

A beautifully enchanting place

Kõltsu (German: Wellenhof) was described in 1913 as: “A beautifully enchanting and wonderfully landscaped place.” A place worth coming to, where you could spend hours, days, weeks. Not large by any means, Kõltsu was not really a proper or a knights’ manor, but came into being only in 1806, when the “half-manor” (German: Landstelle) was separated from the Põllküla estate. The prerequisites for the development of Kõltsu were the exceptional beauty of the place, the clean sea air and the murmur of the waves, which in the smallest manor in Keila parish have allowed for a wonderful combination to be born.

Between 1883 and 1885, during the time of Baron Otto von Uexküll’s widow Benedicte von Uexküll, a building was erected near the beach, the like of which is hard to find among other Estonian manors. It was as if the Baltic spirit had spread its wings, taking ideas from here and creative impulses from there, offering it all up in its own way, in the manner described by Elisabeth Eastlake, an English lady who visited Estonia in 1843: “One thing is certain. This is not Estonia or Russia, because there is no disorganisation. Neither is this France, although you can sometimes hear a French echo. If anything, this place resembles England most of all. We are in a garden where it is quite difficult to find a spot where *embarras de richesses pittoresque* briefly lets one forget where we are exactly. Are we in Switzerland or Russia? At Mon Repos near Vyborg or in Narva-Jõesuu. Kõltsu’s main building is like a cut-out from a stylebook of the era. *Villa maritima* in Latin: a seaside estate, as they were known already at the time of Pliny the Younger in Ancient Rome. A place where you could forget your troubles and live as if the rest of the world did not exist: no Tallinn, no Paldiski, no harbours, no railways, no capitalism or its gravediggers.”

When we look for the inspiration behind Kõltsu Manor, we find it in the resort architecture that began to emerge on the shores of the Baltic Sea at the beginning of the 19th century, and whose French name *cour ort* refers to Sunday instead of everyday life, and to the opportunity to catch one’s breath – a holiday that the industrious German mind had hardly dared to dream of before. On the sandy dunes of Kõltsu we find a counterpart to the white houses that began to emerge at the beginning of the 19th century: in Puttgarden, Heiligendamm, on the island of Rügen, familiar to us from the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich.

Kõltsu draws its nourishment from the wildly beautiful nature of the place, and its artistic creed and architectural vocabulary, on the other hand, is a blend of everything you can think of and imagine: Marie Antoinette’s tiny “Hameau” within the expanse of the park of the Château de Versailles, of destruction and rebirth, of fear and Prince Shakhovskoy, and of Chekhov’s “Cherry Orchard”. Kõltsu brings together surprising and adrenaline-inducing forms: Russian wooden lace and French windows, pitched roofs and stained-glass windows on the veranda. And, to top it all, a tower with a spire that has inspired people time and time again, whenever there have been great expectations. Kõltsu is just as big as the world around it is small; designed in the same way as the architects of the modern era built resort towns and houses in Narva, Kadriorg in Tallinn, Haapsalu, Pärnu. Such was Amandus Adamson’s house in Paldiski. Everything had to be done in the here and now, to place the entire past on a single bet, because you can never be completely certain about the future.