

ISSN 2424-5070

2024

01

echo gone wrong

support



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF LITHUANIA

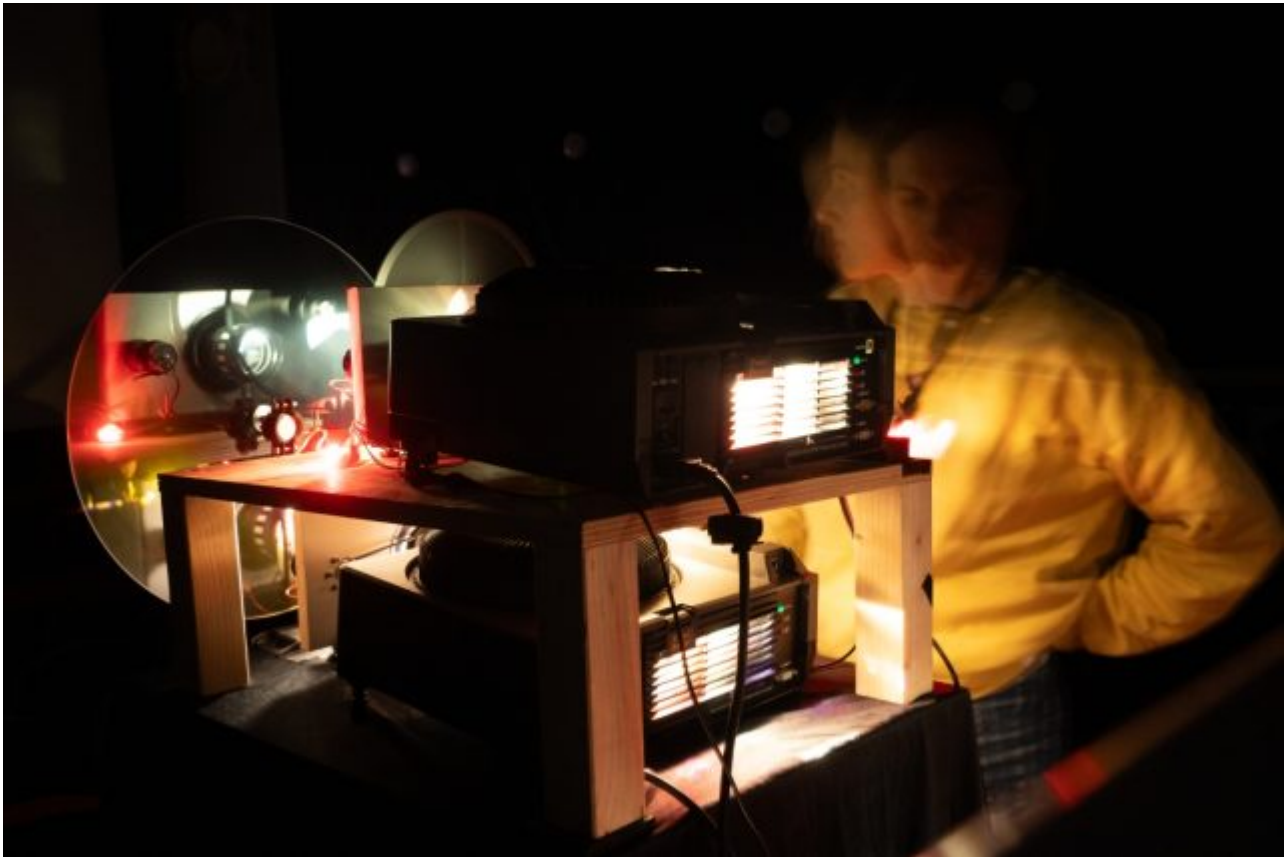


LITHUANIAN
COUNCIL FOR
CULTURE

MRF MEDIJŲ
RĖMIMO
FONDAS

Sticking together: Review from Tallinn Photomonth's film program 'Polar Coordinates'

January 2, 2024
Author Mia Felic



OJBOCA performance Distant Feeler at the Cinema Sõprus, 17.11.2023. Photo by Saara Mildeberg.

The seemingly simple question of *How to do things together*, gathered 10 Estonian and international films during Tallinn's Photomonth (Tallinna Fotokuu) in the Artists' Film Program titled „Polar Coordinates“. This renowned international biennial of contemporary art, which gathers artists working within wide range of artistic practices, took place from Oct 6th until Nov 26th 2023. Alongside the main exhibition, “Trance“, held in Tallinn Art Hall, there was an extensive Satellite Program across several institutions and galleries in Tallinn. The Artists' Film Program “Polar Coordinates“, curated by Estonian artist and filmmaker Piibe Kolka, along with New York-based critic, film programmer, and Assistant Professor of Culture and Media at The New School, Genevieve Yue, ran for two days at the Sõprus cinema in Tallinn.

The “Polar Coordinates” film program, which was part of the expanded PÖFF (Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival) program, aimed to showcase films resulting from sincere collaborations and joint efforts, emphasizing how to do things *together*. The selected films depict everyday life, our efforts to understand our fragmented existence, and our longing for closeness and communication. Alongside themes of togetherness and intimacy, the films also embraced a modest and sincere approach in their making. Unlike films made by large crews with a substantial budget, these films emerged from intimate collaborations and artists' personal fascination with the medium itself. The assembled films are a result of various close partnerships—those of lovers and romantic partners, scientists, artist duos, friends, or activists. The works were made within the personal habitus and, as such, contain tenderness, humour, vulnerability, messiness, and reflect dynamics of such relationships.

Deliberately departing from conventional narrative structure and film language, these films depict the clumsiness and ordinariness of our everyday life, allowing viewers to enjoy and appreciate the authenticity and sincerity within them.

The first film program, “A Frame That Holds Us”, portrays the intimacy and domestic scenes of shared life. The frame that holds us together – whether the walls of our home, the bonds within families, the ritualistic routines of domestic life, or a film frame documenting our shared moments – serves as a comforting reaffirmation of the ties that bind us. The camera, as an observer and witness, documents daily life and sheds light on seemingly trivial moments and fleeting fractions that otherwise go unnoticed. Yet, these outwardly insignificant details that occur during our day contain all the beauty and authenticity of our daily existence.

The film “Is It a Knife Because...” (2022) invites us into a frame of a family home, where collaborative practices are shared between filmmakers Sirah Foighel Brutmann and Eitan Efrat. This collaboration extends beyond the filmmakers, to their children, Rita and Nilus, who both appear in front of the camera, acting, and behind the camera, recording. In a domestic setting, the camera is handheld intuitively and often in close-up, as a child zooms in and observes up close in curiosity and wonder. One seemingly trivial yet critical detail is the understanding of where the light comes from, which is a common ground for the parents whose creative practice revolves around capturing the light, and children having the same awe and puzzlement while observing the light and its flickering.



Still from “Is It a Knife Because...” (2022), Sirah Foighel Brutmann and Eitan Efrat.

Similarly, “Come Coyote“ (2019) is a collaborative work of partners Dani Leventhal ReStack and Sheilah (Wilson) ReStack, documenting their fear, joy, tenderness, and despair regarding same-sex motherhood. The camera serves as an autobiographical tool recording confessions but also captures subtleties and things unspoken. The frame holds something that can hardly be expressed through other means. There is an intrinsic quality to film, which is exclusive to this art form, when one witnesses raw and unprocessed emotions on the big screen, which resonates and touches upon our similar depths.

Ren Ebel and Laida Lertxundi's "In a Nearby Field" (2023) also celebrate filmmaking as an integral part of family life, akin to other domestic practices such as cooking, cleaning, learning, playing, or dancing. Domestic chores are superimposed onto green landscapes, heightening the *everydayness* with an impressionistic and experimental quality, and infusing the film with unusual warmth and consolation. Such a setting where film and family life go hand in hand celebrates humble pleasures and moments of togetherness.



Still from "In a Nearby Field (2023), Ren Ebel and Laida Lertxundi.

In contrast, solitary, diaristic storytelling, as seen in Tönis Jürgen's "A Practice for Surrender" (2022) and João Pedro Rodrigues' "Where Do You Stand Now, João Pedro Rodrigues?" (2017) serve as a personal and internal exploration. Reflections that come from the surface of glass, an interactive interplay of passing lights, provoke reflections, the retrieval of memories, and internal dialogues. The frame evokes a familiar space, firmly anchoring our sense of identity and borders of the self. Yet, amidst this, there is a subtle uneasiness in deliberate letting go while slipping into amnesia, surrender, absence.

In the minimalistic and subtle work "Orbs" (2016) by Liina Siib, two disembodied hands tenderly stroke a sphere. Within this mysterious play, there is a present need for connection, pushing and pulling dynamics become a means of communication, building a bond in an attempt to understand one another.

In the second part of the program, "A Question That Can Be Answered Yes or No", tactics for fostering togetherness and cooperation extend beyond the limits of one's home. Instead, they encompass vast distances, spanning across time and space. The gathered films employ a wide lens to examine a broader, macro perspective, offering insights into micro-occurrences in return.

Filmmakers Jenny Perlin and Jacqueline Goss, in "The Measures" (2011), trace the journey of two astronomers on their quest to determine the true length of a meter and explore the origins of the Western metric system, all during the growing violence of the French Revolution. Landscape and natural forms are overlaid with persistent straight lines, measurements, and angles, while the

authors reflect on political and personal turmoil and the subtleties of collaboration.

In Roman Khimei and Yarema Malashchuk's "New City of Friends" (2021), macro is reflected within the microcosm as we observe a city and its suburbs, in a subtly desperate and disintegrated setting, through the gaze of a teenage flâneur. In the following scenes, we lose the insider's sight and observe the boy as an outsider as he narrates and maps his tour on the ground and microcosmically restages a city-dérive.

"Similar Image" (2021) by the fantastic little splash collective reveals dissonance between order and chaos, structure and disorder in technologically mediated landscapes and a quest to find one's place in a such environment.

The film program ended with an expanded cinema performance titled "Distant Feeler" (2022), that included two slide projectors, by the artist duo OJOBACA. The Distant Feeler was a contraption initially created by another artist duo, Goliatus & Carábida, used while creating "telepathic cinema", a project they worked on from 1977 to 1997. Adopting their peculiar device and a manifesto titled "Distant Feelings or Signs of a Perfect Lover", the artists reassembled the device and presented their own interpretation of it through a performance.

Through rapid flickering light and rhythmical beating of the shutter in the dark, the performance brought an ecstatic and immersive experience of seeing and *feeling* the film. The projection was made of the singular slides, lined up and projected through two projectors, creating a joint image on the screen. The OJOBACA performance and its visual language serves almost as a response or a conversation with Goliatus & Carabida, creating a direct bond between the two artist duos that transcends time and space between them. This form of collaboration also emphasizes mutual inspiration and interconnectedness of our practices.

The simple question of *How to do things together*, aims to introduce filmmaking and film processing as a communal and collaborative practice that nurtures and strengthens our bonds as artists, collaborators, family members or romantic partners. The autoethnographic approach to filmmaking, adopted in some of the films, provides us with an observer's distance to analyze our lives from another angle. This approach also offers viewers an opportunity to recognize and empathize with our struggles and insecurities in the contemporary, disconcerting world. It genuinely reenacts life with all its flaws, randomness, imperfections, and ordinariness.

Thinking further of possible communal strategies in filmmaking, hands-on processing of the film can serve as a self-sufficient alternative to industrial processing. Engaging directly with the materiality of film, besides being more financially viable, opens up a wide range of artistic possibilities and offers a seductive sense of freedom. Hand processed film is meant to reflect the randomness of the process, of trial and error, of individual decisions, and as such is meant to be imperfect and spill over the limits of what a film can be. It also reveals the process as not being perfect and smooth; on the contrary, it is full of unexpected errors and (un)pleasant mistakes (much like life itself), which, when enlarged on the screen, are celebrated precisely as such. This rule-breaking within the film practice reflects a tendency to employ non-hierarchical, collaborative production practices, self-sufficiency and critical thinking.

Being exposed to various styles of cinematic experiences and filmmaking practices, we are increasingly recovering from the rigidity of standardized film language and expanding our ability to digest *different kind* of moving image. In breaking-down of rules and boundaries, one should stand freely in front of the screen allowing the film to reassemble us and to impart whatever it has to offer. Films arriving from the personal and intimate sphere of one's home generously invite us to closely

inspect their lives. In doing so, they encourage us to see ourselves on the screen, urging us to become humble spectators who are able to reflect the similarities of our shared lives and experiences. By exposing us to their narratives, they initiate a dialogue and collaboration with the viewers as well, encouraging us to leave the cinema enriched, provoked and puzzled.

Curating as Collaboration: Conversation with Rupert Resident Amy Watson

January 8, 2024

Author Povilas Gumbis



Photograph by Andrej Vasilenko @ Articulations 3, Medūza, 30 August, 2023

It's one of those early mornings that acts as a forewarning for the approaching realities of Autumn. The lingering possibility of rain and the presence of sharp gusts of wind make the outdoor environment unwelcoming. Hence, Amy Watson, a South Africa-based independent curator currently in residency at Rupert, and I decide to occupy Rupert's office space for our interview.

As the director of POOL, Amy runs a dynamic, collaboration-based art institution, currently located in Cape Town. This emphasis on collaboration and interdependence informs all of her curatorial projects, including her most recent collaboration wherewithall, a library of equipment, practical knowledge, research and knowledge exchange that supports an ecosystem of independent practice. In Amy's independent curatorial work, a recent exhibition How To Disappear looked at the role of surveillance within contemporary society, considering how these technologies might be turned towards forms of collective resistance. Even this interview could be added to the above list of examples of Amy's collaborative approach. Having prepared to inquire about her past and current projects, I'm instead led down the path of Amy's present-day fascination with modernist spaces of Vilnius: an interest which – and this she knows quite well – coincides with my own research. What follows is an opening into the practice of a curator in real time: brainstorming ideas, applying them to specific spaces and their histories, fusing it with more nuanced theoretical discourses, and, finally, considering the practicalities.

We start our interview even before taking our seats. As we continue to get enveloped by the conversation, the drabness seen through the office windows quickly dissipates. So does my competence as a journalist, as only 10 minutes in do I realise that I haven't started recording.



Whale ear bone (painted), Trinity House Maritime Collections, Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Povilas Gumbis: Sorry that I had to stop you mid-sentence, but I had to be sure my phone's recording this. You were saying?

Amy Watson: There are many interesting spaces in Vilnius. For example, there is a planetarium dome behind MO Museum. Framed by two trees, it reads as a sculpture. The projects one might realise in this space, given its intended function, might emphasise optical instruments and practices of looking, and how these have evolved. As well as the evolution of photography and cinema which at times runs parallel to that discourse. There is scope to work with ideas of the micro and the macro, of espionage and the military industrial complex. The next space I am visiting is the one you actually recommended when we first met.

Povilas: You mean the funeral home right next to the Olandai roundabout?

Povilas: It's quite a building, they have twelve halls in which they can hold funerals concurrently.

Amy: An interesting project – 12 memorials, working with artists to commission projects that respond to different deaths and rebirths; life and death, as we know, is on a spectrum.

Another modernist building that captivated me was the palace located next to the river Neris.

Povilas: The Palace of Culture and Sports?

Amy: Yes, I wanted to get closer to the building, but it's been vandalised and there have been attempts to protect it, in other circumstances I would have entered to explore.

Povilas: Yeah, it's been closed for almost 20 years now. Ever since then the place has been contested due to its tumultuous history. Recently, a commission of art historians, museum directors, heritage experts, and rabbis has been formed. Supposedly, a decision should be made by the end of the year.

Amy: What would you do with that space?

Povilas: I'm not sure. I think it has so much to it. For one, that whole area used to be a Jewish cemetery that was closed by Imperial Russia and later dismantled by the Soviet authorities. So in their preliminary discussions, the commission is trying to figure out how to pay respects to the now almost forgotten death of whole generations. Furthermore, the place hosted S?]?dis (Reform Movement of Lithuania) meetings, the so-called 'Rock marches' that were integral to the Lithuanian emancipation from Soviet oppression. It's also where the public funeral of the January 13th victims took place. So there are so many different histories to be accounted for if any future action is to take place. But, now that I think about it, maybe the word 'different' is the problem here – maybe these histories should be looked at as part of Lithuanian heritage without dividing them into issues pertaining to a specific ethnicity. But that's easier said than done. From what I know, the commission is leaning towards a memorial museum.

Amy: In my experience, memorial museums are seldom living spaces. From what I've seen in South Africa, these kinds of projects initially receive funding from the state with an emphasis on infrastructure, and don't make allowances for evolving exhibitions and programming. In turn, they become mausoleum-like, with exhibitions stagnating and beginning to embody a bereftness in a way that seems unproductive and unresponsive to new or alternative ways of looking back.

Povilas: Yeah, there has to be some active component of constant care for that history. A mausoleum could prove detrimental and almost an exact antithesis of what you're trying to do.

Amy: These kinds of museums, especially when they're about one singular history, don't often evolve. I think the best time for creative practitioners to have access to a building is when it's not sure about its future. The exhibition *Between Walls and Windows: Architecture and Ideology*, curated by Valerie Smith in 2012, considered how the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin, an architectural landmark, might be experienced as a large-scale sculpture. In this exhibition the building was stripped of everything, access was made free and allowed through all entrances. Ten artists were commissioned to respond to the site and situation of the building, considering the concepts and questions which architecture attempts to answer as an instrument of history construction, philosophy and politics.

Povilas: Do you think it's possible to combine all of the different parts of history into a single building?

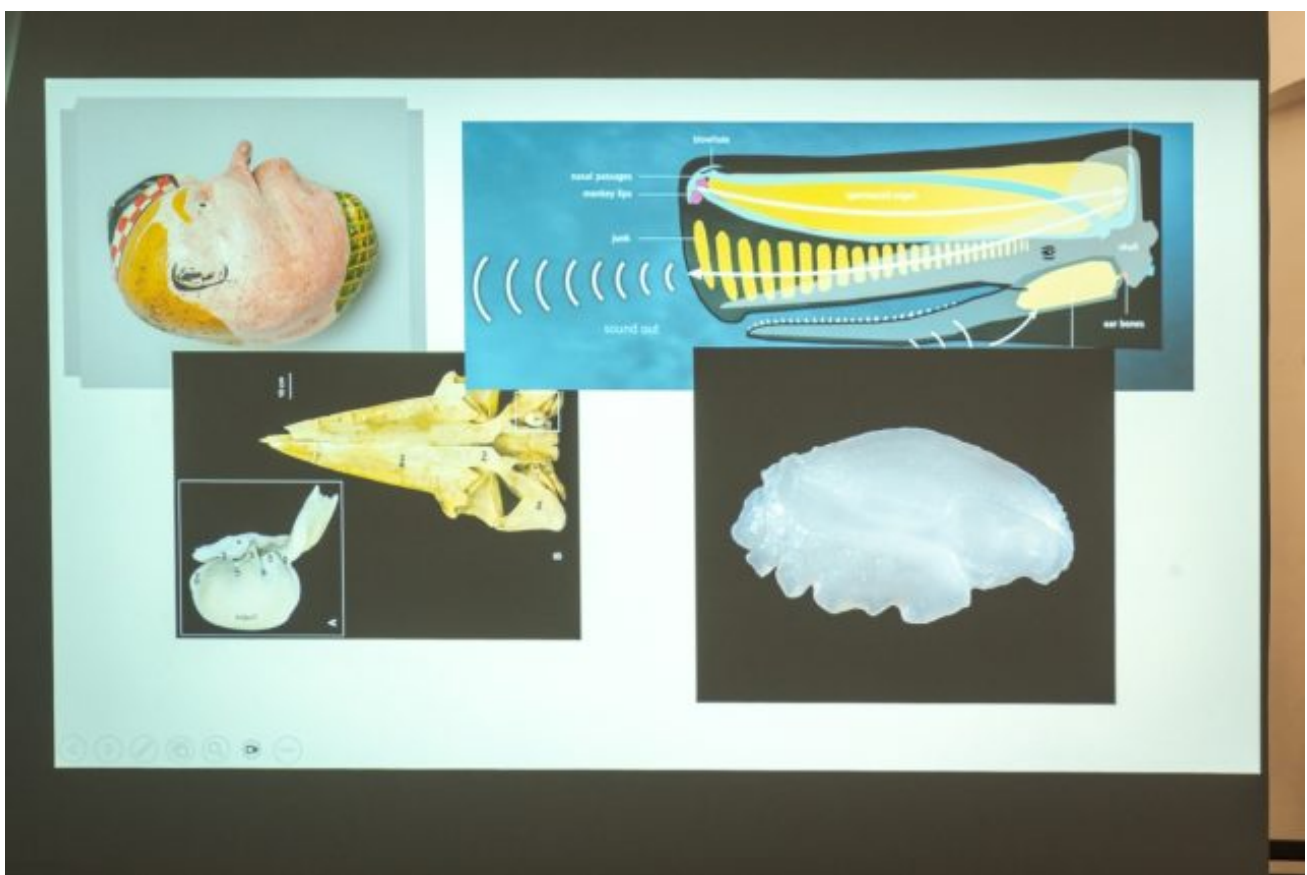
Amy: I think working with artists there has scope to allow for contested interests and positionalities. Through a commissioning programme many truths can exist side by side. This isn't propaganda. You can hold open spaces of memory, death, preservation, history, and heritage. Sometimes we only know by doing. I think there's something to be said for practice to unfold in spaces like this in particular, precisely because they are contested and otherwise in a state of suspension. It is this status of the building as in a state of reckoning with its fractured past and its future uncertain, this state of becoming, that makes it particularly compelling as a site for artistic commissions and curatorial and architectural interventions.

Povilas: So I'm also getting the idea that even if a place has a local importance and is thus safeguarded by the locals from the outsiders, you would try and have international artists participate in this kind of project?

Amy: Having new perspectives on a context can lead to incredible insights and, in its best moments, be quite liberating.

Povilas: So being international is almost a necessity for the role of a curator – even if your practice is based in a very concrete location.

Amy: It can be dangerous to assume that only those who live in a particular location can offer any insight on it, and that in our current moment one's context is somehow unaffected by international events. What I have found inspiring about inviting practitioners to South Africa is that they often see things anew, things that as locals we may have overlooked. A different perspective can reinvigorate practice and bring benefit to the programme for local practitioners and audiences. Placing work by local practitioners alongside practitioners working in other contexts actively demonstrates that we are all influenced by global events and discourses, and that many histories are shared histories. Rarely do things exist in a vacuum. Our histories and our futures are made in relation. Working with artists from one's own context and those outside of it, or with some distance on this, challenges a tendency towards a parochial inward looking and an assumed exceptionalism.



