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# Art, Clarified

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*Valentinas Klimašauskas talks to Jaakko Pallasvuo and Avocado Ibuprofen about switching chairs with a dentist, automating the viewer, and social media, among other things.*

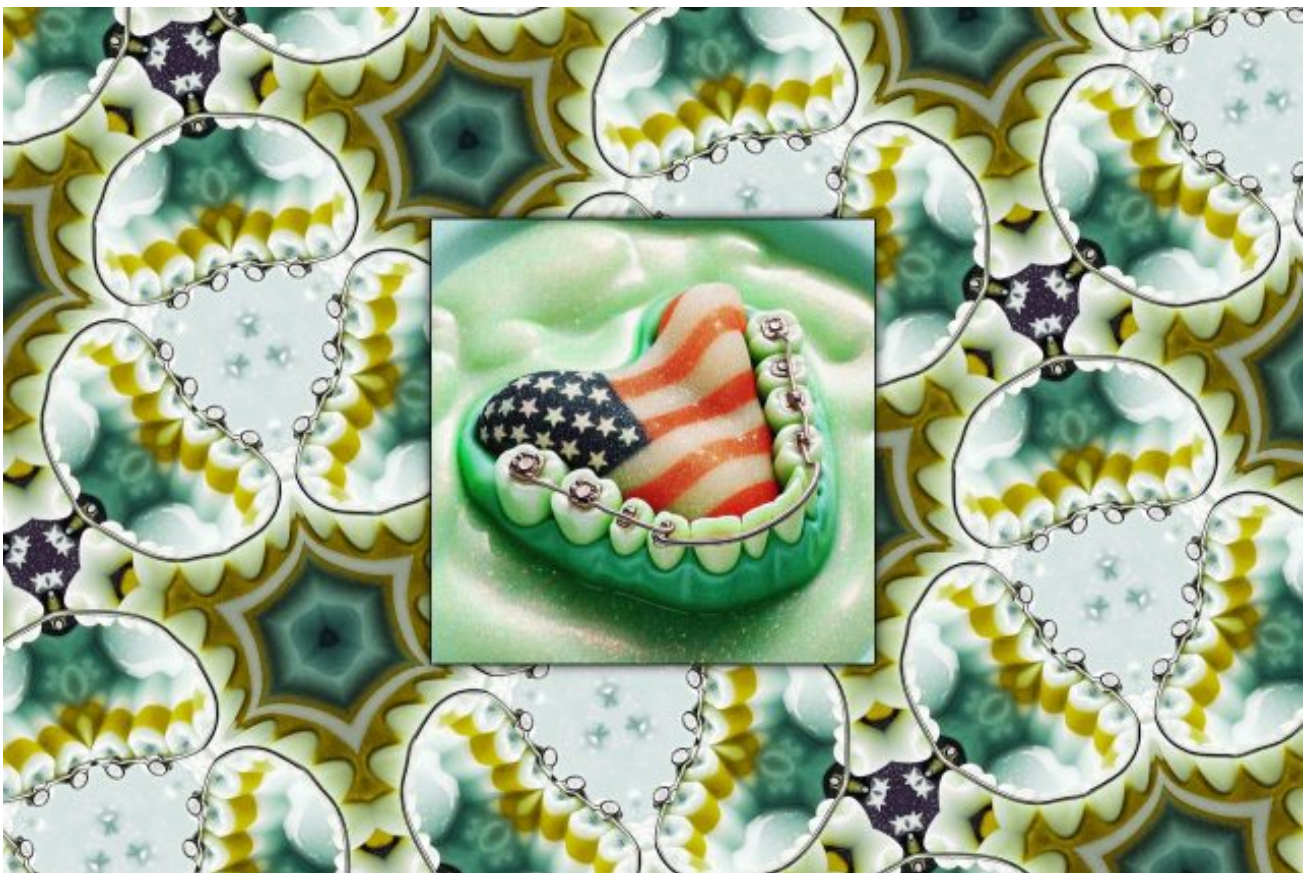
*First of all, who do I have the pleasure to talk to, Jaakko Pallasvuo (JP) or Avocado Ibuprofen (AI)?*

We're both here. We're looking for Dr Klimašauskas' surgery. We need to get our wisdom teeth pulled out.

*This is the right door then. Sitting in the dentist's chair, anaesthetised, with my mouth wide open under the bright lights, and someone's hands and instruments in there, I had helpful visions about how to move on with my doctoral thesis. How do you feel in the patient's chair? Does it help you move on with your art practice?*

I used to go to a dentist who had an unusually friendly and affirming way to encounter her patients. It made the experience of receiving treatment less daunting and alienating. I would lie down on the chair, and they'd put those funny sunglasses on my face, and then I would see it, past the bright lights that they were aiming at my mouth. The dentist had put this very intense painting on the ceiling of the surgery, and I would have no choice but to look at it during the appointment. I remember there were these detached Surrealist eyes floating around on the canvas, and there were sharp, jagged pieces of colourful glass glued to the textile. When I looked at the painting, I thought about what it would feel like to chew on glass, to really bite down on it.

For a long time I've been thinking about this artwork, maybe more of a play, that would take place at a theatre festival. It would consist of a dentist's chair on stage, and a dental hygienist ready to scrape calculus off people's teeth. A volunteer from the audience would get this treatment for free, and the rest of the audience would be allowed to watch. Maybe the inside of the mouth would be projected on to large screens so that people could see what was going on in sufficient detail. The artwork would reflect on the notion of 'care' that occupies a lot of thought-space in the art world at the moment, and would also be a partial remedy for how difficult it is to get a public dental health appointment in Helsinki right now. The work never came to be, and instead I ended up writing a monologue for Teo Ala-Ruona (<https://teoalaruona.net/>) about a dentist who moves to a new city with the hope of becoming an artist.



*Why would a dentist want to become an artist? One of my friends made the reverse move, from acting to dentistry. Also, isn't moving from dentistry to an artistic field like moving to another world, so you don't need to change cities? I want to know more about the script.*

The starting point of the monologue was tied to my being so captivated by fantasies of starting over. I've been a professional artist for more than a decade now, and every year (usually in the spring), I think long and hard about my choices and possible exit strategies. But I'm still here, replying to this question from the position of an artist.

A friend of my family who was a practising dentist once grilled me about why I had ended up doing what I did. Maybe my art practice seemed particularly vague and unreasonably privileged at the time. I explained to her that I saw what I did as a real-time strategy game. Art was a game to me. I had just returned to Helsinki for a visit from London. She told me I should get a job in a factory and learn about real life.

Then she started praising her own field: how healthcare was profoundly meaningful, because it was so needed, because it made people's quality of life better, and extended life itself. The conversation led to an interesting dead end when someone else pointed out that a society where everyone worked in healthcare would be neither viable nor desirable. Many years later, though, I can see how Finland could become that: a country full of (increasingly elderly) patients and their carers, and a small elite class of tech and business workers making the money to keep going these processes of suffering, healing, birth and death. Maybe curators and artists would have to choose whether to join the carers or the patients.



*You mention a few problematic aspects of the art field related to the so-called freedom or autonomy of art, or being an artist, and art's impact on society. As our societies are becoming automatic or even algorithmic, certain automatisms also pervade the sphere that used to be seen as mostly creative, contemporary art. Can I ask you what your thoughts are about this specific condition of automatism versus creativity, especially against the background of communicating your work on social networks?*

And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualisation devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. 'If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.' And art exists so that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony.

Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' (1917)

Automation does seem more of an issue of perception and repeated functioning in the world, rather than (necessarily) a problem to do with the creation of artworks. I feel there's an abundance of interesting material, and a hugely limited capacity to see it properly or respond to it in any way.

People just seem tired, slowly burned out by perpetual ecological, economic and political crises, and by the cognitive demands of knowledge work, which often includes the unpaid work of reproducing oneself as a subject on social media platforms. It seems harder and harder to ask that people would voluntarily have their ways of seeing challenged or inconvenienced by all this difficult art, when there is no solid ground to stand on and contemplate an image.

I think this sense of general fatigue, and impatient, habitual perception, has led the art world to move its goalposts, and to push artists to thematise, clarify and explain their work more and more. Frustratingly, art can never be clear enough. The problem is compounded by the creation of an ultra-precarious administrative class of freelance curators who also seem unfortunately quite involved in this push for art to name itself, to give itself an outline, to be anchored in the autobiography and 'position' the artist is supposed to inhabit in some valid, undeniable way. Images melt into the air, and only a reference to lived experience can re-solidify them for the purposes of another radical, world-transforming biennial.

There's been a lot of discussion lately about the automation of image and text production through AI tools. What I'm personally more interested in is the possibility of automating the viewer, the one tasked with appreciating all these creations. Attention is where the scarcity lies. I often dream about some kind of angelic, celestial figure, or machine intelligence (the difference might not matter?), that would be able to perceive the work I make in some more vertical, fuller way, removed from the transactional, flat, disappointing horizon of the professionalised 'art world' and quantified online interactions. This seems speculative and a bit silly, until one remembers the millennia of artful objects that have been created and put to use in establishing a link to the skies.



*Let's talk about 'automating the viewer' in this so-called economy of attention. Could you expand on it? Do you think it is possible to perceive artwork as not a part of the art world, as not belonging to it?*

What drives me is more the number of activities I want to continue (observing, writing and drawing) than the possible outcomes, and whether or not those outcomes would be considered artworks. I feel an affinity with many other people besides contemporary artists (illustrators, journalists, comedians, meme page admins, poets, filmmakers and designers come to mind). The will to act feels similar, and it's a bit arbitrary what ends up being contextualised as art and what as some other thing? Maybe this is a kind of perceptive limitation I have, that I can't see this circle of meaningful difference around the artwork any more.

I think many of the things I make and upload (I've been sharing images online for much longer than I've been a professional artist) do not get perceived as works of art. But they do get received as a kind of signal. A lot of the work I make that ends up in an art world context does not seem to be perceived, loved, critiqued or collected, even if it is correctly identified as an artwork. These solid works of art vanish in plain sight on the overlit walls of underfunded project spaces. I think most work produced by artists does not have room in the art world. It overflows into studio corners and basement storages, and ultimately to landfills, without ever receiving the care and consideration a narrow selection of works of art receives.

Sometimes when I do studio visits with art students, I can sense that there is this silent question the student wants an answer to hanging over the encounter, something like ... am I good enough? Will this do? It's a question that cannot be asked or answered, really. It's probably a question that lingers in the fog of my own over-intellectualised doubt. Maybe the fantasy is that the outside eye of the automated viewer could be the one to put the matter to rest.

*Do I understand correctly that you see these automated or algorithmic scenes or (social networks) platforms as more open for the distribution of your work, for example, than the art world, which is crowded with gatekeepers and other limitations, like white cube galleries, etc?*

I don't see this as a question where a binary choice (between social media platforms and the art world) would be possible, since the way the art system works is deeply entangled with how recommendation algorithms govern our attention. This is visible both in the flashes of political protest and scandal playing out at biennials, and in the work of the collectable, modellesque painters producing visually enticing wall objects depicting scenes from their aspirational social milieu.

It also seems to be behind the popularity of camera-friendly performance-based work that benefits from the algorithm's preference for human faces, and from how we've all become so rehearsed at documenting ourselves and each other. For example, in the case of Young Boy Dancing Group, the performances appear as a sequence of living memetic images, and the audience members become nodes in a promotional network that receives, records and broadcasts the images as they are happening. It's cute.



To reflect on my circumstances: I don't really see social media platforms as more open or ungoverned, but I guess it's easier for me to perceive what the limits are, because they are somewhat more machinic and explicit than the informal, shadowy workings of the art system. I can't say that I'm a fan of how social media operate, especially with the ongoing enshittification of the major platforms, but I also couldn't say that I'm immune to the level of validation and praise I receive through Instagram (in contrast to my somewhat stale, soured relationship with the art world).

My main form of interaction with art institutions is that I receive dozens of rejections every year to my applications for residencies, exhibition opportunities and public or private funding (the problem is heightened in the Nordic context, where open calls are used as a one-size-fits-all solution for anything). I don't have a gallerist, and my work is not really being collected. Recent meetings with curators have resulted in mutual confusion and melancholy, because it is difficult for me to explain what I do, and for others to grasp it or see any value in it.

Of course, there are also good encounters and invitations that I should really be more grateful for, but ever since the pandemic it feels like the negative side of the art game has been more emphasised, and the positive side is faint or vanishing, while my Instagram account has really taken flight somehow. Maybe it's not really a matter of a conscious decision, but an amoeba-like drifting towards warmer currents. Like I'm on social media because users tell me they want me to be there?

Maybe a more material way to describe the shift would be to think of inflation and rising real estate costs, and how they've coincided with a lack of investment in culture and art in a long period of austerity politics, and how at the same time information technology and virtual space have never been cheaper and more widely available.

Social media doesn't pay for the most part (or users are left to find their own monetisation schemes), and it's really stupid to work for free for Instagram so that Meta can gather the profits, but at least

the tools, storage and circulation of digital images and texts are very, very affordable. A fairly decent PC laptop might cost the same amount of money as one month of studio rent, or much less than shipping a painting, a circumstance which would have been unthinkable twenty years ago.

*How would Avocado Ibuprofen introduce Jaakko Pallasvuo to our readers?*

A signal does not necessarily mean that you want to be located or described. It can mean that you want to be known as Unlocatable and Hidden. This contradiction can drive the 'I' in the lyrical poem into a series of techniques that are the reverse of the usual narrative movements around courage, discipline, conquest and fame.

Fanny Howe, *Night Philosophy*, p. 98

Jaakko Pallasvuo is a Finnish artist recognised for his multidisciplinary approach, incorporating drawing, painting, video and performance. His work delves into the themes of identity, digital culture, and the art world's dynamics, often using humour and irony. Pallasvuo has exhibited his work internationally, reflecting the global relevance of his themes. Known for his collaborative projects, he works with other artists across various disciplines. Additionally, Pallasvuo maintains an active online presence on platforms like Tumblr and Instagram, where he shares his work and engages with a broad audience, enhancing the accessibility and impact of his art.

ChatGPT (when asked for a 100-word answer to the question 'Who is Jaakko Pallasvuo?')

Valentinas Klimašauskas (b. 1977, Lithuania) is a curator and writer. Recently, he cocurated the Lithuanian pavilion at the Venice Biennial 2024 (with João Laia, artists: Pakui Hardware and Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė). Klimašauskas is the author of "Telebodies" (Mousse Publishing, 2024), "Oh, My Darling & Other Rants" (The Baltic Notebooks of Anthony Blunt, 2018), "Polygon" (Six Chairs Books, 2018), and "B" (Torpedo Press, 2014).

More info at: <https://selectedletters.lt>



# The CAC and the Sapieha Palace: The Hope for Lucid Institutions and Solar Sediments

September 10, 2024

Author Jogintė Bučinskaitė



Sapieha Palace. Photo by Norbert Tukaj

The Japanese language has the term *komorebi*. It refers to sunlight shining between the leaves of trees. Despite the mesmerising flickering, this phenomenon also reminds us that the light reaching us through foliage, the ozone layer, and other cosmic filters, is in fact solar sediments delayed, on average, by eight minutes and 20 seconds. This is the time that a fresh burst of light and heat takes to travel the distance of 146.9 million kilometres to the Earth. Yet the solar souvenirs that are becoming increasingly harsh every year suggest cracked filters and a declining resilience.

Thinking about the Sapieha Palace, the new branch of the Contemporary Art Centre, and its first exhibition 'Refuge' (curated by Virginija Januškevičiūtė and Edgaras Gerasimovičius) became an endless *komorebi* in the vaults of my mind. News of the finished, more than decade-long, restoration of the Baroque palace, the need for greater heritage exposure, and the joy of finally having our own palazzo with prime contemporary art, was interspersed with publicly expressed doubts about the poor handling of the renovation work, incongruous details (sockets, heaters, floors, stairs, etc), and never-answered questions regarding the decision to give the administration of this asset to the CAC, of all institutions. Like two Baroque sisters, the light and shade of its public reception further boosted the event's importance and the first impressions, which left one hoping that the glue of light will always keep the reality together somewhat more firmly.

Open to the public since 12 April this year, the Sapieha Palace absorbs light through its huge windows, and light is the exhibition's poetic arrow, which pierces the twinkling surfaces of the works and the glimmer of ideas. Light really becomes powerful, all-connecting matter here, a token of a new beginning and a belief in a miracle, but it can even obscure some things, while highlighting others with its intensity, or become a tool for whitewashing. Bright light blinds. It is perhaps no mere coincidence that the building, which has been a landmark in the suburb of Antakalnis for over three centuries, served successively as a summer residence, a barracks and a military hospital, while in the interwar period it housed an eye clinic. In a sense, earlier experiences are coming back: the new incumbents are indeed committed to providing care for our imagination, inflamed by the war next door, teaching us to observe and marvel at the dialogue between heritage and contemporaneity, and striving to be transparent themselves.

Still, there is a risk here of a Baroque *trompe l'oeil*, an artistic spatial illusion device used to trick viewers into believing that objects depicted on a flat surface are real and that an almost infinite space unfolds behind them. Likewise, after the inaugural halo dissipates, the palace will inevitably have to assure the public that it is not merely a real estate agency that manages spaces for formal and commercial purposes. A more specific programme at the new institution, as well as clearly defined objectives and fields of activity, would help to avoid this impression. These are arguably still missing, as the institution's self-positioning is limited to a fairly abstract definition of a multifunctional cultural educational centre that will offer cultural activities catering to the needs of contemporary society. With regard to the endless public debate on what is included in the notion of culture and what is not, the concept of a cultural education centre sounds particularly problematic.



CAC facade, 2013. Photo from CAC archive

This article is also being written at the peak of the bright period of the calendar year, at a convenient halfway point between the end of the renovation of the whiter-than-ever CAC building on Vokiečių Street and the first months of the new venue's activity. The package of changes is complemented

by the recent news of the CAC's long-time director Kęstutis Kuizinas winning a competition to head another new institution, the National Institute of Architecture, which will cause major paradigm shifts on top of the infrastructural refurbishing of the CAC. The programme, working methods and positioning of the art institution proposed by the future new head will contribute to the redistribution of power, and influence the centre's coordinates in the local and international art fields. This is a pivotal moment. The expectations actively voiced by players in the field who usually paint changes in black or white, depending on personal interests, will be no less important. However, these processes require nuanced rather than categorical assessments, which are second in harmfulness only to the indifference that has emerged as a response to the CAC's peculiarly elitist attitude over three decades. Hence, while histories of contemporary art in Lithuania are sporadically being written, and the changes far outrun their reflection, the new start of the CAC and its branch is a good opportunity to ponder, to ask questions, and to cautiously speculate about the intensity of the institution's activities and the light of its ideas. How do we want our new or revamped institutions to function? What values do we want to promote, and what values do we want to discard? Is it possible to expect change when the common operating practice is contextually tied to a strong public image legacy? Are we witnessing someone's end or beginning?

In his article 'In the Thick of It. What Does the Present Want from Us?'<sup>[1]</sup>, published four years ago by Artnews.lt, the curator Adomas Narkevičius positioned the CAC within the capacious concept of a microtopia. The author employed it to refer to a space that was not fully subject to the existing social, cultural and economic reality of the times. 'It builds its own micro-world by choosing and invoking the institutional organisations and artistic instruments determined by its own members,' Narkevičius wrote. Three decades ago, such an ambitious and perhaps even impudent tactic of operations undoubtedly unsettled orthodox art convictions, but perhaps that was exactly what helped to establish contemporary art in Lithuania, not as marginalised opposition to the already-existing concept of art, but as an autonomous vector in line with international processes. I would dare to say that, in a certain sense, it was a crucial and necessary political tool that was vital in breaking away from the outdated ideological apparatus, raised a generation of daring and unconventional artists, and, according to Narkevičius, 'set the initial trajectories, arranged the guideposts, and drew demarcation lines in the local contemporary art field'.

Curiously, during its first decade, despite lacking long-term experience and a tradition of contemporary art administration, as well as clear operational protocols, the CAC managed not only to institutionalise contemporary art, which was still quite foreign to the public, but also to redefine a contemporary art institution in sync with the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Germany. The CAC's starting position was favourable for such an objective, as it coincided with an attempt at self-discovery through experimentation, rather than changing something that was still non-existent in Lithuania. The New Institutionalism (a term borrowed from economics and sociology) which emerged as a novel curatorial and administrative model in the aforementioned countries in the late 1990s manifested itself as the curators' efforts to reconfigure art centres and *kunsthalls* as active, open, democratic and egalitarian public spaces, emphasising the multifunctionality of institutions and the pursuit of decentralising the exhibition genre in relation to their other activities.

The New Institutionalism was also concurrent with the curators' appropriation of institutional critique, practised by artists in Europe and the USA since the 1970s, which in turn reinforced the position of the curator as an actively creating author. The CAC used this feature of New Institutionalism by entrenching the names of several curators whose mythology continues to define the name of the institution itself to this day. Yet unlike other centres, which changed the institutional structures and their hierarchies, trying the open social organisation role, the CAC opted for open insularity as its political course. The then-new art formation outpaced the governing institutions that were supposed to discipline it, legal acts, and art criticism and theory. The centre's tacit resistance to subordination,

fairly inert movement along the chosen vector, strict selectivity in relation to the members of its community, and an idiosyncratic legal status that did not fit the definitions of a museum or a cultural centre, and ultimately the indefinite tenure of the director, resulted in a slow rotation of people who represented and headed the institution, the postponement of responsibilities, and a certain inviolability.



CAC reconstruction, 2024. Photo from CAC archive

This situation also questions the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture for all terms of office (according to the statute of the CAC, it is owned by the state, while the institution implementing the owner's rights and obligations is the Ministry of Culture). On one hand, it should be the cornerstone of the institutional milieu that governs and supervises the administrative apparatus of the centre and other organisations subordinate to it, shaping mechanisms of change as much as those of stability. On the other hand, the ministry itself becomes a hostage of laws and amendments that are passed too slowly.<sup>[2]</sup> Among other things, the fairly dismissive and occasionally even derisive public attitude towards the Ministry of Culture in the context of other ministries leads to a situation where the same protocols that are followed fanatically in the supervision and governance of the rest of the public sector are often rendered null in the field of culture, often leaving it to inertia and self-regulation. As culture is still widely perceived by the general public as a decorative and symbolic sphere, and decision makers are reluctant to listen to culture professionals, it is just a question of time whether the ministry will be merged with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, for example, when defence issues are the top priority of the country.

Further considering the influence of New Institutionalism, the CAC is mentioned among examples of its application with the 'CAC TV' project (2004–2007), through which the institution demonstrated its ability to curate content beyond the white cube. This practically confirmed the assumption that it is not the building of an institution that defines the art displayed in it; rather, the methods of content-making determine the identity of an institution, no matter where it is. Proof of this is the abbreviation CAC itself, which over the last three decades has become entrenched in popular parlance as a generic designation for contemporary art (or art deemed weird by the viewer). An essentially similar transference of meaning is happening in the case of the Sapieha Palace, for which merely a new, or

more precisely heritage, architectural casing is not enough to adapt the way of presenting art as well. The conceptual 'radiation' accumulated by the CAC over a long time is too strong to allow a radical conversion of the software simply by switching the hardware.

To be sure, there was an ambition to create a new institution unlike any other in Lithuania, and this was voiced publicly on a number of occasions. 'We are building a place that is missing not only in Vilnius, but in the whole of Lithuania, a place we lack,'<sup>[3]</sup> Dr Gintautė Žemaitytė, the head of the Sapieha Palace branch of the CAC, claimed in an interview. The pronoun 'we' contains more than just the CAC administration. In the spring of 2022, I was invited to take part in an online workshop called 'Sapieha Palace Actualisation: Creating a Cultural Education Centre'. The CAC team and Xwhy / Agency of Understanding several times brought together experts from various spheres of culture and employees of cultural institutions, as well as representatives of the local Antakalnis community, to work on the vision of the Sapieha Palace. It is difficult to say whether the generous brainstorming of ideas and writing them down in multi-level tables has been productive, but so far, the publicly declared institutional vision does not appear to have moved from the point announced two years ago. Nevertheless, certain processes are under way, and it is likely that the branch will eventually be pressed to demonstrate that it follows somewhat different principles of operation compared to the central headquarters, if not outright competing with the latter. The Sapieha Palace learning community initiative, which delivers a promise of collective creation of a body of knowledge based on the spirit of the place, and a more open institutional model without even defined specific learning methods or so-called programme tutors, can be mentioned as the first effort of this kind. The fruitful cooperation between contemporary art, scholarship and institutions can indeed promote a dialogue between different fields and research methods, as well as the emergence of new knowledge; but this will take not only agents from the CAC's circuit, but also heritage and cultural history experts.

