157, fols. 57, 59, 70-71.

39 H. Valk, Sõnavõtt Püha Nikolause koja asjus. - *Sirp ja Vasar* 26 June 1981, pp. 8-9.

40 The Olympic Regatta of the 1980 Summer Olympics of Moscow was held in Tallinn.

important. As a solution, he suggested exhibiting them only on the walls or even outside the Niguliste Museum, 'It is obvious that a lot of the tombstones that hinder the viewing of the exposition could not have been exhibited on the walls of the Niguliste Museum. However, we have plenty of free space in the Dominican friary, where some of the old stone-carvings are exhibited. To attempt to keep what once belonged to St Nicholas' Church there at any cost is a narrow-minded principle...'⁴¹

Mai Lumiste died in January 1985, just a few months after the opening of the Niguliste Museum and Concert Hall. She was never able to publicly respond to the criticism concerning the layout and restoration of the tombstones. The only objection was by Rasmus Kangropool in his monograph on St Nicholas' Church, based on the research materials of Mai Lumiste, 'St Anthony's Chapel now remains the only room in St Nicholas' Church with a traditional floor of tombstones complementing the design as an active component. Curiously, the energy spent over the years to preserve the last surviving tombstones provoked in bystanders, as inverted wisdom, only incompetent complaining.'⁴²

Regarding the criticism of the concept of restoring and exhibiting the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church, similar cases preceding and following it should be considered. Even though the restoration work done in Niguliste Museum remains the largest of its kind in Estonian history in terms of volume and execution, there were other similar projects undertaken in Soviet Estonia. These few cases, however, stand apart from the work done on the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church by their initial positions and resulting layout solutions. Of the three following solutions in the churches of Tallinn, two present the tombstones outdoors. It has to be said, however, that even today viewpoints regarding the restoration and layout of historical tombstones remain ambiguous.⁴³

In 1960 six tombstones were placed on the southern exterior wall of St Catherine's Church of the Tallinn Dominican friary. Five tombstones were already there. The situation of the grave markers in the church had been complicated for centuries. The church burned in 1531, leaving it in ruins, and it was only in the 19th century that interest arose in the tombstones there. In 1857 one of them was transported to the summer mansion of the Tallinn commandant Woldemar Salza at Kõismäe. In 1874 the ruined church was sold to the wealthy merchant Andreas Koch; during repairs, the floor of the church was cleaned, leaving the nine tombstones found there in their original locations. In 1882 the Tallinn *Bürgermeister* Girard de Soucanton purchased 13 tombstones and had them transported to the *Via Appia* built in his summer mansion in Rocca al Mare.⁴⁴ The tombstones suffered damage during World War II and from looting, and were brought back in 1959 by the Tallinn Board of Protection of Monuments of Art with the purpose of exhibiting

41 The second part of the article was dedicated to the questions of exhibiting the chandeliers of St Nicholas' Church. The criticism it contains is similar: exhibiting the collection in its entirety and the adjustment of the chandeliers into sources of light were considered questionable. Exhibiting only a few and using modern lamps in the exposition room was viewed as a better solution.

42 M. Lumiste, R. Kangropool, *Niguliste kirik*, pp. 60–61.

43 For instance in the case of St Lawrence' Church in Kuressaare in 2009–2013.

44 E. Tool-Marran, *Tallinna dominiiklaste klooster*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1971, pp. 124–130; M. Loit, *Keskaegsest surmakultuurist...*, pp. 84–85.

them at the friary's church. Only six of the tombstones, with more than 50% of the original surviving, were to be restored and temporarily exhibited on the southern wall of the church.⁴⁵ These stones were placed on the wall chronologically, starting with the oldest tombstones on the west side. The stones were attached to the wall with metal anchors, which were reinforced with metal bolts attached to the wall. The tombstones were located 30–60 cm above the ground and a protective roof-like covering was built to protect them from the weather. The technical report states that this solution was temporary and it would be correct to exhibit the tombstones in the floor of the church, raising them approx. 40–50 cm above it.⁴⁶ Cement was used to restore the tombstones, as well as to fill the cracks and partly rebuild the destroyed areas.⁴⁷

During the excavations in the Pirita Bridgettine convent, twenty tombstones and their fragments were unearthed in 1976–1977 in the western part of the church, with fourteen tombstones having surviving text.⁴⁸ The report from 1979 enumerates and thoroughly describes nine tombstones that were later exhibited on the wall of the convent church.⁴⁹ Most of them were broken and in need of restoration. Similarly to the restoration method used in St Nicholas' Church, the tombstones were placed upon metal frames. The repairs were done using concrete. The tombstones were attached with cantilevers and hooks galvanised to protect them from corrosion.⁵⁰ A protective roof-like covering was built above each tombstone.