1. Photograph by Andrej Vasilenko @ Articulations 3, Medūza, 30 August, 2023

Povilas: These ideas that we've been engaging with throughout the conversation – collaboration, space, international practice and influx of different relationships – all of it seems to coalesce into your current writing project the ear of the whale. Could you expand on that?

Amy: Several years ago I came across a pair of whale ear bones in a maritime museum in Durban, a port city on the east coast of South Africa. Each able to fit into the palm of a human hand, these objects were crudely painted with a human face, positioned as if looking at one another. In the COVID lockdowns I undertook research into these objects, and discovered what could be described as a folk tradition of whalers collecting these bones, which were retained as mementos or trophies of their life at sea. They were frequently decorated with paint and occasionally engraved. The tympanic

bone, unique to whales, survives a whale's death and decomposition because it's the most dense part of the skeleton. Whales have sophisticated auditory capacities that enable them to communicate, navigate and locate themselves and others in space over vast distances, the tympanic bone is crucial in detecting and isolating sound. I consider the ear of the whale as a key or wayfinder for understanding relations between humans and more-than-humans.

Amy: (cont'd) In recognising our interconnectedness and interdependence in many ways, whales hold open the possibility of human survival. The whale is witness to and evidences our human histories of exploitation and global changes. Whaling powered the industrial revolution, and as Alexis Pauline Gumbs has pointed out, there are correlations between the transatlantic slave trade and commercial whaling. Whaling in South Africa is part of this wider history of extraction, colonialism and exploitation, which continues even today. And there are connections to this part of the world too. The whaling station in Durban was part of a colonial-era Scandinavian global whaling company. Recently evidence has surfaced that details how the Soviets whaled many species to the brink of extinction in secret, processing on average only 30 percent of the whale's body, under the aegis of 'leave a desert behind you'. The implications of how we conceive of the modern ocean and help recuperate it are profound for our own survival. I am currently writing about this research.

Povilas: Do you aim to expand the project beyond writing?

Amy: Yes, I'm interested in commissioning artists to respond to research, with those works having a relationship with the potentials and limits of our human sensory capacities. My intention is to have the project speak to locations and temporalities that are significant to whales. As a curator I've worked to draw on and foreground what artists are already undertaking research into in relation to what is most pressing in our world, as opposed to arriving at exhibition practice with my own ideas separate from artists' practices. This opportunity is now to start with materials I've gathered and work with artists who are open and sensitive to it, a process that feels somewhat new to me.

Povilas: I see that you studied as an artist, so you do have experience of starting with your own ideas.

Amy: Yes, at one point I had wanted to be an artist.

Povilas: And how does this education translate in your practice?

Amy: I think having originally trained as an artist informs the ways in which I work. I have an understanding of materials and fabrication processes, and am able to troubleshoot and work through alternate spatial and material solutions. I recognise the vulnerability of what it means to put your work in front of a public and the learnings from doing so. I share artists' research and forensic processes, as well as the highs of insight and practise-based learnings. At one point I understood curating as a sustained way of working collaboratively on realising something that is at times greater than the sum of its parts, and that curating, in its best moments, was a creative act that might illuminate shared discourse without reducing or instrumentalising practice.

Povilas: Was there no possibility to work with others as an artist?

Amy: Yes, there was, and I met the limits of collaborating in a context with little funding and support for visual art very quickly too. This has in part fuelled my interest in co-founding the organisation wherewithall with Chloë Reid and Kundai Moyo, which enables and supports the sharing of resources, interdependence and DIY exhibition making. Projects like wherewithall have the potential to radically change an arts ecosystem for a generation of practitioners in a city. It can be incredibly difficult to practise as an artist when working in contexts and under conditions that don't support

your work and can at times be unsustainable if you don't practise in community. Having initially trained as an artist enables an understanding of the challenges of working as one, and I feel comfortable collaborating closely with artists, which I might not have done had I arrived at curating solely from a place of theory, exhibition histories and 'instituent practice'.

Povilas Gumbis is an art historian interested in Eastern European and Baltic art of the 20th century, their post-soviet developments, resulting historiographies, and the contemporary scene. Presently he works at Rupert.

Temporal (Dis)connections, Collaboration, and the Cicadas: Conversation with Rupert Residents Fred Schmidt-Arenales & Monika Uchiyama

January 12, 2024

Author Povilas Gumbis



Photograph by Andrej Vasilenko @ Articulations 3, Medūza, 30 August, 2023.

After a week-plus of scheduling, I finally meet Fred Schmidt-Arenales and Monika Uchiyama, the filmmaker duo that currently resides at Rupert – an independent, publicly funded centre for art, residencies and education located in Vilnius, Lithuania. Working on their first collaborative project – an experimental documentary titled Counting Seventeen – the artists focus on brood X, a specific cicada type that emerges only once every seventeen years in northeast U.S. According to the description provided by the artists, the cicadas ‘function as metaphors for the unconscious, imagined construction of new human social structures, fear of ego death, and much more’. In this interview I aim to pry into the laconic yet curiosity-inducing ‘much more’.

With refreshing beverages in hand, we take our seats on the patio of Caffeine, situated in the middle of White bridge in Vilnius. With the ambient sound of the nearby skate park adding sonic background to our conversation, I begin by giving my own take on their previous work and how I think it connects to Counting Seventeen. The keyword that emerges is heritage. In Fred’s B-29, you’re my sunshine (2019) and Critique of Inheritance (2018), heritage acquires a familial connotation: in the former, one of the subjects is Fred’s grandad, a veteran of WWII who participated in the occupation of Japan, through whom an analysis of the war’s legacies takes place; in the latter, a 3D scan of Fred’s face allows the artist to probe into the questions of inheritance of whiteness. With Monika, documentary works like A New Use (2018) and Limits of Feeling (2017) also position her family at centre stage. Minimalist modes of filmmaking, accentuated by the delicate yet precise sways of handheld camera, meet the heaviness of heritage in A New Use, which depicts a small family-run factory in Tokyo that has been making wax products for generations. Its current proprietors worry about the future of the business and

simultaneously glance backwards, questioning whether they ever had a choice in becoming part of the family trade.

Having said the above in a more verbose manner, I continue:

Povilas Gumbis: ...and these themes of family and heritage, I feel, also dominate the subject of Counting Seventeen. But before we go into that I would like you to react to what I've just said. Do you think it's a fair description of your work?

Monika Monika Uchiyama: It's interesting to think about *Counting Seventeen* through heritage. Heritage isn't a keyword that I would write down. But when I think about it in the context of *Counting Seventeen*, I think about humanity's heritage: what we inherit, what we protect, what we preserve, what we pass down, how we think about generations before us. And I think that definitely is a theme that we're working through.

Fred Schmidt-Arenales: But I'm curious, before *Counting Seventeen*, how do you feel about heritage as a keyword for your other works?

Monika: Heritage... It's almost like I bristle at that word. It doesn't feel right in my mouth.

Povilas: Yeah, it does sound a bit official, almost. We could also change that to inheritance, as I think the term offers a slight ambivalence, whereas heritage might be a very objective term.

Fred: Yeah, those two terms are very related. It feels that heritage can attract other, more counter-productive meanings. Especially with the sort of fetish nature of the object. Like wax-making as Japanese heritage or traditional craft.

Monika: Which is funny because it's not really a traditional craft. My perspective on it and how I depict it is not meant to say it's craft. It's just kind of like a... thing. So maybe that's what makes me bristle about heritage, that kind of overly precious extra layer of meaning that I don't quite see?

Fred: And in my work, it feels the opposite. It's not like, oh, we love this heritage. The connotation is – fuck, here's this heritage, here's this thing that we have to confront.



Photograph by Andrej Vasilenko @ Articulations 3, Medūza, 30 August, 2023.



Photograph by Andrej Vasilenko @ Articulations 3, Medūza, 30 August, 2023.

Povilas: The reason as to why I was thinking about heritage and family in relation to Counting Seventeen is twofold. One, they emerge in unison to overwhelm their predators – their survival and thus essence is based on the action of the collective. Second, they live in areas where there's either a lot of trees or, and this I would like to accentuate, in places where they have lived previously. Here's the heritage thing – you come from a lineage, from something that comes before you.

Monika: Yeah, there's literally a person in our film who says that the cicadas that we're encountering this year in 2021 are the children of the ones that came in 2004. Generational difference becomes clear because their life cycle is so short. I mean, it's long for an insect, but short in human scale. It allows us to see a species being affected in real time.

Fred: Well, that makes me think of how sensorially rich the cicada emergence is. All of the senses are very specific and overwhelming. The smell is really strong. The sound is really strong. And this sensorial experience happens only once they emerge. I think they can create this sort of time warp or temporal displacement feeling in people who are near them and who have lived in that place for a long time. A few of the people we talked to, you can tell that they're kind of in both of those time periods at the same time.

Povilas: And – basic question territory here – how did the idea to make a work about the cicada come about? Because whenever people ask me about it, I always say that these cicadas emerged in late May – June of 2021, at a time when the world was coming back to normal after all the pandemic shenanigans. So there is this connection of the cicadas emerging from their slumber with us doing basically the same thing at the same time. Is that the connection you are making in the film?

Monika: We were actually discussing it this morning. The pandemic is in the film, not through any literal connections, but in a few different ways. It's reflected in how some of the characters talk indirectly about the pandemic, just about their experiences in general. It's reflected in how we came to make the movie in a way, because for me, the project came at a time when I was feeling really creatively frustrated and very stuck in my house, going through a depression. So it made sense that we would come together to collaborate on something that just involved going out and finding people and observing this thing that we don't have control over anyway.

Povilas: So were you just talking, sharing your experiences during the pandemic and then thinking as to what are the creative things you can do? And that later grew into Counting Seventeen?

Fred: Yeah, just texting and staying in touch – me in Philly, Monika in New York. And at some point I happened to hear of the impending emergence through somebody on the radio. So then I did a tiny bit more research and thought that we should make a film about this. Mostly because it would be a good way to kick off filmmaking or artmaking again. But this connection that you're drawing between the end of the pandemic, where people were enjoying summertime, spending time outside gathering...

Monika: People were vaccinated.

Fred: Yeah, newly vaccinated as of that spring. So that was definitely in the air. But, as we're editing it now, it's not trying to be a portrait of that moment with regard to the pandemic. But that is a true thing about the experiences of the people in the film.



Film still of *Brood X* (2022), Digital video, sound, image courtesy to Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Monika Uchiyama

Povilas: And how much will both of you feature in the film? Will there be an origin story of how the film came about?

Monika: We're there as a presence, and our various characters are definitely talking to us and are in conversation with us, but we're basically not in it.

Fred: We're there in terms of the camera perspective, which is one that's very much handheld, and sometimes you see recording devices or microphones and people are, like you say, very much talking to somebody, and that somebody is us.

Povilas: Reading through the description of your film, I've learned and was quite fascinated by the experimental use of all the different media. Counting Seventeen will feature 8mm film, digital video, computer and stop animation, analogue photography. I've even read that you'll somehow incorporate the cicada husks and wings onto the film stock and then scan it afterwards.

Monika: We made contact negatives in the dark room with the cicada husk and did some experimentation with the wings as material. I will say that we've scaled back a little bit... I think what comes out from all of the different media is, hopefully, not confusion, but a representation of how expansive our curiosity was when we were making the film. We really went in not having a clear shape of what it could be, but it was about going out in a moment where there was this phenomenon happening and using it as a framework to find people and to talk to them. So maybe that comes out of this period of isolation, and it's a reaction to that. I would say if I were making a film by myself, it wouldn't be on this topic and it wouldn't be in the way that we are making it. But that's part of collaboration, is that you're doing something that's generated from two people. We had a lot of fun with it.

Fred: Yeah, I think this is true for every way we approached it, we didn't know how it was gonna go. And that was the founding condition of the film. We had never collaborated before. Our approaches to filmmaking are somewhat different, so we didn't know how that was going to go. We didn't know who we were going to meet or what the cicada situation was going to be like because we'd never

experienced it before. We've never been to Lithuania, I'd never co-edited a film, so we didn't know how that was going to go. The cicadas have never seen the light of day before. So, when they emerged into their adult form, they didn't know how that was going to go.

Monika: And to return to the use of different media, I think it gives us a different access, different textures. I won't speak for you, but as for myself, I lean towards extremely held back subtlety and very little intervention when it comes to editing. And so, this is kind of a different project in that there's a lot of editing and a lot of possibility for intervening and creating different kinds of effects, whether it's an emotional effect or a narrative effect or whatever. And because we come from – or at least I come from – a perspective of kind of letting things do what they do, the media also kind of gets to do what it does.

Fred: Yeah, I'd sign on to that, for sure. I've never been like, oh, I want to make films, because of all the crazy, cool things you can do with cinematography. I've always thought of it as a time-based medium – something you can allow to unfold. And even though we are doing a lot of cutting and chopping things up and moving between media, we're really trying to do that in service of letting the different sensorial experiences or textures unfold in a film, which is not the same way that they can unfold in real life. Because the experience of being in the cicada emergence is so total and it's cinematic, but it's not one to one.

Monika: And we're not trying to represent that faithfully. We can't do it.

Fred: Yeah, we can't.



Film still of Brood X (2022), Digital video, sound, image courtesy to Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Monika Uchiyama



Film still of *Brood X* (2022), Digital video, sound, image courtesy to Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Monika Uchiyama

Povilas: Would you then call it world-building? You're almost creating a different type of experience...

Fred: I don't know. I wouldn't say world-building. Let's think about that.

Monika: I wouldn't say world-building because it sounds a little bit too controlling. I think we're very moved by the content.

Fred: We're moved by this world.

Monika: Yeah, because world building sounds like you're the architect and you get to make the world. And I don't think we're doing that at all.

Fred: But there is something in that... I was just saying you can't experience the cicadas with just image and sound. So, we are building an adjacent experience in a film that is like a reflection or something. It's a response to the world.

Povilas: Huh, because obviously you two are directors of the film and therefore have authorship of it... but also don't at the same time.

Fred: Yeah, it's definitely weird. I've collaborated in this way a bunch of times before with other people, and I really enjoy that part of it. I feel like our collaboration is so fluid: it's not simple, it isn't easy work necessarily, but it's very fun. It just feels very generative and collaborative, and even when we encounter problems, I think we're both good at pivoting rather than getting frustrated.

Monika: I wonder also if it has to do with the content, too, because it's so much about learning from what we encounter and what we see. It's almost as if this material that we are working with disallows us from fighting over authorship – you kind of can't. I keep thinking about how present we needed to be with the people and how present we needed to be with the cicada and... that time recording and actually getting the footage and talking to the people has ended, but that presence continues and we're just kind of reacting every day to different feelings or things that the footage is teaching us.

Fred: Yeah, all of the footage is from a process of us being unfamiliar with the cicada emergence and encountering it for the first time. The perspective of the camera and the film is of discovery and learning. I also think that this will hopefully facilitate an outsider's approach, allowing different audiences to identify with that.



Film still of Brood X (2022), Digital video, sound, image courtesy to Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Monika Uchiyama

A few days after our conversation, Monika and Fred screened a rough cut of their film to the people at Rupert. Watching it, never once did the idea of heritage come to my mind. Nor did I think of the pandemic – there were but a few frames of masked individuals that reminded me of those distant times. Instead, the cicadas appeared to me like open symbols, like empty signifiers that are able to house many different meanings, many different stories and subjectivities. It defies the ownership of a single narrative. It is a film, I think, about meaning-making, it aids the viewer in that journey without holding their hand and telling them what to think. It keeps a certain distance; it doesn't tell more than it needs to, nurturing an active viewing experience as opposed to straightforward storytelling.

The cicada brood means something to me now as well, and in 2038, during their next emergence, I'll have a chance to reflect on my position within the temporal cluster.

Povilas Gumbis is an art historian interested in Eastern European and Baltic art of the 20th century, their post-soviet developments, resulting historiographies, and the contemporary scene. Presently he works at Rupert.

The Secret Life of Objects. An interview with the artist Indriķis Ģelzis

January 12, 2024

Author Žanete Liekīte



Indriķis Ģelzis at his studio, 2024. Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

Around eight years ago, the Latvian artist Indriķis Ģelzis re-introduced himself with a new visual lexicon. Ģelzis has reached an unrivalled clarity of form contrasted with the complex information layers of his 'objects-in-itselfs'. These 'steel drawings' are walking a fine line between constructivism, abstractionism and figurative art, resisting any categorisation, and bearing naked narratives of identity-stripped individuals on an almost archetypal level.

Employing the unique technique of 'layered horizontals' in the shape of statistical data (John Welchman), Ģelzis presented his HISK graduation show in 2016, swiftly followed by his first

significant solo exhibition 'Sky's the Limit,' at Hole of the Fox, Antwerp, in 2017. In an intriguing turn of events, presenting his work within his own region only on rare occasions, he took the international stage by storm. The only local institution representing his work since its inception and throughout his career is the Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, where the latest solo exhibition 'Watery Day's Eye' also took place.

The deliberate choice to confine the sculptures within a frame not only acted as a defining aesthetic element, but also as a geometry to success. Yet these self-imposed creative constraints proved to be truly exhilarating to break at various points in the artist's career. Çelzis breaks his own rules most vividly at 'Watery Day's Eye'. Aesthetically and conceptually situating his 'objects of knowledge' within a rigorously orchestrated encompassing setting, the works take on a life of their own. These 'prototypes of society' are not a matter of private whim, but urge us to explore the array of potential cultural, sociopolitical and sexual backgrounds, and mind-independent reality.

This conversation draws a full circle: from the spatial installations of Çelzis' early career to the artist's decision to restrict the scale and aesthetics, only to rediscover and reintegrate encompassing, story-telling elements within his own methodology.



Indriķis Çelzis solo show Watery Day's Eye at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, 2023. Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

Žanete Liek?te: Not too long ago, you wrapped up your immersive solo exhibition at the Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, and I wouldn't hesitate to call it pivotal: 'Watery Day's Eye'. What reflections have you had looking back at it?

Indriķis Çelzis: This exhibition unfolded naturally, and I should express my delight that it coincided with this particular period. I felt entirely and utterly prepared for it. During 'Watery Day's Eye', I observed that my practice, comprising three distinct sub-disciplines, free-standing sculptures, wall sculptures, and the reflective 'Time Camouflage' series, has discovered a harmonious coexistence.

After eight months of intense preparation, despite now being recovered and revitalised, I find it challenging to look back at this exhibition objectively, and perhaps I don't have to. During the dedicated work on this project, a new and intriguing idea emerged, which was the most rewarding part. Mentally preparing to translate this concept on to paper, I anticipate a genre-wise similarity to the previous exhibition; however, emotionally, it seems to promise a more playful tone.

ŽL: I'm curious to hear more about the deeper personal revelations that emerged during the process.

IG: My body weight tends to fluctuate, and I've observed an interesting pattern. During periods of weight gain, I tend to lean towards using thicker steel rods. However, after the recent exhibition, where I experienced a bit of weight loss, I noticed this yesterday while working in the studio, I'm now crafting a new piece using six-by-six-millimetre steel rods (*laughs*).

ŽL: I appreciate your openness (laughs). Before we delve into 'Watery Day's Eye', which undoubtedly encapsulated your whole practice, let's rewind to the beginnings of your artistic era. From your perspective, when did it truly commence?

IG: I divide my career into two parts, the time before my studies at HISK, and the time after. The pre-HISK era was a phase of self-discovery. When commencing the creation of a new exhibition or artwork, I faced a blank page. Instead of persisting in a single direction, I chose to change horses midstream each time. For me, it was an exhausting and degrading rhythm. Each exhibition demanded a substantial investment, physically, mentally and financially, and each time, I ended up empty-handed. It led me to the inevitable contemplation about how an artist can endure in such a reality.

HISK marked a significant new beginning. At that time, twenty-six students from different corners of the world started this journey with me. Each of us had a spacious studio, allowing freedom of individual expression. This routine was complemented by monthly guest lectures and studio visits featuring art scholars, curators, museum directors, and more. The interview process was demanding, posing challenging questions that assessed our confidence and readiness over the course of an hour. This period brought profound revelations about my limited understanding of the processes and relationships in the art world, disclosing what it truly means to build a career as an artist.

ŽL: What significance do you attribute to the presence of fellow students, like-minded individuals from various corners of the globe?

IG: I much appreciated my classmates. We spent a lot of time together, visiting each other daily, cooking together, and engaging in discussions about new works, goals and interests, including Jura Shust, Kasper Bosman, Nicolas Lamas, William Ludwig Lutgens, Frederico Acal, and others. What struck us initially was the diverse blend of our backgrounds, from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Belarus and Latvia, to America and Argentina. Each of us brought a distinct perspective, based on various traditions and understandings of what art is. I would describe it as a true artist's haven, a place where everyone was ready to lend an ear to the artist's struggles and challenges (*laughs*).

ŽL: Pre-HISK, your practice spanned video works, installations taking forms in cars, furniture, and ambitious spatial creations. Do you recollect the inception of your current medium, one that has nearly transformed into your eponymous?

IG: During my initial semester at HISK, I distinctly remember preparing for an exhibition at the Arsenāls exhibition hall here in Riga. At that time, I was crafting a heavy sculpture, a hanging plaster imprint of a human figure within a curtain, and I perceived it then as yet another seemingly useless

work. Struggling on the brink of financial, mental and physical exhaustion, it dawned on me that a transformative shift was necessary. This particular artwork, in a way, marked a farewell to my previous artistic practice.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show *Two Unexpected Visitors* at Arsenāls Exhibition Hall, Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, 2015.

That same year I had a significant studio visit with the art historian John Welchman. He mentioned John Baldessari, who in 1970 deliberately burned all his paintings in the local crematorium, I believe, as a pledge to refrain from ever creating boring art again. Reflecting on it now, this story inadvertently motivated me to sever ties with my initial artistic pursuits. I freed up my studio space and dedicated a year of research, aiming to comprehend the visual threads and references that shaped my upbringing. I sought to identify personal qualities that could serve as building blocks for a fresh visual alphabet or artistic methodology. Until then, I had always worked on something large, heavy and spatial. However, I realised that I wanted to scale back, to limit myself, and create something confined and placed on the wall. Back then, I believed, all I needed was one strong set to begin a new era, and I came up with a couple of sketches.

ŽL: *And in short order, you found your technique and discovered that your ‘canvas’ and ‘clay’ is steel.*

IĢ: I didn’t realise it at the time, but yes, indeed, I came up with a new technique, which I subsequently chose to implement using steel. Initially, I made sketches inspired by diverse sources, incorporating elements from so-called graphic statistics or infographics, to shape the methodology of construction. I delved deeply into mind-independent reality, contemplating various types of infrastructure associated with communication, transport and human structures. I recall the idea of

crafting skeletal structures capable of supporting both space and the body. Reflecting on that period, it seems, perhaps unconsciously, I was attempting to draw parallels between realms of information, abstraction/constructivism, and the concept of mind-independent reality. I found it intriguing to associate a mind-independent reality with the automation of diverse processes, and link it with the acceleration of the world.