Still, the administration's wish that the palace should be unlike any other cultural institution is very conditional, since at least two existing institutions have been referred to as role models. The working group formed by the Ministry of Culture in 2017 proposed that the Sapieha Palace should house a Cultural Education Centre, an allusion to the Centre for Civil Education which opened in 2016. On considering which of the institutions under the ministry could implement this idea, it was decided to entrust the Contemporary Art Centre with the task. Kęstutis Kuizinas revealed in an interview that he had asked the then minister of culture Liana Ruokytė-Jonsson (in office from 2016 to 2018) and her team why the ministry had chosen the CAC in particular, to which the ministry replied that their intention had been to have something interesting and future-oriented, rather than just another conventional museum in the city.<sup>[4]</sup>

It is also important to note the leap from the office of political decisions to an executive position by Gintautė Žemaitytė, who had served as a vice-minister under Ruokytė-Jonsson, somewhat predictable but softly cushioned by a single competition. One would hope that this instrumentalisation of political power was approved by all stakeholders, and will ensure the optimal performance of the new institution in the future. Although the current Law on Budgetary Institutions does not specify a term of office for the head of a structural subsidiary, the changing work culture will hopefully make the tradition of indefinite terms increasingly questioned, and eventually a thing of the past.

On the other hand, one wonders whether the choice of the CAC as the agent capable of consolidating the work of the Sapieha Palace was based solely on its undeniable national and international expertise. For some time now, there has been a growing feeling that the CAC is undergoing a certain moral and conceptual exhaustion, which calls for a reconsideration of its

institutional model. Such a brief respite was supposed to be provided by the reconstruction of the building, which could have served as a test of whether the entity was visible only when it was on a hiatus. Still, as was mentioned earlier in this article, infrastructure constitutes only part of an institution, regardless of its importance to its identity. The invisible component has recently slowly shifted from evolution to involution: ideological contraction, decline and reduction. Narkevičius also notes this in his article: 'Over the course of three decades, an external institutional and non-institutional milieu has developed that points to both the necessity and the opportunities to lead this field along completely different lines. This seems to suggest that the pull of this microtopia has diminished, and perhaps it has declined as a living concentrate of ideological and human commonalities that has an end.'

This is inevitably related to the emergence of new art initiatives, spaces and institutions, which began around 2008 and peaked in 2012–2016. Once an alternative to the artistic conventions dictated by the Artists' Union, the CAC eventually triggered the advent of alternatives to itself by making quite hermetic decisions about what kind of art should be made visible and what was to be left out. The fact that the idea of the isolated space of museums, art galleries and art centres has gone out of fashion has exacerbated this situation, while our perception of contemporary art has also become worryingly outdated. These and many other factors, not necessarily related to the CAC, have naturally prompted a search for new art streams, trends, forms of presentation, and concepts of contemporaneity. The light of the CAC as a beacon of contemporary art has obviously diminished, which only proves that the Lithuanian art field has expanded its shores.

Yet this, too, raises new questions and leads to other extremes. The art field's active pursuit of institutionalisation confirms the privileged status of the organisational model of an institution. Institutionalised activity is still perceived as self-evident, widely acceptable, resistant to change, and supportive of a hierarchical system and close ties with government structures. Paradoxically, the concept of an institution appears to be more stable than the category of art itself *par excellence*. Individuals who do not represent a particular institution are not always deemed fully fledged agents in the field, as if lacking a certain 'organ'. Curiously, however, normative funding mechanisms force institutions to become increasingly homogeneous and multifunctional, with the content of their activity being oriented towards a progressively larger segment of society which often displays the same capacity for cultural consumption. While institutions and their growing diversity expand the landscape of contemporary art, more institutions means a more complicated system, and more regulation and coercion. In this context, the CAC's territorial expansion may look like an attempt to reclaim the declining discursive power.



Sapieha Palace. Photo: Audrius Solominas

The activities in the Sapieha Palace also contribute to the curious and particularly intensified process of *palacification*, marked by art institutions inhabiting heritage objects. These include not just the Sapieha Palace as a new branch of the CAC, but also the Kirdiejai Palace, which is to house the Vilnius Museum, the Radvila Palace, which belongs to the Lithuanian National Museum of Art and is currently awaiting renovation, the recently restored Trakų Vokė Manor, and so on. Unlike the case of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, where the reconstruction of a non-surviving building divided the public and attracted political interests, these developments are seen as positive examples of heritage preservation and adaptation that draw attention to the country's less visible historical legacy. Today many initiatives are not tied any more to the exalted official narrative of state culture as it used to be conceived, i.e. as saving the freedom of Lithuania and establishing the eternal foundations of statehood. It is nonetheless interesting to ponder how palaces, charged as they are with the power and vocabulary of historical privilege, will influence the processes of the administration of (contemporary) art and the attitude towards it, and ultimately how this symbolism will function in the face of the war raging nearby. Maybe it will spawn new visiting habits and talking regimes that will reconfigure image-making strategies, or alternatively it will further deepen the divide between these worlds of survival and celebration?

If the New Institutionalism lost its appeal because it failed to problematise the notion of institutions, perhaps this time of the emergence of new institutions and the transformation of existing ones is a good occasion to consider exactly what contemporary art and the organisational structure of its presentation are becoming today here in Lithuania. Given that the geography of art history is expanding, and its Western version is just one of many, while ours is no less important, and that art strives to confront historical injustices and to take into account social and political processes by making proposals, showing solidarity, facilitating the production of knowledge and networking, and bearing witness and encouraging participation, one could say that it is increasingly becoming an ethical activity. If this is true, this turn could mark the emergence of an ethical institutionalism that

renounces worn-out tropes of power hierarchy and the politics of the one and only way to 'the art world'. It is obvious that this kind of (art) world, and the scale of its problems we are facing today, demands a change of operating methods if we are to trust in it again.

The first exhibition at the Sapieha Palace, 'Refuge', has cast a spell, if not for systemic change, then at least for a bright future. This show indeed hints at a hopeful turn to miracles, faith, magical thinking, spells and enchantment, and a sentimental longing for alternative ways of living and being together. This thematic field, which has dominated the contemporary art scene for the last few years, meets the somewhat earlier motifs of care and psychologism, reflecting the disillusion with ideas of reason and progress evident in Western culture today. Human culture increasingly appears dangerous and destructive rather than creative. Perhaps that is why magic often replaces science, faith stands in for knowledge, and ritual substitutes for rational action in our everyday life. On which side of these binaries art falls is another question.



Petras Mazūras. Double Race, 2020. Mixed media, 27 × 20 × 37 cm and a fragment of a wooden wall: 102 × 28,5 × 23.5 cm. Photographer: Andrej Vasilenko

The direction chosen by the curators is a timely and sensitive response to the anxiety caused by ongoing wars and their escalation. But we should not forget that this time, fed by Ukraine aid packages, is also capable of expanding and contracting. The exhibition opened before 24 April, when the US Senate passed the \$95 billion foreign aid bill, and it is no wonder that anxiety, or perhaps resignation, could have become the third curator in putting the show together. The display could have had an absolutely different effect on those who had a chance to view it during the first weeks. This ability to refract light according to the changing degree of hope and context is one of the exhibition's fascinating qualities.

Yet it is precisely this curation of the atmosphere that begins to dominate the exhibition's other declared themes. The show is said to be a meditation on Baroque, as well as bringing to light the



different narrations of the palace's history, but these lines remain hypothetical, lacking direct references or more extensive curatorial navigation between the chosen works and historical facts. Links with roughly marked past uses of the palace are schematic at best: for instance, Petras Mazūras' sculptures illustrate the barracks stage, while drawings done with closed eyes on her sick bed by the late artist Alina Popa allude to the hospital one.

Experiencing an overview of the palace's history through works of contemporary art is a challenging task, particularly if one has not taken part in any of the guided tours of the premises offered. Although descriptions of works might have come in useful in this respect, they mention just a few such associations, while most others are abstract and distant. Hence the reader is left to enjoy the stories behind the creation of the works and their interpretation, sensuously written by the curators in rich poetic language. Describing works anew in this article makes no sense, so it is much more interesting to question the motives behind the selection of the works and the ways of combining them, which, in line with the chosen motif of spells, often appear mysterious too.

Although this curatorial gesture can be related to the incoherence of historical narratives and visitors' freedom to come up with their own individual storylines, this hinders the promise of connecting past and present discourses. After all, the first exhibition often becomes a benchmark for later activities. Time is an interpretational category that defines every person's experience. Failure to provide a chronological compass and conceptually engage with the historical coordinates in exhibitions and the rest of the programme puts the institution at risk of dehistoricising the heritage to a merely expedient infrastructure: refurbished walls and ceilings. The ground floor historical capsule, intended to compensate for this, so far looks too modest. What, then, will set the exhibitions at the institution's headquarters apart from the ones at the subsidiary, if such a constellation of works can easily be pictured in the CAC's white cube?

The aim to help the palace reveal itself as an architectural exhibit with the first display was implemented successfully, unlike the 'Refuge' exhibition itself, whose conceptual base appears too fragile and blown over by the almost elemental effect created by the building. The curatorial decision to place works of contemporary art in a heritage object in a discreet and non-invasive way is overshadowed by the intense environment, giving an impression of a sparse collection of works scattered around the palace that have difficulty forming a coherent whole.



Darius Žiūra. *Mould*, 1998 / 2013. Coins collected in fountains, 15 × 7.5 × 3.75 cm. Photographer: Emilija Filipenkovaite

Perhaps this is why Darius Žiūra's *Mould*, displayed at the beginning of the exhibition, is a tuning point not just for 'Refuge', but also for the institution itself. The conceptually capacious work is an alloy of coins harvested by the artist from the main fountain in the seaside resort of Palanga, a small monument to the ritual meaning originally attributed to these 'good luck' coins, like a brick for a beacon of happiness or for the road to the Land of Oz. Although the alloy of different metals was not expected to be technically possible, the coins tossed into the fountain by tourists from various countries eventually fused into a shiny rugged composite. Likewise, the impression made by the first exhibition makes the Sapieha Palace look like a compound of the experiences of diverse institutions and initiatives. It synthesises the activities of the Aikas Žado Laboratory, responsible for the restoration and conservation of the 18th-century Žeimiai Manor (Domas Noreika, the founder of the laboratory, works at the palace as a restoration expert), while the conceptual and aesthetic agenda of the works selected for the exhibition fluctuates between the CAC's trademark approach, the defunct Swallow exhibition space, and the Medūza contemporary art and culture space of the Lithuanian Artists' Association. This only confirms the spell that if you toss these different coins into a Baroque fountain and revisit it later, you will probably still find them there, provided that municipal employees or an artist have not collected them. Thus, it is hardly possible to conjure up something new by fusing established entities from the art circuit. Nevertheless, Žiūra's *Mould* shows that the result can be unexpected and even very satisfying! The sundial will tell.

Still, the impression left by the fusion in this exhibition is twofold. Some of the works induce genuine delight, even if they are quite straightforwardly rhymed based on the aesthetic denominator of light and radiance, as if focusing solely on their 'shining' qualities. A quick walk through the exhibition indeed reveals it as beautiful, however banal the term. Beside Žiūra's sheeny bar of 'charmed' coins, Gintautas Trimakas' lightography engages in a conversation with the glare of the sun captured in mundane landscapes by Vytautas Balčytis. Andrius Arutiunian's intellectual and atmospheric work, resembling a suspended tongue trying to articulate old Armenian spells, connects through its brass

surface with the grabbing and caressing hands of the sculptural installation by Iza Tarasewicz. The latter work also speaks through the curators' lips about the Ukrainian grain export crisis, and brings the exhibition closer to today's upheavals in the region with a light gesture, as if dispelling the exalted illusion of light. Ochre, a fluffy dust-like powder that leaves annoying stubborn stains on surfaces, displayed in wooden boxes next to the installation, fleetingly resembles the aforementioned solar sediments. Although the artist herself invokes them in order to allude to the toxicity of capitalism, this work could also epitomise any kind of harnessed power.

The almost century-old Futurist watercolour by Vladas Drėma depicting a fire in Vilnius extends its drawn flaming tongues to Mindaugas Lukošaitis' impressive visions of a burning future. Nevertheless, it is a pity that the works of one of today's most intriguing Lithuanian draughtsmen are presented in the exhibition as digital prints that extinguish the original hand quivers, make the colours look synthetic, and make the series resemble a comic strip. Petras Mazūras' burnt wooden wall fragments, adorned with original contemporary resin amber containing inclusions of the horseman figure which symbolises Lithuanian nationhood, look like the aftermath of this hypothetical fire. One of the exhibition's darkest rooms houses digital images of non-existent plants that require no light, created by Miljohn Ruperto and Ulrik Heltoft. Perhaps we are witnessing what is to come after the light expires? After a long time spent with the show, the choice of video works begins to raise questions. Projected by artificial light, they often look like pretentious and solipsistic foreign bodies, distant from the exhibition's thematic fabric, dense as it is, seeking literal analogies with a countryside residence, joking peculiarly about time travel, and testing our duality. This is not to say that the works are inferior, but their selection introduces completely different registers that do not help consolidate the disparate material of the show.

All in all, we should acknowledge that life and art are neither perfectly separate nor precisely connected spheres. This time 'Refuge' has a solid architectural refuge that admittedly is a much stronger attraction. Another, much more complicated question is what kind of content will attract visitors to the palace when this exhibition scenography loses some of its initial appeal. Hopefully, history will not be turned into a period drama here and arbitrarily laid out in the eternal present, disregarding chronology and context. If the institution's further activities and their model aim to continue the direction of the curation of light, it is worth noting that the latter comes close to a game of hide and seek, filtering the light, concealing, and creating screens, shades and shelters, for the sun also has its winds. Yet this is perhaps the only way to find where the new and renewed institution's place under the sun is, and what reaches us only as sediments of the latter.



Refuge, exhibition view. Sapieha Palace, Vilnius. Photographer: Andrej Vasilenko

[1] Narkevičius, Adomas. 'Ten, kur tiršta. Ko dabartis iš mūsų nori?'. *Artnews.lt*, 12 February 2020. <http://artnews.lt/ten-kur-tirsta-ko-dabartis-musu-nori-55939>.

[2] In response to a written inquiry regarding the competitions for the positions of the heads of the CAC and the Sapieha Palace subsidiary, the following comment was received from the Ministry of Culture. Only the relevant excerpt related to the terms of office of heads of public institutions is provided:

'The Law amending the Law on Budgetary Institutions, which came into effect on January 1, 2024, stipulates that an individual can be appointed head of a budgetary institution for a 5-year term by means of a competition or, in specified cases, without a competition. Article 2, Section 7 of the Law specifies that heads of budgetary institutions who were appointed to office for an indefinite term prior to the Law coming into effect and have held the position of head of this budgetary institution for more than 10 years on the day of the Law coming into effect continue to hold the position of head of this budgetary institution for one year from the day of this Law coming into effect.'

[3] 'Gyvai iš Sapiegų rūmų atidarymo. Sapiegų rūmai Gintautė Žemaitytė'. Radio broadcast, Radio Vilnius, published on April 13, 2024. <http://radiovilnius.live/sapiegu-rumai-%e2%94%82-gintaute-zemaityte/>

[4] Markevičius, Vytautas. 'Visuomenei atveriami Sapiegų rūmai: kvapą gniaužiantis iššūkis virsta realybe'. Bernardinai.lt, April 12, 2024. <http://www.bernardinai.lt/visuomenei-atveriami-sapiegu-rumai-kvapa-gniauziantis-issukis-virsta-realybe/>.

# Promises are not Meant to be Kept

September 12, 2024

Author Rosana Lukauskaitė



Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

Perhaps never before have we scrutinised our own faces as intensely as we did during the peak months of the pandemic. As work meetings and lectures migrated to virtual spaces, our eyes would involuntarily drift toward the small box in the lower right-hand corner of every Zoom call. Over time, I noticed that the version of myself staring back at me from the screen had become distorted and weird, as if my real self and the digital imitation were beginning to behave differently, almost taking on a life of their own. Yet I couldn't quite articulate this phenomenon. Researchers suggest that prolonged gazing at one's reflection in dim light can evoke strange visual effects, including hallucinations of familiar faces, strangers, distorted features, or even grotesque figures. Rūtė Merk's exhibition 'Promises', on display at the Lithuanian National Gallery of Art until 6 October, offers a profound opportunity to reflect on similar feelings and experiences. The exhibition invites viewers to

delve into the intersections of digital and physical realities, explore how digital aesthetics influence our perception and self-awareness, and examine the transitions of our identity between the real and the virtual.



Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

The field of contemporary art continually seeks to make sense of the technological and cultural shifts defining our era. 'Promises' stands as a compelling example of how traditional painting techniques can be reimagined to engage with modern digital and social discourses. Through the portrait and still-life genres, Merk delves into the evolving concept of corporeality in the digital age, opening new pathways for reflection and interpretation. What makes Merk's pieces particularly captivating is their ability to seamlessly blend the physical and virtual worlds into a unified visual experience. Her portraits, constructed from digital fragments, evoke contemporary mythology, where traditional heroes and gods are supplanted by symbols of pop culture and digital archetypes. This transition underscores how our collective imagination is now more influenced by the internet and social media than by literature or history. These portraits are not only visually striking but also laden with meaning. They provoke deep contemplation on issues of identity, authenticity and representation in a world where the boundaries between physical and digital selves are increasingly fluid. Each portrait by Merk is akin to a digital palimpsest, gradually unveiling the social and technological narratives that define our time.

The still-lives in the exhibition 'Promises' transcend the traditional boundaries of the genre, offering more than just elements of Classical art; they also reflect contemporary consumer culture. Oversized latte cups, meticulously crafted artificial fruits, and macarons emerge as symbols that echo the economic and ecological contradictions of our time. These objects, now icons of global culture, provoke questions about authenticity and the loss of naturalness in our technological age. Yet, despite their artificiality, they still stir something primal in the descendants of hunter-gatherers. These still-lives do not merely critique; they also delve into notions of beauty and authenticity. Each

image in the exhibition serves as a poignant reminder of humanity's enduring desire to control and aestheticise the world to suit its own vision.

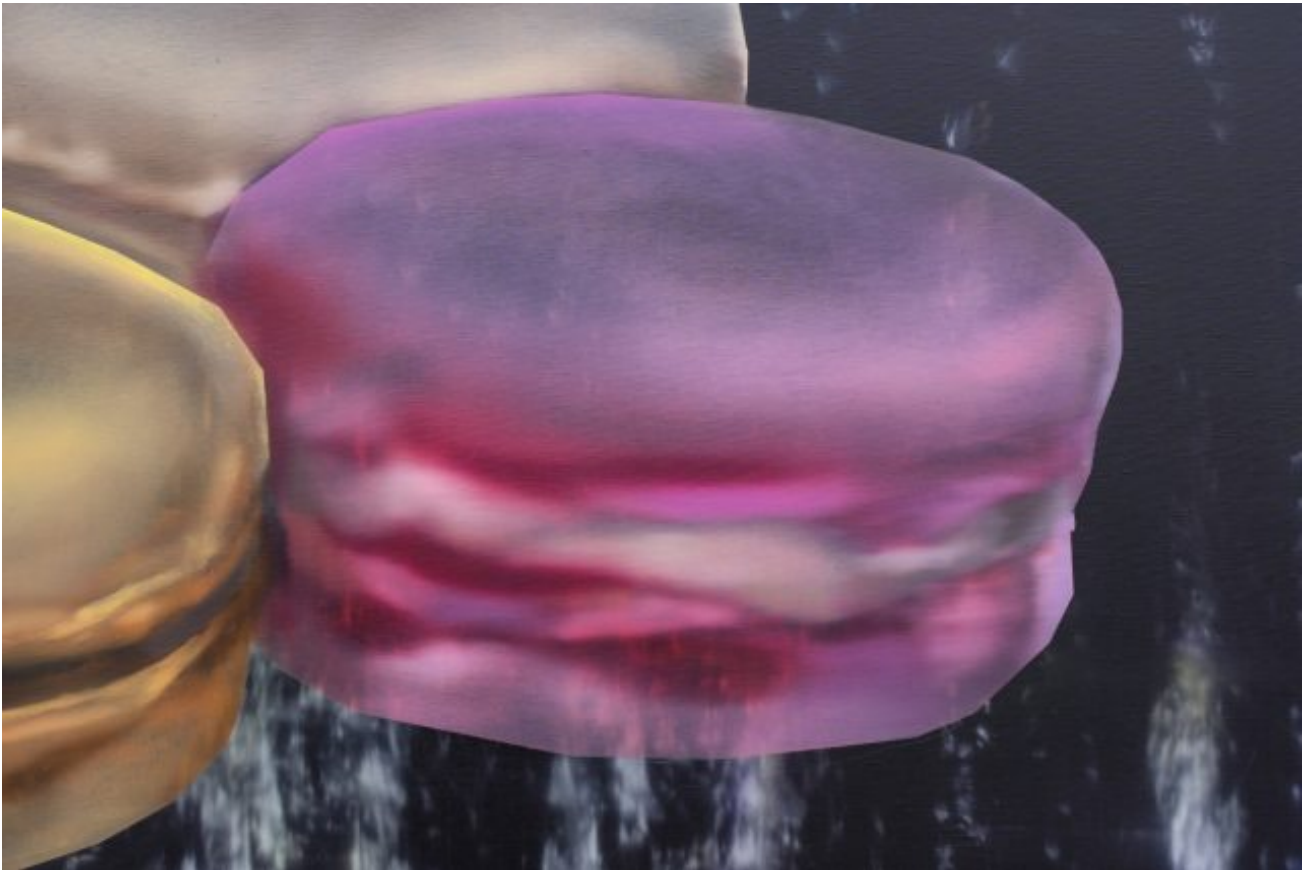


Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

In his seminal work 'The Language of New Media', Lev Manovich offers an in-depth exploration of how digital technologies are reshaping artistic practices and cultural production. His insights into the transformative power of digital media are vividly exemplified in the work by Rūtė Merk, where the fusion of digital and physical realities results in hybrid images. This fusion enables artworks to convey a new visual language unique to our era, which Manovich terms 'new media aesthetics'. He further highlights that digital composition can attain an exceptional level of density and detail, akin to the meticulousness found in 17th-century Dutch painting. This same intricate density is apparent in the work by Rūtė Merk, where each visual element is carefully crafted and seamlessly integrated into the overall composition.

New media objects are often modular and dynamic, capable of existing in a variety of potentially infinite versions. Inspired by digital aesthetics, Merk exemplifies this concept beautifully. Her paintings function as modules that can be combined and reconfigured, much like video game worlds that are continuously updated and reshaped. This approach involves not just the recoding of digital images but the transformation of entire cultural frameworks according to the logic of computers. Such modularity mirrors the perpetual dynamism of the digital realm and its boundless potential for creative evolution. Rūtė Merk transcends the mere transference of visual elements between digital and physical media. Her art expresses a profound concept of cultural recoding through computational logic, where the creative process becomes algorithmic, and each image serves as a dataset that can be analysed, transformed and interpreted.

Contemporary media often prioritise spatial navigation over a linear progression of time, as exemplified in video games and interactive applications. The portraits and still-lives by Rūtė Merk



function as components of such a space, inviting the viewer not only to observe but also to mentally navigate through various visual layers and contexts shaped by digital aesthetics. Her exhibition 'Promises' further demonstrates a synthesis with cinematic language, evident in the structure of the paintings, which evoke film frames or video game screens. This integration bridges traditional art with modern technological practices and the enduring quest for narrative.