Similar solutions were used to restore and exhibit the tombstones in both St Catherine's and the Pirita convent churches: the stones, repaired with concrete, were placed in vertical positions on the outer walls of the churches⁵¹ with the help of anchors and supporting cantilevers. In both cases, roof-like coverings were built above the tombstones. The main reason for exhibiting them outside was the state of both of the ecclesiastical buildings. Both the Bridgettine convent and the Tallinn Dominican friary had been in ruins for centuries. As reconstruction of these buildings was unrealistic, exhibiting the tombstones there in their original locations was out of the question.

While exhibiting the tombstones in the vertical position outside is quite a traditional solution, the approach has generally been condemned regarding the interior of buildings. One such example is the Tallinn Cathedral. During the work done in the sacristy in 1983, seven tombstones and their fragments were discovered when a wooden floor was removed. In 1984 Mai Lumiste suggested exhibiting one of them,

45 K. Aluve, H. Üprus, *Dominiiklaste klooster. Aruanne Rocca al Mare'st tagasi toodud ja 1960. aastal dominiiklaste kloostri seinale pandud hauakivide kohta*. Tallinn, 1960. National Heritage Board archives (hereafter MKA), item P-225, fols. 3–7.

46 K. Aluve, H. Üprus, *Dominiiklaste klooster*, fols. 8–10.

47 M. Limberg, *Püha Katariina kiriku lõunaseinas olevate hauaplaatide konserveerimistöde vahearuanne*. Osatühing Vana Tallinn, 2001. TKVA, inv. N 12, item 295B.

48 V. Raam, J. Tamm, *Pirita klooster. Ehitus- ja uurimislugu*. Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 2005, pp. 62–63. The plan of recovering the tombstones is provided in: M. Loit, *Keskaegsest surmakultuurist...*, p. 95.

49 V. Raam, K. Kaplinski, *Pirita klooster. Arheoloogiliste kaevamiste vahearuanne 1977–1978. Hauaplaadid*. Tallinn, 1979. MKA, item A-136, fols. 1–17.

50 S. Ränd, I. Kannelmäe, *Pirita klooster. Hauaplaatide kinnitamine ja kiriku põranda tööjoonised. Piilarite ja altariate konserveerimise metoodiline juhend*. Tallinn, 1979. MKA, item P-4320, fols. 1–2.

51 In the Pirita convent the tombstones are exhibited on the interior walls of the church but since the church is a roofless ruin they are outdoors.

the figurative tombstone of Georgius Bardien from the late 16th century, on the eastern wall of the sacristy.⁵² The suggestion followed the practices of the Niguliste Museum, where figurative tombstones were not incorporated into the floor but were exhibited on the walls. Despite the suggestion, the solution was rejected in the Cathedral and the tombstone was, as with other stones, placed in the floor of the sacristy.

Conclusion

The restoration of the tombstones of St Nicholas' Church in the 1970s still occupies a special position in the history of restoration and conservation in Estonia. How do we evaluate Mai Lumiste's concepts and methods today? First, I'd like to emphasise that we should not underestimate the situation, restoration practices and experience at the time. What was accomplished in St Nicholas' Church stands apart from the practice of restoring tombstones in Soviet Estonia primarily due to the volume and level of difficulty of the work. Neither before nor since have such a large number of carved stones been restored in Estonia (over a hundred tombstones and their fragments). The fact that almost the entire surviving collection was saved is most extraordinary. In Tallinn and Estonia, the collection of tombstones of St Nicholas' Church is unique, with only the tombstones of the Tallinn Cathedral being comparable.

Departing from the historical interior of St Nicholas' Church, the choice that was made then – to preserve, restore and exhibit the entire surviving collection of tombstones – was of utmost importance. The conflict that arose during restoration between the theory presented in the Venice Charter and the actual outcome mirrored the search for answers to the questions that the process of restoring had posed. The extremely poor condition of the tombstones prior to their restoration drove historians to look for the most optimal solutions between theory and practice.

Regarding the restoration of tombstones in general, the local tradition of their conservation is a relatively new area, compared to the conservation of paintings or polychrome wooden objects. Although criticism of re-carving the tombstones continues today as well, in other areas, the methods used in the restoration have proved to be correct. The tombstones supported by metal frames are in excellent condition more than thirty years after exhibiting them in the Niguliste Museum.

It is also very important that the entire collection was exhibited in its original location, St Nicholas' Church. Mai Lumiste proceeded from the idea of the tombstones being a part of the historical interior. This was also the reason for exhibiting most of them in the floor. Presenting so many figurative tombstones on the walls of the interior was new and was not used frequently later. In Estonia it was instead a solution used with exteriors. Mai Lumiste emphasised that in renovating

52 M. Lumiste, *Toomkirik. Ettepanekud käärkambri hauaplaatide ja pöranda korrastamiseks*. Tallinn, 1984. MKA, item A-1217, fols. 2-3.

St Nicholas' Church the building had to be seen as a historical entity, the church itself being the main exhibit, with the tombstones forming an integral part of the interior.