So, yes, I ultimately decided to bring the initial sketch into reality using steel. Despite my lack of prior experience with steel or welding, I was aware that in its unprocessed state, it leaves traces on the hands, much like a graphite pencil. I envisioned that when placed on the wall, it would resemble a graphite drawing. Additionally, I contemplated the construction of urban infrastructures and buildings, recognising their inception with steel skeletons, later becoming infused with life. Similarly, I thought about materials like titanium, composing the body of an iPhone, inhabited by various conversations, text messages, and images; a similar approach is mirrored in my works.



Indriķis Ģelzis, Probability Slots. Solo show TABLAEU at ASHES/ASHES, NYC, 2019. Photo: Indriķis Ģelzis

ŽL: During this time, you formulated your aesthetic language, evocative of graphic charts, where parallel developments and actions are concealed and encoded, referred to as 'Aesopian speech' by the curator Zane Onckule.

IĢ: I must say that creating a personal vision filter has been crucial for me. It serves as a means through which I convey and present my perspective of the world that we collectively share. The extent to which I choose to delve into it, whether superficially or profoundly, hinges on my personal feelings, reflections and experiences. For instance, when I spend time in metropolises, I am drawn to creating works that delve into the structural frameworks of cities. On the other hand, due to a couple of not-so-pleasant surgeries in the last few years, I found myself poring over an anatomy book, studying human organs and their functions. This exploration led me to a new series of works showcased in 'Watery Day's Eye', although these were not the first pieces in this series. Regarding

graphic statistics, my intention is not to foreground them. Instead, I leverage their methodology and logic as the conceptual backdrop for my works. I refrain from employing specific information or references. Instead, I analyse personal observations and experiences, allowing the reflexes of my fingers to guide the lines, shaping them up and down.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show Watery Day's Eye at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, 2023. Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

ŽL: Describing your creative process, it initiates with conceptual work in 3D-modelling software, juxtaposed with the hands-on, tactile work of welding, bending, grinding, burning, oiling and sewing in the 'man cave'. What significance do these distinctly different processes have for you?

IĢ: Certainly, the initial step involves digitally constructing the artwork in a 3D program. I can confidently state that this is the most crucial process in my practice, to which I devote most of my time and attention. It resembles a thought process that I translate virtually through my fingers, constructing creations freehand using the touchpad. At times, it feels as though my fingers are making choices on my behalf, and that's certainly a quality I wish to retain. Let's phrase it this way: it is important for me that the movement of the line and the reflex of the fingers precede the words, as they often dictate the fate of visual references. Sometimes I find myself concerned that the works are becoming progressively more complex, thereby escalating the level of difficulty in their development. My spine slowly takes the shape of a waning crescent moon, and its spikes begin to pierce the lower back and neck (*smiles*).

Despite how peculiar it might sound, the process of developing digital models is the most vibrant and creative aspect of the work. At that moment, something comes to life, a time brimming with hope, filled with new ideas and thoughts that I am on the verge of creating something surprising to myself. Once the digital sketch is complete, I transition to the studio, where I bring the artwork to life

by welding. At this stage, it feels like serving my own digital creation, leading into a relatively automatic process of welding, sewing and shaping the wooden forms of the material. I simply follow the work plan or sketch, and let my thoughts wander through memories and drift in hope for the future.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show Yawn Holding fields at Tatjana Pieters, Ghent, 2022. Photo: Dirk Pauwels.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show Yawn Holding fields at Tatjana Pieters, Ghent, 2022. Photo: Dirk Pauwels.

ŽL: *I wonder why, after these insights, it remains crucial for you to personally undertake this labour-intensive process? Given the current point in your career, conceptual work alone could be possible.*

IQ: I've considered that, but I find it challenging to delegate any of the work processes to someone else. Primarily, I derive genuine enjoyment and satisfaction from all stages of my work, believing firmly that the smallest detail contributes significantly to shaping the overall impression of the artwork. Even though I adhere strictly to the pre-made sketch, there are moments when I encounter situations that require alterations here and there to ensure the overall composition works seamlessly.

ŽL: *So it's not exactly about the meditative nature of the workflow. You simply don't trust anyone else with this task!*

IQ: Yes, I don't really trust anyone else with it (*laughs*).

ŽL: *Coming back to the aesthetic language, it seems that you've opted not to disclose the precise narrative. Simultaneously, you provide subtle hints through the choice of material or the artwork's title, such as 'Between the Sheets', allowing viewers to make informed guesses about the general course of action.*

IQ: I wouldn't phrase it as a deliberate choice to keep the course of action under wraps; rather as naturally unfolding artistic circumstances. To be honest, I'm quite pleased with the outcome, as many intriguing layers appear within this visual entanglement. While my works may initially appear abstract, I meticulously analyse every line, shape and piece of fabric. Every minor detail plays a crucial role in the overall composition. Ultimately, my works are representative. For instance, here on the wall hangs a piece entitled 'Nameless Heartspace'. While I was creating it, I contemplated

circulation as a fundamental process inherent in both nature and the human body. The heart, serving as the central human muscle, facilitates the circulation of blood throughout the body. Similarly, caves play a pivotal role in the circulation of water in nature. Pondering this analogy, the phrase ‘when a heart breaks, it breaks down into caves’ occurred to me, ultimately influencing the outcome of this piece.

ŽL: Your recent works have undergone a notable contextual shift. They no longer predominantly feature figurative elements of specific domestic scenes. It appears that the introduction of anatomical systems has imbued them with more symbolic representations. Can you elaborate further on the inspiration and concept behind this series?

IG: Yes, indeed. Since 2021, or to be more precise, the first series introducing anatomical systems was featured in my solo presentation at ‘Liste’ in Basel. This shift might imply progress and a departure from figuralism; however, in my ongoing projects I craft new works that feature a nuanced return to figurative elements, infused with a fresh perspective. After a while, I’ll certainly revisit anatomical systems as well. However, before I do, I need to reassess what I have accomplished so far. If we briefly revisit my last exhibition at Kim?, all the works showcased on the wall drew inspiration from specific elements of the anatomical system, each contrasted with values that hold my personal associations with Latvia. For instance, if we take a look at the piece *Night Flame*, I approached its creation with a dual perspective, considering both the anatomical structure of the throat and the essence of fire. The immediate association that springs to mind when I think of Latvia is singing. Consequently, I aimed to explore the throat, the organ responsible for vocal expression. Simultaneously, the bonfire, as one of the symbols of the Latvian landscape, seemed like an intriguing contrast, simultaneously provoking an irritation in the throat.

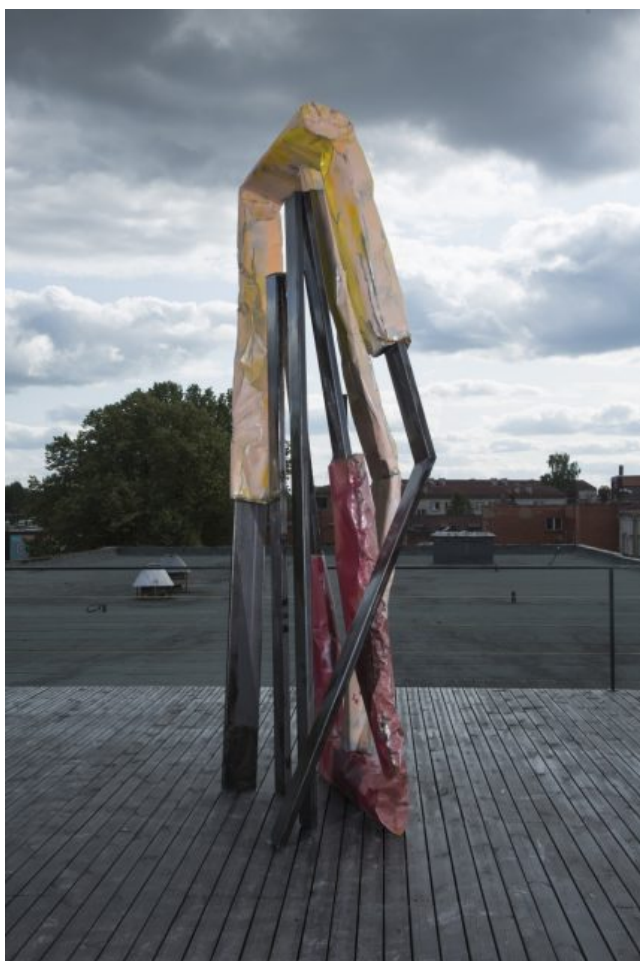


Indriķis Gelzis, *Night Flame*. Solo show Watery Day's Eye at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, 2023.

Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

ŽL: *As we revisit your portfolio, I actually notice a series of evolutions from your initial set-ups. The shift in 2019 at the C?sis Art Festival, where you displayed free-standing sculptures on the roof, stands out. Can you talk me through the moment your wall sculptures transitioned beyond their frames?*

IĢ: At that time, I had been creating free-standing sculptures digitally for a while. I selected one of the figures from my wall pieces, positioned it on a plane, and began manipulating it. Basically, I sought a method to convey my artistic expression through my entire body, allowing for a more fluid approach in certain aspects of the creative process. In these sculptures, you can see traces of real physical work. I knead those steel volumes with my hands and legs, and sometimes I hug them with my whole body and bend them with full force. I could say that every sculpture equals a genuine wrestling match. I've just completed the large-scale sculpture *Raised in a Geysir*, created concurrently with the pieces showcased in 'Watery Day's Eye'.



Indriķis Ģelzis, The Peach of my Eye. Cēsis Art Festival, Close-Up, 2019. Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

ŽL: *Around the same time, the first pieces of 'Time Camouflage' surfaced. How did this series come to life?*

IĢ: It happened a bit later. I remember creating four peculiar works during the pandemic in New York City, and two of them have now become part of the collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art. These smaller pieces were originally conceived as sketches for the larger ones. Initially, I saw these small reflective works more as study cases, but I soon recognised their self-sufficiency in becoming a new series.



Indriķis Ģelzis, Time Camouflage: Eye Clock. Solo show Watery Day's Eye at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, 2023. Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

ŽL: ... and in the end, they became everyone's favourite works (laughs).

IG: Yes (*laughs*). I made the very first 'Time Camouflages' from non-reflective steel. However, my own interest piqued when I figured out a way to make them reflective. When I created these works, I contemplated the mechanisation of a phenomenon or dimension, whether it's a landscape, a natural element, a gesture, or some of the body's organs. I have a tendency to portray the mechanisation of a singular phenomenon, yet more often I enjoy combining two or more elements, resulting in a cohesive, monolithic entity. For instance, in the piece *Eye Clock*, I merged an eye with the mechanics of a clock. Within the exhibition context, it transforms into camouflage for the space, underscoring the mechanisation of vision and time.



Indrişis Çelzis solo show Daily Charts at Suprainfit, Buckarest, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Suprainfinit Gallery.

ŽL: It seems that from this moment your works began to activate both the surroundings and the viewer. I subsequently observed that in 2021 at 'Liste' in Basel and at the 'Daily Charts' exhibition, your works assumed a more active role in shaping the scenography of the space.

IÇ: Actually, a scenography appeared for the first time in the exhibition 'Sky's the Limit' at Hole of the Fox in Antwerp, Belgium, in 2017. It was a significant moment, as this exhibition served as my first major showcase with the newly developed series shortly after graduating from HISK. Creating a spatial installation or a constructive framework for the works felt very natural, as it served as an extension of the works rather than the other way round.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show *Sky Is The Limit* at Hole of The Fox, Antwerp, 2017. Photo: Indriķis Ģelzis.

ŽL: Indeed, the integration of space in your works has been there from the start. Yet I consider the 'Liste' exhibition a stand-out. The artworks reach further than the frames; the wood featured in the works transforms into the wall, and the wall literally becomes a part of the work. I think this marked a particularly special and formal turning point.

IĢ: Participating in 'Liste' in Basel posed both a significant challenge and a great opportunity. As always, Suzanna and Cristina from the Suprainfinit gallery and I were on the same page, deciding that it could be the perfect moment to create an installation, and we went for it. For this installation, I took one of the wooden forms from the artwork, enlarged it to scale, and used it as a support system to display the work. Personally, it led me to rethink the scale and its impact on the functionality of an object. It made me consider how cleverly or awkwardly it might fit into the environment, along with similar considerations. That brings to mind the example of the eye: what if it were scaled up four times? Would a person see things four times larger (*smiles*)?



İndriķis Ģelzis solo presentation at Liste, Suprainfinit gallery, Basel, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Suprainfinit Gallery.

ŽL: *'Watery Day's Eye' took this spatiality to the next level. It's not a simply unified presentation across various parts of the installation, but it completely swallows the viewer on entering the room. Did you sense your works transitioning from 'wall sculptures' to a fully immersive installation?*

İĢ: This was a deliberate choice, and to some extent I was always aware of the fact that the working methods I employed before studying at HISK would not be in vain. I knew I would revisit them in one way or another. Since childhood, dramaturgy had a special place in my heart; one might say I was a pessimist on the interior and an optimist on the exterior. I have always been afraid of tragedy, so I often play it out in my head. Reflecting on the time before HISK, I see how this fear played a role in my work and influenced the ideas I deemed worth pursuing, to varying degrees. In order to create the idea for the video work, I recall envisioning a surreal scenario, and I was resolving it by creating a narrative. It's been nine years now since I created my last video work, and this year I decided to produce a new video work for 'Watery Day's Eye'. I spent a considerable amount of time searching for an interesting and meaningful entry point, attempting to translate my visual language into moving images, but with no success. However, the breakthrough came when it dawned on me that I could leverage the three key components of the video medium, movement, light and sound. This revelation led me to envision an immersive installation, a deconstructed and mechanised set-up, in a way. And that's how I conceived the installation of 'Watery Day's Eye', incorporating mechanised sculptures, lights, and a soundtrack. This encounter establishes a fresh perspective for me, and is an example of my vision for creating future exhibitions.

ŽL: *Some reviewers of the exhibition quite literally interpreted 'Watery Day's Eye' as being filled with tears, suggesting that the observer looking through it is sad, attempting to outline a specific narrative. However, I have a hunch that such a straightforward palette of emotions may not be implied in your exhibition.*

IĢ: In this exhibition, I consciously tried to maintain a specific vagueness of sense. My objective was to provide opportunities for varied perceptions. The eye, affected by tears of joy, sorrow, sentiment or fear, tends to blur. Therefore, I aimed to guide the viewer without imposing any specific emotional state. It's undeniable that the events of the last few years have been quite unsettling for all of us. For me, it was crucial to incorporate this background into my exhibition, not in an anxious manner, but in a light and playful way. Rather than opting for red sirens, I chose to play with blue light, which also served as a refreshing moment of diving in a cool Baltic Sea lagoon. This nuance helped me to portray a state of ignorance and disorientation. While creating this exhibition, and particularly while working on the part of the installation where the voice could be heard, I pondered extensively about the average Latvian individual. If all Latvian minds were united into one, what would it tell us? I didn't formulate my own version, but the presence of such contemplation assisted me in preserving a sense of universality. It also inspired the text I wrote for the soundtrack.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show Watery Day's Eye at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, 2023.
Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.



Indriķis Ģelzis solo show Watery Day's Eye at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, 2023.
Photo: Mārtiņš Cīrulis.

ŽL: *What does the New Year have in store for you? The steel rods after the festive season might increase in size.*

IĢ: (*Laughs*) I have two exhibitions planned for next year, and I really wouldn't like to be working with chubby steel rods for my new pieces. So my New Year's resolution is to keep my rods slim.

'I feel Palestinian Art is a Very Good Ambassador for Palestine'. An interview with the Palestinian movie director Nahed Awwad

January 15, 2024

Author Tadas Zaronkis



Gaza Calling (2012) by Nahed Awwad, film screening on 2 December 2023. The film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will) at the education and media research space Meno avilys curated by Edvardas Šumila, organised by the Contemporary Art Centre. Photo: T. Terekas

On 2 and 9 December 2023, the film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will), organised by the Contemporary Art Centre, the education and media research space Meno avilys, and the cultural organisation artnews.lt, and curated by Edvardas Šumila from the CAC, was screened in Vilnius. The selected films delve into the history of Palestine and the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation by exploring everyday life experiences and going into the stories and narratives of individuals. In this way, a space is (re)created in which our relationship with these themes is not limited to hasty assessments and casualty figures, but also includes the human dimension of interest, exploration and relationships. One of the films screened on 2 December was Nahed Awwad's *Gaza Calling* (2012).

Nahed Awwad is a Palestinian film director currently based in Berlin. She has produced two feature-length and five short documentaries, and contributes to curating exhibitions. Her films have been screened at many international film festivals, including the HotDocs Film Festival in Canada, the Prague Human Rights Film Festival, and the Vision du réel Film Festival in Switzerland. Nahed Awwad's documentary filmmaking is characterised by a close, intimate relationship with her characters and her environment. All her work focuses on Palestine, and in one interview she admits

that it is impossible to make a film about Palestine that is not political. Thus, her cinema is definitely political, but in no way didactic.

Awwad's first two works were experimental short films. *Lions* (2002) and *Going for a Ride?* (2003) feature images of the 2002 Israeli invasion of the West Bank. Images of destroyed buildings and tanks driving over cars are soon followed by footage of people cleaning the streets, playing music and protesting. These painful and complex realities are presented through the somewhat warm gaze of a local resident. Awwad's film *Gaza Calling*, screened as part of the A Different Will programme, follows closely two families. Due to the severe restrictions imposed by Israel on movement between Gaza and the West Bank in 2006, members of these families are torn apart. Although separated by only an hour's drive, they had not been able to meet for six years by the time of the film's production in 2012.

Samer, one of the characters in the film, stays in Ramallah after his studies to find better job opportunities in order to help his family in Gaza financially. However, unable to see his relatives and his little sister, who was born after his departure, he becomes gradually depressed. There are countless such cases. Following the two families' persistent efforts to keep in touch, and exposing the absurdity of life created by arbitrary militarised rules, Awwad develops a coherent political critique based not on theses and slogans, but on allowing people into her world, sharing the lived experience of perseverance and frustration.



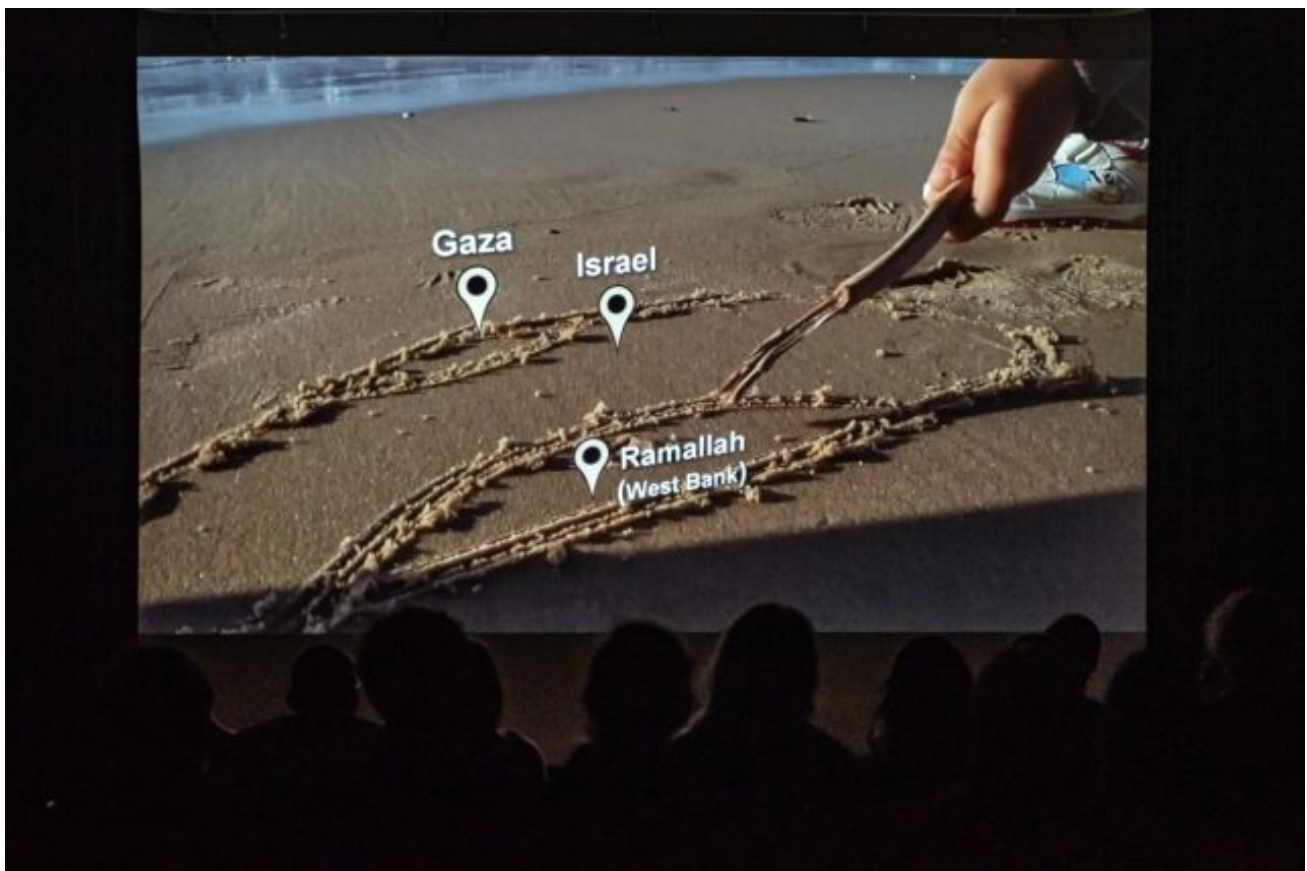
Gaza Calling (2012) by Nahed Awwad, film screening on 2 December 2023. The film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will) at the education and media research space Meno avilys curated by Edvardas Šumila, organised by the Contemporary Art Centre. Photo: T. Terekas

Tadas Zaronkis: The screening of your movie *Gaza Calling* (2012) in Vilnius on 2 December, along with other Palestinian movies, intervenes in the terrible context of an unprecedented escalation of violence. While most human rights organisations warn about the ethnic cleansing happening in Gaza, the international community seems to be slow in taking action to help end the hostilities. In Vilnius,

the Palestinian film programme was organised in the context of a rather one-sided right-wing mainstream media discourse, which tends to ignore the wider context of the Palestinian occupation. *Gaza Calling* was also screened in Berlin (where you live) on 26 October in a similar context of a hegemonic one-sided German-state discourse. How do you see the role of Palestinian art, and particularly the screening of your movies, in this moment of extreme tension and polarisation?