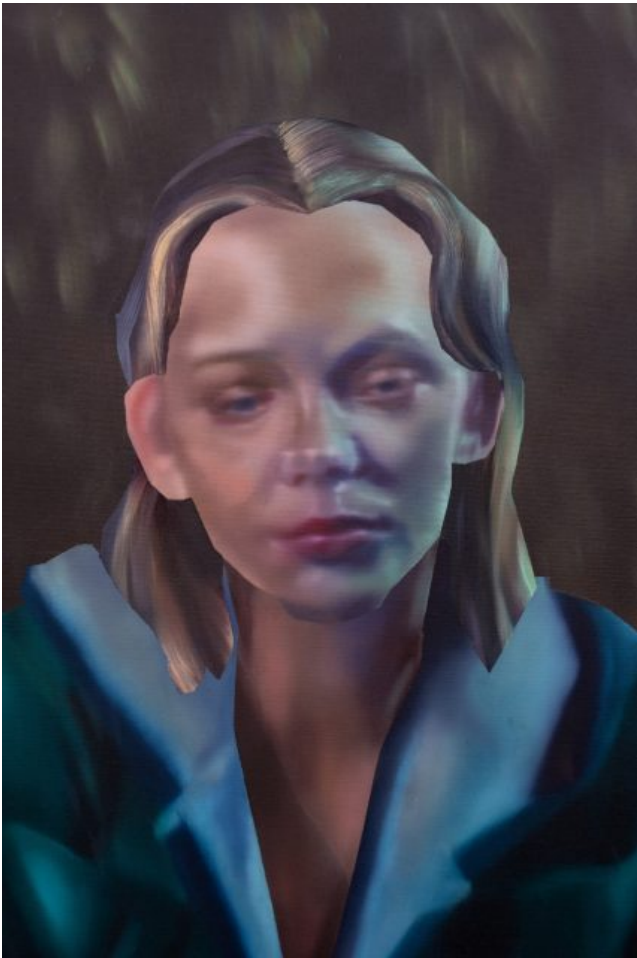


Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

Rūtė Merk delves into the contemporary expressions of visual language and discourse, exploring them through the lenses of time and space in a post-internet world. Her pieces resonate with a profound sense of emptiness, where the figures portrayed in her paintings, and the viewers who engage with them, seem to hover on the brink of absence. They are rendered visible only through their invisibility, as they are reflected in the digital mirror of representation. This reflects a paradox of our time: although we incessantly document ourselves and our surroundings, we still grapple with a deep-seated longing to remain unseen. Merk's work deftly exposes the tension between publicity and privacy, between existence and non-existence. Her creations compel us to question whether our identities genuinely extend beyond the digital screen, or if we are merely reflections shaped by social media and virtual interfaces. In today's world, we dream of escaping our own representations. We fear being truly perceived, and might rather disappear into the depths of a fluorescent matcha latte if it meant securing our ultimate intangibility.

In one painting, Thalia, holding valerian flowers in her hand, playfully sticks out her tongue. Is she mocking our neurotic daily lives, or is she crafting a herbal remedy for modern ascetics, overwhelmed by insomnia and overstimulated by caffeine? The search for identity and the turbulence of emotions aren't eased, even with discount codes from influencers' arsenals, like 'ariadne\_thread2024'. A slightly less realistic existence still feels hyper-real. When digital illusions

collide with physical reality, we see ourselves reflected both as we wish to be and as we most fear becoming.



Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

# Dreamt Realities. An interview with Rūdolfs Štamers

September 18, 2024

Author Elīza Ramza



From a painting session for his previous solo exhibition 'Voices in my Heads', 2023. Photograph by Elīza Ramza

It is impossible to predict what the artist Rūdolfs Štamers will propose in his next solo appearance: eight-metre paintings; heartbeats, the whispered flow of his thoughts, or the best of 2000's pop hits as a background; clouds of different aromas; portraits of fallen angels and their DJ tables; a parrot that dreams of being an eagle; materiality deconstructed beyond recognition, rugs made of human hair and a chance for visitors to cut off their own; to fog and change the ambience of the space, making visitors question their prior knowledge of it; the performative involvement of other artists. And these are just a few examples of what Štamers has done so far in his art.

Rūdolfs Štamers has been living outside Latvia for more than six years, but has not left his homeland's art scene. His previous exhibition in Riga 'Voices in my Heads' (TUR art space, 2023) was nominated for the Purvītis Prize, the main award in the visual arts in Latvia. He initiated and co-founded the TUR art space in Riga. He has received a BA from the Department of Visual Communication at the Art Academy of Latvia. He has studied as an exchange student at the KASK School of Arts in Ghent, interned with the installation artists Guillaume Bijl, and received an MA from the Department of Sculpture at the Royal Academy of Antwerp. After that, Štamers moved to Paris, where he lives and works today, and founded the artist-run space New Garden Galerie. His studio always smells of deconstructions of industrial materials. Metal, composite materials, synthetic fabrics and transformations of plastic are some of the key elements of Štamers's dual creative work. The owners of his wall-based works can often transform the compositions. It reveals the importance of time as the fourth dimension in Štamers's artistic practice, both in installations and wall-based works.

In 'Somewhere Something Fell Down' at the Kim? Contemporary Art Centre (25 July until 8 September 2024), so far his biggest solo exhibition, Rūdolfs Štamers heightens visitors' senses on the hitherto new vestibular level, thus clearly expressing his natural inclination to always strive for something unprecedented in his work. For me, it has always been interesting to talk to him. We decided to publish our reflections on both his solo exhibition at Kim? and on previous projects.



Detail from Untitled, 2019, mixed media on canvas, 100 x 140 cm, from the 'Blackouts' series. Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers

*Elīza Ramza: Your creative work is not tied to one medium or material; rather, it can be characterised with time as being a unifying essence of your works, its flow and 'in real time' experience. It is present in your opening performances, happenings and aromas in space, and even in your wall-based works; for example, in the 'Blackouts' series (2018), where you made*

*layers of different-coloured plastics that over time distort and reveal other sub-layers. By letting time become an important part of your work, you give away control. I also remember that the idea behind 'Blackouts' was about giving control to the unconscious.*

Rūdolfs Štamers: None of us has enough time in this world, so that is what interests me: the timeless, things that I won't be able to experience, and probably even the next generation, maybe only the ones after them.

The 'Blackouts' series was based on my own blackouts, but slowly starting to work with them, I realised that it reflects vividly the passage of time, and the fact that we initially don't see things, they reveal themselves in new ways only over time. These works are like dreams, we experience and then forget, and it takes time to perceive everything seriously and clearly when we return to consciousness. For example, at the beginning, the world was so happy to discover plastic, but now it has become one of our biggest struggles. And similarly, to our minds that think slowly and unravel slowly the mistakes of the past, trying to get better, these layers of plastic represent reaching new perspectives of our experience, like unpeeling realities.

The upper layer is mostly dark, but plastic will dissolve other un-open layers, brighter and more vivid. And there lies the unknown, much of it I have already forgotten. Texts, my thoughts. Teeth that are eating our time away, chains in which we are held by time ...



2020, mixed media on canvas, 2020, 140 x 180 cm.  
From the group show '20/20', Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers

ER: *The analogy of the chains of time is reflected in your installations too, where time is essential as a risk to miss out, to not be there at the right moment, the impossibility of experiencing it without being physically present. This was very apparent in the installation Svalka (2019, created together with the artist Alise Sondöre), where once every ten minutes glasses 'fell down' from the podium. I vividly remember the excitement of waiting for that particular moment, and the feeling of 'missing out' if I was at the other end of the museum and had to wait another ten minutes (laughs).*

RŠ: Yes, *Svalka* turned into a sound installation as well, because we used a vibromachine that 'vibrated' the glasses down, making a big rumble. I was told that when lectures were held in the exhibition, speakers had to have a minute of silence, as it was impossible to speak over the noise. All those clutters afterwards melted in the one big block of fortune: in Latvia breaking a plate is considered to bring good luck, so I hope the lecturers had good luck too (*laughs*).

Time really fascinates me. For me, it is an unbeatable mystery that cannot be stopped, so I want to make visitors dwell on it. My current practice is directed towards the present, the feelings and experience of the given moment, to be in the installation, to discover it with all the senses, and to move towards ethereality, like a dream that fades away from the memory. That's why the visitor and their unpicturable experience is a very important and irreplaceable aspect of my installations. It's also funny that the only ones who care about time are us humans. Nature will continue its life this way or that. In my practice, I want to focus more on longevity.



The installation Svalka, in collaboration with Alise Sondöre, LMA centenary exhibition 'Academia', Latvian National Museum of Art Exhibition Hall Arsenāls, 2019. Screenshot from Rūdolfis Štamers' website



ER: *You used a comparison with a dreamworld; it plays a significant role in your work. Before the curator Zane Onckule invited you to hold an exhibition at Kim?, you applied for their open call with an idea that you had seen in a dream. Is there anything remaining from your first idea in this exhibition?*

RŠ: I think that dream came true quite a lot. For example, in my dream there were also three separate rooms, with a shaking floor in the first one. In my dream, I entered the room, and the ground under my feet started to move, and there was also some strange light around. In the second room, I saw an installation that encompassed all space. I don't remember exactly, but on the feelings level, it was the same controlled chaos that I worked on for the exhibition, putting together sketches and models for a year. In my dream I didn't enter the third room, but at Kim? it was transformed into a commercial room, with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* playing in the background as a representative of the traditions, the unwritten rules, that the commercial art world revolves around.



The first space in Rudolfs Štamer's solo exhibition 'Somewhere Something Fell Down', Kim? Contemporary Art Center, 25 July to 8 September 2024. Photograph by Ansis Starks

ER: *This is not the first time a dream has stimulated the birth of your work. The juxtaposition of the dream and wakefulness was at the centre of your final work for your MA degree. In one of your exhibition's tours at Kim? you joked that you felt as if you were kind of stealing from yourself, taking another idea for an artwork from your dream.*

RŠ: I believe that you can steal from yourself, especially if it comes from a dream, unconsciousness, something that you don't access directly in everyday life. In the dream whose idea I proposed for the Kim? exhibition, I entered an exhibition by someone I didn't know. That's why I made the suggestion that I had stolen these 'works' from someone. It could be translated as unconscious impressions, influences, visions, some deep, hidden thoughts that are hard to access. Then I understood that it's an exhibition that I strive for, as it comes from my subconscious.



The second space in Rudolf Štamer's solo exhibition 'Somewhere Something Fell Down', Kim? Contemporary Art Center, 25 July to 8 September 2024. Photograph by Ansis Starks



The sculpture 'As in Heaven so on Earth' from the 'Fallen Angels' series for the group exhibition 'Surrender', 2020, Pilot LMA gallery. Photograph by Ansis Starks

ER: *How did you decide on the representation of the art world's commercial side? It is hard to find the exit from the second to the third room, especially if people aren't used to physically touching contemporary art installations. Kim? mediators also mentioned that they often suggest visitors go back and find the third room. Can you explain why you chose it to be this way?*

RŠ: The main reason is that installation art is most important for me. I want to create what I want to create, and these are mostly not pieces that can be called 'sellable', but immersive, intangible compositions that are sooner or later meant to be torn down. The exit doors in my exhibition are secret, because commerce can be found only by whoever needs it. It's kind of my half-secret nature. Of course I would like to sell all my works, because material studies and the process of creating works give me much pleasure; but yes, I think my main goal is to make immersive site-specific installations.



The third space in Rudolfs Štamer's solo exhibition 'Somewhere Something Fell Down', Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, 25 July to 8 September 2024. Photograph by Ansis Starks



The third space in Rudolfs Štamer's solo exhibition 'Somewhere Something Fell Down', Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, 25 July to 8 September 2024. Photograph by Ansis Starks

ER: *Your installations are strongly centred around the visitor's sensory experiences. A somatic experience that engages all the senses, this time except a taste: everything looks black and white, a perfume machine that gives off Santal 33, Vivaldi's music and the recording of your thought processes, the need to grope in the dark to find the exit, and also the tickling of the vestibular apparatus. In visitors' reactions, one can spot both the delight caused by confusion about what is happening to them, and also a helplessness, followed by relief when they find the exit from your immersive installation. Something similar to Ilya Kabakov's total installations, but in my opinion you go even further, since in 'Somewhere Something Fell Down' you don't use ready-mades as symbols for a particular message and carriers of easily recognisable associations, but all this immersive installation is made of your artworks, deconstructed elements of hardly identifiable materials.*

RŠ: But they're still ready-mades after all! Works, sculptures that I have made by myself, left in storage and forgotten. Now they are rediscovered and presented in a different light. Maybe previously I used found objects and ready-mades more often, because I didn't yet have my own works to show, so I just exhibited already-existing things (*laughs*). And now these four years that I spent in the Paris studio made me consider and try new directions, to rethink the way I work, so the classic ready-made has taken a back seat. But for me everything I made previously is a kind of a ready-made, a ready object. And this time I used a perfume that is already known, that is also a ready-made. I was thinking about perfumes for about five years, but I haven't yet dreamt of how to incorporate them. This dream is not coming to me (*laughs*). Maybe it will take me years to find it, and then sit in the lab with perfumers, scientists, to make my own perfume for my installation. And then it will seem silly that I have used Santal 33 as a symbol of the elite art world.

I've always loved smells, tastes and sounds, everything that can't be captured in a photograph or a video. I just feel it is necessary and needed in my work. An extension, a direct experience, in contrast to scrolling pictures on Instagram and thinking that you know, see and sense everything. My wall-

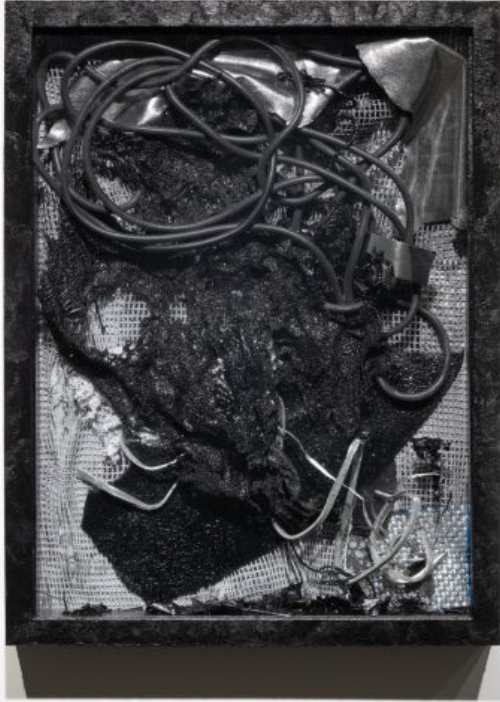
based objects also can't really be photographed, because there is that depth, blacks and whites, reflections from all the mirrors and other surfaces ...



The Kim? installation integrates works from the past: 3x5 m paintings from the exhibition 'Voices in my Heads' and melted plastic film works from the 2019 series 'Blackouts'. Photograph by Ansis Starks

*ER: I think that in this exhibition you have really successfully cracked your practice with those shakeable wall works: they are like crystallised mini-versions of your immersive installations that can be taken home and put on a wall. And the visitors are important, in the sense that they activate these undocumentable experiences that carry them. In this series of shakeable shadow boxes, the owner can rearrange, change the compositions the way she, he, they or whoever else, wants, to become a co-author.*

RŠ: It is similar to the way I made the works in the 'Blackouts' series. I created my signature that can be read in both ways, since the exhibitor chooses the position of the artwork. In this series of flakes, I designed a kind of gear instead of a small hook on the back of the work that allows the work to be placed in every position around 360 degrees by anyone who accesses the work, the curator or the owner. I love these uncontrollable actions, unmanageable coincidences. In the other series ... yes, it is strange that I haven't dreamt or thought of the title yet (*laughs*), so at the moment I call them shakeable works: shadow boxes filled with many small elements, different materials that are not fixed. It means that after being packed and transported, this work will be shaken, so these details, wires, for example, will form a slightly different composition.



The so-called shakeables, mixed media, 33 x 43 x 4.5 cm. Photograph by Ansis Starks



The so-called shakeables. Photograph by Ansis Starks

ER: *Both series were made for 'Somewhere Something Fell Down' at Kim?. The deconstruction of materials, by heating, melting, changing their physical condition until they are beyond recognition, has always been a part of creating your works. How did you come to these wall-based sculptures of flakes?*

RŠ: Accidentally, a year ago, when I was doing something with paint on plexiglass, and wasn't happy with the result. So I just smashed the piece with a hammer. I saw in these shards, painted flakes, that other beautiful combinations can be made. Then I got a lot of plexiglass. I both painted them and broke them. After this aggressive act, I got on the mediation for several months where I was looking for the right pairings, the perfect compositions, which may look simple, but it is actually quite a frustrating process.



Untitled, 2024, plexiglass, paint, mirror paint, comatex, glue, 100 x 120 x 8 cm. Photograph by Ansis Starks

ER: *Let's return to your immersive installations: what is your position on repeating such site-specific installations, the adjustment to a specific space in another art institution? Do you generally see your installations as re-exhibitionable entities?*

RŠ: I wouldn't like to repeat it, because I just get bored. This idea was in my head for a whole year. I have realised it. I have spent two weeks building it on site and being alone in that darkness. I ended up feeling like a visitor in this immersive piece, because I've already lived through it and now see it from the outside. It would definitely be a different installation, maybe a combination of installations again, maybe the aroma and shaking floor put together in a different room, different colours. I get bored easily, so I need to change techniques, deconstruct, and do things incorrectly, to find new ways, shape, and improve my creative work.





Material studies in the studio. Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers

The second room in the exhibition, the so-called immersive installation is my world, the same voices in my head, dialogues with myself, my struggles, my results. I think it's amusing that Latvian artists don't usually exhibit their works repeatedly. Since we're not so many, you feel you can't show the same thing twice. But actually, so much of it is forgotten or unseen.

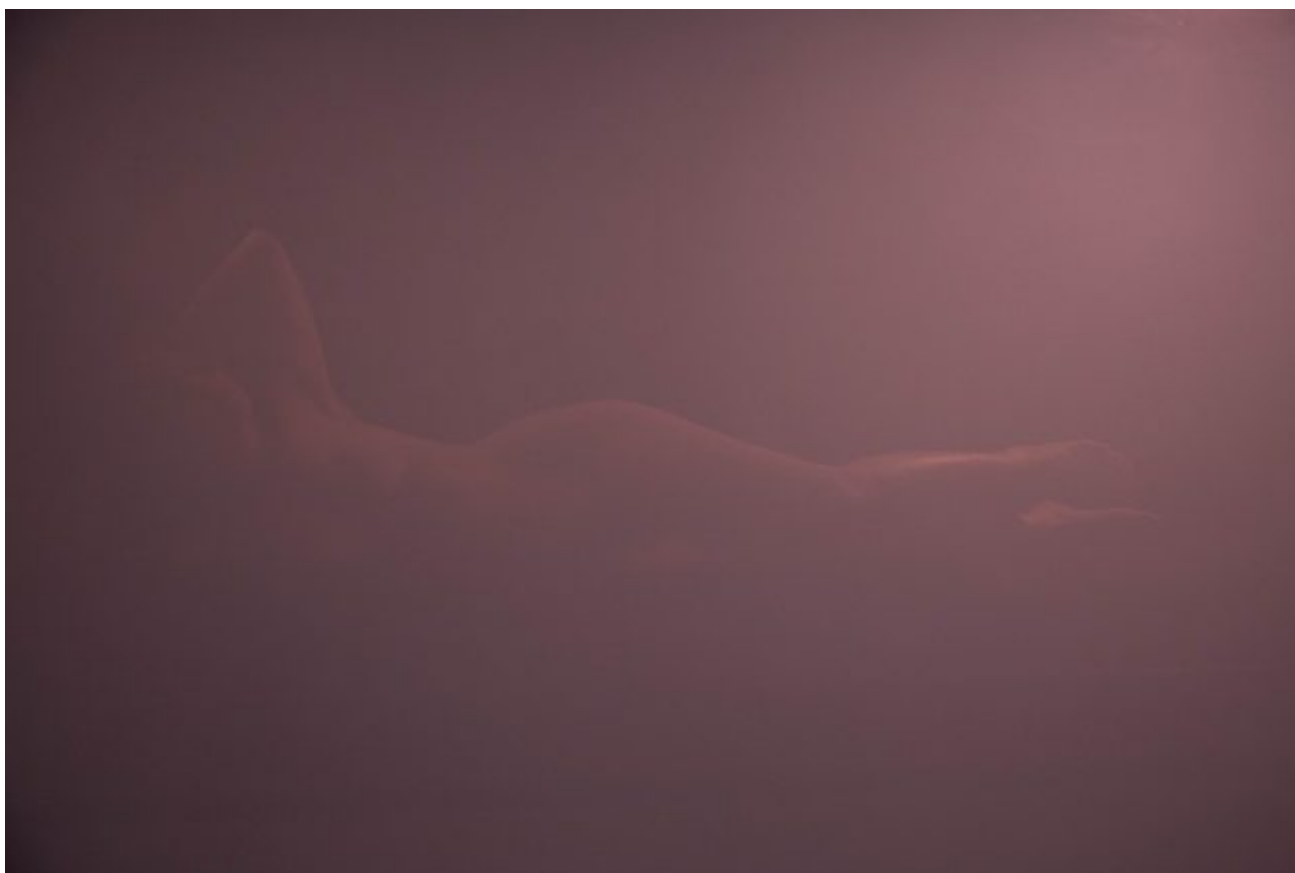
I combine these works from different times, and the whole installation is a formation of studio work of four years, multiple material studies in the search for the ideal version and combinations. Such a big cross-over of processes, controlled chaos, something grotesquely beautiful has come out of it, in my opinion. I also like sustainability, that's why I'd love to maintain some parts of this installation, and maybe integrate them into my future works. In this way it will be a ready-made, a found object that can be used again by making something else.



Part of the installation from the solo exhibition 'Voices in my Heads', with an integrated sculpture by the artist Uģis Albiņš. Photograph by Filips Šmits)



Part of the the installation Voices in my Heads, with an integrated work by the artist Sabine Vernere. Photograph by Filips Šmits



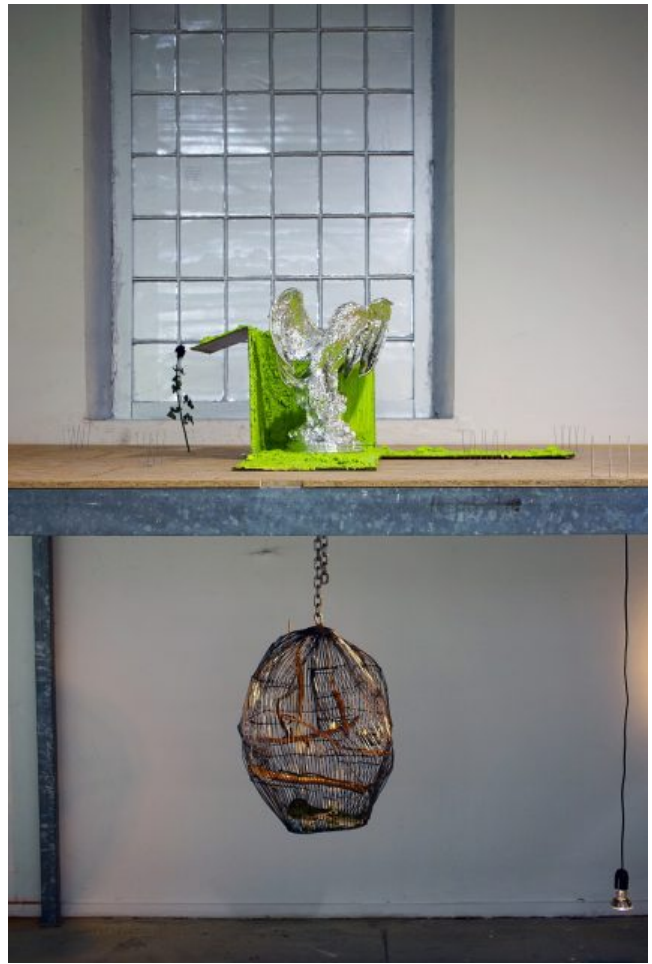
From the 2018 show 'Dream Baby Dream', a performance by Ludovica Cuzola. Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers

ER: *Yes, I have noticed how easily you get bored, maybe that's why you're so drawn to organising exhibitions for others and initiating art spaces. In your solo exhibitions you also integrate works by other artists in the style of early Franz West installations, or by performatively involving composers, or making live sculptures, like your Venus of Urbino after Titian, or Life in a Cage. The presence of other artists runs through your art, while sometimes extending in, as you call yourself, in the role of a cultural developer ...*

RŠ: Yes, but I'm not planning to use animals (like the parrot in the work *Life in a Cage*) again in the near future ... I felt quite sorry for that little creature. At the end of the exhibition the parrot found a good home with a lady who has more than thirty parrots. So I believe the little performer is living his best life now. But I plan to continue collaborations with others, with musicians and their own proposals, not just performers, with sound artists, poets, speakers ... I'd like to unite humans' abilities into one ensemble.