Nahed Awwad : It's very important. Actually, my film was shown three times recently, in Berlin and in Brandenburg. These events attracted some people who are new to the topic, especially young people, who wanted to learn more, to understand the context of what is happening. This is good. But right now, I feel this is not enough. I want to go on to the streets to demonstrate, public interventions, all these actions are important because in Germany, and actually in most of the Western media, they are not saying enough about what's happening. The discourse is one-sided. When they talk about Palestinians, it is only numbers. Of course, that's also because journalists are not allowed by the Israeli army to go into Gaza. And it is so important, because people don't know what's really happening. The Israeli narrative is very dominant in the mainstream media, and also among politicians. So we really need to work harder, also by showing our films and art.

And there is lots of movement, actually. In Berlin there are so many events about Palestine, film screenings and discussions, almost every day, or at least two or three times a week. And that's also because people really want to understand. Social media helps: people notice the difference between what the mainstream media reports about Palestine and the information they are able to gather in social media, from activists or from Palestinians themselves. These two different worlds are parallel to each other. People are clever, especially young people, and they notice that there is something wrong with how things are reported, and they question it. I feel Palestinian art is a very good ambassador for Palestine. It has been doing a really good job, even better than some Palestinian politicians.



Gaza Calling (2012) by Nahed Awwad, film screening on 2 December 2023. The film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will) at the education and media research space Meno avilys curated by Edvardas Šumila, organised by the Contemporary Art Centre. Photo: T. Terekas

TZ: In Germany, where you live, we have recently witnessed two significant attempts to exclude Palestinian, or simply critical, intellectuals and artists. In October, the Frankfurt Book Fair suspended the LiBeraturpreis award ceremony for Adania Shibli for her book *Minor Detail*. On 16 December, Masha Gessen, an American journalist of Jewish and Russian descent, was awarded the Hannah Arendt prize for political thought. But the event almost did not take place, as the Heinrich Böll Foundation was going to withdraw its support after Gessen recently compared Gaza to the Jewish ghettos of occupied Europe during the Second World War.

How do you feel as a Palestinian artist creating and showing your work in this context? Do you consider it important to fight for the visibility of Palestinian art in the West? Does it affect the relationship with the artistic or intellectual work itself?

NA: I heard about these two incidents, of course, and it's really sad. I don't understand it, because we're supposed to be in a free, democratic country with free speech. But it seems this applies to many things except Palestine. Regarding Adania, her book was already translated into German, published by a German publisher more than a year ago. And all of a sudden, they made this strange decision. This is problematic, because I think one needs to take a stand. If you don't want to take a stand for Palestine, you should take a stand for freedom of speech, artistic freedom, against censorship. This is art. It doesn't kill anybody. You know, words don't kill anybody; it's bombs that kill people. So it really is ironic what we are seeing.

What happened with Adania also put the spotlight on her book, it sold more because people were interested in why someone was trying to exclude it. From what I have heard, it recently also got translated into more languages. I still can't understand by what logic they legitimise these actions. As a Palestinian artist, you expect to get cancelled, that your work won't be shown in the main spaces, that you won't get state funding.

This is also what is happening in Berlin. So people look for alternative underground places, cafes and bars, where they can show their work. It's sad, it's as if the state doesn't want us to be able to exhibit our art. They also often ask Palestinian artists to condemn their own identity in order to fit into the mainstream-approved narrative. It's sad, and it makes me angry sometimes.

غزة تنادي Gaza calling

Gaza Calling (2012) by Nahed Awwad, film screening on 2 December 2023. The film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will) at the education and media research space Meno avilys curated by Edvardas Šumila, organised by the Contemporary Art Centre. Photo: T. Terekas

TZ: Your movie *Gaza Calling* (2012) focuses on the restriction of a fundamental human freedom, freedom of movement. The camera follows two families that cannot meet any more because of the restrictions on movement between two parts of Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank) imposed by Israel since 2006. But the topic of freedom of movement seems central in your cinema almost from the very beginning. In your other full-length movie *Five Minutes from Home* (2008), you investigate the Al-Quds airport, which was used for international travel by Palestinians in the 1950s and 1960s, before its occupation by Israel in 1967. Your second short movie *Going for a Ride?* (2003, in collaboration with an installation by Vera Tamari) shows massive lines of cars crushed by Israeli tanks during the 2002 invasion of Ramallah. So it not only documents violence, but also stresses a particular dimension of it, attacking the very material possibility to move freely. In *Not just any Sea!* (2006) you protest against the impossibility for people trapped in the West Bank to go to the sea.

How did the topic of freedom of movement become central in your work? Does this topic capture something specific about the violence of occupation which is imposed on the Palestinians?

NA: Actually, it is not intentional, I only noticed it years later. A close friend of mine told me that I was always going back to the same theme. It is a kind of urge for me. I lived in confined places with restricted movement, it was affecting my life and the lives of everybody around me. I felt I needed to show it.

The story of the Jerusalem airport came to me by accident while I was filming *The fourth Room* (2005). I was talking to Abu Jameel, a character in the film. I asked him how he used to bring books for his bookshop, and he told me he went to Cairo and Beirut every week. And I asked how. And he said he took the plane, from the airport. I come from a generation that thought the airport had always been Israeli. I didn't even know much about it, because it was always behind a fence, and later

behind a wall. I didn't know that it used to be Palestinian, that it was built during Jordanian times, that most of the workers were Palestinians. This conversation led to me creating *Five Minutes from Home*.

In general, with my films, when something bothers me or touches me, I feel the need to do something about it. It is the same with *Going for a Ride?* During the invasion of 2002, I was filming a lot in my neighbourhood and in my city. For some reason, I was focusing on filming those destroyed cars. I was walking around and I saw them. I was naturally drawn to them. So I filmed the cars even before I knew that the artist Vera Tamari was making her installation with those smashed cars. I learned about it by accident from a colleague of mine who was working on the idea with her. So I wanted to meet her, and we did, and then we decided that it would be a good collaboration. I already had some footage, and she wanted me to document the installation.

I lived in Ramallah, but my family lived in Bethlehem. So I was moving between the two cities a lot. And there were always obstacles, checkpoints. We often had to change our route. That is something I was affected by. And I wanted to do something to reflect it, and to share it with people.

TZ: Another very significant topic in your cinema is the relationship with memory and the past. Time in your movies often seems to be cut between 'then' and 'now'. In *Five Minutes from Home* it is the past, when international travel was freely accessible to Palestinians, that you explore as something forgotten, almost unimaginable for the current generation. In *The Fourth Room* (2005) you interview Abu Jamil, who talks about the 'good old times' before the occupation, before the checkpoints, when he could move freely. He preserves signs and memories of those times: a red car parked in front of his home, even though it doesn't work any more. In *Gaza Calling*, time is also broken in two: before 2006, when Israel imposed strict control over movement between Gaza and the West Bank, and afterwards. It is as if you try to gather the pieces of a better past, in order for it not to be buried under the rubble of the present. How do you understand this relationship with the past? Can it be called nostalgia, or is it something else? Why is the work of memory important in your cinema?

NA: Yes, part of it is nostalgia, but only part. It's important to document the situation in Palestine, because the landscape, the space, everything is changing rapidly. I noticed it especially when I started travelling outside Palestine and coming back. Because of the occupation, land is being confiscated, fences and walls for segregation are being built. It is my childhood landscape that is being changed, and I have always felt the urge to document it, to film it. Every time I go to Palestine, I take a camera with me, and I film because I don't know if next time I visit it will still be there.

People are always losing land, so, for example, in Bethlehem, where my family lives, the city is cut off, from three sides, by a wall of Israeli settlements. People are getting married, they need space for their families, so they build vertically, additional floors, because they can't expand horizontally. I feel I need to capture that as well.

It is important for me as a form of protest against a reality that I don't really accept. I need to capture how it used to be, how it is, because people without memory are like a computer, an empty machine.

Many times, the Israeli army tried to destroy it. In 1948, they confiscated whole libraries and photographic archives. They did it again in 1967, and again in Beirut in 1982, then again in the 2002 invasion of the West Bank. That time they went into my office, where I worked in a television station in Ramallah. They took many things, including hard drives. So we resist by preserving the memory, not only for us, but also for future generations. I recognise this effort in many Palestinian artists and filmmakers.

To preserve the memory also means to be able to present another narrative, our narrative, which is absent from the mainstream media, but you can find it in many alternative places, and also in universities. They cannot bury everything.



Gaza Calling (2012) by Nahed Awwad, film screening on 2 December 2023. The film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will) at the education and media research space Meno avilys curated by Edvardas Šumila, organised by the Contemporary Art Centre. Photo: T. Terekas

TZ: You talk about preserving memory as an act of resistance, and another aspect of your cinema seems to me to be related to this topic. You have a very intimate relationship with the people you film. In one interview you mention that it is different to working with actors. Watching *Gaza Calling* I was almost astonished by how accepting people were of the camera, gently letting you into their lives. Also, your movies are about your own home and the violence it suffers. I don't know if I can say it, but I have the impression that even the terrible violence that you document becomes in a sense intimate in your movies. In your first movie, *Lions*, the gaze of the camera is not that of a journalist documenting a tragedy, but more like the gaze of someone who lives there, who is comfortable with the space. How does it change the cinema you make? Does this intimate relationship with what you film change the very genre of your films, or their production process?

NA: I make films about people I know and places that are familiar to me. It's very important. So, for example, in the movie *Lions* I film a destroyed restaurant, and I've been to that restaurant. You can see the sign 'For family' in the rubble, and I remember that sign. It is the same, for example, with Samer, who I film in *Gaza Calling*. He is actually a relative of a friend and colleague. I already knew him, but in all cases it is important for me to build a relationship with the people I film.

And sometimes this makes it hard. Samer was living in the West Bank, and he decided to go back to Gaza. You see it in the movie. After his decision, when we weren't filming, I asked him, are you sure? Do you really understand what it means? In the film it was a very good scene, when he goes back. But at the same time, it is really hard to hold these two roles together, being a filmmaker, but also a

human being who cares about Samer, who considers him a friend and likes him. I'm still in contact with Samer, he's in Gaza now. He's married with two beautiful daughters. I'm really worried about him and his family. I write to him, sometimes he takes a few days to answer. But I also feel ashamed or shy to write him. What shall I ask him? Are you still alive? So sometimes I ask his cousin in London or his brother in Paris. I know Samer and his family are fine, but they are also not fine; mentally, they are exhausted to the limit. All they need now is a ceasefire, this needs to be stopped, and not just for a break.

TZ: In *Gaza Calling* I found one moment involving Samer particularly touching. Samer is a young camera operator who stayed in Ramallah after his studies to work for a news agency and wasn't able to see his family (who live in Gaza), or the sea, for six years. As you mentioned, at one point he decides to abandon his work and go back to Gaza. This is a sort of sacrifice, since the work prospects are worse there, life is more dangerous, and he will probably not be able to leave. But in the car which transports him through Israeli territory to the checkpoint, he looks to the hills and says: 'We have a beautiful country.' This seems to be a moment of freedom and hope. In the midst of total unfreedom, for a moment, freedom of movement is reclaimed, even if in a very restricted way. In *Gaza Calling* both families fight to keep in contact, they call each other, send video recordings and gifts, and appeal to NGOs. In *Lions* the images of destruction are juxtaposed with those of people tidying up the rubble, a man playing music in the street, and a demonstration where Palestinians are seen chanting: 'We want to live in freedom!' These moments of resistance and hope are very present in your movies. Do you see your cinema as hopeful?

NA: First, thanks for your words, and for noticing these little things, because not everybody sees them. I'm somebody who's hopeful despite the darkness, and my cinema reflects it. I always look for human connection, and for these little moments that give hope, firstly to me and then to the audience. Hope that helps one keep resisting injustice and making films about it, even though it becomes really dark and frustrating sometimes. We are only humans, you know. Like Samer and his decision, it was very hard for him. But he wanted to be with his family, he chose it, and I respect that. I think if he stayed in Ramallah, maybe he would be very miserable. Especially now, with what's happening in Gaza, I can't imagine it. I have lots of friends who have families in Gaza, and they're really living through hell. They cannot function well: always watching the news, always trying to call their families. They feel helpless. But also I feel that we, who live outside Palestine, have to keep fighting, with all the tools we have, like art, films and words, for those who are in Palestine.

The people who come to events about Palestine in Berlin, it's a really colourful crowd, different ethnicities and backgrounds. It's so empowering and hopeful to see these kinds of people show their support and call for a ceasefire. I hope for a ceasefire very, very soon, even today. It will take years to rebuild Gaza. The people there have been through hell, and we need to continue to support them, to bring their voice out in many shapes, as artists and activists can do.

عاد سامر الى غزة منذ أكثر من سنة.
لم يحصل على المنحة، لكنه بدأ التحضير لتصوير فيلمه الاول في غزة.

It's been more than a year since Samer returned to Gaza.
He didn't get the scholarship, but has begun preparing
to make his first film in Gaza.

Gaza Calling (2012) by Nahed Awwad, film screening on 2 December 2023. The film programme about Palestine 'Kitokia valia' (A Different Will) at the education and media research space Meno avilys curated by Edvardas Šumila, organised by the Contemporary Art Centre. Photo: T. Terekas

For Whose Good. An interview with the artist Mateusz Choróbski

January 18, 2024

Author Uršulė Baltėnaitė



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023. Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery

Mateusz Choróbski pays a lot of attention to the exhibition space: his choice of architecture complements the artworks; and vice versa, the works help the environment in which they are exhibited to resonate. He has recently been focusing not only on developing visual ideas, but also on social themes. In this exhibition, he combines sculptural light objects with sensitive topics that are relevant both in Poland, his homeland, and in Lithuania. Here we talk with the artist about his ideas, his work, and his current exhibition in Vilnius.

Uršulė Baltėnaitė: You explain the concept of the exhibition's name 'For Whose Good' with Cicero's phrase 'Cui bono?', used in forensic science to assess who might have benefitted from a crime. What made you approach the social representation of Poland and Lithuania in the exhibition from this point of view? Have you thought about the answer to your own question, for whose good? And would your answer be valid for the situation both in Poland and in Lithuania?

Mateusz Choróbski: Seeking answers is not the point. Cicero's statement from centuries ago and his '*Cui bono*' question are still relevant. And so the mechanisms which this exhibition is dealing with, such as the transfer of goods and benefits, and the process of exclusion and alienation, are all present in our societies. In most cases, someone benefits from someone else's loss. It doesn't matter whether that is in Poland, Lithuania, or any other country. The title of the exhibition, with the question mark deliberately left out, implies that the question has been raised again and again, and yet multiple attempts to answer it have failed to bring about the expected change. We keep

grappling with the same issue. Hence 'For Whose Good' is closer to a statement than a question. Likewise, it implies an unfortunate acceptance of reality as it is, rather than looking for answers and waiting for change.



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023.
Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery

Uršul? Balt?nait?: The exhibition 'For Whose Good' creates a misleading first impression: a cosy homey atmosphere, dim and warm light, the floor shining with copper. But the underlying idea is actually at a deeper level of the home theme: the poverty line. How did the idea for this visual expression come about? What does this (fake) home cosiness represent?

Mateusz Choróbski: The exhibition is conceived as a coherent statement, in which individual objects affect the whole, their meanings intersecting and complementing each other similar to the warm light emanating from the illuminated objects, the only source of light in the gallery, which fills the space with a Baroque yellow. At first glance, the construction-exhibition is designed to tantalise, entice, and lure the viewer in like a decoy. But it's all just appearances. Beneath all the shine of coins and golden lighting, which creates a cosy atmosphere and ensures the well-being of the viewer, lies something antithetical to these sensations, namely exclusion, poverty, and the powerlessness of those who aren't represented in art. This seduction mechanism has a meaning, because it's a sort of universal indicator of the everyday reality, surface-level posturing and accruing one's symbolic and financial capital at other people's expense. After all, it is not just the art world that is built on smoke and mirrors.



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023. Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery

Uršul? Balt?nait?: Conceptually, you combine different ideas, poverty with capitalism, cosiness with instability, rough industrial materials with the pleasant light that emanates from them. In the same way, the viewer, who initially admires the works, is introduced to their unexpected context. What emotions are you really trying to create?

Mateusz Choróbski: I'm not trying to create emotions. My intention in dealing with such subjects as in the case of 'For Whose Good' is by no means to define or formulate a close-ended narrative. I try to steer clear of pontification, or any didactic or categorical representation, so that what's heavy, emotional and uncomfortable doesn't morph into some kind of spectacle of poverty and an ostentatious display of a whole gamut of extreme emotions. In other words, it's important to me that my work touches on the *cause*, not the *effect*. The causes might be more complex, ambiguous and contradictory, whereas the effects lend themselves to depiction, reduction and ultimate commodification.

I see there the potential for non-representational art that doesn't utilise any pre-existing *images*, but creates a space for their singular emergence and uniquely personal experience. Some experiences and notions cannot be translated into figurative art.

Furthermore, this kind of exhibition concept offers the viewer not one, but many clues, which they might follow: the decision as to which path they want to choose is entirely up to them. To a large extent, it is the viewer who is responsible for interpreting and interacting with the exhibit. It depends on the experience they bring with them.

Uršul? Balt?nait?: The sculptures in the exhibition are created from ready-made materials, which are supplemented by your casts. Do you have a specific way of selecting the objects you reuse for your artworks? Do they all have their own story, their meaning?

Mateusz Choróbski: The pieces you've just mentioned aren't made from materials that are yet to be instilled with meaning. I prefer working with objects which already contain a morsel of content that can be modified and juggled visually and semantically, just as in poetry, at times combining things that are seemingly incongruous, so that the meaning of a work of art emerges at the initial stage of the selection of materials. This process begins first and foremost with a selection of their potential content, which can be discerned within and highlighted. The visual aspect is far from meaningless, but what first comes to mind is the consideration of what this thing is, what it was, and what it could signify. For this reason, these are often objects that have already fulfilled their primary function. They are discarded and dismissed for years to come, like radiators with multiple layers of paint, traces of the repeatedly painted rooms they once heated, door frames torn from homes, suction cups acquired at flea markets, or coins taken out of circulation.



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023.
Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery

Uršul? Balt?nait?: Your sculpture-light objects contain a contradiction: a warm light emanates from rough, industrial materials. How did this unexpected idea develop, to associate this light with such an influential theme, using a misleading cosy atmosphere to then represent instability and exclusion?

Mateusz Choróbski: The light itself doesn't represent exclusion, it allows it to reveal itself. Although it creates this seemingly cosy atmosphere, the lack of it would result in deeply pessimistic connotations. In fact, alienation is not represented by the light, but by the used object and its history, like scrap metal in the form of radiators, or small change, that is, the smallest denomination, which we don't even bother picking up on the street, and yet throw into the can of a person in need. Therefore, instability and exclusion are represented by the way we perceive something that we no longer need and notice. In my practice, I use these objects, the formerly used things I find, alongside their provenance and an awareness of their original function.

At the risk of sounding pompous, light can be associated with hope (which is an established link in art history). Not only does it create an apparent image of a pleasant experience of space, but creating these appearances might also offer a rare way to cope with one's emotions and predicament for a person living on the edge of poverty. Perhaps the use of light would allow us (the viewers) to come to terms with something that is sometimes too hard to bear on a daily basis.

Uršul? Balt?nait?: You have recently been concentrating on social and political themes in your work. What sparked your interest? What motivated you to create and draw the attention of the audience to these topics? What emotions do you experience when you create in a socio-political context, but at the same time are aware of the incredible scale of capitalism in the art market? Does this become a daily frustration, or is it an inspiration to speak out even louder on sensitive topics?

Mateusz Choróbski: Themes revolving around social issues have perhaps always been close to me, although at times unconsciously. As a student, I witnessed my father's company going bankrupt after the financial crisis of 2008, and my father himself turning from a resourceful man into a completely lost and helpless person without a job. Barely a month after graduating, I moved from Warsaw to the USA. After a couple of weeks, I started working at this baseball cap factory in the New York fashion district. On entering a high-rise glass building, I was greeted by a doorman, walked to the lift on a red carpet, and as its doors opened on one of the floors, the sweatshop appeared right in front of my eyes. A 'beautiful' contradiction. I was the only white person working there illegally. Most of the staff consisted of immigrants from Latin America. The company was managed by two middle-class white men. I would have a one-dollar slice of pizza and a coffee for lunch. Sometimes I satisfied my hunger with just a coffee and cigarettes. What I can recall clearly from that period of my life is a feeling of powerlessness, my willingness to work and my inability to find employment. And a simultaneous awareness of my own insignificance. I could vanish in that city, and no one would even care. Perhaps that is the reason why I tend to avoid flaunting extreme emotions in my work. It seems to me that a person who has never faced any anxiety about their material situation wouldn't be able to truly comprehend it. Empathy is not enough. Viewers of my exhibitions interact with them in two ways: in terms of an aesthetic, and with their own experience and preconceptions about/on the subject of poverty.

Although it's hard to admit, I do sometimes feel this frustration, which can also be motivating. At the same time, I'm part of the art market. However, what is more interesting to me is the fact that art rarely even addresses the subject of poverty. I wonder if it simply stems from the notion that poverty is not cool. Perhaps it's easier to ruminate on issues of marginalised or persecuted groups that still use the same language as us, and so belong to our 'bubble'; whereas poverty is often associated with those with whom we don't wish to be associated, with working, patriarchal, small-town or rural communities. It's a bit like how Didier Eribon wrote in *Returning to Reims*. Even if we've managed to leave that kind of circle behind, we still feel this odd sense of class shame. So why even come back to it? Why deal with this at all? Moreover, it is the feeling of being pulled in two different directions. On one hand, you still feel like a member of this community, you feel drawn to it, and yet alien. On the other hand, you already belong to the class you aspire to, in which you have an unwavering sense that you need to prove your worth and value, and you're still kind of incompatible.



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023. Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023. Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery

Uršul? Balt?nait?: How have social and political themes influenced your other ideas, materials and techniques over time? Do you ever create without thinking about the context behind the artwork?

Mateusz Choróbski: I don't create art for the sake of art, neither materials. I think it is not possible to create with no context. Even unintentionally, the context appears on its own because we're part of a bigger story. By creating, we make a public statement, which belongs to a wider discussion. We don't live in a vacuum.

I also never select political themes at random, just pulling from the readily available stack of current issues. They originate from, or touch on, my personal experience. They're part of my reality, as well as the reality of many other people who I know very well or just a little. The first piece made of coins seems worth mentioning here. In 2018, I exhibited *Cream*, an object made of melted one-penny coins with a collective value corresponding to the sum of my debts when the work was produced. The object was split in half and sold in two parts, each for the same amount as that of my debts. Despite the fact that one of them was sold, my debt was not cleared. The gallery snatched a 50% fee from the total sum, thus remaining the sole beneficiary of the transaction. I was still in the red. Ever since then, I've been observing my surroundings more closely. After all, every single one of us is saddled with some kind of 'debt', be it more or less substantial. That's how I arrived at the themes that captivate me right now: questions about the dignity of life, living conditions, what provides us with a sense of security, and when our lives are in danger. It's not politics, it's the basis of our existence, regardless of time and place. Unfortunately, these questions resonate more strongly in the current post-pandemic state of affairs and with inflation raging all over the world. So the issue of the minimum subsistence level appears in my work.

Uršul? Balt?nait?: Your exhibitions are presented in different countries. You adapt the works and ideas to the spaces in which they are exhibited. How do you choose these spaces: do they tell their own stories, is their (historical) context important, or are they chosen just to visually complement your ideas? Maybe it is the other way around: does the location dictate to you an idea for the work? How does this process of selecting spaces work?

Mateusz Choróbski: Although I would love to choose the places on my own, for the time being I receive invitations for exhibitions, like the former Le Scalze Church in Naples, the perfume museum of Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice, Villa Medici, the French Academy in Rome, and the SALTS garden in Basel. I create brand-new pieces for each exhibition, so that they are rooted in a specific place, engage in a dialogue with it, and at the same time tell/herald/signal the subjects that I find interesting and universal. Working on shows in these types of locations can be time-consuming, but it also offers an opportunity for learning more about local contexts, history and architecture. I often get a lot of satisfaction from consulting source materials, poring over some books and albums. With each subsequent piece, I want to gain a sense of overcoming my own habits, or, to put it simply, growth. As far as 'For Whose Good' is concerned, I also delve deeper into the subjects that fascinate me, notions relating to the human condition, in a new context (of a place or country) that organically broadens the potential for interpretation and experience of those works. Or should I say 'co-experience', since I never offer a single template for their understanding, which also brings me to the fact that I view my work in terms of visual poetry.



Mateusz Choróbski. For Whose Good. 2023. Exhibition view. Photography: (AV17) Gallery

Uršul? Balt?nait?: Your works are usually exhibited in characteristic locations where a specific dialogue emerges with your site-specific sculptures. This exhibition, in the (AV17) gallery, is working more or less in a white cube. Was it more difficult or more liberating to work in such an environment?

Mateusz Choróbski: I enjoy site-specifics. As you know, I couldn't help myself even in this context. One of the pieces is displayed in the gateway leading to the gallery. It tells you what you can expect. The neon emulating the shape of a coin bathes the formerly dark space of the passage in golden light, a place usually associated with danger, grime and alcohol consumption in the evening, and a sleeping spot for homeless people.

Even though the exhibition gives an impression of a white cube installation, I still think of it as a site-specific piece due to the concept, and not just the pre-existing architecture. Here, the site-specific quality rests on two aspects. Firstly, the entire narrative is formulated on the basis of the spatial layout of the gallery and the way the viewer has to move through it, where the light comes in, and how they need to move around the arranged pieces. Secondly, I checked the statistics pertaining to the poverty level for a family of four living in Lithuania, bearing in mind the spatial layout of the gallery, its rooms transformed into a neighbourhood of experiences of neighbouring countries. I always make some sort of reference to a given location, for instance through architecture, history, social issues or statistics. As a result, the location of an exhibit becomes an integral part of it. These two approaches require a slightly different preparation, but neither is superior to the other.

Uršul? Balt?nait?: Finally, is there a venue or building where, if there were no restrictions, you would like to hold an exhibition?

Mateusz Choróbski: The attic in my family home and Dia Beacon.

Mateusz Choróbski's exhibition 'For Whose Good' will be at the (AV17) gallery (Totori? g. 5, Vilnius) until 26 January 2024.

[Photo reportage from the exhibition 'For Whose Good' by Mateusz Choróbski at the \(AV17\) Gallery](#)

Bending Things and Making Sense: Conversation with Rupert Resident and Performance Artist marc norbert hörler

January 24, 2024

Author Povilas Gumbis



Still from *heat and fervor* (2023), performance, fragrance, sound, image courtesy to marc norbert hörler.

It's already past 2:30PM, which means I'm running late for the interview. I quickly leave Rupert's office, descend two flights of stairs, and turn right to reach our first-floor reading room. marc is already there waiting, assuring me that my belatedness is of no concern. Sporting a baseball cap and dark-brown sunglasses, they are ready to face the piercing sun rays streaming down from the bright blue sky above the pine trees that encircle the area around Rupert. As we close the heavy metal doors behind us, I propose we take our conversation along the narrow footpath by the Neris river.

marc norbert hörler is a Berlin-based artist whose practice encompasses poetry, song, fragrance, writing, performance, education, and publishing. Combining language and the senses, marc composes spatial, sonic, and olfactory environments engaged in sensorial storytelling and diachronic allusions. Their work tends to engage with obscure histories, magical rituals, and somatic articulations – all of which offer an experience of new, emancipatory worlds.

Before I turn on the mic, I passingly ask whether marc has had a chance to do one of these (interviews) before.

marc: No, I haven't really done many interviews. I appreciate that an interview offers a chance to elaborate more in detail about certain concepts, but also that it is a conversation rather than a catchy headline.



Photograph by Povilas Gumbis, Rupert.

Povilas: So, to get our conversation going, would you mind describing where we are?

marc: We are at what seems like the beginning of a forest next to a river. There's a table, a trash bin. If I see a table like that, I assume that there's a barbecue place somewhere. It's similar to how I spent summer nights with my friends growing up in Switzerland: next to a river, somewhat surrounded by trees. Making a fire, talking and drinking wine.

Povilas: I, someone who's never been to Switzerland, imagined that there's a pretty big contrast between what you see here and what you see there. My image of your home country has a certain topographical drama to it: steep mountain ranges offset by deep valleys and vast azure lakes.

marc: Where I grew up it's definitely hillier – mountains are visible and they always surround you. We didn't have a river like Neris: I grew up with lakes or little streamlets. The landscape is mostly forest, meadows and farming land. And it's a small community. The population of the whole district is like 15,000. And in my village, it was even less.

Povilas: This image that you're painting – provincial community encircled by grand landforms – has a certain gentleness to it. I immediately think of one of your performances. In it, you, together with two other performers, traverse through a compact space, always finding one another through touch. Delicate strokes along the back; the head finding solace on a shoulder or thigh... All of this is offset by a distant background seen through a floor-to-ceiling window: a foggy landscape of Appenzell. It's called Blue-something...

marc: *spell for *bluescht?*

*Povilas: Yes, thank you. This gentle proximity of bodies echoes the harmonious use of language that is prominent throughout your oeuvre. There were many instances in spell for *bluescht where the performers would suddenly – sometimes mid-sentence – transition from German to English (or*

vice-versa). Could you elaborate on this seamless blend of vernacular and your general interest in language?

marc: I have a background in linguistics. I studied Latin and comparative linguistics and I think that's also how I deal with language and poetry and voice in my work. Some of my research when writing a piece is working with etymologies. To observe how meanings of words change through time can be a helpful tool in understanding the dominant discourse at the time, and how it can suppress certain meanings in favour of others. The particular moments in *spell for *bluescht* where it's shifting between the local dialect of my region and English is how I emphasise this oscillation between the lexical meaning of words and the materiality of the voice that performs them. The relationship between words and voicing has been a disputed one. What happens to words in their enunciation? Is the voice only meaningful when it pronounces the words so that the audience can understand them? Or maybe there is meaning to be gained by transgressing that in this excessive performance of the text. What happens to the legibility of the performance as a whole when the text that makes it up becomes unintelligible? The voice can completely transgress the textual and create other planes of perceiving, of listening, or perhaps reading in this case.



Still from *heat and fervor* (2023), performance, fragrance, sound, image courtesy to marc norbert hörler.

Povilas: What you're now alluding to – this dialectical relationship that exceeds the sum of its parts – becomes noticeable through the many different yet coalescent elements that compose your performances. Apart from choreography, writing of the text and later voicing it, you also manufacture scents and make the garments both you and other performers wear. So where do you begin when you compose a new performance? Is it this singular from the very beginning?

marc: Generally in my process I'm working on a variety of different materialisations of my research at the same time. Poetry is one of them, working with scents is another. I carry these poems, sometimes melodies of songs, olfactory experiments with me for a longer period of time. I feel like only after a moment of these materials fermenting with each other a concrete idea for a piece starts

to appear. I lay out all this stuff, and look at it again, and then I get a sense for which materials make each other vibrate and build up a tension in one another. These researches continue to exist and appear in more than one instance in my practice, new references open up. An example perhaps is the word 'smart'. Allusions to its story and relation to words like the German *schmerzen* (En. 'to hurt') have appeared on multiple occasions. In a drawing that includes a poem on this, there is a sword, which in Tarot is a signifier of intellect; this is the second instance of an understanding of cerebral capacities as connected to sharpness and pain. I tried to look at this from a different point of view, a perspective of softness and a more interconnected understanding of the word, which then resulted in a huge knitted sword with a poem encrypted on its malleable blade.

Here, whilst continuing our journey on the circuitous trail, we are obliged to give way to the incoming traffic of bikes. This pauses our conversation for a bit.

marc: It's funny that we saw twins, huh?

Povilas: Why – is that like a bad omen?

marc: (laughing) No, no. I like it because I see language and poetry as a form of spellcraft or magic and this reminded me of it. In an interview, poet CA Conrad said 'Magic is discovering how things bend, then bending them for results [...].' And if you take a look at their poems, you can see that visually, they have a specific shape, kind of like a sigil, which carries its own meaning and potential. The poem is also a recipe, introduced by specific somatic *rituals*. And it is a score, so it can be performed. I like this encompassing understanding of poetry, it literally *makes sense*.

Povilas: You mentioned rituals, and they're by definition collective. So is a poem, or any other form of cultural text, for that matter. The author's intentions are met with the reader's interpretations, resulting in a dialectic production of knowledge. Making sense, as you put it, is then always collaborative. Does that ring true to your practice?

marc: I understand the term *ritual* based on the assumed reconstructed root **re-*, 'to reason, observe carefully'. A ritual can then be both an individual or collective practice to reflect and understand something, to situate oneself vis-a-vis a multisensory reality. Ecologist David Abram would perhaps call this participatory, with regard to the reciprocity of perception. In touching someone or something, I simultaneously experience myself as touchable. I feel like such practices operate with this phenomenological understanding and thereby perhaps move from 'the text' to 'texting', if that makes sense, from the thing as an object to *analyse* to the score as a practice to *do*. This doing is infused with all the performers' experiences and identities, and offers more than just an amplified bandwidth or increased harmonic potential.

Povilas: In the future, would you entertain the idea of going behind the scenes completely?

marc: I'd like to take on that role, yes, but I will continue performing myself. After composing some performances for several performers, I really enjoy seeing how a piece changes depending on the performers I work with and having to navigate the direction of it. Having another person perform some of what I've written also allows me to be affected by it in a different way. I like to imagine the characters in my performances as producing a slight friction with reality. A tension perhaps in a sense that it shows how things can be bent differently, to go back to CA Conrad for a moment. And it seems to me that this can create an opening, for imagination, for change.

Povilas: This bending of things and new openings you're referring to – is your aim to create new, self-contained, and immersive environments?

marc: One of the terms that I like to think together with my work is world-making, a prominent concept in queer performance. Sometimes I feel like what is happening when different senses are activated in the perception of the piece is that it kind of reworks or twists those little nodes of time and space. I would say that this perceptive shift is what can work as an opening of sorts. I attempt to create environments that operate specifically with the activation of our ears and noses additionally to our eyes. Those two senses are very connected with the materialities of story-telling for me, and that's something my pieces try to achieve, inside and outside of the written score.

Povilas: And what are the foundations for the worlds that you make?

marc: As a queer person, my practice is sensitive to those experiences. In my latest performance *for heat and fervor*, it became very apparent that apart from the content of the piece, the experiences of that shared process and the emotional ties between the performers become part of the performance as well. I would like to see my performative practice as a testament of that process too, as an affective potential for interaction and collaboration. The piece I'm talking about worked specifically with the choir as a social and material coming-together of voices, which informs what world-making can mean in this context. I'm also thinking of the ephemerality of performance, of enunciated language and smell. Especially the way fragrance works with memory is relevant for me. What is the relation between performance and memory? The performance continues to live on in affective shards, at times literally in molecules that stay in one's nose after leaving and that can be activated at random and potentially transport you right back.

Povilas: If, as you say, memory can activate the performance, can the latter also do the same for the former? Here I'm referring to your use of folklore and its wealth of narratives or collective memories that you revitalise in a contemporary context.

marc: I've been working with folklore as an aesthetic and practice to reclaim, one that I grew up with but that never felt like it was part of me, or I was part of it. Folklore as popular knowledge, customs, beliefs are things that are a big part of what I grew up with. I wanted to work with these inherited cultural and aesthetic forms and redefine my relationship to them by claiming them in my work and turning them into something else. In *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, writer Ursula K. Le Guin quotes anthropologist Helen Fisher: 'The first cultural device was probably a recipient, [...] a container to hold gathered products and some kind of sling or net carrier.' My understanding of story-telling and how I use it in my work is related to how Le Guin understands her writerly practice, one that sees the various things that are held in such a container but also the relation they take to one another. I think there is a very intimate relationship between performance and memory. But memory perhaps not so much as something coming from the past, but memory as the potential sensory souvenirs taken from the ephemeral shards of reality that are displayed. As something yet to come.



Photograph by Andrej Vasilenko @ Articulations 3, Medūza, 30 August, 2023.

Povilas: Do you think that all of these ideas are retained within the documentation of your work? Smell, such a prevalent element in your performances, escapes the recording capabilities of a camera...

marc: I find inspiration in the writings of queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz. One of my favourite texts is his essay *Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts*, in which he talks about queer acts as standing as evidence for queer lives, powers and possibilities. I think by now I can almost quote verbatim what he writes about *ephemera*: 'Ephemera, as I am using it here, is linked to alternate modes of textuality and narrativity like memory and performance', and he continues by saying that 'it is all of those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired, but certainly not the thing itself. It does not rest on epistemological foundations but is instead interested in following traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things.' So perhaps the afterlife of the performance is not to be captured and preserved – at least not in an official, document-oriented archival way. So even though, yes, I can make a video, it does not manage to preserve the performance entirely. Perhaps the thing it most directly evidences is that the performance happened. I can prove it in my portfolio and on my website. The afterlife of the experience of the audience in the performance is probably many things but a clear image; more of a feeling, perhaps a fragment of a melody, or a fragrant memory.

Povilas: Roland Barthes argued that a photograph's sole claim to veracity is by being a 'testament to the existence of a specific thing in a specific place at a specific time.' But even here he leaves space for specks of trace – he doesn't annihilate the connection between the action of conception and the material consequence of that action.

marc: It's interesting then to think about how to continue a performance in how the visual material that documents it is treated. I guess that also reframes the question of the archive. Is there a way to have a sensorial access to something like an archive? How does that change the way things like

performances are documented, so that it speaks the language of immersion or being with the performance rather than outside of it?

Povilas: So how do you edit a video of your performance, for example? Undoubtedly, you put a lot of care into choosing when to cut, what sort of angles to showcase, etcetera.

marc: This is the point where I collaborate with other people. The invitation to have someone work on it and bring in their own experience of the work may already introduce aspects of the work itself rather than enacting a gaze from outside. And for this I need to be able to provide them with the same care, and have the means to compensate them in a way that facilitates an openness to such a process.

Povilas: Since we're almost back at Rupert, I thought at the end it would be fitting to ask you what's in store for you in the future, what could we exp–

We suddenly hear a loud thud nearby. In front of us, a car, slowly crawling out of its parking spot, has drove on top of a sidewalk, hitting it in the process. An irritating noise of now loosely-hanging front bumper scraping against cement is what follows. Since we are directly next to Rupert, this feels like a 'full-stop' moment signalling to us that we have reached the end of our conversation. The question of marc's future will thus be left unanswered. However, smidgeons of past and present dispersed throughout the interview will, hopefully, inspire the reader to follow marc's artistic journey. As a little nudge towards that direction, here's a [link](#) to their website.

Povilas Gumbis is an art historian interested in Eastern European and Baltic art of the 20th century, their post-soviet developments, resulting historiographies, and the contemporary scene. Presently he works at Rupert.

Manifesto for violence

January 31, 2024

Author Alina Oprelianska



View from the exhibition *Endless Shine of Human Violence* at Kogo Gallery, 2023. Photo by Marje Eelma

“In the ENDLESS SHINE OF HUMAN VIOLENCE, everyone becomes king, and every pathetic worm blinds the rest with its radiant splendour.” – These are the words that greet you when you step into Alina Kleytman’s exhibition in Kogo Gallery. The exhibition starts with a so-to-call manifesto that carries great symbolism, as the artworks themselves constitute a kind of manifesto for violence.

The first thing you see are the crowns – they are everywhere. Up against the walls are four shining crowns made from the glass remnants of broken windows in Ukraine. Some look like Ukraine, taking the form of the *Tryzub* (trident) and make you feel with your own skin what that means: I am the freedom (? – ?????). All the crowns are lit, making you pay attention to the shadow cast by the crown and understand that it is bigger than the crown itself as it forms a long, bold pillar and halo. It reminds you of the saints; it reminds you of greatness... As an object, the crown canonises the ruler and endows them with the power to grant unconditional forgiveness. You take a step back and see how far the shadow is cast, how far it reaches. The ruler is a tiny human sitting in one place, but their power reaches far; the deeds committed in the shadow of the crown reach even further.



View from the exhibition Endless Shine of Human Violence at Kogo Gallery, 2023. Photo by Marje Eelma



View from the exhibition Endless Shine of Human Violence at Kogo Gallery, 2023. Photo by Marje

Turning your gaze, you see the process of Growing the Crown. This installation hangs from the ceiling and elicits a feeling of disgust... and goosebumps. The crown grows with the help of corpses and based on corpses. The letters are made of plastic human body bags; hair hangs in bits and pieces, reminding you of a crime scene. But it's the shadow that tells you what the crime is here – barbed wire as a part of captivity and torture. The Crown of Thorns.

Behind you, you see The Crown. It is made from the same body bags, but this time, the crown is without greatness; rather, it represents how foolish violence and the servants of violence can be. This crown is a reference to the opening manifesto: “I am the DIRTY WHITE! I am the victim and fool”; and indeed, the materials are the victims of violence while the shape is of the fool.



View from the exhibition *Endless Shine of Human Violence* at Kogo Gallery, 2023. Photo by Marje Eelma

All this is complemented by an unsettling half-whispered voice in the background that issues from *The Four Revenges of Queen Olga*. The video embodies and unfolds around the half-legendary events of Olga's vengeance in Kyivan Rus' time, described in the *Tale of Bygone Years*. It is noteworthy that the figure of Queen Olga and her deeds are perceived as significant in Ukrainian history and nowadays resonate with wartime folklore. Queen Olga started to appear in memes as a symbol of rage and mercilessness toward the enemy and re-emerged from that as *Queen Olga 2.0*. – a term now used by Ukrainians on Facebook to praise someone's fighting back against the Russians. The video consists of three key elements: a woman's body painted in the colours of Russia, narrations of fragments from the *Bygone Years* chronicle, and the voice of violence itself that every time interrupts the narration.

The choice of the female body in the video is a purposeful one, embodying fertility and the birth vessel. The entity in the video breastfeeds the violence, emphasising how people crave for violence,

while the colours of the Russian flag are placed exactly on those parts where the marks of rape usually show.

The exhibition tells a compelling visual story of how violence breeds more violence while humanity drowns in its desire for violence for revenge, caused by the ecstasy of power and unfetteredness. It makes you think how one act of violence by those in power leads to another and another. But when the violence becomes personal – when it concerns you – it blindfolds you. History evaluates deeds from the point of view of the righteous, nationalising the evil events, evaluating what's right and wrong and canonising deeds and figures for the sake of nation-building. However, the violence remains violence. In times of war, we just take a side on it.

“The CROWN will protect you from arguments and evidence forever, and YOU WILL NEVER FEEL ANY FUCKING DOUBT AGAIN”.

[Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Endless Shine of Human Violence' by Alina Kleytman at the Kogo Gallery](#)

Alina Oprelianska, PhD, Junior Research Fellow at the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu.

The solo exhibition Endless Shine of Human Violence by Ukrainian artist and curator Alina Kleytman was on view at Kogo Gallery in Tartu, Estonia from 17.11.2023 to 13.1.2024. The exhibition project documents the ongoing crimes against humanity in the Russian war against Ukraine. This review was first published in Estonian by Postimees on 11 January 2024.

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'ANATOMY OF THE FETISH' by Goda Palekaitė and Marija Puipaitė at Galerija VARTAI

January 8, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



The mysterious Sphinx, half-woman, half-lion, arouses desire. Fetish is where the secret joins the strange, and their encounter becomes ambivalent – the sphinx we nourish secretly at our core. Karl Marx had a theory of fetish as a socioeconomic hieroglyphic; Michel Leiris diagnosed the West with an ethnopsychiatric condition of Eurocentric fetishism; and Jean Baudrillard thought of it as a simulacrum, which is never the one that conceals the truth — “it is the truth which conceals that there is none[1].“

A fetish needs a body, a screen of representation, an object of desire, a foreign culture, or a female figure; to put it simply – the other. In the twelfth-century Latin-speaking Europe, laws regulating heresy were introduced, forbidding practices of witchcraft or the so-called maleficia – “evil deeds”. Among these were fertility rites, abortion methods and other remedies used by women, named facticiosa. A related term fechura stood for the manufacture of magical objects. At the end of the century, when Portugal emerged as a kingdom and Portuguese as a distinct language, the translation feitiço was born. In the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese first reached the Senegal River and encountered African societies, the religious objects of local inhabitants were labelled

feitiço, to depreciate and distinguish such spiritual practices from the Christian ones.

In this exhibition, we play with the historical meaning of fetish as the unknown originating in the demonization of women's practices, which itself later grew into the fetishization of objects and, finally, of entire cultures. We begin our narrative from the history of the Venetian Renaissance courtesan culture, where a woman could only feel liberated if she existed at the margins of society and engaged in clandestine activities. Although living in precarity and danger, courtesans were some of the most educated, liberated and influential women in all of Europe, making them someone we can look up to even today. Veronica Franco (1546-1591), a courtesan and a poetess famous for both professions in her time, has become an inspiration and a guide in our research in Venice. Digging through ancient books and archives of textile, we were looking for liaisons between the female body, courtesan culture, publishing, and material heritage as early manifestations of feminist engagement. The study of female sexuality – historically veiled, feared, controlled, and fetishized by the patriarchal gaze – became an invitation for us to negotiate space. The space of the gallery Vartai, a commercial art venue in a high-ceiling romantic interior, reminded us of the Italian ridotto, or salon, where semi-public encounters between artists, poets, intellectuals and their customers – high-class male investors and politicians – would take place. It is in those salons that Veronica was performing readings of her passionate, daring, erotic and critical poems, an absolute exception within the literature of the time.