Parrot life from the sculpture *Life in a Cage*.  
Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers



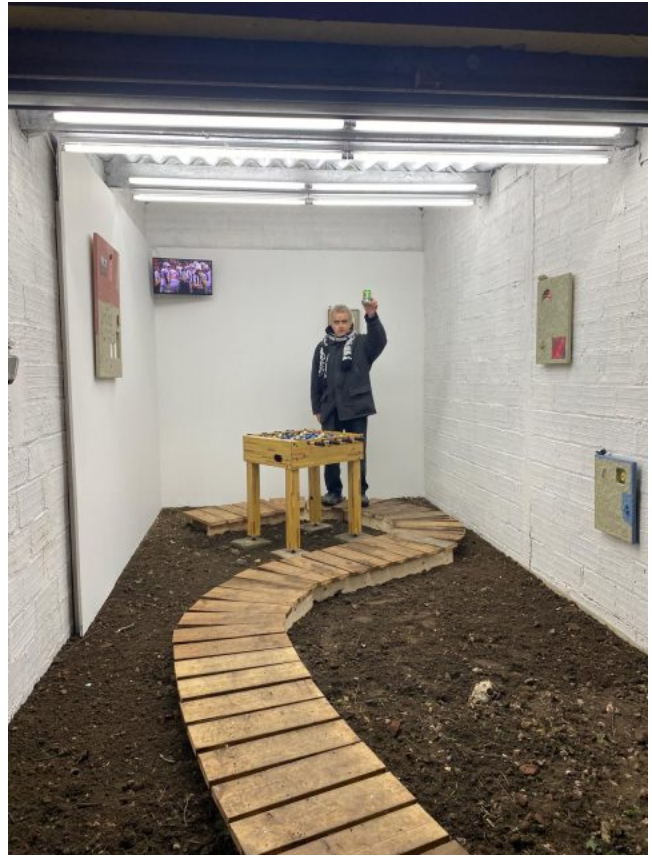
Part of the installation *I saved You Yesterday so You Can Save me Tomorrow* from the MA exhibition at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp.  
Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers

I've always felt the urge quite naturally to do exhibitions. About nine per cent of what I have done has been on my own. My first exhibition was when I was eighteen. I found the space, and organised everything by myself. The same goes for the next shows, happenings, one-day exhibitions. I made it all by myself, and then it grew into a group exhibition, because I just got tired of doing it alone. It's just impatient me: I get bored waiting for invitations to exhibit something, so I had to make my own events. The TUR art space was established because we lack art spaces in Riga, especially for young artists, where they can express themselves freely, without commercial or other restrictions, and feel appreciated. I started it and still keep an eye on it, but I live in Paris and previously lived in Antwerp, so for most of the time I'm not physically on site, so I call myself a cultural developer instead of a curator, because I'm the one who just helps a little, introduces, pushes the process ... And I want to focus on my own practice more. But still, there are offers from people who want to have exhibitions at my New Garden Galerie in Paris. And if I have a spare moment, why not help friends and acquaintances, help them feel appreciated? It is just the way I want to feel.

ER: *Yes, it sounds so effortless, feeling appreciated. Thank you, R?dolfs, for doing all this! (R?dolfs takes a sip of his beverage and smiles)*



The opening of the artist-run space New Garden Galerie. Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers



From Michael Price's solo show 'Breaking Ground' at the New Garden Galerie, December 2023. Photograph courtesy of Rūdolfs Štamers

# Forest Ears. Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė's Exhibition 'An Ear for Ecology' at the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center

September 18, 2024

Author Neringa Černiauskaitė



Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė. Abstraction, 1971.

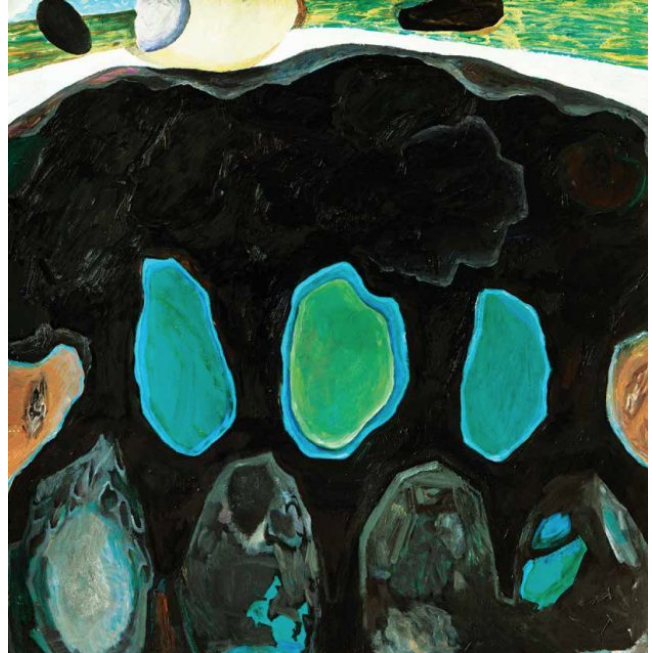
Selective hearing. This is how one might describe our relationship with the natural environment today. You consciously choose to travel by train instead of by car, but along the way, you can't resist buying a sandwich wrapped in plastic. Only a few possess perfect hearing in this regard, and I can assure you, you've probably read about them somewhere. However, hearing can also be sensitive, and that's enough for a peaceful retreat in nature to turn into, if not a profound sadness over the litter left by others, then at least an afternoon spent frantically picking it up.

Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė possessed an exceptionally sensitive, almost seismic, ability to perceive the deteriorating state of nature. This is suggested by the abstract, anxiety-laden landscapes she created as early as the 1960s. These works, which speak more openly about ecological themes and

are now accessible only in video documentation, were included by the curator Laima Kreivytė in the exhibition 'An Ear for Ecology' at the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center in Užupis. Immediately, we stumble upon the word 'ecology', much like tripping over a knotted larch root. This broad, multi-layered and charged term is often equated in the popular consciousness with environmental protection, whether through individual or systemic efforts to preserve nature. However, ecology more accurately encompasses the relationships between individuals and systems, allowing discussions about environmental damage to consider factors such as developing technologies, political regimes, and shifting human behaviours.



Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė. Miško ausys (*Forest Ears*), 2003



Marija Teresė Rožanskaitė. Žemės gėlmės (*Earth's Depths*), 1976.

In Rožanskaitė's work, particularly in her later years, ecology was treated as an immediate, tangible problem of environmental destruction. Unlike the artist group Žalias Lapas (Green Leaf), active in the late 1980s, which clearly articulated the systemic nature of ecological issues and identified the 'agents' and powers at play, Rožanskaitė focused on the consequences of inappropriate actions and circumstances, without attempting to untangle the complex web of causes and actors behind them. However, the goals of both Žalias Lapas and Rožanskaitė's actions in the late 1990s and early 2000s were similar: to use a unique artistic language to draw society's attention to emerging ecological wounds, to cultivate environmental sensitivity, or, in the best case, to mobilise the public. In Rožanskaitė's case, the term 'mobilise' included not only her close friends and family, but also her students, who helped create the artwork *Forest Ears* (2003). This piece featured anatomically accurate, surrealistically large ears, sculpted to resemble the listening organs of trees, keenly attuned to the piercing screech of chainsaws in the forest. By endowing non-human beings with human attributes, she blurred traditional distinctions between passivity and activity, emphasising nature's role as an active participant rather than a passive backdrop. Today, in the context of the Anthropocene discourse, this understanding of nature as a dynamic and actively life-shaping agent has become the new dogma. It is difficult to measure the impact of these (then contemporary)

artistic actions on society, but there is a certain satisfaction in imagining a citizen, X, who, one evening in 2002, transported a load of construction debris in his Opel Astra to the edge of a forest, only to find mourning ribbons inscribed with the words 'Nature-lovers mourn' tied to piles of existing waste. Perhaps this gesture by the artist (with considerable help from her family) made citizen X reconsider and, for once, take the waste to a designated disposal site.

Artists who engage with ecological themes (or are 'taken over' by them) often face criticism for not contributing directly to the resolution of these issues through their artistic gestures or visual language. This leads to a second conflation, between art and activism, where the expectation is on artists to take on the role of activists. Abstract poetic expression is expected to be replaced, or at least accompanied, by concrete actions and/or change. In this way, transformation is shifted from the minds of the audience into physical reality, or, at least, that is what critics believe should happen. However, does this not underestimate the viewer and the plasticity of their consciousness? Perhaps a precise artistic gesture can penetrate more deeply and have a longer-lasting impact. But there is no way to measure this. It seems that today, art is most useful to eco-activism as symbolic capital, which 'Just Stop Oil' activists attempt to wrest from society's grasp by pouring soup and paint on the glass protecting historic canvases. Thus, through the act of negating art, attention is drawn to the planet's critical ecological state.

But let's return to Rožanskaitė. She created her ecological actions around the 2000s, a time when these themes were not overly 'in fashion' (although no less relevant) in contemporary art, and before they became unavoidable due to the increasingly apparent climate catastrophe. Once again, she seemed to deliberately resist the prevailing currents of time, a concept she explored repeatedly in the action series 'My Stream' (1998, 2000, 2001). By disrupting the flow of time, the artist equated the body of nature, or the planet, with the human form. And quite literally: she placed actual hospital beds in a flowing river, depicting the diseases afflicting bodies of water (*First Aid*, 2001). For Rožanskaitė, nature is first and foremost an embodied existence, not an abstract category. Ecology becomes a health issue.

As is well known, in the 1970s and 1980s, when Rožanskaitė painted canvases on medical themes, she expressed sharply her distrust of 'modern', 'rational' and technological approaches to treating bodies. Equally important to the artist was the intangible aspect of the body. This intangible, yet no less powerful, almost pantheistic, element is palpable in her early abstract landscapes and compositions, where works like *Earth's Depths* (1976) and *Asian Rivers* (1971) serve more as carriers of unnamed forces than mere natural formations. By translating natural phenomena and their forces into the language of abstract painting, the artist engages in a process similar to that of many works exhibited at this year's Venice Biennale: observing and learning from non-human creations. It is a process of learning humility, and honing one's sensitivity within this delicate ecosystem of bodies, actions, particles and systems, which today is feverish like never before.





exhibition 'An Ear for Ecology' at Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, 2024. Photo: Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center

# It is worth creating art even in these difficult times. An interview with the sculptor and interdisciplinary artist Rūta Putramentaitė

September 19, 2024

Author Agnė Sadauskaitė



Rūta Putramentaitė. here all is distance there it was breath. garbage, paper mache, kombucha leather, soil, sugar, bioplastic, flax seeds, wood, bones. 2023.

We disembark on the island. After an ecological catastrophe, it is not clear whether there is any life left on it. The calm voice of the biologist guides us through different parts of the island. This scientific expedition, which looks for apocalyptic signs, also considers life after an ecological disaster, and asks the listener, so what remains? How to be and act in such an event? What do we do after a disaster? These questions are asked in the audio piece 'You disassemble and reassemble me again', and it is one of the worlds created by the interdisciplinary artist Rūta Putramentaitė (b. 1989), which allows us to experience a possible scenario in the future. Using sculptural objects, writing, audio and performance, the artist invites observers to think and rethink the current times, mankind's place in the world, ecological themes, and the issue of climate change, which is challenging the status quo. Her sculptural objects, created by combining rubbish and organic materials, depict a distant future where unseen species of flora thrive in the remnants of our civilisation. What does it mean to be human in the 21st century? How to create in the Anthropocene? How do ecological disasters and constant change affect us? The artist questions the anthropocentric understanding of the world, and looks for alternative ways to understand and experience it.

Rūta Putramentaitė is from Vilnius in Lithuania. She studied at Middlesex University in the United Kingdom, where she obtained a BA in photography. Later, she studied for a BA and an MA in

sculpture at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. She participates in residencies and biennials, and contributes to the implementation and planning of artistic events, symposiums and happenings. Rūta is a co-curator of the Divoká Šárka art festival, and the annual forest symposium More-Than-Human Curiousness, created together with Les-Woods. She lives and works in Prague in the Czech Republic.



Rūta Putramentaitė. holding the earth. a performance made together with Mira Gaberova for 4+4 Days in Motion. 2018

***Agn? Sadauskait?: This year you will be a participant in Manifesta 15, the European Nomadic Biennial, taking place in Barcelona. Which of your works are presented to visitors?***

Rūta Putramentaitė: The biennale presents works that were created a long time ago, and some that were created exclusively for this event. I was contacted by one of Manifesta's curators, who had already selected one of my works entitled ***Home No 1***. I lent it for the entire period of the biennale. The biennale's main team is based in Amsterdam, but the event is organised in a different European city each time, with a local curatorial and production team. In this way, when travelling to Manifesta, visitors can not only get acquainted with the artworks, but also find interesting places they would not normally discover. My sculpture is in Casa Gomis, a Modernist villa in a national park, which has a distinctly unique style. There will be other works in the villa. I am very happy that the biennale chose to show my work. For me, this is more proof that the topics I research are relevant; it gives me meaning to continue creating.

***AS: When talking about recognition, at the beginning of 2024 you were awarded the Emerging Sculptor Award by the Sculptor Network. Congratulations! What do awards and ratings mean to you?***

RP: This is quite a difficult question. Firstly, I do not like to enter all awards. It is important to me who finances the competition and who are the organisers. I would certainly not accept recognition from those who are engaged in wasting natural resources, while by supporting artists they cover up their 'dirty' activities or want to improve their image in the eyes of the public. Sometimes, of course, it is very difficult to choose, because many artists are in a rather vulnerable position, and companies have a lot of capital and can manipulate it. I have a source of income independent from my art, so I have the freedom to choose, and I don't participate in many competitions. The Sculpture Network competition is funded by a gardening firm, and I was not against participating in it. The members of Sculpture Network are artists, curators and theorists of the older generation, and I was very pleased that my work reached them and was relevant to them.



Rūta Putramentaitė, the hole #3, 2024. Photo: Jaroslav Trojan



Rūta Putramentaitė, the hole #3, 2024. Photo: Jaroslav Trojan

**AS:** *Did you notice more interest in your work after winning this award?*

RP: Yes. There are many artists in the Czech Republic who are content creating contemporary art within the country, because there are many institutions to collaborate with. I would like to work both in Lithuania and in other European countries, because collaborating with other people brings more perspectives. Specifically, after this award, I was invited to the Manifesta Biennale.

**AS:** *I assume that after participating in the Manifesta 15, a snowball effect may occur, and we might soon see some of your works in other countries as well. However, it is interesting to hear your story: born and raised in Vilnius, you studied in the United Kingdom, and later you moved to the Czech Republic and continued your studies in Prague.*

RP: I was looking for where I can create art. In Vilnius, I attended an art class at the M.K. Čiurlionis School of the Arts. I studied artistic visual practices for eight years. I knew I wanted to be an artist, but I didn't know which path to choose. I tried photography, and got into photography and media studies at Vilnius Academy of Art. However, I dropped out and enrolled in photography at Middlesex University. After a while, I realised that I no longer found creativity and inspiration in this medium. I did not feel liberated. I became interested in creating sculptural objects. At the same time, I ended up in Prague completely by accident and spent a couple of weeks there. I really liked it. The city is much smaller and more beautiful than London, but at the same time I found a large and active contemporary art community. I liked the atmosphere, the culture, and soon decided to move there. In Prague, not only is the artistic scene active, but at the same time, everyone is more involved in maintaining personal relationships than, say, in London, where they do not find the time or interest, and keep a greater distance. Here I feel I have found like-minded artists, friends, and it has turned out that I have more opportunities for creativity than in London. I did not want to go to Vilnius at that

time for several reasons. Eventually, I realised that I am more comfortable living elsewhere as a Lithuanian than in Lithuania as a person who left and went back to live there again.



Rūta Putramentaitė. here all is distance there it was breath. pieces of garbage, paper mache, soil, sugar, bioplastic, wood, bones. photo Jan Kolský. 2023.

**AS:** *It seems you have found a new home in Prague.*

RP: I am not Czech, and never will be. I am more a person of the world, and my identity is not tied to one place. This gives me more freedom.

**AS:** *This September, after completing a BA degree, you will continue MA studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design (UMPRUM) in Prague. Tell us more about that.*

RP: It's good to go back to university at an older age. I didn't expect it to be so enjoyable to learn. Studies are open to needs, desires, topics and various media. Art subjects are taught by artists, theoreticians and curators who are active in the art field in the Czech Republic, so it's a close connection with professionals, who notice you and invite you to collaborate, and who know about current affairs and problems. In my previous studies abroad, there was a lack of that. The study programme I chose is also focused on ecological problems, the relationship with nature, topics which are very close to me. I am also thinking about doctoral studies in the future.

**AS:** *The topic of the climate crisis is inseparable from change, constant transformation. After getting acquainted with your work, it becomes obvious that the topic of change is very close to you. In your work, you explore the opposition between nature and civilisation (as well as collisions), the effects of human activity on the planet. Mariana Serranova, a curator with the Jelení Gallery, described your work as fragmentary metaphors for the environment, reflecting the indestructibility of human activity. In your work you seek answers to the question what does it mean to live in an anthropocentric era and to be a person in the 21st century? What research methods do you use for this? What answers or clues have you already found to this question?*

RP: There are many ways to answer. I am interested in mine and overall human identity in this period. I don't agree with the dominant cultural narrative that presents humans as opposites: the human is not nature, the human is not woman, black, queer, and so on. These topics are relevant to me, but ecological issues and climate change affect me most. I feel sorry for how nature is being exploited; at the same time, I see apocalyptic scenarios that will befall us as a civilisation. I read about it whenever possible. I am especially keen on eco-fiction and eco-horror genres of literature dealing with this topic. I look at and explore our culture's closed view of reality as a binary opposition that sees the human as an independent subject, ruler, conqueror, standing in opposition to nature, animals, birds, forests, and other living worlds, which are presented as objects, inert, passive and only to satisfy human desires. I don't agree with that. The description that formed about the person in Enlightenment, Humanism and Modernism philosophy is too narrow, and limits me as a person. It narrows the relationship with the world and with nature. A consequence of this is fundamental problems of climate change that will affect humanity, and which, of course, are already changing the world.

It concerns me because I don't want to live through an apocalypse; but at the same time I try to accept it and resist the widespread view of nature. In nature I look for an active subject, a creator, a speaker. The Anthropocene, by the way, is the name of a new geological era, which refers to humanity as such a strong force that it changes the structure and the surface of the Earth to such a point that it will be recognised as a separate geological layer in the history of the Earth.

Creativity also works as a therapeutic area. After all, I see how complicated everything is. I notice the meaninglessness or smallness of individual actions, as well as the fact that systemic changes take time, they happen slowly, or sometimes they don't happen at all. Due to these thoughts and hopelessness, I also became depressed; but in the end I turned it into action, creation. I give space to my feelings, let myself live and express emotions; art helps me. I use art as a way to learn about the world through the various topics I explore, while also changing my relationship with the world. In essence, art has become a method of survival, a creative force that has also moved into my personal life, encouraging activities that do not kill, but create life. It comes with the knowledge that what I can change is limited, but I do it anyway.



Choir of cooperative of life. Rūta Putramentaitė together with Denisa Langrova and Jonas Richter. as part of We are Woods symposium. Photo: Dita Lamačova, 2019

**AS:** *It seems inevitable that being a sculptor and an interdisciplinary artist in the 21st century, working on these topics, means facing (inner) debates about the meaning of creation, life, and the importance of change, as well as the complex emotions that come together with these questions.*

RP: Yes. If I can't create, I feel the need to do it. I had to ask myself, does making art make sense these days when there are so many problems? After deep experiences and depression came the answer that it does make sense. I just love to create, and through my passion I can combine my concern for certain things in the world. It makes sense to create art in this day and age. I would like to make more of an impact on a political level, because in the ecological discourse cultural influence is more on a diplomatic level and often does not bring actual changes. In the long-run, culture as a process can introduce and initiate changes (and it seems to me that this is happening, there are many cultural institutions that run programmes related to ecological issues), but it is a very slow process. At the same time, art can speak much more freely and widely than politics, that is its power and strength. At the same time, I try not only to create sculptures, but to explore themes that are important to me and to find other means to express them. I use audio and writing, and organise several artistic events exploring these themes. I am looking for like-minded people with whom I can talk about topics that are important to us and support each other so that it makes sense. It is interesting to grow with them.

**AS:** *When did you realise that you wanted to create on the topic of climate change? When did this theme become the main focus of your work?*

RP: I became interested in this topic after attending a contemporary art festival in Prague in 2016. It explored climate warming and other ecological issues. I became very interested in the subject, and



quickly sensed the problematic through the artworks. It all touched me personally. I also attended a lecture by the art theorist and curator T.J. Demos. After that, I started reading his books and watching lectures. He talks about art from a political perspective, and uses art to develop ecological issues.

T.J. Demos' book *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* completely stunned me. It seemed like new channels had opened. I began to observe nature much more, and especially from the position of a city dweller. It's an aspect of reality that I haven't had much connection with before. I created a relationship with the natural world through logical thinking, and then through art and the senses. I completely jumped into this topic, strong emotions were boiling, and works began to be created from it, because creativity has been the tool I have been using all my life. I started creating sculptures, and later pieces of writing, and organising performances.

*AS: Are there other topics that have the same importance to you as the climate?*

RP: For me, this is the most important topic, and it seems it is endless. I am dependent on the planet, and the planet is dependent on me to a certain extent. Many other topics arise from this. I explore the subjectivity of nature, the political aspects, and the consequences of this not only for me. I look for a personal relationship with that *non-human being*. I am very interested in getting out of human centrality. I try to look for another point of view, a different understanding of people. I am interested in positions other than those of a person: a sparrow or a sunflower, trying to understand their wishes, positions and aspirations. Through it I learn, I feel that my consciousness is expanding.



Rūta Putramentaitė. here all is distance there it was breath. discarded objects, soil, sugar syrup, paper mache, kombucha leather, wood branches, chicken bones. Photo: Peter Kolářčik. 2023.



Rūta Putramentaitė. here all is distance there it was breath. garbage, paper mache, kombucha leather, soil, sugar, bioplastic, flax seeds, wood, bones. 2023.

*AS: Perhaps one of your dreams would be to talk to the world of flora and fauna.*

RP: I am looking for that common language. The process is possible to a certain degree.

*AS: This topic has been extremely relevant to you for eight years. Has it added to your personal life, and maybe even gone in a completely different direction to what you thought?*

It really did. I don't know how it came so naturally. Before, when working with photography, I explored aesthetic themes and forms, but I wasn't emotionally involved in the media. Sculptures and objects were the beginning of thinking about ecology, and at the same time helped me to survive and navigate political and social problems. Now I view and experience my work completely differently. I don't use photography as a form of art. I haven't found a way to express myself through it.

*AS: Sculpture is one of the main media you use. What ideas do you base your sculptures on?*

RP: When making sculptures, I use a formal juxtaposition of two different types of aesthetic elements. One part consists of industrially extracted mass-produced items that I use and recycle. I'm interested in creating objects using rubbish. Even if the materials originally come from the natural landscape, after being processed and thrown out as waste, these objects do not easily decompose into the same landscape. For some, such as plastics, it will take up to a thousand years. When I think about that length of time, I imagine a world that neither we nor many generations after us will see, but these objects will witness it. Another type of element is often made by me and is easily degradable material such as paper, soil, kombucha skin, bioplastics and bones. I grow these materials on garbage in such a way that they begin to make a resemblance to unseen types of flora. This flora uses garbage as an architecture to build its living quarters. It thrives in these once man-made structures.

Together, these two types of elements form an inseparable, intertwined living organism that helps us see the future world I imagine. These are the ruins of human civilisation in the distant future, on which flora of an unseen form grows. The aspects that are important for me in this work are: different time scales, the human lifetime compared to geological time; the natural/cultural landscape, both kinds intertwined; the de-centring of the human perspective and bringing non-human perspectives into the imagination.



Rūta Putramentaitė. home no.1. pieces of garbage, human hair, paper mache, chicken bones, a tree branch. 2023.

**AS:** *Before preparing for the interview, I wanted to introduce you as a sculptor, but in the long-run as an interdisciplinary artist. You also work in writing, performance and audio. I recently listened to the audio 'You disassemble and reassemble me again' created by you and Jonáš Richter. It features a fictional story about a biologist exploring an island after an ecological disaster. When did you incorporate all these areas into your creative work?*

RP: I read a lot, and I want to remix what I read and learn. I also write about the topics that I explore in my sculptural installations, audio and performances, but in a different form. Textual creations are more like narratives. Sculptures are too, in a sense; they are just more like a certain specific situation that has already appeared after the narrative. Let's say in this audio that you mentioned, the listeners travel along with the story, and observe it, it's a different way of thinking when talking about the same topics.

**AS:** *You collaborate with other artists, both in exhibition spaces and when creating audio or texts together. You mentioned that you have found many like-minded people in Prague. What do these collaborations give you?*

RP: Collaborations are important to me, because it is usually quite difficult to build relationships with people. I am quite a reserved person, but with the help of art it is much easier to do this. It's fulfilling for me. I'm with people who are close to me, and it's a very nice feeling. Also, we learn to create on those topics together and to think about them together. Not only creativity, but also problem-solving, changing the way we think, and methods; we are all interested in how to change our thinking as people; first, of course, our own, and then society.