The anatomy can be of a woman, of an object, or of a culture. A sensory, even erotic perception of an object unfolds in the encounter between the gaze and what is hidden beneath. Silky frills reveal a pearl-encrusted wooden structure. Layers of time and touch, the worn and the unfinished overlay like drapes of fabric – veiled yet see-through, pleasing and teasing the onlooker. The inwards of a chair peak through its surface while its detached legs support the human organs made of glass, the latter reminding us of the four humours or bodily fluids that determine our health and existence in the world. A baldaquin falls from the ceiling, kept together only by the courtesans' embroidered poems. An illusion of a terracotta landscape arises, with rivers of Venetian ochre clay and mountains of glass, the transcendent material developed in Egypt.

Ancient Egypt, the cradle of us all, has been intriguing and fascinating us, Westerners, for millennia. The ultimate cultural fetish, Egyptomania, reminds us of the unbridgeable gap between the inaccessible past and its representation. Archaeology might be compared with psychoanalysis. Unravelling the psyche layer after layer, one also uncovers layers of the buried humanity, disclosing collective fears, desires, memories and, above all, fetishes. The psyche, constructed by the history of conquests, misogyny, and phantasms.

Anatomy of the Fetish fluctuates between the somatic and the epistemic, communication and collaboration being its primary methodology: with texts and people, with objects, bodies and materials. Conversing with the dead, working with the hands, moving through the space of superstitions, dreams, prophecies – the vertigo of the fantasy takes over. Splendour intertwines with nudity, desire with ridicule. Because a true fetishist simultaneously recognises the phantasy and is driven by it; in no way does awareness reduce the power of the fetish.

Goda Palekaitė and Marija Puipaitė

Scenography: Barbora Šulniūtė

Graphic design: Jonė Miškinytė

Artistic collaboration: Graham Kelly

Production: Paloma Bouhana, Martynas Gailiušas, Lina Šuminaitė

Text editing: Alexandra Bondarev

Exhibition supported by: Lithuanian Council for Culture, Hasselt University, Vilnius Academy of Arts

Gallery's Patrons: Renata and Rolandas Valiūnai

Gallery supported by: Vilnius City Municipality, Lietuvos rytas, Vilma Dagilienė, Romas Kinka, Ekskomisarų biuras, Mailerlite, Plieno Spektras

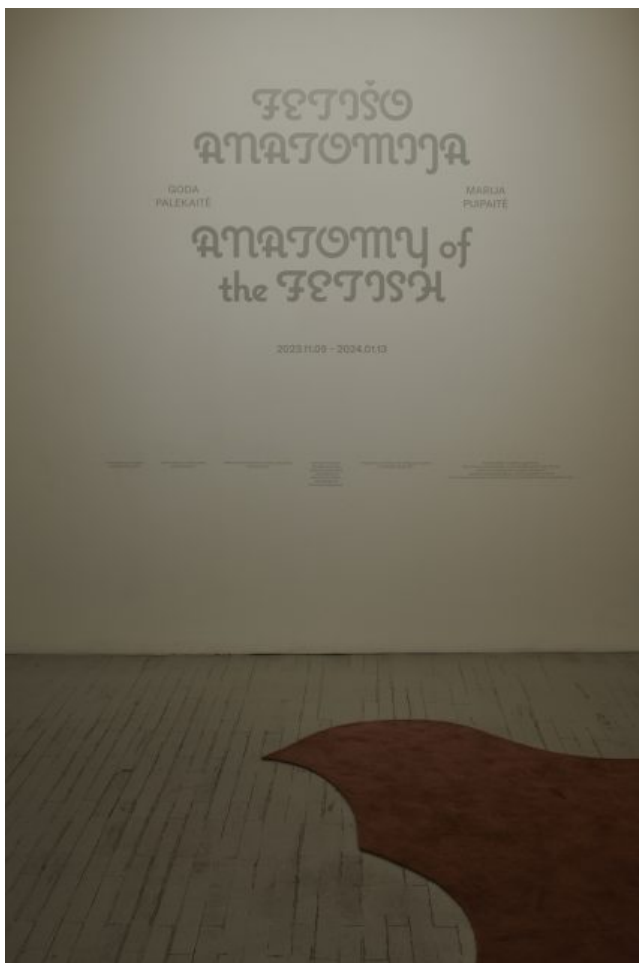
[1] Jean Baudrillard, Mark Poster, Selected Writings, Stanford University Press, 1988, p.166

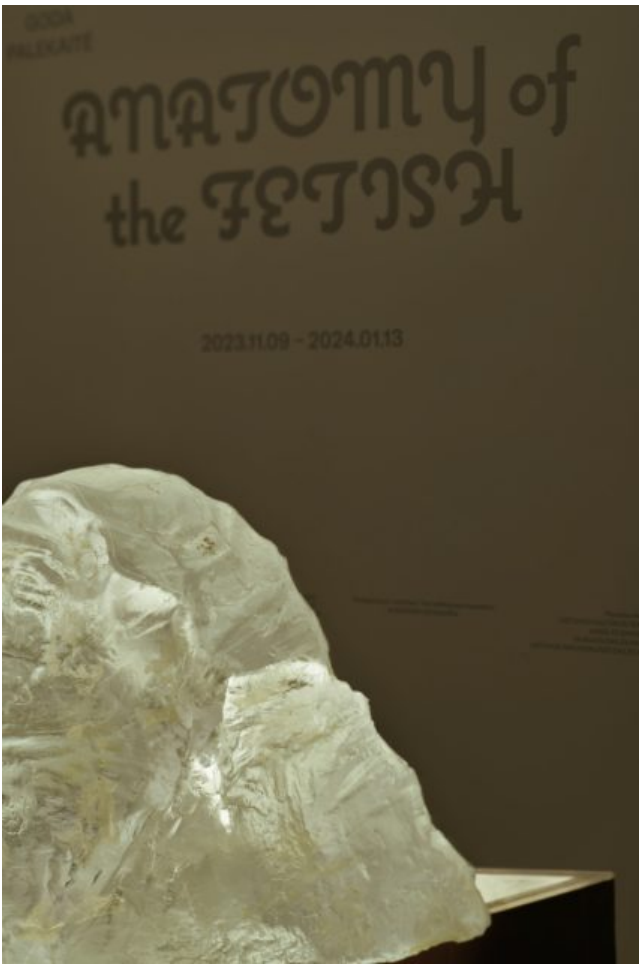
ANATOMY OF THE FETISH by Goda Palekaitė & Marija Puipaitė

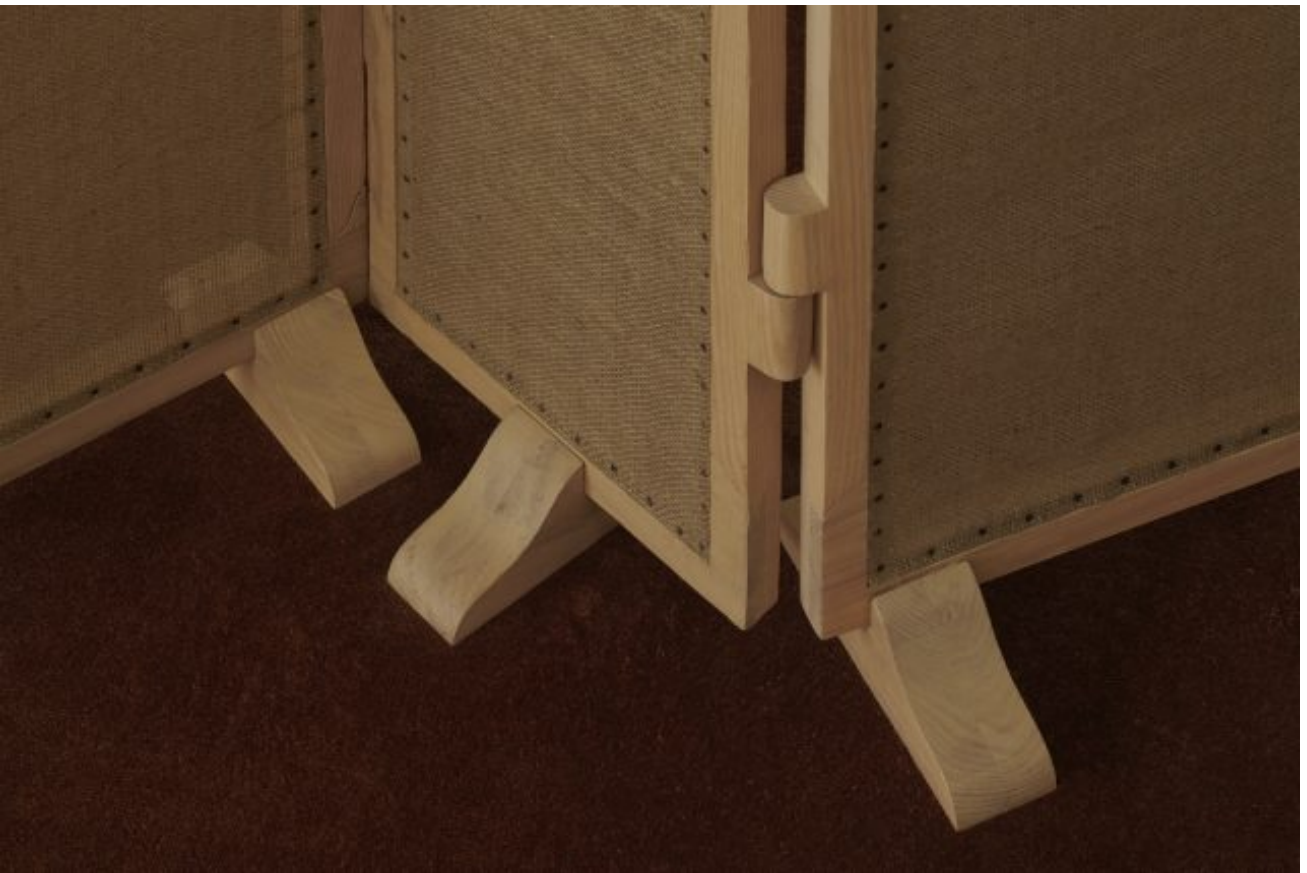
09.11.2023 – 13.01.2024

At Galerija VARTAI, Vilniaus g. 39

Photography: Darius Petrulaitis

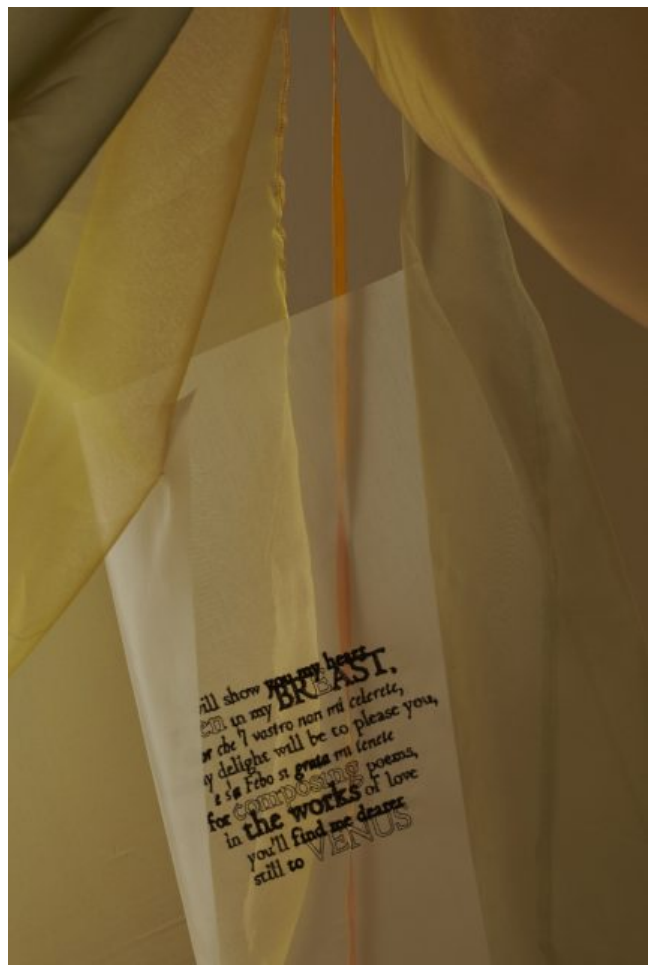
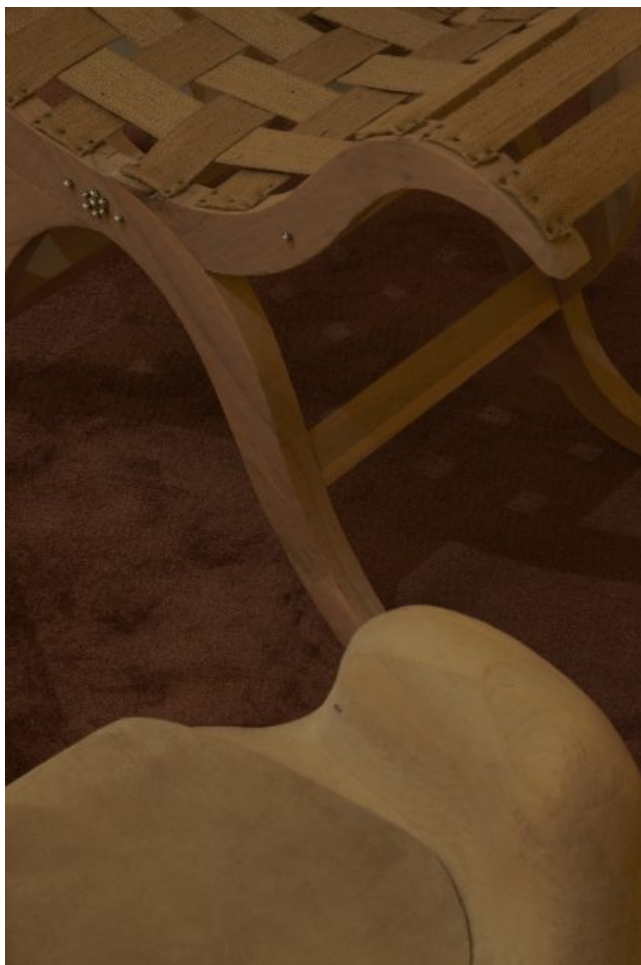












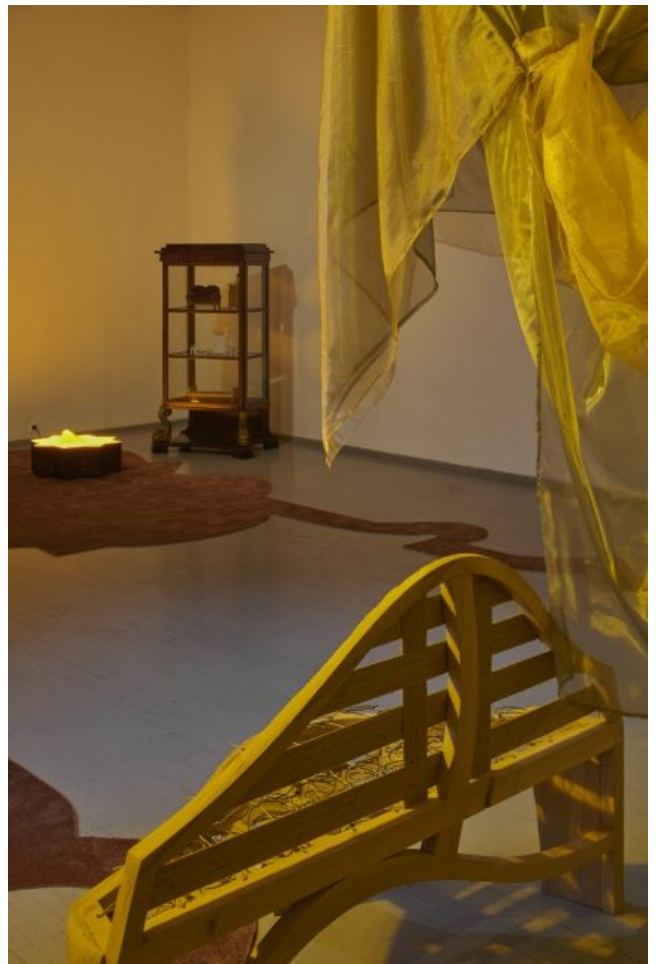






Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Man! God Has Created You Out of Nothing, and This is Too Often Felt in Your Case' by Urmas Lüüs at Tütar Gallery

January 10, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Urmas Lüüs' solo exhibition "Man! God Has Created You Out of Nothing, and This is Too Often Felt in Your Case" is now open at Tütar Gallery in Tallinn.

Having once again produced a large-scale, almost total installation in the vein of Kabakov, bearing a title borrowed from Arvo Valton and recreating the atmosphere inspired by the Catholic cemeteries seen in French villages, Lüüs poses a question that appears again and again in classical art, which has assumed new relevance in our time: "How do you ask the dust?" (John Fante)

Urmas Lüüs is known for his expressive contemporary art, in which various creative identities intersect and overlap. A blacksmith by trade, he has dabbled in performing arts, jewellery, noise music and installations, and taught and written about art. I have a feeling that Lüüs, as an artist, or more broadly as a creator, has always taken delight in situations where he comes off as a bit of an outsider, as though eyeing someone else's backyard.

Art critics and curators have often associated Urmas Lüüs' work with neo-materialism. This trend is reflected in the belief that an artistic text is sustained primarily by embodied labour, by the energy inherent in the personal, poetic manipulation of material. Realisation, therefore, is anything but secondary, because thinking itself proceeds through manual search. As such, neo-materialist art seems to irk the neo-platonic idea-centric imagination typical of mainstream post-conceptualism,

whereby it makes no difference whether an artist realises their project themselves or hires diligent craftsmen from a remote Chinese manufactory. At the broadest level, however, it implies a conscious rejection of the dominant operating models of both the industrial production society and the service-based information society, without becoming obsessed with nostalgia and craftsmanship. Lüüs uses traditional techniques, from embroidery to blacksmithing, but often in unusual, skewed contexts, so as to open up unique registers of manual thinking.

It's more than refreshing to see contemporary art offer the opportunity to take the Bible off the shelf and trace the lines of Ecclesiastes to deliver a sermon: "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." Humour aside, the jauntily pessimistic effect of Lüüs' new installation is an escape route from the ever more insistent demand to choose sides everywhere and to take to the barricades to make ourselves heard. This conviction, which increasingly oppresses contemporary cultural consciousness through intensifying political crises and which is accompanied by the further exacerbation of the "crisis of subtlety" (Hasso Krull), can in fact only be relativised in the impermeable private space of poetry, without imposing a clear moral on anyone. To paraphrase the artist himself: "plurality is acceptable because evil does not invalidate bad and bad does not negate good."

As Lutheran heirs to the 'Danse Macabre', it is easy for us to embrace the thoroughly democratic message of Notke's painting, declaring all men equal before death—kings and beggars alike. In the world of kitsch Catholic votive offerings that has fascinated Lüüs in this case, things seem more complicated. The smaller works displayed in the installation appear to be characterised by sacramentality – the invisible and spiritual is present through the visible and material, which in turn is made sacred by its presence. In view of this, it seems fair to ask: who dares to claim that "no man brings souvenirs from beyond the grave"? (Gennadi S. Klein)

Accompanying text: Hanno Soans

Design: Juss Heinsalu

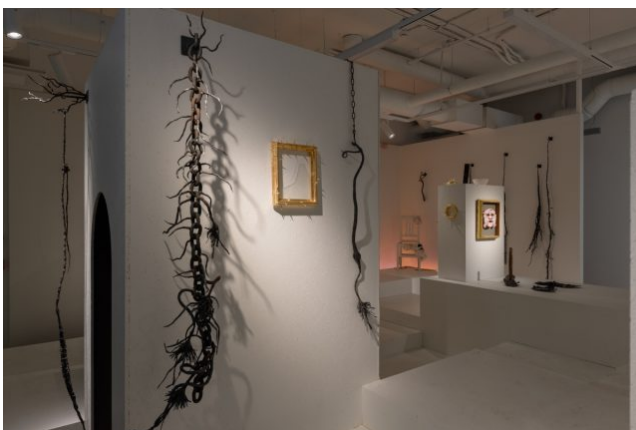
Graphic Design: Cristopher Siniväli

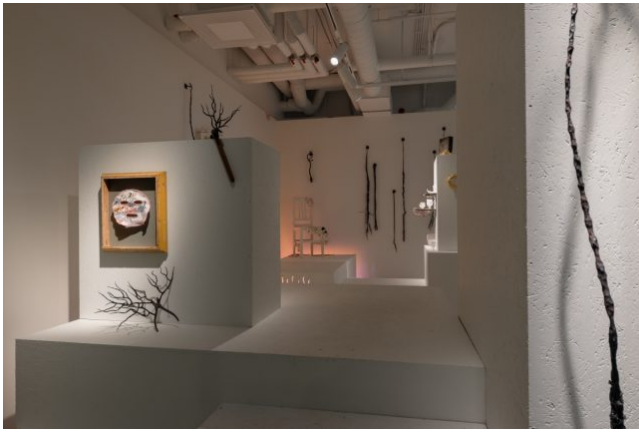
Technical Solutions: Hans-Otto Ojaste

Installation Support: Erkki Kadarik

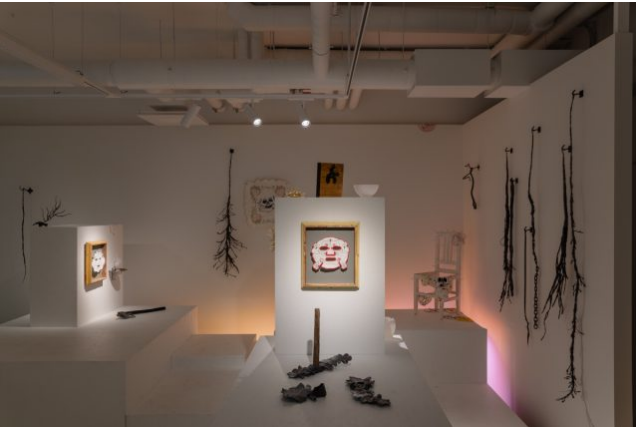
The exhibition is supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, City of Tallinn and Koch Brewery.