Rūta Putramentaitė. here all is distance there it was breath. discarded objects, soil, sugar syrup, paper mache, kombucha leather, wood branches, chicken bones. Photo: Peter Kolářčík. 2023.

**AS:** *You mentioned that summer in the Czech Republic is quiet and slow, but I know that there was a symposium recently. What projects are you working on at the moment?*

RP: For the fifth year in July, we are co-hosting a three-day interdisciplinary symposium at Les-Woods exploring the relationship between humanity and nature. Scientists, theorists, artists and researchers are invited to join. There are interventions, performances, lectures, readings, and in the evenings a community meeting around a bonfire and other activities. We are holding the symposium in a forest, national park territory, belonging to one of the curators. It's always an interesting experience for me, because I'm dealing with various dilemmas when curating this event, choosing themes, forms, and everything else. This is a project close to my heart, a pleasant experience, when we spend our days in the forest and attend various workshops.

There is another event called Divoká Šárka, which takes place in a nature reserve near Prague. We've also been holding multi-day gatherings there for five years now, where we talk about this area, and talk about it as a person. Each year we focus on a different aspect of that 'person'. This year we are running three days of events that focus on the transformation of our bodies through the food we eat. In this sanctuary there used to be allotment gardens, so many plum, apple and other fruit trees still survive from those times. Each day of our event will be about interweaving aspects of the material world and human culture, what we can get that is edible from the reserve, and that will be our material relationship with the reserve. Our goal is to find another affective, emotional means to

create a relationship between us and Šárka. There will also be local fermentation workshops and medicinal plant searches, and we will listen to a lecture about picking goodies in the city, after which we will ferment and cook. After around a month, we will gather to taste and eat them, and there will be a performance and a lecture accompanying the event.

*AS: It sounds like an art retreat, not just a symposium. You also mentioned that you will present your sculptures in Brno in the autumn: this will be the best opportunity to see your work in the Czech Republic.*

RP: In the autumn, Brno will host a large exhibition, the main topic of preparation for a long-term critical situation, social and climate change, but in the most diverse aspects. It can be instructions, works that thematicise the emergency state in which we already are. I will create sculptures combining them with audio text. Some of the sculptures have cocoons that will integrate human voice recordings, speaking metaphorically about the heating of the air, the rise in heat, the burning of culture, and the decline in the economy because of over-productivity. I will present this as a scenario of the past: in my installation we will see the remaining ruins covered with new life. I will talk about what happened, how people tried to adapt, topics I usually talk about in my work.



Rūta Putramentaitė. homes for dwarfs. with Marie Hola and Dominik Bek for Divoká Šárka event. materials found in Nature Reserve Divoká Šárka, paper mache, thread, fabric, potato starch. 2020



Rūta Putramentaitė. homes for dwarfs. with Marie Hola and Dominik Bek for Divoká Šarka event. materials found in Nature Reserve Divoká Šarka, paper mache, thread, fabric, potato starch. 2020

# About disorienting poetry. Conversation with Kotryna Ūla Kiliulytė

September 26, 2024

Author Julija Šilytė



Kotryna Ūla Kiliulytė . Photo from personal archive

Together with Milda Valiulytė, I have worked with Kotryna Ūla Kiliulytė several times. In 2023, we organized *Collective Dreaming* at the Centre for Contemporary Arts Glasgow: a moving image programme that touched upon the threads of storytelling and environment, unfolded in Kotryna's work *Amateur Botanist* (2019). This year, at Meno Avilys in Vilnius, her two moving image works *Dyad* (2021) and *Gentle Touch* (2022), from the series *Arctic Swell* (2020-2022), opened and closed the Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Scottish moving image screening *to lay the wee one to sleep* (part of *Collective Dreaming*) that continued the topic of ecological relations.

Kotryna Ūla Kiliulytė is a Glasgow-based Lithuanian artist, who works in the expanded field of photography. Combining image, text and sculptural objects, she has been investigating ecological relations from various angles.

In our conversation, we talked about gentleness, motherhood, responsibility, lullabies, care, the psychology of climate and nature degradation, her childhood in the Šnipiškės neighbourhood of Vilnius, and the human and forest as ecological collections or *holobionts*. The interview was prepared together with Milda Valiulytė.

JŠ: Let us start with a disclaimer that we know each other creatively. When thinking about the *Collective Dreaming* programme with Milda, we wanted to stress gentleness through the what and the how of our process. In the context of Lithuania, gentleness seemed quite radical. What is the

position of gentleness and its link with politics in your creative work?

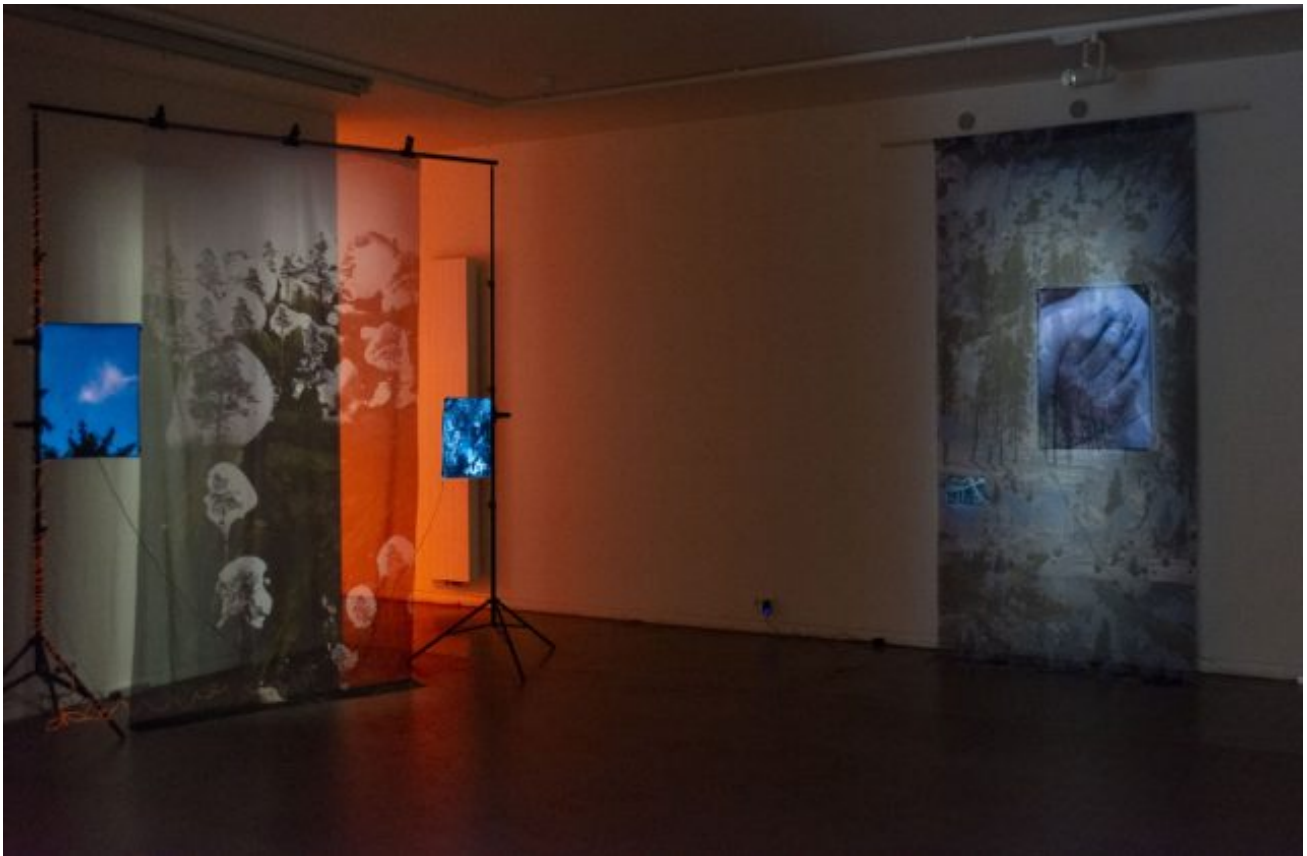
KUK: You are onto something. I started to think about gentleness when I was making all four chapters of *Arctic Swell*, a body of work consisting of moving and still images and a publication. At the time, I read about climate change and its psychology. On the other side of the coin, there was my pregnancy and parenting in isolation during the pandemic, which intensified this surreal feeling even more.

I often spent nights, days and long months in solitude holding the tiny, entirely dependent-on-the-other newborn, that strange new creature (*smiling*). Then I realised everything I had learned before—the rush, the pursuit of career and creative goals—is worthless when you witness birth, death, loss or caring responsibilities. I never specifically aimed to participate in the Western competition of speed and accomplishment; nevertheless, willingly or unwillingly I took part in that race, worried if I had accomplished enough. Suddenly I chose to be in a situation where these laws were inapplicable. It is impossible to outshout a baby. I learnt that only a calm voice and patience will get you somewhere.

I started to think about this as a metaphor or allegory about my relationship with the environment. I think of the environment not only as nature but also as the connection and compassion between people. Caring for the other is so undervalued under capitalism. When everything shut down, the pandemic showed us what was most important. Suddenly, nurses, medical professionals and cashiers became overnight heroes and now, again, they live on the poverty line and are completely underappreciated.

My experience of being a mother inscribed itself onto this. It is enormous unpaid labour, on the boundary of gender-based division of duties, which usually ends up being done by women. Sometimes these duties are shared between women and men, sometimes not. It is much harder not to shout or slam the door and leave, all these actions that are weirdly understood as culturally masculine. It is so often described: *masculine, strong, not babbling, not showing feelings, raised their voice, slammed the door and left*. Try giving a person with such traits a delicate, barely surviving creature so that it would live and grow into an unharmed person. That was the beginning of my thinking.





Arctic Swell, Prospekto gallery, Vilnius. Photo: Kotryna U la Kiliulyte

JŠ: One of the central themes in *Arctic Swell* is the lullaby. Through it, the connection between the singer and the one to whom the singing is dedicated (usually, a child and a mother or another person who is caring for the growing person) is being built. Lullaby melodies are usually simple but also sombre. Could you talk more about your process of thinking about them?

KUK: While making this work, I read about lullabies and there was this anthropological theory. Sometimes lullabies were used as therapy for the singer (mother but not necessarily). There are lullabies like that but not Lithuanian and possibly not even Scottish ones. I can recall examples of people from African countries singing about fear and other matters that cause anxiety and danger.

In one of the *Arctic Swell* works, there is a lullaby in Gaelic. The lullaby is called *Highland Fairy Lullaby* and it is about a mother who went to collect blueberries. When she came back, she could not find her baby. She looked around, saying that she saw an otter but not her baby. She heard a crane but not her baby. The lullaby comes from Victorian times, it is not so old. It stuck with our family and I learnt it from my partner's family; his mother used to sing it to him.

Someone who is singing a lullaby is usually going through a massive life metamorphosis towards responsibility, especially when becoming a mother for the first time. The brains of many people who become the primary carers of a small baby (not necessarily biologically) experience visible changes. MRIs show their activated centres of empathy and anxiety which stay that way for the rest of their lives. This happens to dads who did not give birth, carers, foster parents and grandparents—everyone who is caring and feels immense responsibility. I found this fascinating. The lullaby helps to channel the inescapable anxiety of this situation.

JŠ: Then, what could singing a lullaby to the environment mean, or say about our relationship with it? I wonder why you like to use the term *solastalgia* but not *eco-anxiety*, both terms reference

emotional responses to environmental changes. Solastalgia contains the reaction to past and present changes, while eco-anxiety has more to do with future events. I am curious to hear your thoughts on this quartet consisting of the lullaby, environment, time and lived experience.

KUK: When I worked with the second chapter of *Arctic Swell—a simple melody atoms buzz like linden trees in July*—the soundtrack consisted of two lullabies and I was thinking about calming and lulling both the planet and oneself. Anxiety, fear and worry are typically unproductive feelings. Acting while being anxious can be difficult or sometimes impossible. Through finding inner calmness, that I associate with inner strength, we can take the first steps to change a situation. Therefore, I find calming down to be the first step towards ecological thought and action.

It is clearly known what must change so that humanity would slow down or at least reduce the effects of human-induced climate change. This includes giving up fossil fuels and redirecting ourselves towards a different economic model that would not be based on endless growth of industry and consumption and would enable the use of renewable resources, and reduce consumption and production. This is clearly known and there still has not been any headway made in loosening the grip of capitalism. Here, time becomes key because we are the people living during these changes, the crisis is happening now. It will not happen sometime soon, in a year or decade, we are already in it. In Europe, we feel the effects on a smaller and gentler scale. However, in other places in the world, the so-called Global South, communities are already getting poorer, starving or have no drinking water. This is why the climate change question is very political. At its core, there are racial, gendered and economic inequalities.

This is how these elements—the lullaby, environment, time and lived experience—become tools or structures in *Arctic Swell*, which I am using to construct a narrative of radical gentleness. Through them, I search for answers to the questions of what the role of the individual in this swampy situation is and how to act collectively.



Diad, Arctic Swell, exhibition A Simple Melody, Street Level Photoworks. Photo: Eoin Carey

JŠ: Let us talk about the difference between the relationship with the environment in Scotland and Lithuania. What are your insights?

KUK: In Vilnius, I grew up under very rural-like conditions. During my first sixteen years, I lived in a small wooden house in Šnipiškės, which is not there anymore. I was the third generation that was born there. There was a garden and a firewood shed nearby, as the house was heated by firewood. When I was little, we only had an outdoor toilet. Later, we put one inside. We only installed a shower in the house when I was 10 or 11 years old. The White Bridge had not been built yet. Nevertheless, we lived 15 minutes by foot from the city centre.

My family used to grow a lot in the garden. During the late soviet times and early independence years, people used to maintain gardens not exactly for pleasure, as the middle class in Scotland does with their allotments. One grows two tomatoes because it is a hobby. In Lithuania, it was more about survival so the potatoes grown would be cheaper.

When my family comes to Glasgow, they ask me where the boundary is between the end of the city and the beginning of nature. What we call *nature* in Lithuania is usually a forest. One walks for long hours and there are no cars or people in sight. Travelling from Glasgow to Edinburgh by train, there is no such thing. The suburbs carry on and turn into towns and cities. To reach a more *natural* (words are difficult here) nature that would not feel like a country park planted by the nobility, you have to drive quite far, and this is what I lack here. For one-day trips, it is possible to drive around Glasgow in many directions. However, such places usually come with huge car parks and are aimed at people strolling with their dogs. I quite like taking walks in the grim fields and forests around Vilnius.

It is challenging to reach any kind of conclusion. In Lithuania, many people still have where to go and whom to visit in the countryside. There is typically only one or two generations between the people who worked the land and the young people residing in cities. In my circle in Scotland, almost everyone has grown up either in cities or suburbs, therefore their relationship with nature is slightly different. Those who wish to get away from cities choose to climb hills or camp.

JŠ: You now work at the One Health Institute of the University of Glasgow. The idea of *one health* recognises that to maintain optimal health, we have to look at the interrelations between people, animals, plants and the environment. Does this academic setting influence your creative practice? I am also thinking about structures and infrastructures that, talking very broadly, shape relationships with the environment globally. What does it mean to work at a university whose alumni include James Watt, the inventor of the steam engine?

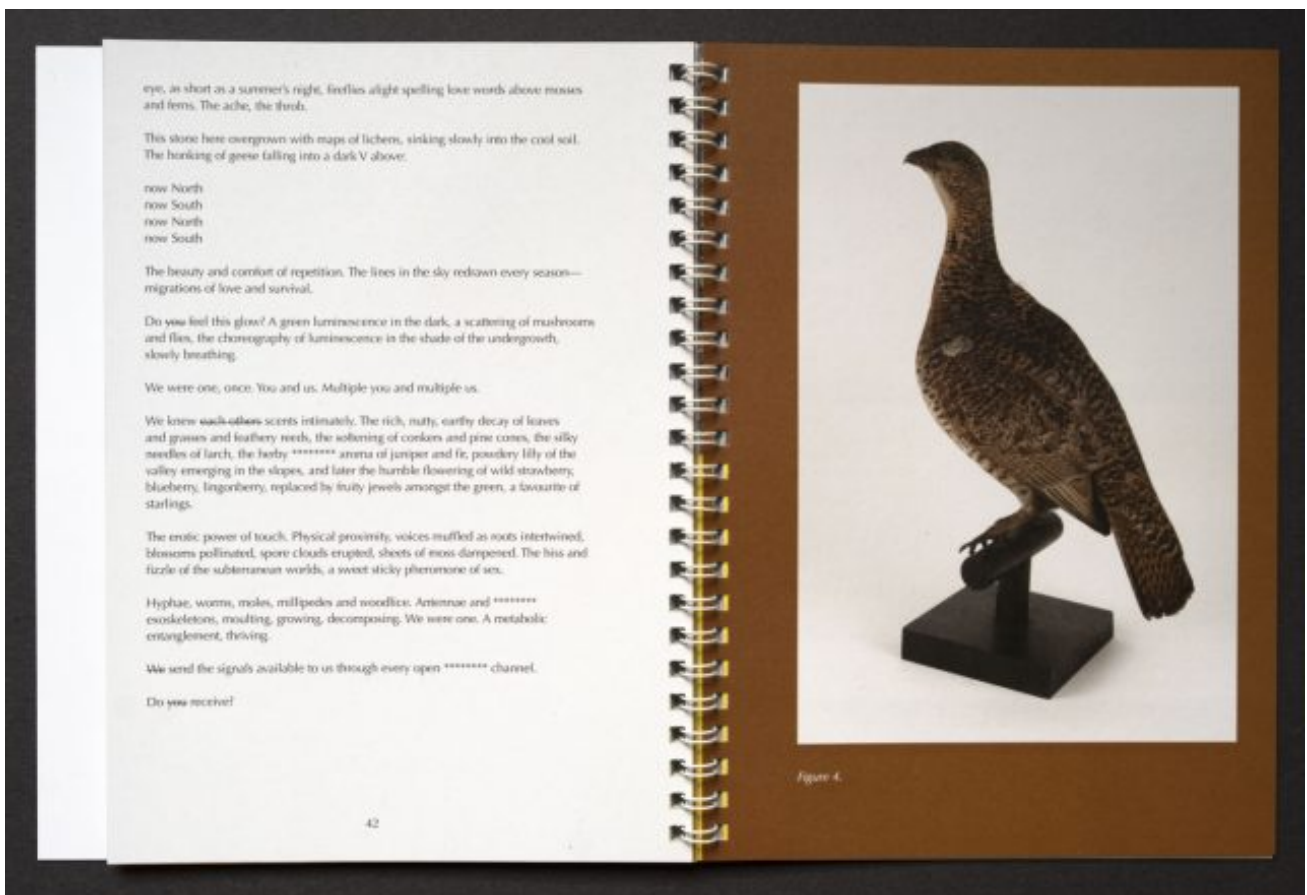
KUK: Just like many other artists, I coordinate my creative practice with my so-called day job. I am very lucky indeed that over the last eight years, I have been working either in the field of archive digitalisation or the One Health Institute. From time to time, I teach at the Glasgow School of Art. All these roles surely influence my practice.

From archive digitisation, I took the photogrammetry technique (seen in the *Amateur Botanist* and *Arctic Swell* works), using real and fictitious archives (such as in my earlier work *Impossible Colonies* and *Sylvan*, currently in development) and the paper marbling technique (part of my new collage series  *HOLDERS*).

The One Health Institute has inspired me because global, significant and important issues are studied through very concrete and tiny changes, such as how the changes of a few degrees Celsius can affect avian circadian rhythms, or the analysis of salmon digestive systems in the context of the heated climate. I like working with different scales, it is a sort of disorienting poetry arising from the juxtaposition of celestial bodies with hormonal rhythms, or the relation between satellite monitoring data and the travel of pollen. I am glad to have found myself in the department of such scientific research rather than one of business studies.

Talking about the structures that shape the relationship with the environment, I find it fascinating how and why knowledge is disseminated. We see many cases when research data is corrupted and misrepresented on purpose. Lobbyists of big industries are working tirelessly and people are influenced by various, already disproved studies, for instance, about the consumption of alcohol, meat or fat, all the while, the fossil fuel industry is dedicating all their resources to ensure we continue burning fuel at full capacity.

I do not know really what it means to work at a university where James Watt had studied. Universities are quite contradictory institutions. However, I would still choose to work in an educational setting rather than a big corporation. The student community in Scotland is quite active and the university staff are unionised. In this way, we can put pressure on the university when thinking about such ethical questions as weapons or fossil fuel divestment.



Sylvan (Letter 02). Photo: Kotryna U la Kiliulyte

JŠ: Finally, I would like to ask you about your most recent work *Sylvan*, a publication consisting of textual and visual material. In your practice, the relationship with the environment is both abstract and specific. The final text of this publication are love letters between the Białowieża and Caledonian Forests. In the letters, interpreted by a classified group of scholars, there are many unfinished sentences or redacted and crossed out words. At the end of the publication, there is a disclaimer that we can ask for help to interpret the text. I would like to request a consultation—could you talk more about this project?

KUK: *Sylvan* was born out of several inspirational sources. Although I have worked mostly with visual projects, my work began to be infused with words and texts already a few years ago. At first, texts became the soundtrack or the dialogues of moving images. Later, they turned into a separate publication called *Arctic Swell*. Eventually, I started setting myself free from feeling limited by my second or third language and relaxed when writing in English. I try to use my other languages when writing, it helps me to avoid clichés.

The three visual-textual works in *Sylvan* are both separate and related. I started the collage series *Holders* even before the pandemic. It took me a long time to learn the ancient paper marbling technique. These paper-marbling works have not been displayed yet; I am waiting for the right moment. The short story *Myriad Forest* came into being unexpectedly. It just came to me after a week spent in the Białowieża Forest. I had never planned to write fiction, especially sci-fi (or maybe this is strange fiction?) until the medium presented itself in conjunction with the topics I was developing.

*Sylvan*, which I could call an experimental short story, is the core of the project I am developing now. Roughly a year ago, I started developing an interdisciplinary project that revolves around the

communication between these two forests. I shot footage and recorded sound in several places of what is left of the Caledonian Forest in Scotland and Białowieża Forest in Poland. In parallel to this, I am making sculptural objects and writing. I was speaking very broadly about ecology, biodiversity and metamorphosis, and I wished to find a more specific approach. The imaginary script, probably also coming from the strange fiction sphere, helps me bring structure to a more abstract thought. Even if I am reading not as much as I would like to, in the last few years, the books that stuck most with me were of the strange fiction genre. Sometimes, this genre with all its imaginary worlds, tells me more about our world than environmental observation or documentaries.

I am unable to share my interpretation of the text just yet. In the future, it will be provided in the shape of visual-sculptural objects when other parts of the works are finished. *Sylvan* is my fantasy about making ourselves understood by the more-than-human forms and about interspecies intimacy. Quite straightforwardly, this idea arose from my love of forests. I feel best and lightest when I am breathing in green sanctuaries, like the pine forests of Dzūkija, the hilly and endangered Scottish forests or the lichen-filled Finnish woods. Then, I started reading about forests, trees and ecosystems. I talked with scientists and became fascinated by research in biology that refutes the idea of a biological individual. An individual is not only an ecosystem but also a collection of ecosystems. A holobiont. The forest is a holobiont and I am too. We are connected by multiplicity and that is basically what *Sylvan* is about. I am also curious to see what shape this unfinished work will gain with all its audiovisual and sculptural elements.

JŠ: Thank you for the conversation, Kotryna. And many thanks to Milda!