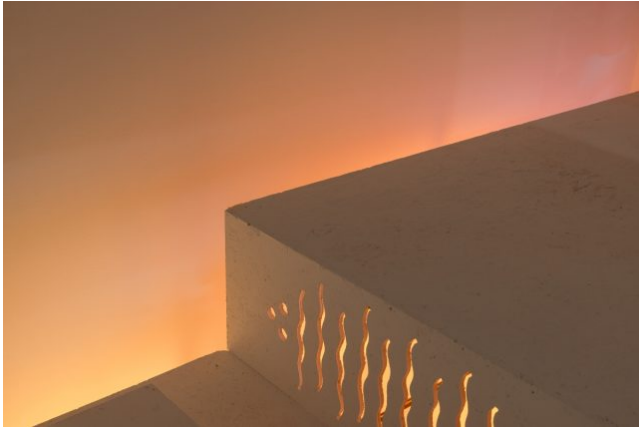
Photography: Joosep Kivimäe

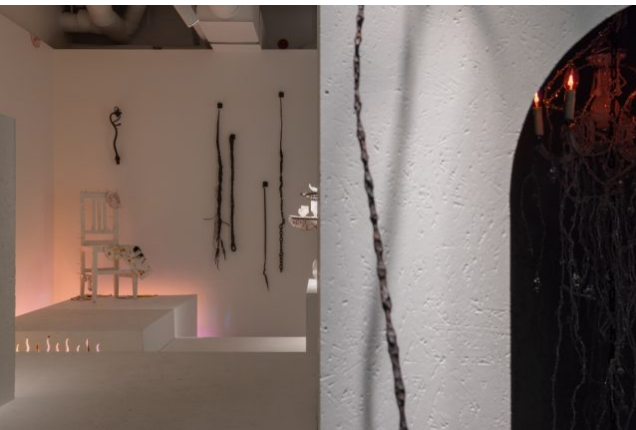
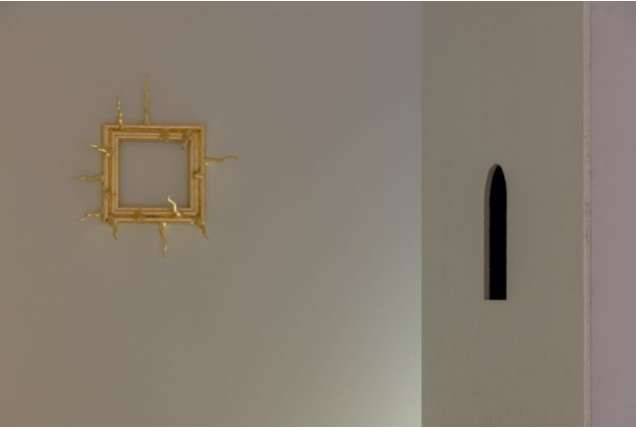


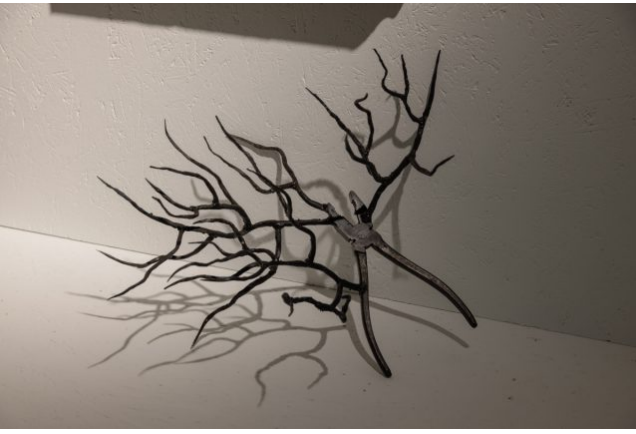
















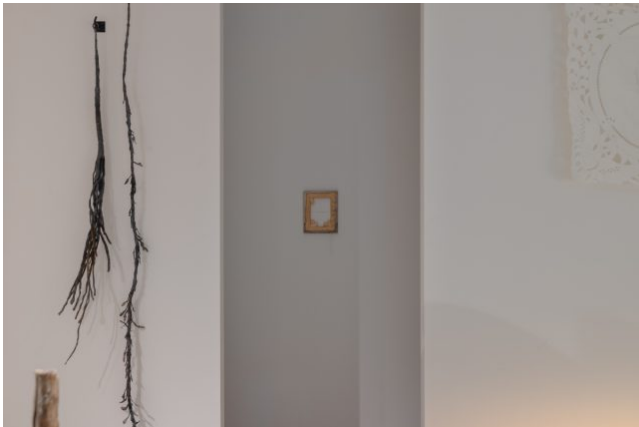




Photo reportage from the exhibition 'As if Night Were Dreaming of Day' by Paulius Šliaupa and the exhibition 'Agency of Matter' by Manu Engelen in Vilnius

January 11, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



On 10 January, Vilnius City Hall and Vilnius City Gallery Meno Niša invite you to the opening of two exhibitions by artists living in Belgium. These are the exhibition *As if Night Were Dreaming of Day* by the award-winning Lithuanian artist Paulius Šliaupa and the exhibition *Agency of Matter* by Belgian artist Manu Engelen, who is presenting his work in Lithuania for the first time. The opening of both exhibitions will take place on 10 January, 6 pm, at Vilnius City Hall.

P. Šliaupa's collaboration with Belgian artist Manu Engelen began during their residency in Ghent, Belgium. While working together at the HISK residency and traveling, the artists got to know each other even better and thus started a dialogue between their different works. "Together we want to shed light on the structures of images, patterns of observation, poetic energy, and man's relationship with technology," said the Belgian-based artist on the idea of the two joint exhibitions.

"This is not the first time Paulius has collaborated with international artists. In 2022, Meno Niša Gallery presented the exhibition *Earth Drama* by Šliaupa and Swedish artist Finn Anton Örstrand, in which the artists, inspired by nature, embarked on an exploration of contemporary man's relationship with the landscape. We strongly encourage such creative international collaborations between the artists we represent," said Diana Stomienė, director of Vilnius City Gallery Meno Niša, stressing that the gallery has been cooperating with Vilnius City Hall and organizing exhibitions of its own artists for many years.

In two spaces, Vilnius City Hall and Meno Niša gallery, P. Šliaupas' exhibition *As if Night Were Dreaming of Day* will examine the changing relationship of man with nature: in Vilnius City Hall, the artist's video works and paintings created during his studies and residencies in Belgium will be shown. In the Meno Niša gallery, paintings, laser engravings of landscape models, and objects based on natural structures will be exhibited. Insects printed in 3D, glowing at night, hang between the works and bring another interpretation of the modern relationship with nature.

"I come from a family of geologists, so I have a strong connection to the earth. I spend part of the year in Bartelių village, it becomes a refuge, a small world with six inhabitants, where I can hide by the Merkys River, observe the light, feel and connect all the motifs before I return to the wide world. Motifs from different countries intertwine with the fields of Bartelių village and grow on canvases painted in the countryside," says Šliaupa.

Belgian artist M. Engelen depicts energy – from mechanical to nuclear – in the paintings of the exhibition *Agency of Matter* in the City Hall. He uses the motifs and concepts of science and geometry in his work. Manu's fascination with technological artifacts and their fragments inspires him to combine the sensory and poetic realms. Industrial motifs turn into allegorical expressions, turbines into abstract wall paintings, and airplane silhouettes transform into laconic forms.

Since his childhood, Manu was surrounded by models and various vehicles, as his father was a pilot. Together they watched air shows, which formed a unique feeling, combining the poetics of everyday life and mechanical templates. Later, while studying at Hasselt's PXL MAD Academy of Arts, he cut the fuselage of an F84 jet into 5 uneven sections and displayed them in an exhibition space as his final project.

About the artists

Paulius Šliaupa (b. 1990) is a young-generation Lithuanian artist currently living and working in Belgium. Having started with painting, he also makes videos and photographs and writes art texts. Paulius holds a BA in Painting, an MA in Contemporary Sculpture from Vilnius Academy of Arts, and an MA in Media Arts from KASK and the HISK post-academic residency program in Ghent, Belgium. Last year he won the main prize of the ArtContest22 competition for young Belgian artists (Brussels) and this year, the main prize of the INPUT / OUTPUT 2023 competition (Bruges). Over the past year, Paul has participated in art residencies in Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Iceland. His works have been acquired by private collectors in Lithuania, Berlin, Ghent, Rome, Brussels, Rotterdam, Paris, and Istanbul. Paulius' works are in the collections of museums M HKA, Antwerp, Mu.ZEE, Ostend, IKOB, Eupen, and SMAK, Ghent.

Manu Engelen (b. 1984) lives and works in Leuven, Belgium. He holds a Master of Arts degree from Kunstacademie Münster in 2017, a Master of Arts degree from Kunstacademie Münster in 2010, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Provinciale Hogeschool Limburg, Haselte in 2009. In 2021, he participated in the HISK residency in Ghent. In 2020, the Flemish community acquired his works, which are currently housed at SMAK Ghent. Manu's second solo exhibition took place at Callewaert & Vanlangendonck Gallery in 2020, and since 2022, he has collaborated with Gallery Ponti in Antwerp.

Paulius Šliaupa's exhibition *As if Night Were Dreaming of Day* and Manu Engelen's exhibition *Agency of Matter* will be open at Vilnius City Hall until 27 January. Šliaupa's exhibition *As if Night Were Dreaming of Day* will be on show at the Meno Niša Gallery from 10 January until 24 February.

The organizers of the exhibition are Vilnius City Gallery Meno Niša and Vilnius City Hall. The sponsor of Meno Niša is Vilnius City Municipality. The exhibition is sponsored by the Lithuanian Council for Culture and Flanders State of the Art.

Photography: Mika Savičiūtė













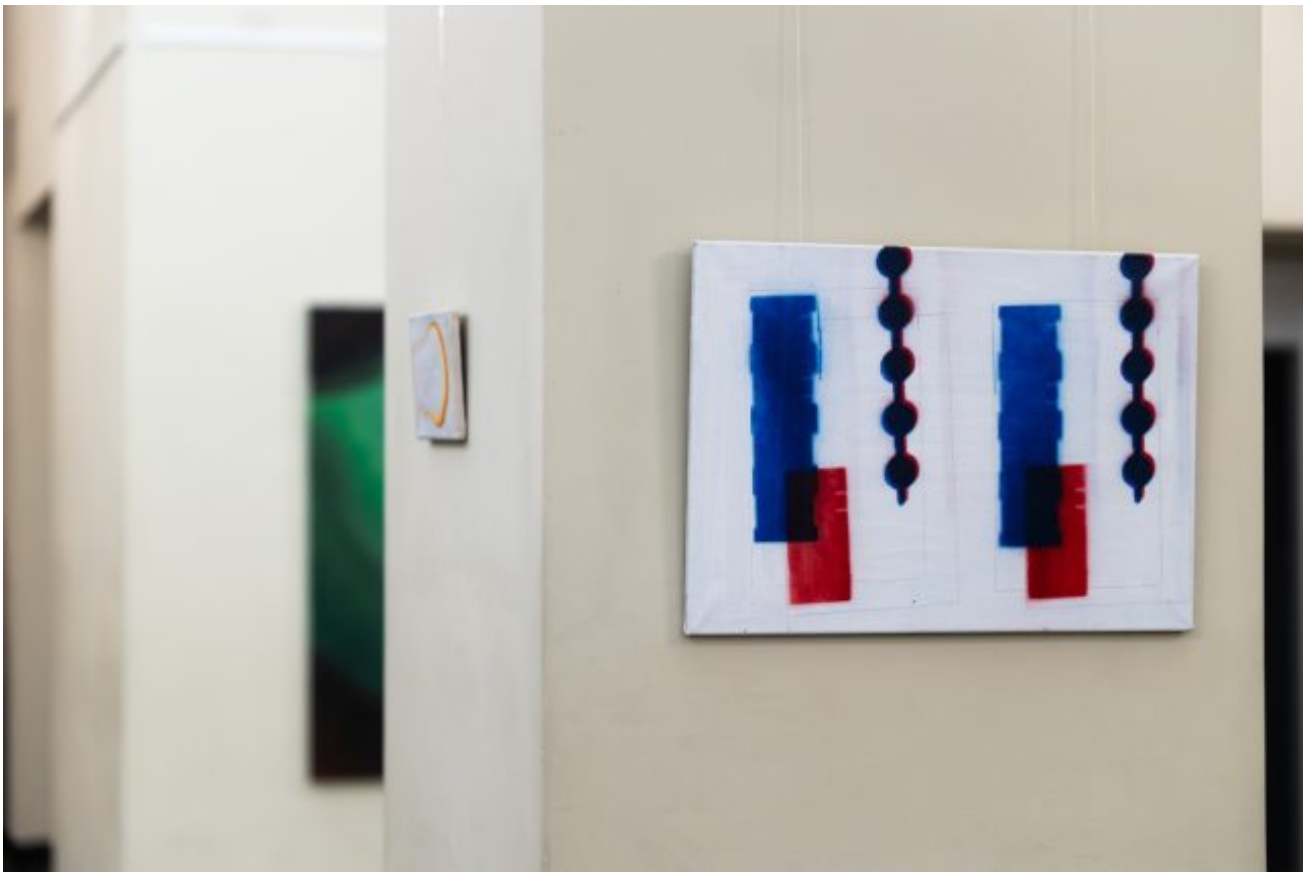






Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Everything will be okay. Soon, flowers and grass will grow and you will be in them... and that's beautiful' by Zane Tuča at ALMA

January 15, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Zane Tuča's new exhibition title is taken from the Icelandic film *Godland* (*Vanskabte land*, 2022) by Hlynur Pálmason.

Earthworm is crawling on a stone. A little boy puts the stone on top of another stone so that they are balanced. Time flows slowly as a river. The wind blows over it all, forming mountains and valleys where men set up white tents.

A range of association that is close to the archetype of Zane Tuča's painting. A serene Nordic flow of time, a wild existential beauty of nature reduced to symbolic matter. With a sharp HB pencil, laying line upon line, the paintings take months to complete, slowly and meticulously.

The motifs Zane takes from nature. Landscapes of Latvian forests, evergreens, trees, trunk, roots, Norwegian rocks and waterfalls. The new exhibition will feature a monumental work depicting the first frost-stricken sunflower in an open endless field.

Zane Tuča (1989) graduated from Jānis Rozentāls Riga Art Secondary School, MA at the Painting Department of the Latvian Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Since 2013 Zane Tuča has been collaborating with ALMA. This will be her fifth exhibition at the gallery.

Zane Tuča

'Everything will be okay. Soon, flowers and grass will grow and you will be in them... and that's beautiful'

17.11.2023 – 19.01.2024

ALMA

www.galerija-alma.lv

Photography: Krista Dzudzilo











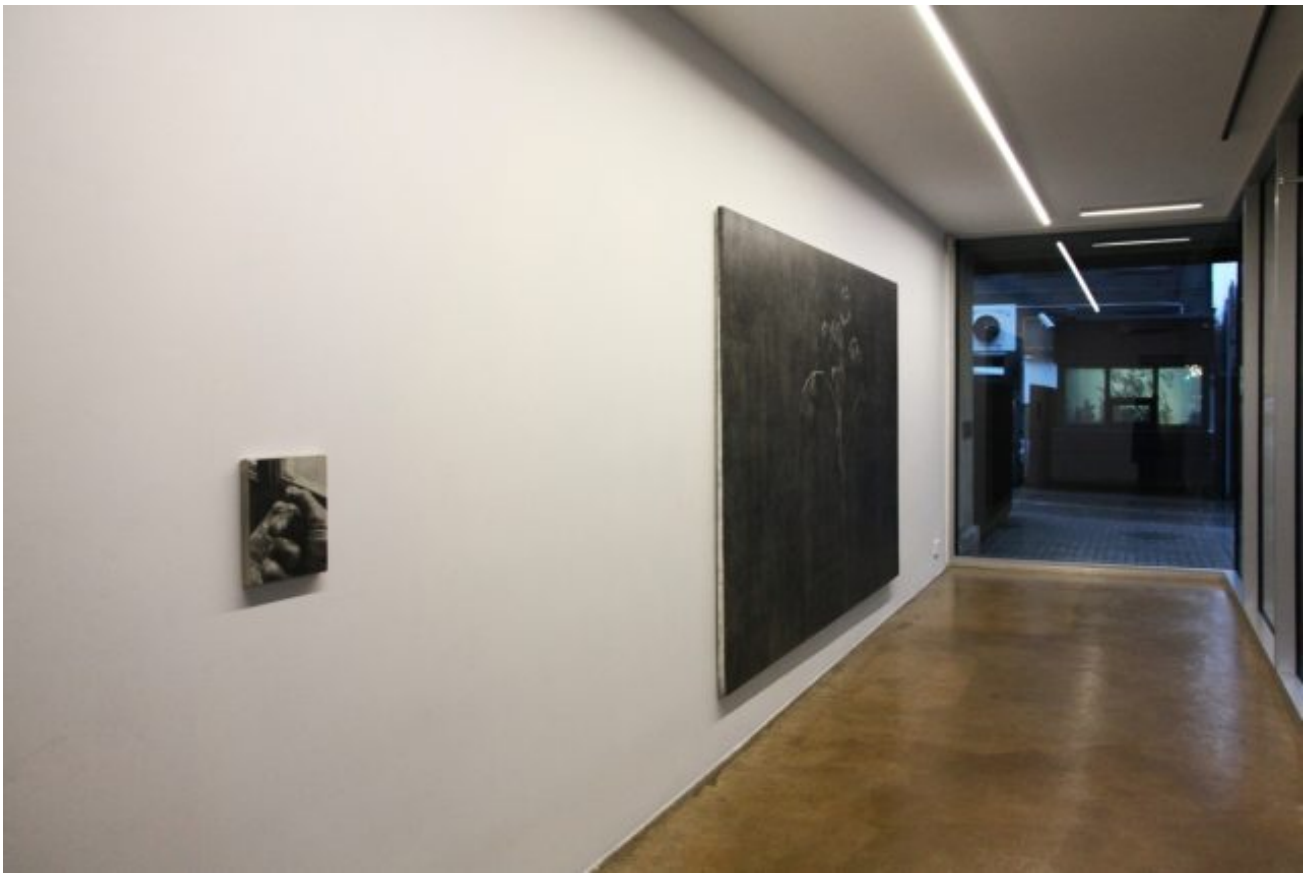








Photo reportage from the exhibition 'MISSING PARTS' by Hermandrowning at the Pamėnkalnio Gallery

January 29, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



“His eyes glittering, looking away from his reflection in the mirror, a man turns around slowly. A trembling hand grips the image frame.

An irregular landscape shifts in a hotel window, colourful berries flashing among the bush. On the ground floor – a secret terrace within an inner courtyard lit by colourful lights. Mind-massaging memories flutter through the gaps in the surface of an unconventional table. A small mask on the wall grows corresponding to an excessive amount of repetitive radio ads. Before the jingle begins, an airplane screeches as if an eagle in the sky.

The scent of fresh paint lingers in the kitchen – the dining room is masked within asymmetrically repeating graphic patterns of dishes. An unwilling hand pushes everything off the table, disclosing in its corner a python egg. Suddenly, from within a vase, rises a swarm of hornets, spreading its wings like a lengthy tapestry. In the manner of a sawfish spinning on a propeller, the day flies by. Wide lines draw a path towards evening’s descent.

The waterline of an endless seashore rinses feet covered in knee-long socks. A woman’s hair lightly flutters in the wind. The glance rolls towards foaming sunlit waves. An idyllic landscape. Five and a half feet tall and one inappropriate step wide, the body waves its arms. Her man is drowning.”

Hermandrowning aka Evaldas Bubinas is a professional graphic designer and artist currently expanding the spectrum of his creative endeavours and research toward various new forms – sculptures, installations, and objects. Here in Pamėnkalnio Gallery, his solo exhibition is being presented to the public.

In contemporary arts, the synthesis of visual art and design is becoming an independent entity carrying its own unique meaning. Yet due to differing application practices, the two mediums mostly

remain in their separate spheres. An artwork or an object of design? Design of paintings – the art of design. By applying various techniques and navigating nontraditional practices and styles, the author sets out to contrive his own distinctive puzzle.

The relationship between persons and their surroundings evolves into an exchange of abstractions and symbols. Meanwhile, the details of reality, which lies concealed beyond, dwindle. The plot of the exhibition becomes transparent, full of gaps. Missing parts get deformed without their proper content. By creative expression the gaze of the spectator is carried throughout an associative story, the roots of which lay in personal contexts – reminiscences and experiences.

See more:

<https://instagram.com/hermandrowning>

<https://www.hermandrowning.fun>

Organiser: Pamėnkalnio Gallery.

Sponsors: Lithuanian Council for Culture, Lithuanian Artists' Association.

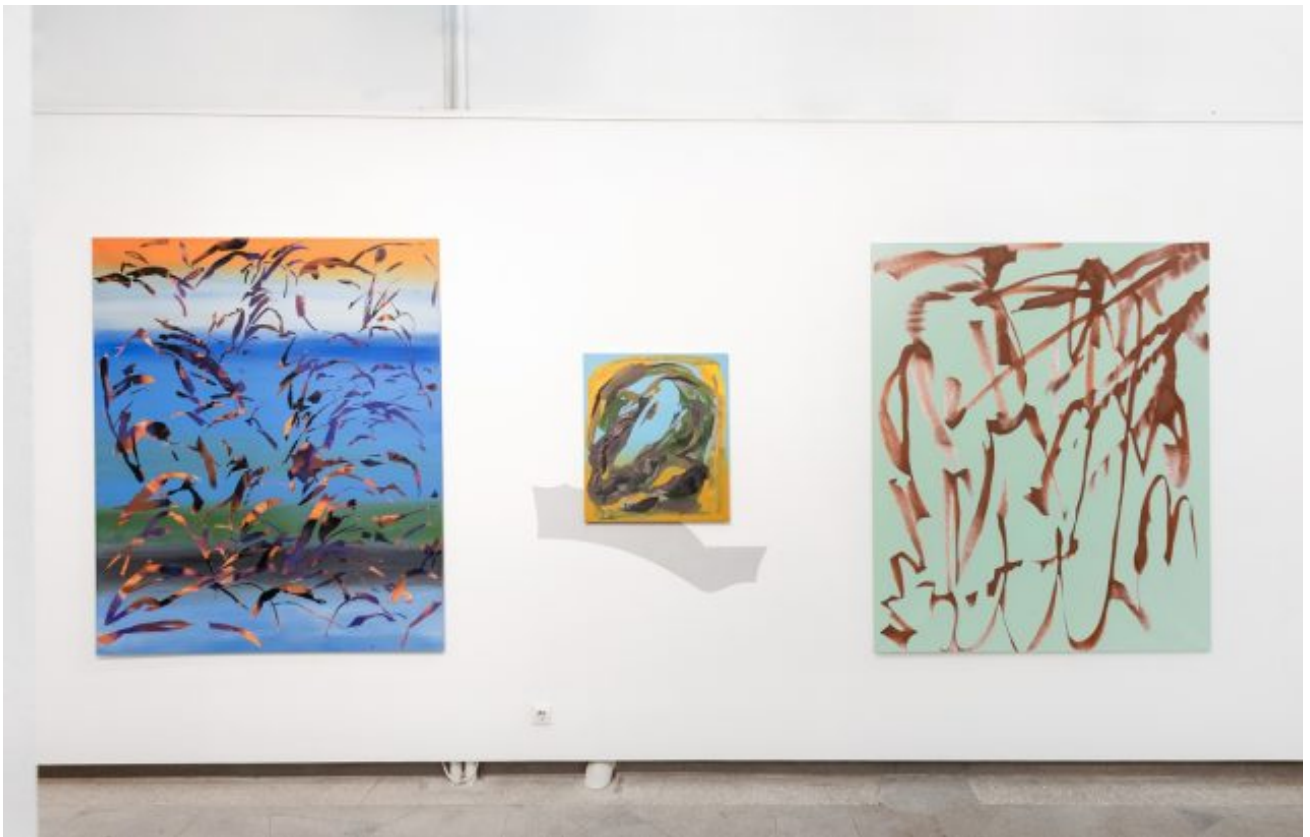
Exhibition open: 9–30 January 2024.