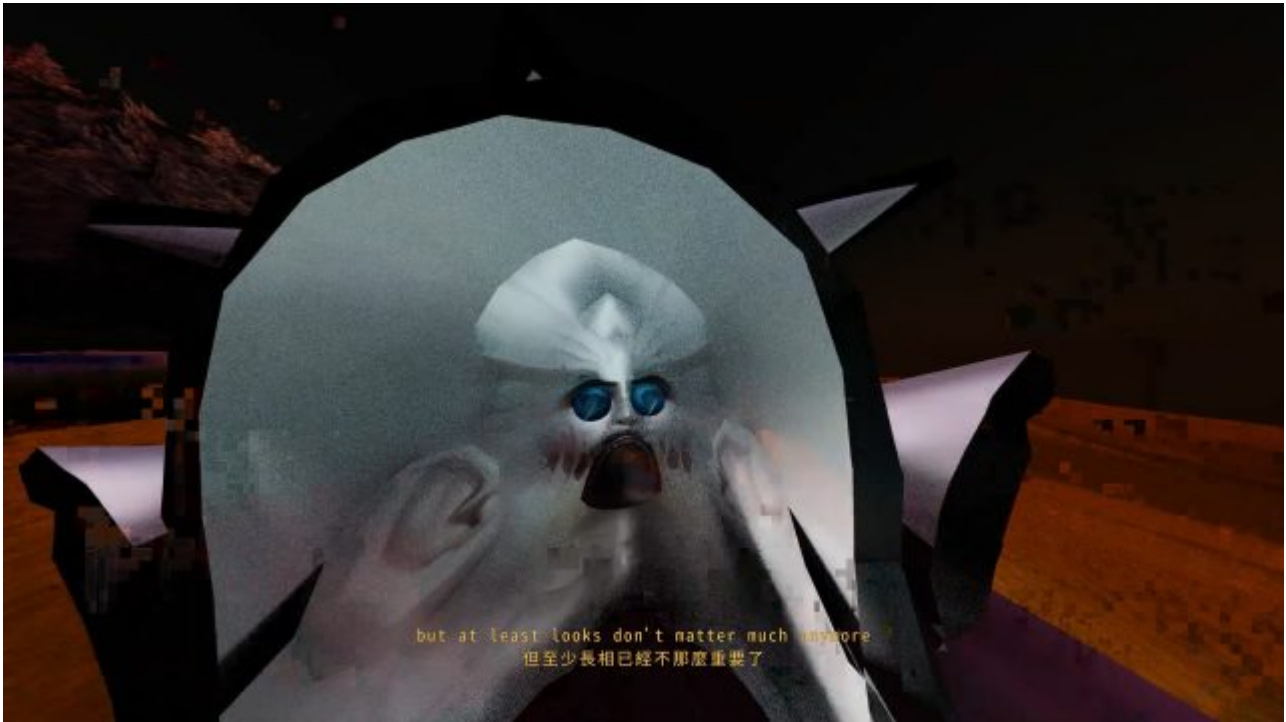
KUK: Thank you both! Until next time.

*From September 25<sup>th</sup> until January 19<sup>th</sup>, Kotryna ?la Kiliulyt?'s works are on display in the group exhibition Earth Gazes Back at Photo North – Northern Photography Centre in Oulu, Finland.*

# Rediscovering a Way of Perception that Belongs to the Digital World

September 30, 2024

Author Rosana Lukauskaitė



It was just a virtual kiss, Machinima, world of warcraft 3Dmodel, Dual Channel Video, AR 2020 video still image

Poyuan Juan is a Taipei-based artist whose work revolves around digital games, cyberspace, and the concept of cyberqueer, with digital archaeology at its core. Growing up in the post-Internet era, he draws inspiration from online communities and games, blending these experiences into his creative process. Through his art, which spans sculpture, painting and printmaking, Poyuan rethinks the digital world, exploring how digitalisation reshapes our perception of reality. His work has been showcased in solo exhibitions at the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei Digital Art Center, and Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, and at international festivals and venues.

The artist is currently participating in the SODAS 2123 residency, an occasion that gave us the opportunity to discuss his work in digital archaeology, cyberqueer themes, and the impact of digitalisation on contemporary art and culture.

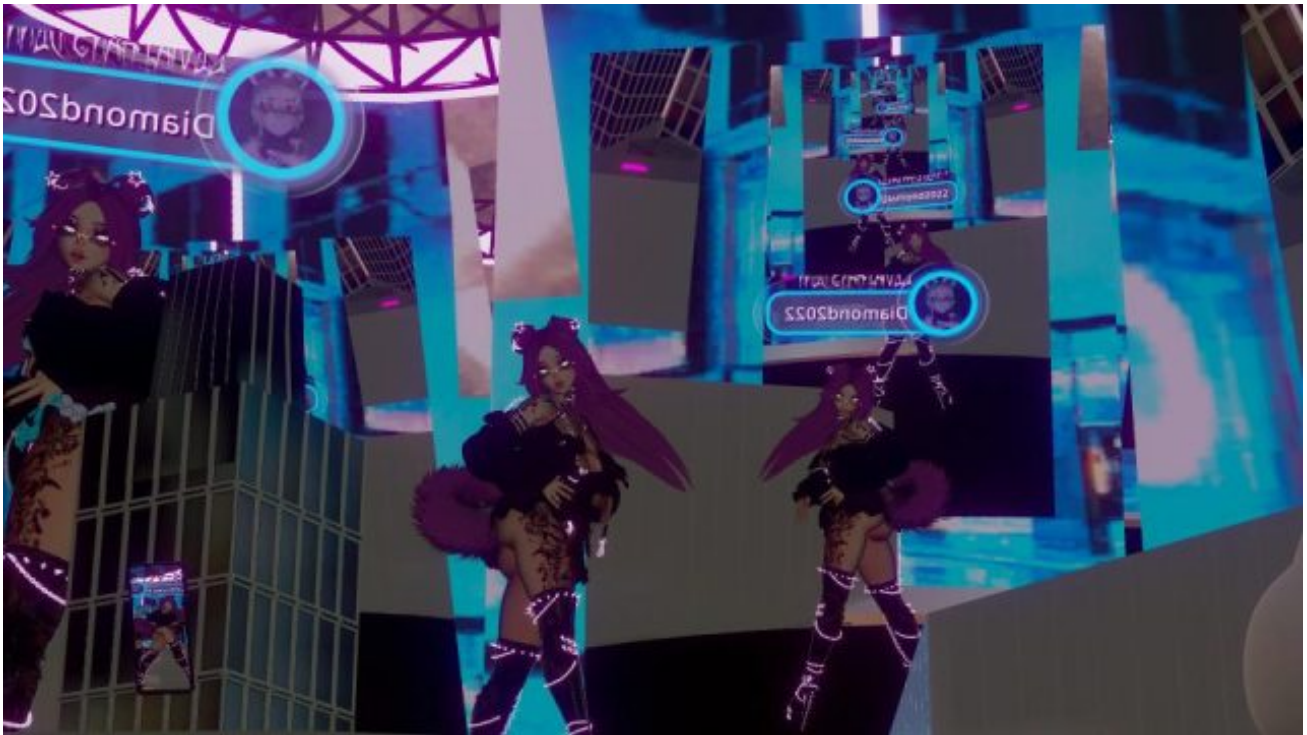


It was just a virtual kiss, Machinima, world of warcraft 3Dmodel, Dual Channel Video, AR, 2020, video still image  
The story of love that takes place in the online game World of Warcraft is turned into the raw material to explain how players of online games construct their own virtual bodies in the digital world and how their bodies are extended in digital form, thus turning a game into a medium to touch, embrace, and kiss each other through different fantasy races of doubles. By crossing to the other side of the screen, visibility enables the character one plays to entail the illusion of bodily and physical connection with other characters, whether as affect or constraints, thus overcoming the limitation of our real body. It is a new sense of body constructed digitally, and much of it through Machinima movies and computer-realistic animation  
<https://vimeo.com/495894747/448e2f9c31>

***Rosana Lukauskait?: Your work often involves digital archaeology, digging into the digital artefacts of our era. How do you define digital archaeology in the context of your art, and what do you believe is its importance in understanding the evolution of cyberspace?***

Poyuan Juan: The concept of digital archaeology comes from two parts. One is the form I often use, Machinima. Machinima is a blend of machine and cinema, a media form that utilises games and existing game engines for creation, characterised by low cost and high efficiency. Machinima captured from screen recordings of game records, game demonstration videos and event records can be considered a variant form of realist cinema, a documentary form belonging to the digital world. Digital archaeology, on the other hand, draws on anthropological concepts, assuming that the digital world has a history and using digital space as a field research site, further contemplating the relationship between the digital, history, technology and people.





Feel your information flow and body through this shell layer of the body, Machinima, VRchat, 2023, online performance image

The work uses virtual images and a physical installation to suggest internal and external corporeal and spiritual circumstances, and he likens the layers created to the shelling of 3D model characters and body boundaries. These bodies that have been shelled are integrated into various decentralized scenes of desire, including cyber love, fictosexual, and avatar sex, as they stray away from reality and leap into a world composed of 0s and 1s. The absence of boundaries then leads to a kind of cyberqueer and sensory body that are fluid and mobile in the virtual space. Juan believes that haptic visuality can be used to perceive an image through its materiality and the physical relationship evoked by the viewers. In this artwork, what appears to be an overlap between the inner and outer spaces formed by a digital game's visual glitches is actually a mediated zone of multiple universes that contains various possibilities of erotic imagination and extensions of dreamscapes.

<https://vimeo.com/914637546/e422cfd26c?share=copy>

***RL: The concept of 'cyberqueer' plays a role in your creative expression. Can you elaborate on how this concept intersects with digital spaces and communities, and how it informs your visual language?***

PJ: Cyberqueer is a concept that explores the possibilities of identity and the body in the digital age. In my creations, cyberqueer includes themes such as cyber love, fictosexual and avatar sex, which intersect with various intangible and tangible groups and communities. For example, fictosexual is related to online gaming, 2D Japanese animation, and digital imagery, while avatar sex is an informal role-playing practice prevalent in various online games, known as erotic role-playing. Such communities exist from World of Warcraft to VRChat, where I participate and conduct research on the erotic role-playing community.



Intrusion, Machinima, 2011 world of warcraft 3Dmodel, UnrealEngine4, 2021, video still image  
“Intrusion” is based on the invasion of the Taiwanese server by Chinese Internet users (players) of the game “World of Warcraft” (2007~2011). The video content uses character models representing Chinese censorship as symbols and uses the game engine and simulated cluster movement algorithms to create a large number of aggregated, unconscious and twitchy character models. Try to touch the meaning of digital ruins, abandoned network space, and unoccupied server state. <https://vimeo.com/653357736>



Intrusion, Machinima, 2011 world of warcraft 3Dmodel, UnrealEngine4, 2021, video still image



Intrusion, Machinima, 2011 world of warcraft 3Dmodel, UnrealEngine4, 2021, video still image

*RL: Growing up in the post-Internet era, what was your favourite online community, and how did it shape your artistic vision?*

PJ: I think a characteristic of growing up in the Internet age is that you are shaped by many different communities, online forums, information and videos, making it hard to pinpoint a single favourite or community that has influenced me most.

*RL: As an Internet enthusiast, what's the most bizarre or obscure online space you've discovered that unexpectedly sparked a creative idea for your work?*

PJ: What I have recently discovered is the community of erotic role-playing. I have been researching it in VRchat for a while, and there are many different role-playing communities in various online games. Players strive to embody the characters set out in the game's storyline, becoming a part of the game world rather than just a player. Erotic role-playing involves engaging in avatar-sex activities in online spaces through 3D model bodies that transcend gender and race.

<https://vimeo.com/938202610>

*RL: Your recent work explores the digital objects behind interfaces. What do you think is the most significant way digitalisation reshapes our perception of reality, and how do you aim to communicate this in your art?*

PJ: In a life surrounded by digitalisation, we have been profoundly influenced by the digital, with gestures, bodily perception, thought patterns and memory all changing alongside digital technology. I want to make this change visible through my work, and to perceive the technological objects and materials beneath the digital interfaces that affect us, rediscovering a way of perception that belongs to the digital world.



vrchat erp image



vrchat erp image

*RL: Incorporating aesthetics from online games is central to your work. How do you navigate the balance between the visual language of gaming and traditional art forms, and what do you see as the future of this hybridisation?*

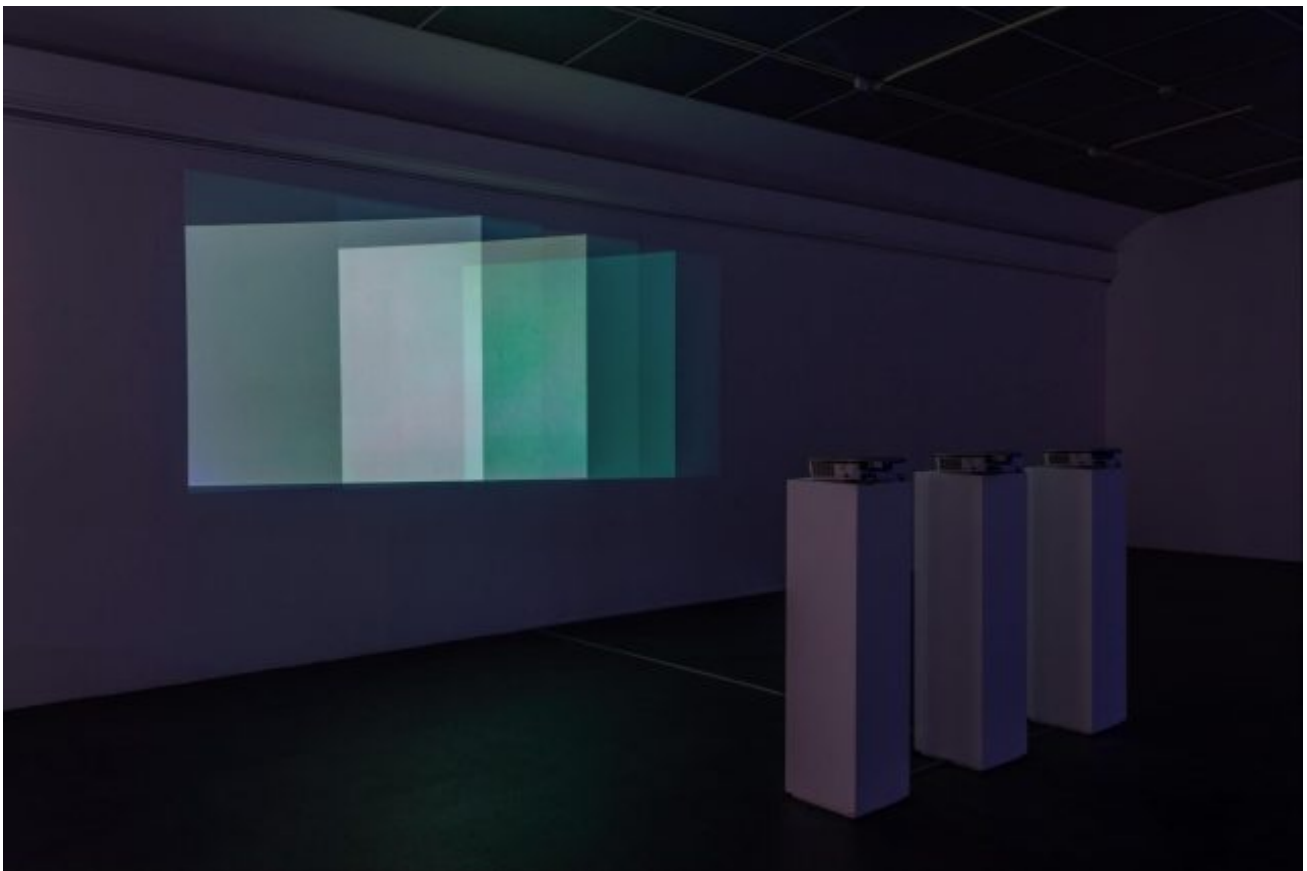
PJ: I mainly discuss 3D models through the concept of sculpture, a hollow body of thin shell layers, and extend this concept to online games and digital models. In my work it was just a virtual kiss, I referenced the concept of shell body to discuss the emotional transmission from players, screens and game characters to another player. I believe this kind of emotional engagement through multiple interfaces should be future-oriented.

*RL: As someone deeply embedded in the gaming and online community culture, how do you view the role of cyberspace in shaping cultural identities, particularly in relation to your Taiwanese heritage?*

PJ: I have conducted a long-term investigation into censorship issues of online games in China, as well as the game closures caused by censorship and issues with proxy companies, which led to a large number of Chinese players using VPNs to migrate to game servers in Taiwan. Such events extend the political issues between Taiwan and China into the digital space, and this special exchange has influenced the identities of Taiwanese players and Chinese players.

*RL: In your piece Feel your information flow and body through this shell layer of the body you explore how removing the outer layers of 3D characters mirrors the breakdown of boundaries between physical and digital bodies. How does this 'shelling' process reflect the fluidity of identity and desire in virtual spaces?*

PJ: *Feel your information flow and body through this shell layer of the body* hopes to create an overlapping inner and outer space formed by the fragmented visuals of digital games, generating a networked queer and sensory body that exists in a boundaryless state, possessing fluid qualities within virtual space.



White picture (Three Panel), Projector, transparent image, 2023

Inspired by Robert Rauschenberg's White Paintings (Three Panels), White Picture (Three Panels) rethinks White Paintings in the light of contemporary digital technology, multiplying the organic state of space and environment. The work uses projected images without pictures to multiply the organic state of the space and environment in

which it is embedded. The work responds to “White Paintings (Three Panels)” by projecting images without images, thinking about what is the absence of an image and what is the image of absence in the light of images without images.

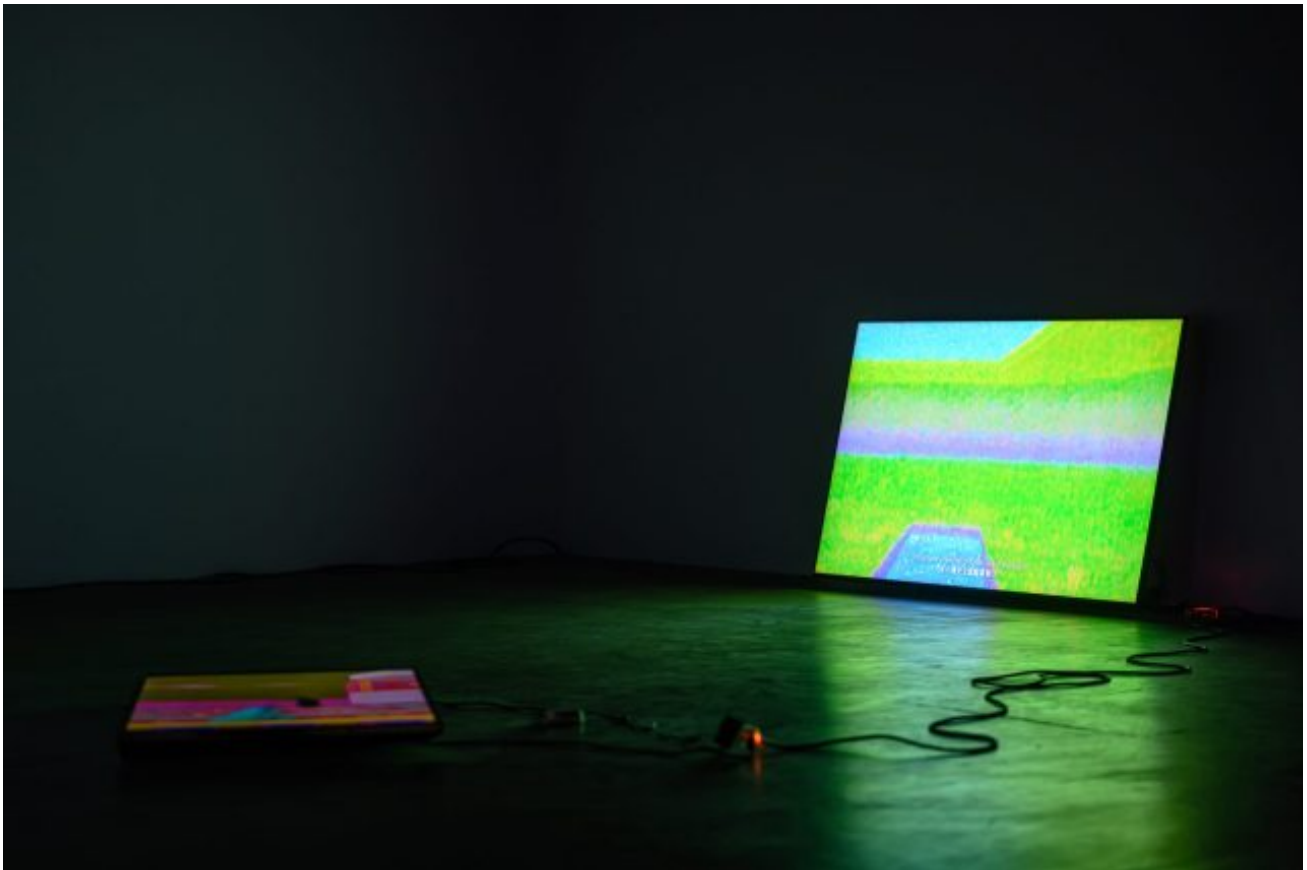
Three projectors of the same model were set up at the installation site with equal spacing, and a hex editor was used to compile a “clean” png file with only a transparent alpha layer (without any editing, software, or commercial company information), and the transparent png file was projected by the three projectors at the site to produce a pictureless image. The transparent png file is projected by three projectors on the site to create a projection screen with no picture. The projector is the active subject in the artwork, and the transparent png file is translated by the information and light from the projector to create a visible projection screen with no picture on the site. In this way, the projection responds to the organic state of White Paintings in relation to the space and environment through the relationship between topography (the projection of value and space) and projection technology (the correspondence between space and space), and the correspondence and interaction between the transparent file and the projector.

***RL: How do you reconcile the seemingly disparate practices of traditional art forms like printmaking and painting with the ever-evolving digital mediums you work with? Is there a dialogue between these practices in your art?***

PJ: I hope to integrate the concept of physical objects through sculpture with digital objects, allowing the digital and physical worlds to connect and be perceived together. Additionally, I discussed the relationship between the reproducibility of printmaking, replication, and the irreproducibility of digital files, memory and artificial memory. I also paid tribute to Rosenberg’s white paintings to discuss the emptiness and nothingness of digital files, as well as the random order of digital projectors and information translation.

***RL: With the increasing integration of AI, VR and AR into digital art, where do you see the future of digital art heading, and how do you plan to evolve your practice to meet or challenge these advances?***

PJ: I think digital art should involve thinking about digital artistic creation, and only through reflection and the critique of digital concepts and technologies can we avoid being discarded by technological innovations. Of course, continuously keeping up with new technologies is also very important, but it should not mean becoming a user limited by software; rather, it should allow for flexible switching between user, creator and technology.



This world is so clean/beautiful/pleasant that you may wanna die, Social Media, Dreamcore, AI generation (text, images), LSD simulator, 2023

The work is derived from the dreamcore images in social media, which are characterized by anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal tendencies. Using the LSD-Dream Emulator scene as the basis of creation and the dreamcore images as the concept of presentation, the images are filled with a large number of depressing and strange architectural spaces, with mysterious, misanthropic, or fearful feelings, and are paired with the vague textual content often used in the AI algorithm of the dreamcore to compile texts and stories, which are meant to discuss the emotions and moods that are formed by the contemporary human beings on the internet in the relationships with the algorithms, the social media platforms, and the images on the internet.  
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/10220762>

***RL: In your piece*** This world is so clean/beautiful/pleasant that you may wanna die ***you explore Dreamcore imagery and its links to anxiety and depression. How do you think social media algorithms and AI-generated content influence these emotional landscapes online?***

PJ: Social media and algorithms influence what we receive in our lives most of the time, and the rise of short videos has exacerbated this effect. When fed a large amount of homogeneous content, various differentiated groups are bound to form, and these groups will become extreme due to the thickening of layers. Strong emotions can profoundly change a person, often without them realising it. ***This world is so clean/beautiful/pleasant that you may wanna die*** utilises algorithms to push a large number of Dreamcore images and tweets, mapping out the emotional landscape online. Originally, Dreamcore had only a small amount of anxiety and depression tendencies, which were not the focus of Dreamcore, but in social media, these tendencies towards anxiety and depression are continuously amplified by users and algorithms, thus forming this emotional landscape.



multi-digital world and shell body visual



multi-digital world and shell body visual





online game erp image



online game erp image

# Photo reportage from the group exhibition 'Translucent Dreams' at EKA Gallery

September 2, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik

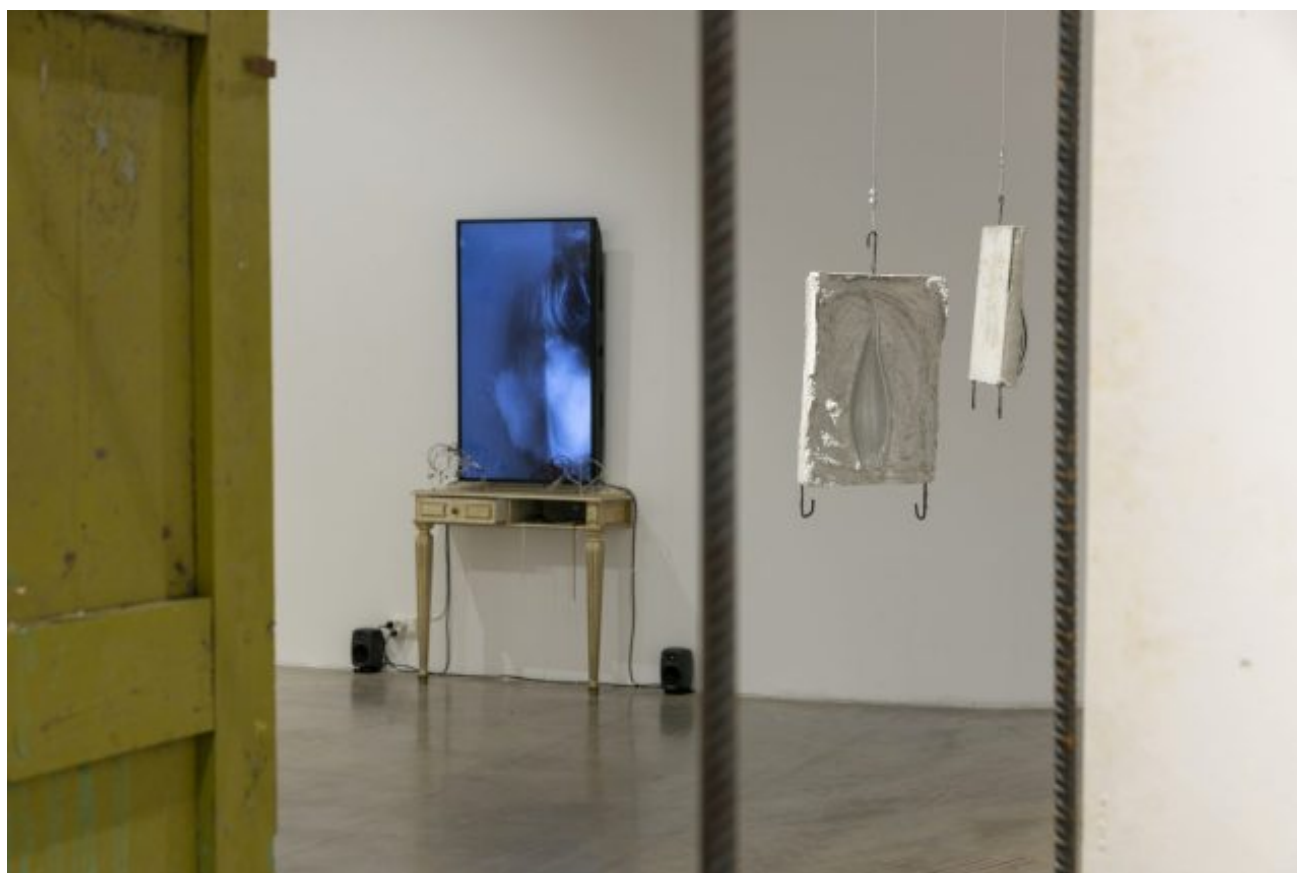
The exhibition 'Translucent Dreams' takes place at EKA Gallery in Tallinn, Estonia, from August 8 to September 8. Participating artists: Chloé Geinoz, Rose Magee, Vitor Pascale, KitKit Para, Syed Sachal Rizvi.

In today's interconnected world, the notion of identity has progressively become more complex and multifaceted. Gender, geography, and social/political beliefs, to name but a few shape the ways individuals perceive and express themselves.

This exhibition brings together five artists from diverse corners of the globe, each accentuating themes of intersecting identities through the lenses of chimerism, duality, hybridity, queer identity, and the construction and deconstruction of self. Using various visual strategies, these artists delve into the intricate layers of identity formation and expression, inviting you to journey through contemporary identity's dynamic and ever-changing landscape.

Technician: Erik Hõim

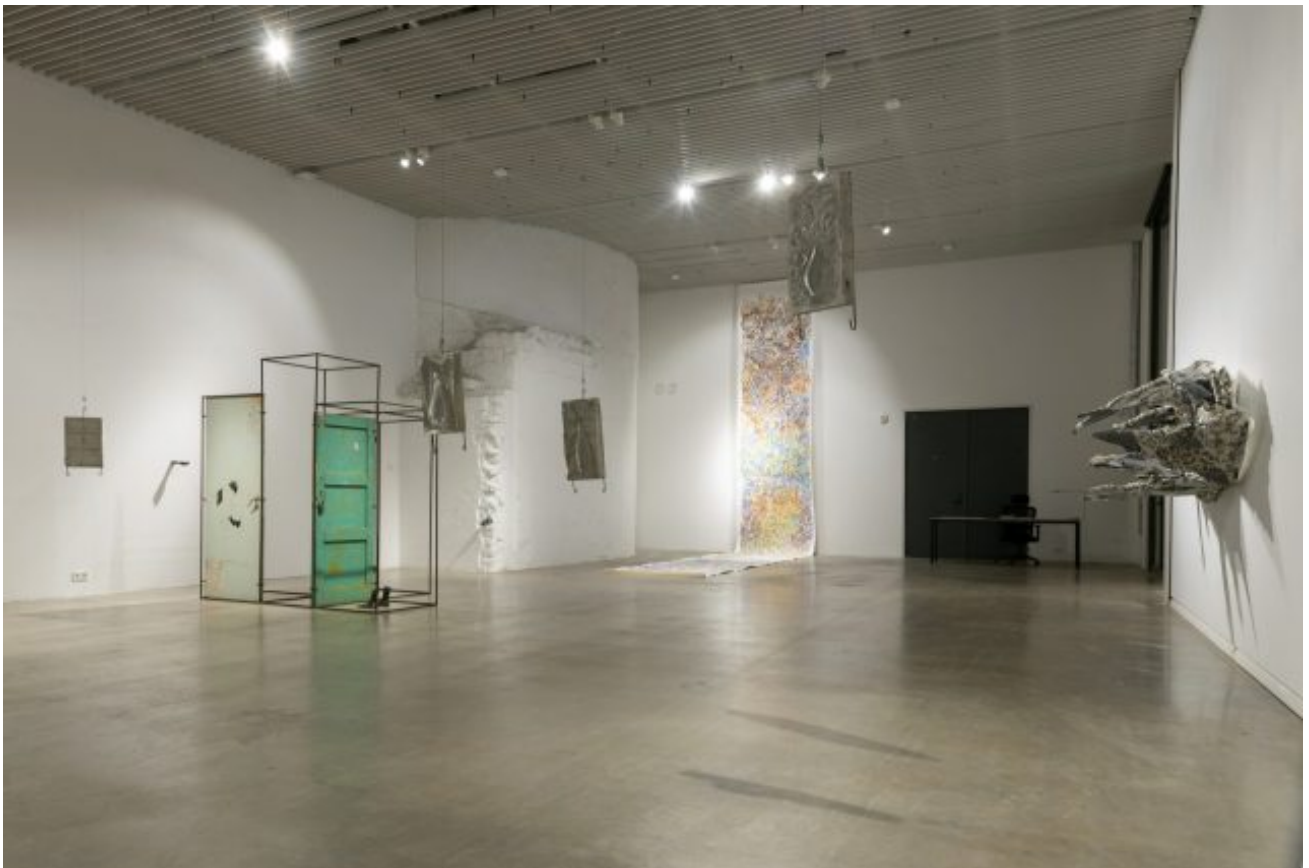
Photography: Kaisa Maasik



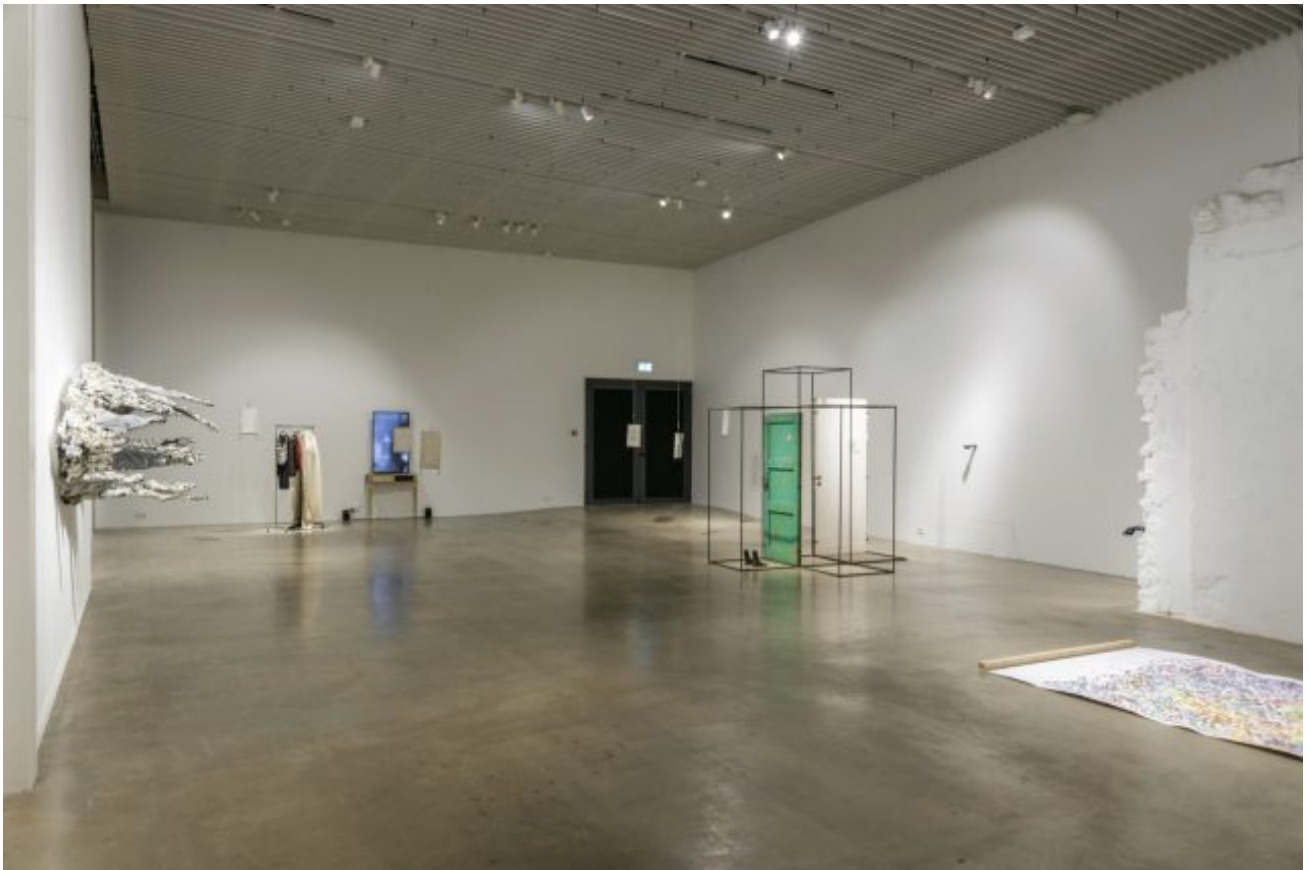
View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



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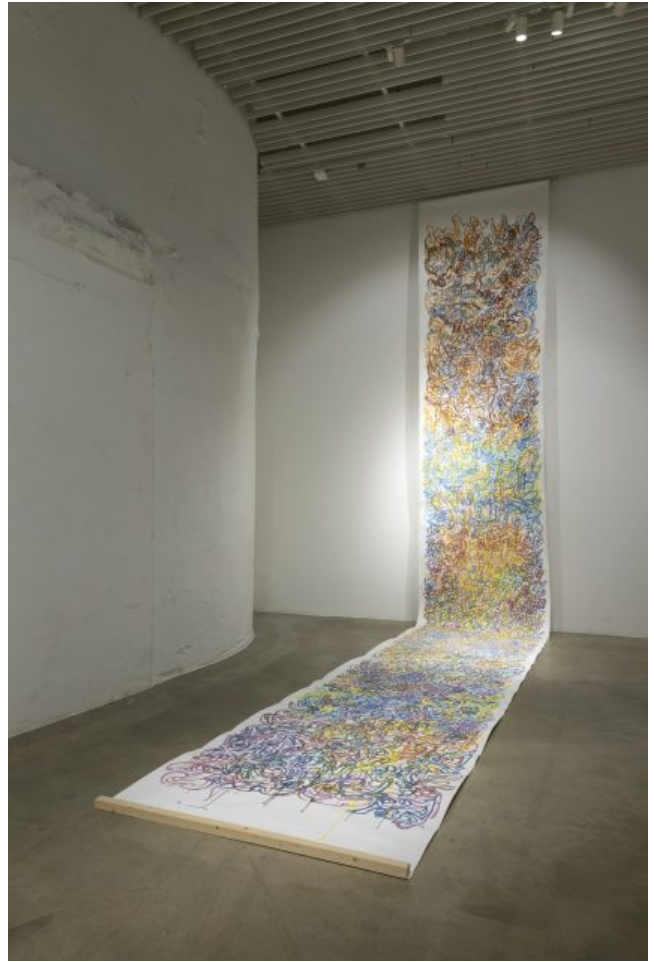
View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Syed Sachal Rizvi 'Residues II' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Syed Sachal Rizvi 'Residues II' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Syed Sachal Rizvi 'Residues II' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik





Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



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Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Vitor Pascale 'Locked Away' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik





Rose Magee 'Let Me Hold You' (2023). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Rose Magee 'Let Me Hold You' (2023). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



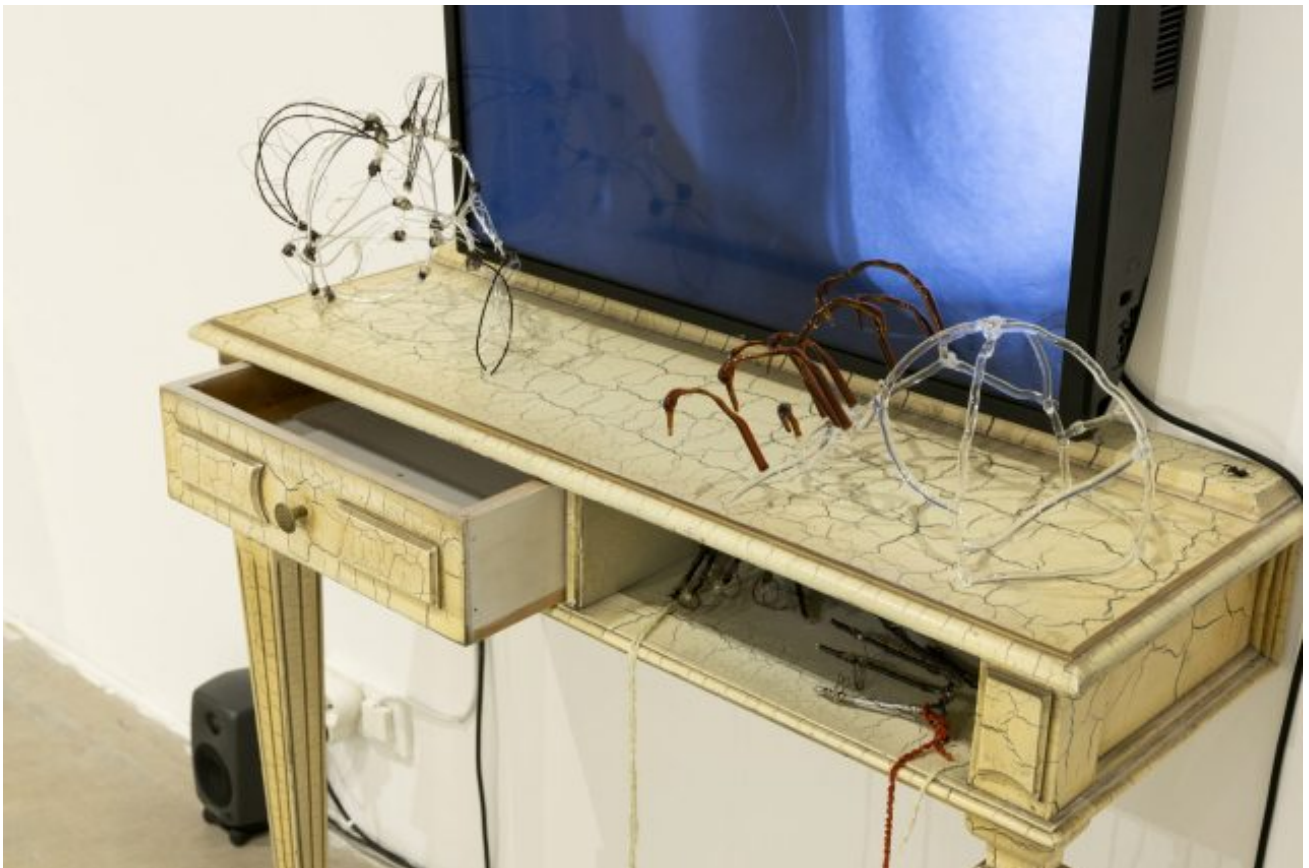
View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Chloé Geinoz 'Chimerism' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Chloé Geinoz 'Chimerism' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Chloé Geinoz 'Chimerism' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Chloé Geinoz 'Chimerism' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



KitKit Para 'Not My Hong Kong' (2024). Photo by Kaisa Maasik





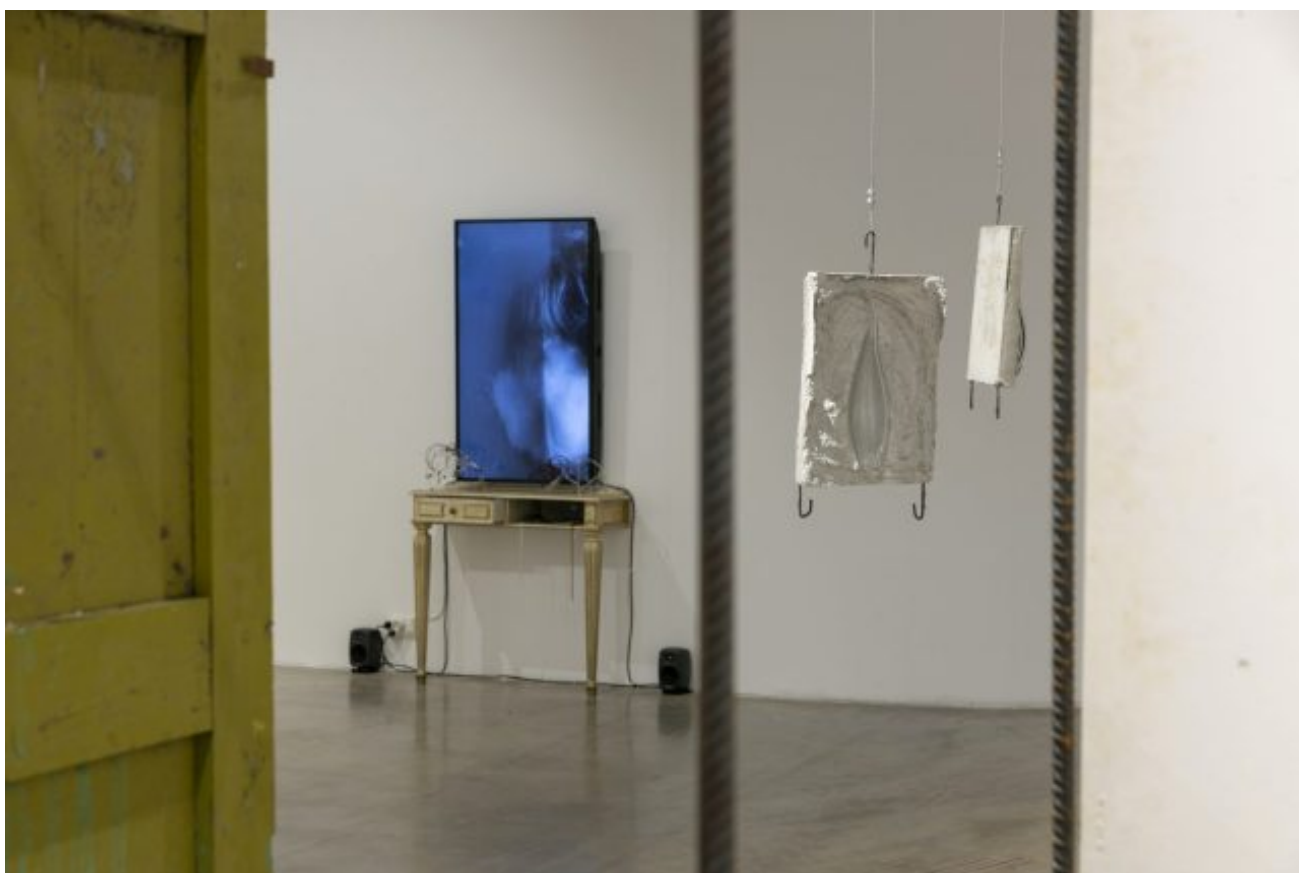
KitKit Para 'Not My Hong Kong' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



KitKit Para 'Not My Hong Kong' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



KitKit Para 'Not My Hong Kong' (2024), detail. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition 'Translucent Dreams', EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik

# Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Still Life' by Urte Janus and Paweł Olszewski at Editorial

September 20, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Lithuanian artist Urte Janus' sculptures and the paintings by the younger-generation Polish artist Paweł Olszewski, transform seemingly familiar, human-made objects into time- stopping relics of civilisation, creating new dimensions of time and space.

Urte Janus' sculptures, displayed on shelves resembling meat curing cabinets, are crystallized under thick layers of salt. What do we choose to bury and what do we choose to preserve? Food, bodies, poisons, memories, secrets, treasures, hopes – what is worth freezing in salt molecules, whose history of extraction and dispersal has catalysed wars, revolutions, and technological progress? Through compositions of found objects – tools, toxic waste, debris – Janus creates a microrepository, a small model of that immeasurable layer of salt in the earth, beneath which lie the most toxic traces of humanity's activities, destined to outlive us.

In Paweł Olszewski's canvases, time and space multiply around everyday objects. Painted specifically for this exhibition, his works feature a muted color palette and futuristic geometry that divides the canvas surfaces into thin layers, shimmering like digital screens in the dark. Or is it the screens that are observing us and the objects around them, rather than the other way around? Olszewski flips the usual perspective, turning familiar surroundings into still lifes lost in time, like binary oppositions seen through a technological lens.

About the artists:

Urte Janus (b. 1991, Vilnius, Lithuania) is a Lithuanian artist currently based in London. A graduate of the Vilnius Academy of Arts, Department of Photography and Media Art, she is currently pursuing her MA in Art and Ecology at Goldsmiths College, London. Janus was selected for the JCDecaux Prize in 2023 and is an alumna of the Alexander McQueen Sarabande Foundation Residency. She regularly exhibits in group shows in the UK and in 2023 created a site-specific installation in the Anglican Chapel, Nunhead Cemetery in London.

Paweł Olszewski (b. 1996, Toruń, Poland) is an artist living and working in Krakow. He graduated with a BA from the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow and obtained an MA from the University of the Arts (Universität der Künste, UDK) in Berlin. Olszewski has had two solo exhibitions at the Piktogram Gallery in Warsaw and has participated in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and the Serce Człowieka project space in Warsaw.

Graphic design: Monika Janulevičiūtė

Translation and textual editing: Alexandra Bondarev

The exhibition is supported by the Lithuanian Council for Culture and Vilnius City Municipality. The Editorial Space is open III-V 3-7pm and VI 12-4pm.

Exhibition title: ***Still Life***

Artists: Urte Janus and Paweł Olszewski

Venue: Editorial, Vilnius

Dates: 5 September – 12 October, 2024

Photography: Editorial



















# Photo reportage from the exhibition '5 Objects (2)' by Mindaugas Navakas in the Bernardinai garden, Vilnius

September 20, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Exhibition '5 Objects (2)' by sculptor Mindaugas Navakas will be open in the Bernardinai garden, Vilnius until 10th of October. This is the second exhibition of the renowned artist in this Old Town park, the first one – '5 Objects' – was presented in 2022.

The exhibition '5 Objects (2)' at Bernardinai Garden has been inspired by the artist's previously created Vilnius Notebook (1981-1985) – a series of sketches drawn up using photomontage. Notebook's unrealizable projects – dynamic sculptural and architectural fusions – feature dynamic arrangements that resemble live forms, resulting in an emergence of a contrast to the virtues of the Soviet period, its monotone and pragmatic architecture, thus affirming nature's indomitability. The new series by Mindaugas Navakas distinguishes itself with its volume and mass, its suggestive irony, its provocative qualities that are directed towards both the audience and its surroundings and is a continuation of artist's previously established ideas. Steel sculptures situated in a busy city park are here to disturb one's mindless stroll, subsequently encouraging a reevaluation of public spaces and the shift in values, drawing attention to the relationship between humans and nature.