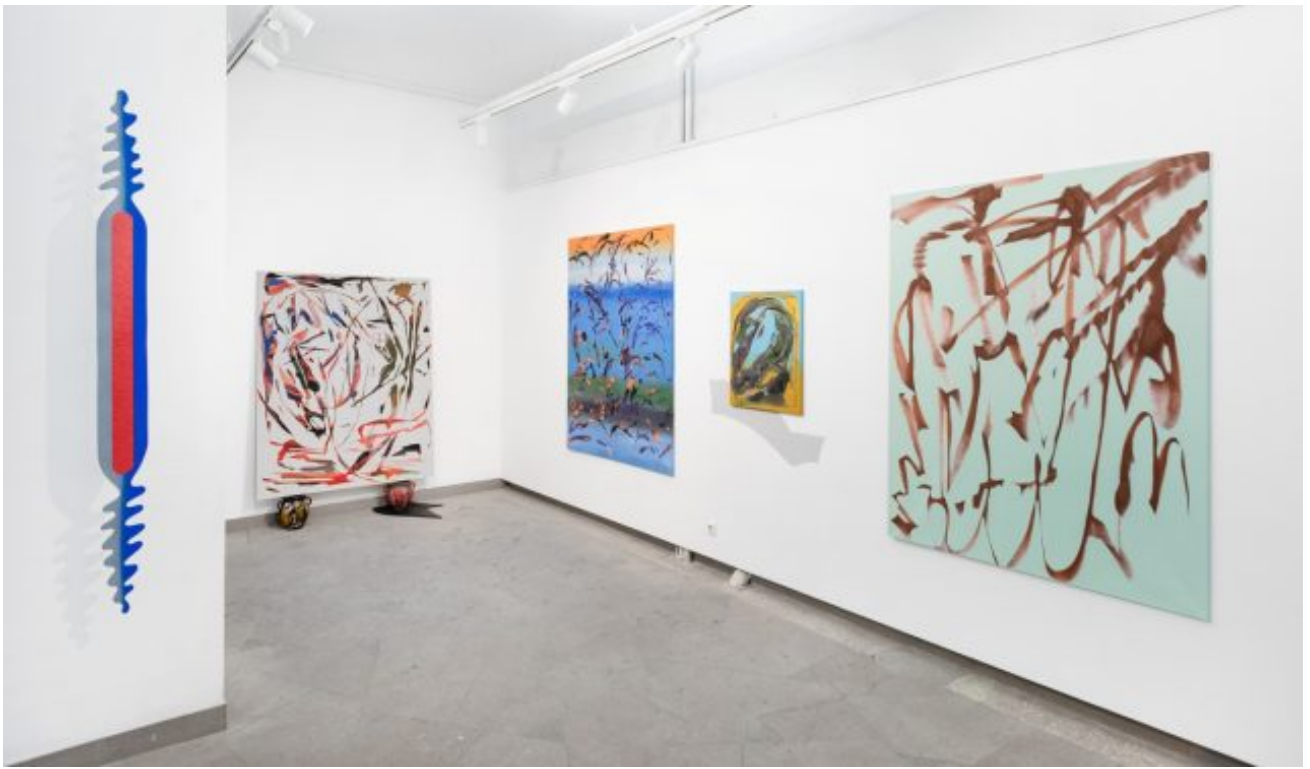
Working hours: II–V 11–19, VI 11–16.

Attendance is free of charge.

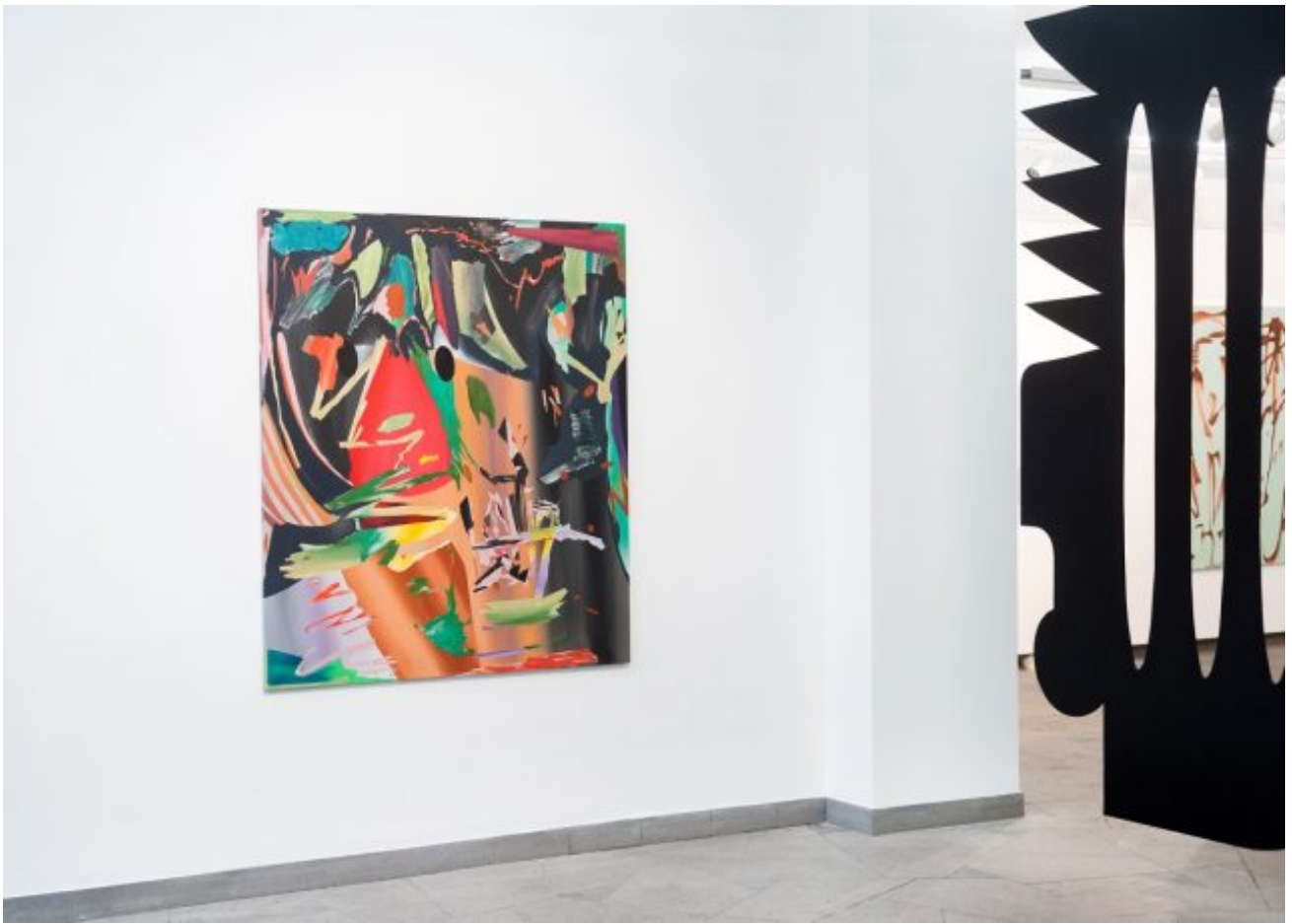
Photography: Tomas Lukšys, Ekvilina Milaševičiūtė



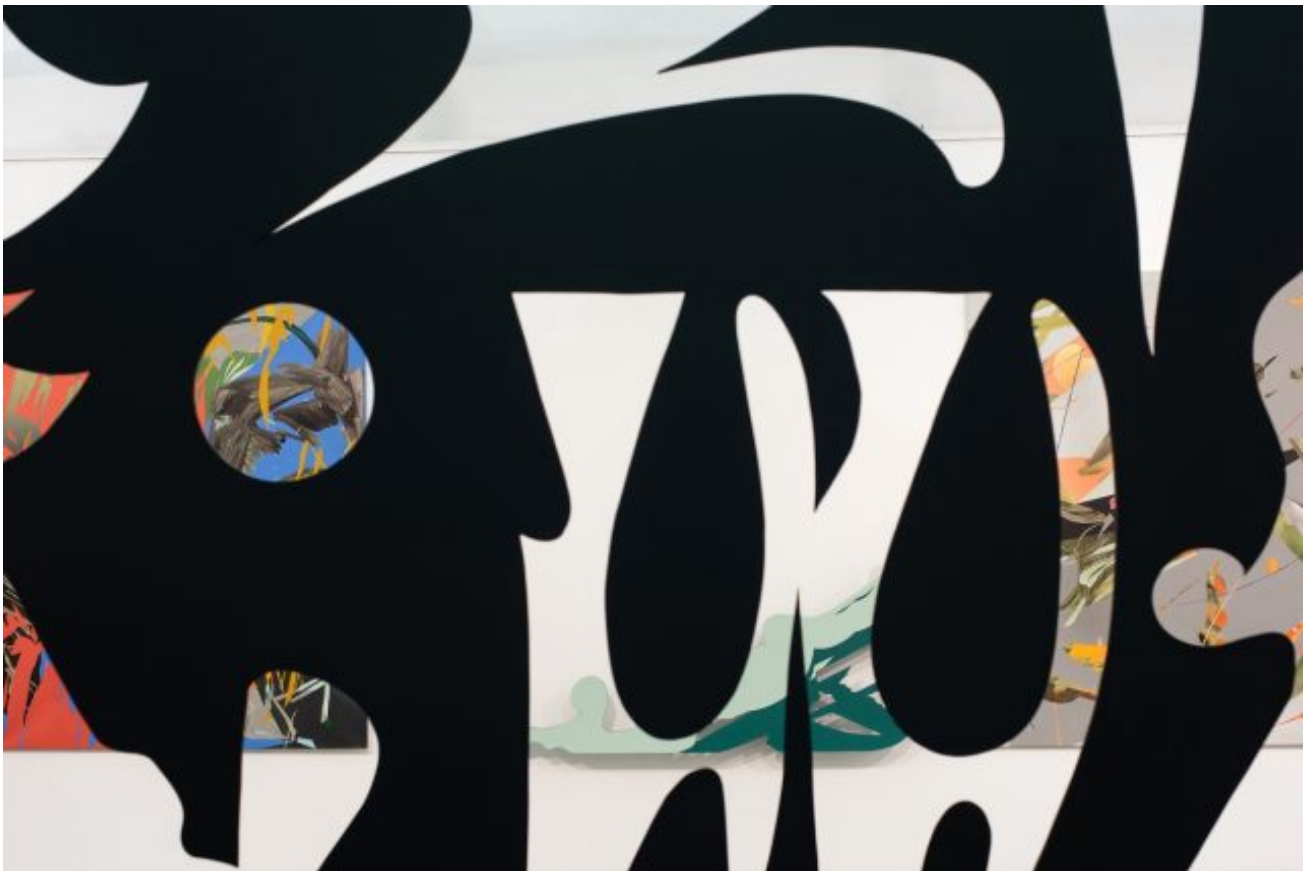






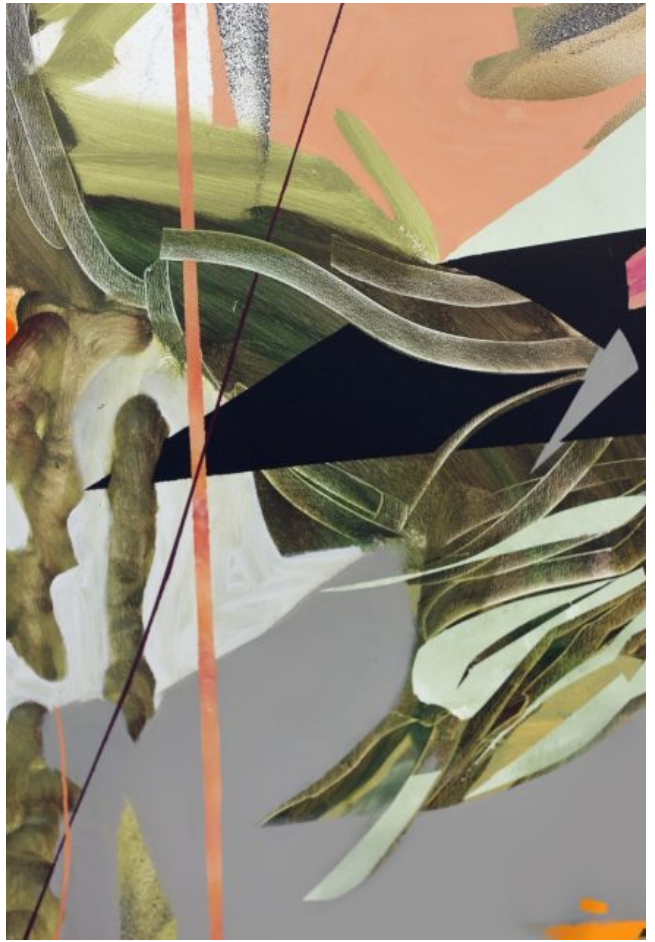












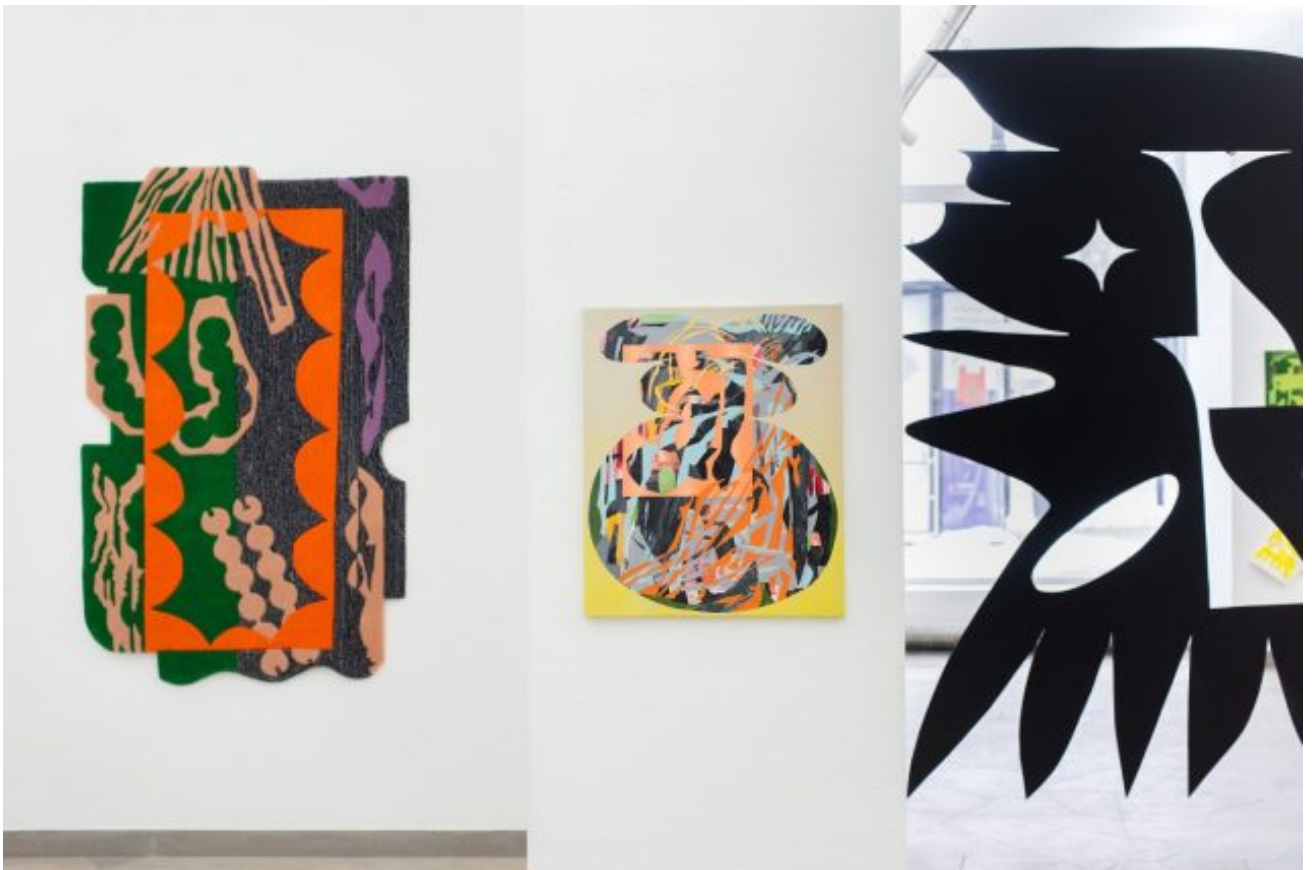






Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Locījuma vietas II Folding Lines' by Luīze Rukšāne at TUR_telpa

January 30, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



The exhibition runs from 18 January till 17 February 2024 at TUR_telpa, Riga.
Luīze Rukšāne – “Folding Lines”

For her exhibition “Folding Lines” Luīze Rukšāne has merged the space of TUR_telpa with an abstraction of the winter landscapes her grandmother and the many generations of Latvian grandmothers before her might recognize. Around the relative shelter of the home we can imagine the daily ritual of peering out the window to check the conditions of the day: the harsh unrelenting winter cold, frozen ground, leafless birch tree forests disappearing into the haze of a white horizon. Rukšāne has used the every-day action of her grandmother looking out the window as a departure point for her artistic exploration into their relationship. By extension, it reflects on the relationship we all have with the oldest generation and the sense of transience caused by the limitation of passing time.

Her large graphite drawings on canvas are an interpretation of her grandmother’s digital tablet photos sent to the family chat to inform about the daily conditions around her countryside home. The drawings embody the exchange between grandmother and granddaughter. The subject matter might seem trivial, but in them is expressed something more fundamental: the sense of urgency to ask all the important questions before it is too late, to learn the wisdom, but also the source of trauma that lies buried deep. The information passed on from generation to generation, like strands

of DNA they are altered a little each time it is passed on, small alterations, little diversions and with every generation, a little of the previous ones is lost. The long banner-like textile works are made with the textiles of an anonymous elderly woman whose diligently maintained bed sheets and tablecloths became redundant after her death. Rukšāne carefully, respectfully, repurposed the textiles and through it explored how something passed down can retain value even when it is altered to satisfy changing circumstances.

Photography: Luīze Rukšāne















Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Apophenia. 12 days from now is not a future' by Marten Esko at ARS project space

January 31, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



ARS Project Space 20.–31.01.2024

The project is open for 12 days, daily from 12:00 to 18:00.

For the finisage on January 31 Wondering O (aka Mihkel Tomberg) will be performing live from 6pm.

From January 20th to 31st ARS project room hosts Marten Esko's installation-based staged environment "Apophenia. 12 days from now is not a future", which partially reuses scenes and experiences from everyday life as well as materials used in previous creative projects; partly not.

Apophenia is the tendency to perceive meaningful connections between unrelated structures. “Apophenia” and apophenia seem to be meaningfully related. As part of “Apophenia”, the ARS project room is used as a project room, i.e. a room in which the project is largely made. “Apophenia” is an exhibition-like situation and a specific kind of meaningful whatever-feeling after a longer-than-average overly-focused thought process in the context of finding an answer to some major or minor vitally important question.

“Owing to lack of interest, tomorrow has been cancelled, you are now in the strawberry beds of the eternal present.”

This is a quote from Derek Jarman’s “Through the Billboard Promised Land Without Ever Stopping”, published in 2022, but written in 1971, which itself is an extension of Irene Kampen’s 1969 book title “Due to Lack of Interest, Tomorrow Has Been Canceled”. By now that lack of interest seems to have largely changed to a conflict of interest – or has it always been that instead? – and a conflict of interest is often a conflict of meaning; that is, a conflict in meaning-making and making-sense.

In “Angle of Yaw”, published in 2006, Ben Lerner writes:

“MINUTE PARTICLES OF DEBRIS IN SLOW DESCENT force evacuation of the concept. At what altitude does the view grow comprehensive? The daredevil places his head in the camera, eliciting oohs and aahs. We have willingly suspended our disbelief on strings in order to manipulate it from above.”

Apophenia – making sense out of senselessness – could as well work in reverse apparently, where meaningful connections are perceived as meaningless. Some call it randomania, the simplest concrete example of which is prosopagnosia, the so-called face blindness, or the inability to recognize people’s faces (prosopagnosia is the opposite of pareidolia, a sub-branch of apophenia). Everything has a name, but meaning is either there or it isn’t, or it isn’t perceived, or it doesn’t hold, or it has to be invented or added, or it hasn’t been given and you should make it yourself. Either make this make sense or stop making sense; the choice is there amongst others.

Ben Lerner continues:

“IF IT HANGS FROM THE WALL, it’s a painting. If it rests on the floor, it’s a sculpture. If it’s very big or very small, it’s conceptual. If it forms part of the wall, if it forms part of the floor, it’s architecture. If you have to buy a ticket, it’s modern. If you are already inside it and you have to pay to get out of it, it’s more modern. If you can be inside it without paying, it’s a trap. If it moves, it’s outmoded. If you have to look up, it’s religious. If you have to look down, it’s realistic. If it’s been sold, it’s site-specific. If, in order to see it, you have to pass through a metal detector, it’s public.”

Disagree here.

The project is supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, the Estonian Artists’ Association and EKKM.

Thank you: Mihkel Ilus, Mihkel Tomberg, Patrik Tamm, Angela Maasalu, Mikk-Mait Kivi, Jaanus Samma, Veiko Iliste, Henry Kasch, Ingrid Köösel, Neeme Külm, Tommingas family.

Photography: Patrik Tamm