Mindaugas Navakas is one of the most significant Lithuanian sculptors whose work is known not only by art enthusiasts. Artist's large-scale sculptural objects have become a major part of urban spaces both in Lithuania and abroad. The work of Navakas has greatly contributed to the renewal of sculptural expression in the 80's and 90's, with the artist still retaining an integral position in the contemporary art scene. His work is characterized by enormous scales, heavy, massive forms and materials, and unexpected display solutions.

Mindaugas Navakas (b. 1952) – a Lithuanian sculptor that has been actively participating in exhibitions in Lithuania and abroad since 1977, was also a longtime lecturer of Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts' department of Sculpture. Among other exhibitions, the works of the artist were shown in the first biennale of Gwangju in 1995, he was also the first (together with artist Eglė Rakauskaitė) to represent Lithuania in the 48th Venice Biennale in 1999. In 1995 he received the Herder Prize; in 1999 he was the recipient of the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize as well as the Baltic assembly prize in 2004. Works of Mindaugas Navakas are owned by the Lithuanian museum of art as well as private collections in Lithuania and abroad.

The gallery (AV17) organizing the exhibition is located at Totorių str. in Vilnius; this space has been actively working with contemporary art for 10 years. This is one of few Lithuanian galleries that exclusively exhibit contemporary object, sculpture and installation art. In addition to regular exhibition activities, the gallery implements various international and regional artistic and educational projects, carries out exchange programs with foreign and Lithuanian creators, thus promoting the dissemination of contemporary art in our country and Europe.

Photography: Evgenia Levin























# Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Although One Is Often Aware of Some Far Brighter Light' by Loora Kaubi at the Draakon gallery

September 23, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Until 28 September, the exhibition 'Although One Is Often Aware of Some Far Brighter Light' by Loora Kaubi is on display at Draakon gallery.

Exhaustion is inherent to the experience of life. It lacks clear boundaries; its tentacles seem to reach everywhere. Yet exhaustion could be followed by a certain freshness, a respite, and relief. But what to do when one awakens from a refreshing slumber feeling weary – more weary than before lying down? What happens when exhaustion does not subside? Perhaps one person's fatigue is something greater; maybe we are seized by shared fatigue? How deeply has the darkness, so prevailing on this latitude, seeped into our essence? Can fatigue be an inherent part of a person?

Hands work, and hands are shaped by work. Hands grow weary, even if they are big and strong. Arms, with their ability to caress, with their rough knuckles, scratched forearms marked by labour, and the muscle memory of their knobby fingers. Arms, like blind creatures, droop wearily. Bodies, curled up and feeble, allow to come close. This feebleness has grown into an all-embracing neglect, into doubts and an endless uncertainty. Bodies are fragile and mortal. In due course, reincarnation is no longer possible – old skin cannot be shed; it is not regenerated or renewed but instead remains a heavy burden. Yet this old skin has a few fissures through which one can see clearly. For the time being, these fissures are raw, more like cracks.



Loora Kaubi explores mental and physical exhaustion and, in her work, plays with the idea of months-long, or even eternal, uninterrupted sleep. Her pieces are sensual reflections: discarded skin, powerless bodies, and exalted hands that offer comfort and may even redeem. “Hands touch, hold, and hurt. If those big hands were to come down from the heavens, would they scare or break something? Would they be dangerous? Or would they actually fix something?” the artist asks, pointing to a sgraffito.

Under the gray haze lies a fragment of hope – even if a person never sees the sun in their dreams, there may be some brighter light somewhere that will help one escape. The awareness of light is there; yet in order to reach it, one must scrape the surface.

Loora Kaubi (1998) is an artist working in Tallinn. She is interested in themes such as eternal sleep, longing, and exhaustion. Wandering in the space between reality and imagination, she focuses on intense emotions portrayed through sculptural installations. Loora has graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts painting department and has studied in the sculpture department at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She has done an internship at the Ceramica Suro ceramics factory in Mexico and participated in Casa Lü residency in Mexico City. Loora Kaubi has received the Weekly Prize from the Estonian Young Contemporary Art Union and has participated in exhibitions in Mexico City, Vienna, and Estonia.

Thanks: António Tainha, Eva Mahhov, Cristo Madissoo, Paul Raud, Saara Liis Jõerand, Kristi Kaubi, Ats Kruusing

Text: Helena Aadli.

Advisor: Laura De Jaeger.

Graphic Design: Sonja Sutt.

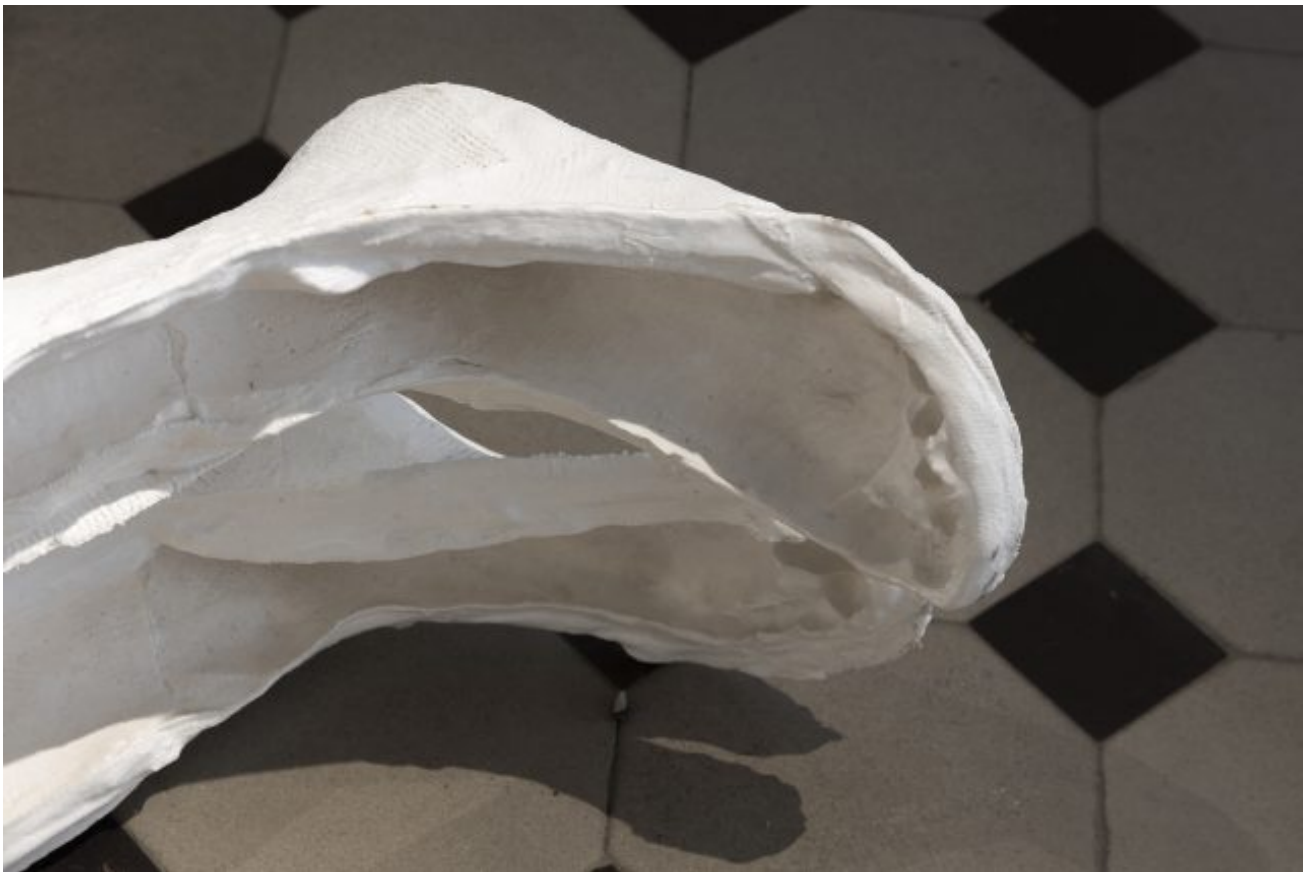
Exhibitions at Draakon Gallery are supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, the Estonian Ministry of Culture, and Liviko AS.

Photography: Elo Vahtrik



















# Exhibition 'Marmoleum Real 2mm' by Zane Priede at the ISSP Gallery

September 23, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Until October 24 Zane Priede's exhibition 'Marmoleum Real 2mm' is on view at the ISSP Gallery, based on the artist's personal experience of growing up in the environment and aesthetics of the 1990s. Also, the ISSP Gallery team will participate in the ArtVilnius'24 art fair with the exhibition 'Marmoleum Real 2mm' by Zane Priede from October 4 to 6!

The still lifes created in Zane Priede's studio are rooted in the aesthetics of the 1990s. The photographs depict objects and materials typical of that era, which, when connected with people's emotional experiences form a landscape of material memories. In her compositions, memories of the past are transposed into present-day scenographies, narrating the interaction between time and objects through artistic practice. The materiality of objects helps shape our shared world and the experiences through which we build relationships with our environment and each other.

Life amid Soviet greyness exposed us to the new materialities of 1990s capitalism and consumerism, which ultimately became cheap imitations. Gypsum, linoleum, various plastic and glass objects, and a reference to food culture in the images created by the author, transfer these memories to today. The 1990s are still present and can be felt in Zane's hyperbolised images, as well as our homes, construction stores, small village shops and elsewhere, evoking a nostalgic aftertaste.

Zane Priede (1990) is a professional photographer whose work features imaginary and surreal scenes created with everyday objects. Graduated from the Design Academy Eindhoven. Zane Priede's deep passion for architecture and design is evident in her visual approach, which involves

constructing scenes with small-scale objects. Her interest in science, biology and psychology forms the focus of her visual research, providing a playful approach to storytelling and revealing the fantastic in everyday life. In 2023, Zane was nominated for the Futures European photography platform.

Exhibition scenography and spatial solutions: Aleksejs Beļeckis.

Curator: Iveta Gabaliņa

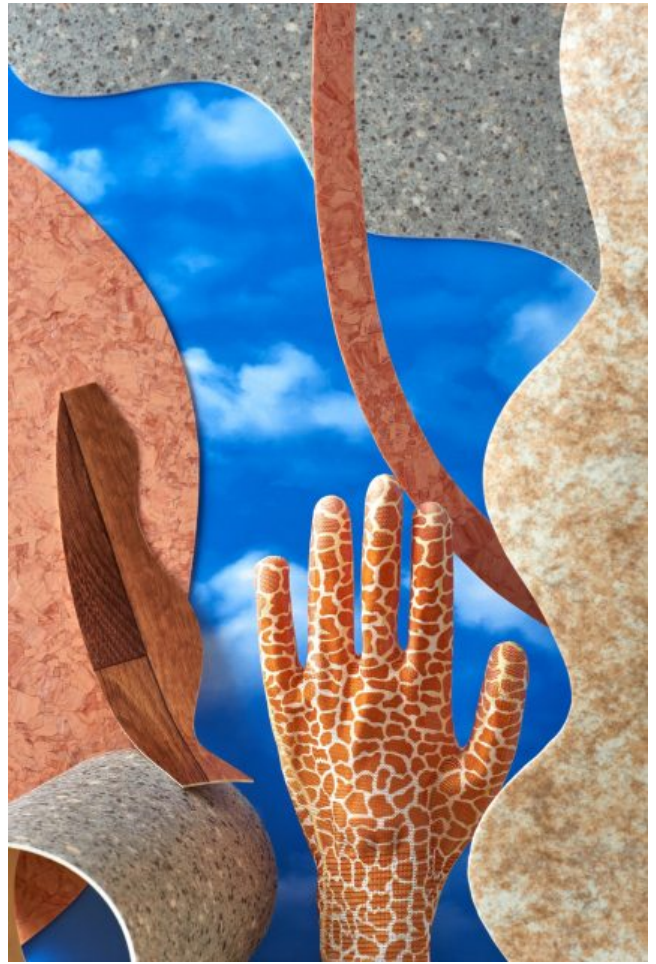
Photography: Reinis Hofmanis/ Zane Priede















# Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Measures ('Festival 'Survival Kit') in Riga

September 26, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Māris Ārgalis 'The Eye' (triptych), no later than 1981

Until October 6, the exhibition 'Measures' curated by Jussi Koitela is on view at 4 Amatu Street, 34a Eduarda Smiļģa Street ('Smilga'), and 4 Strazdu Street, Riga.

For the 15th time, this autumn, the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art will host the Survival Kit festival in Riga – one of the most notable annual contemporary art events in the Baltics. The exhibition 'Measures', curated by the festival's artistic director Jussi Koitela, will be open from 6 September to 6 October at three locations on both banks of the River Daugava – Amatu Street 4, E. Smiļģa Street 34a and Strazdu Street 4. As every year, the festival will be accompanied by an extensive public and educational programme, keeping in mind the accessibility of contemporary art to different groups of society. A separate programme of events will also take place within the framework of the contemporary culture forum 'White Night'.

To take 'measure' is a two-fold act: on one hand, it is scientific and quantitative, and on the other, it is a call to action. Presented across a number of nearby sites in Riga's city centre on both sides of the Daugava river, 'Measures' demonstrates how the knowledge of a city emerges from acutely personal experience, but also from communal struggles and values. It considers possible pasts, presents and futures by measuring, investigating and embracing the diverse knowledges embedded within the city of Riga and beyond, and invites audiences to engage with nature-culture environments, daily bodily experiences, and data and truth-making.

Curator Jussi Koitela elaborates, 'Following various trajectories in both its physical environment and subject matters, audiences can engage with the exhibition by encountering causalities that connect different temporalities, collapsed distances and bodies across communities and locations, all the while fumbling amid a mesh of truth, alternative histories and situated knowledges.'

Continuing the theme of the exhibition 'Measures', the public programme of the festival invites artists and thinkers to reflect on the different forms of knowledge produced by the city and its communities. Gundega Laiviņa, curator of the Survival Kit 15 public programme, says: 'The programme is designed to remind people of their right to access the city's resources, their right to change the city and to change themselves. It invites us to see the city not as a fixed and finished environment to navigate, but rather as a porous and ever-changing space where things become possible.'

The Survival Kit 15 public programme, curated by Gundega Laiviņa, is divided into four episodes – 'Artist' (11 September), 'Place' (21 September), 'Nature' (29 September) and 'Future' (5 October) – held at all festival's exhibition addresses and throughout Riga.

With a continued focus on accessibility of contemporary art and creating an inclusive environment, Survival Kit 15 will be enriched by an educational programme for diverse groups of society. Throughout the festival, until 6 October, everyone is also invited to apply for guided tours led by art mediators at the central venue of the exhibition 'Measures' at Amatu Street 4.

Participating artists (\*denotes a new commission)

\*Linda Boļšakova (LV), Jeremy Deller (UK), \*Kritoffer Ørum (DK), Monia Ben Hamouda (IT), Eero Yli-Vakkuri (FI), Toril Johannessen (NO), \*Jaana Laakkonen (FI), Lou Mouv (DE/NL) & Isabella Solar Villaseca (SE/CL), \*Gerda Paliušytė (LT), Yuri Pattison (IE), \*Rena Rädle (DE) & Vladan Jeremić (RS), \*Luīze Rukšāne (LV), Vidha Saumya (IN), \*Shubhangi Singh, \*Laura Soisalon-Soininen (FI), \*Līga Spunde (LV), Jon Benjamin Tallerås (NO), Aimée Zito Lema (AR/NL), Fabien Giraud (FR) & Raphaël Siboni (FR), \*Konstantin Zhukov (LV), \*Malin Arnell (SE) & Mar Fjell (SE), Luna Lund Jensen (DK), Māris Ārgalis (LV), Monika Czyżyk (PL) & Neil Luck (UK), Renée Green (USA).

Survival Kit 15 is organized by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art.

Survival Kit 15 is supported by Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, Riga City Council, State Culture Capital Foundation (SCCF), SIF, Embassy of Italy in Riga, Goethe-Institut Rīga, Mondriaan Fund, OCA fund, Danish Arts Foundation, Culture Moves Europe, NOVUM Riga, British Council, LIAA, Swedish Arts Grants Committee, Arctic Paper, Culture Ireland, Embassy of Finland Riga, Zuzeum, Skrīveru saldumi, LSM, Satori, Echo Gone Wrong, Riga This Week, Riga Neighborhood, Viegļās valodas aģentūra, Pasqua Wines, VV Foundation.



Luna Lund Jensen 'Dreaming of dunes, and valleys of glass', 2022



Luna Lund Jensen 'Dreaming of dunes, and valleys of glass', 2022



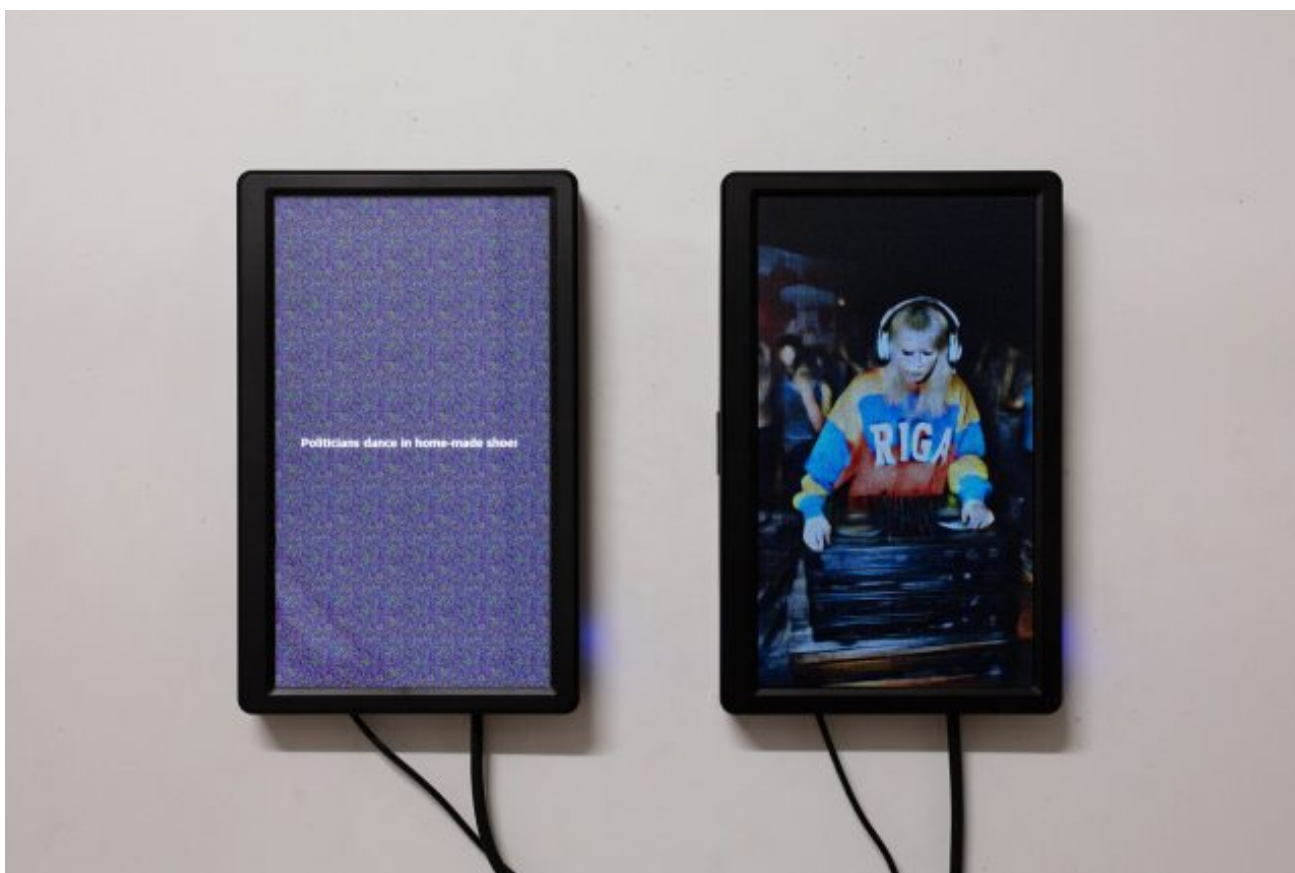
Malin Arnell & Mar Fjell '– Please, don't end here', 2024



Luīze Rukšāne 'Clock, Clock, on the wall, tell me, what hour is suited for nothing?', 2022 & Toril Johannessen  
'Words and Years  
Screen prints', 2010–2016



Monika Czyżyk & Neil Luck 'Almanach (Echoes)', 2024



Kristoffer Ørum 'Monuments of a Fictional Past', 2024



Konstantin Zhukov 'Black Carnation: Case Study No. 2', 2024



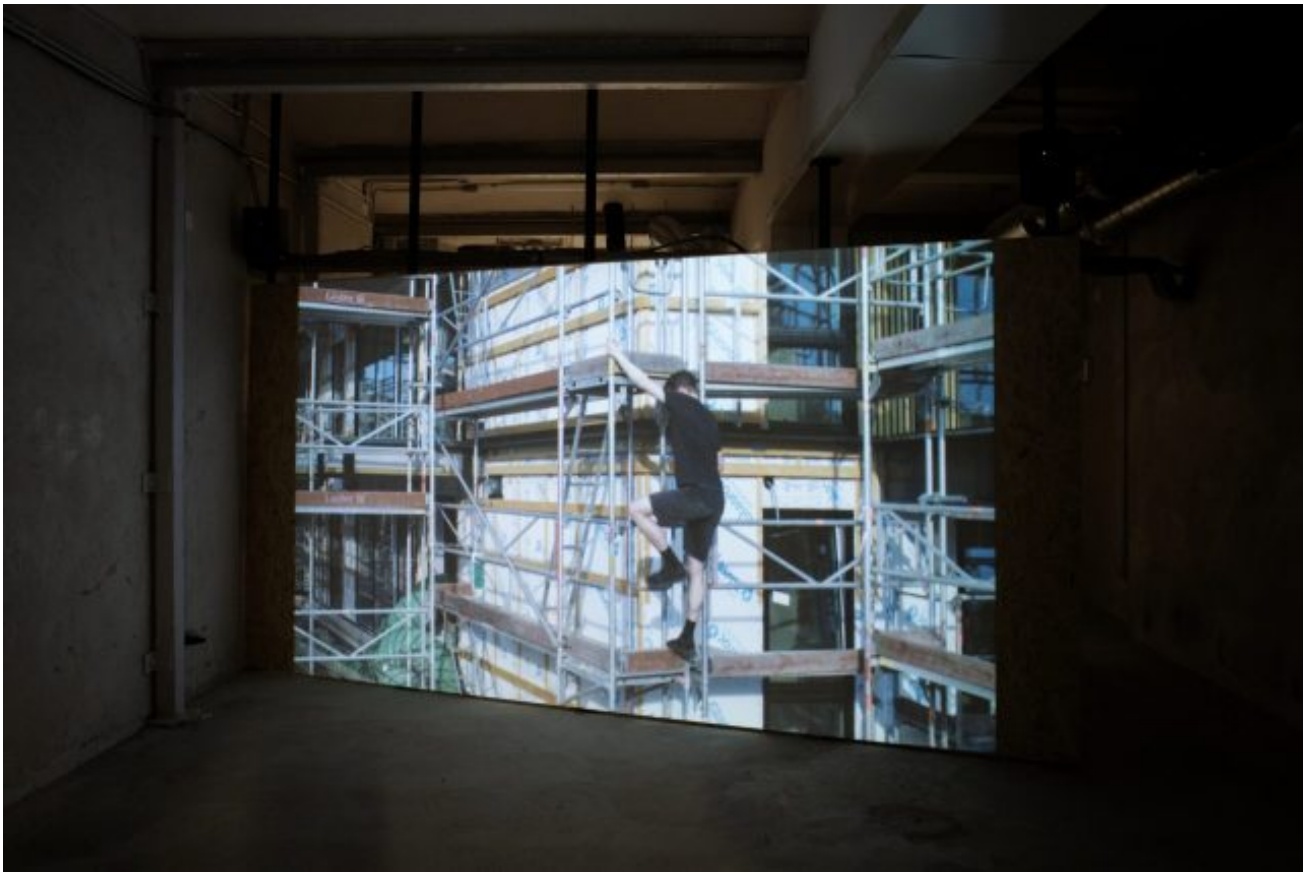
Gerda Paliušytė, 2022-2024(ongoing)



Luna Lund Jensen 'Petrified Bodies', 2024 & Toril Johannessen 'Words and Years', Screen prints, 2010–2016



Luna Lund Jensen 'Petrified Bodies', 2024



Jon Benjamin Tallerås 'Changing the city that changes me', 2023



Jaana Laakkonen, 'sheets crusts reach', 2024





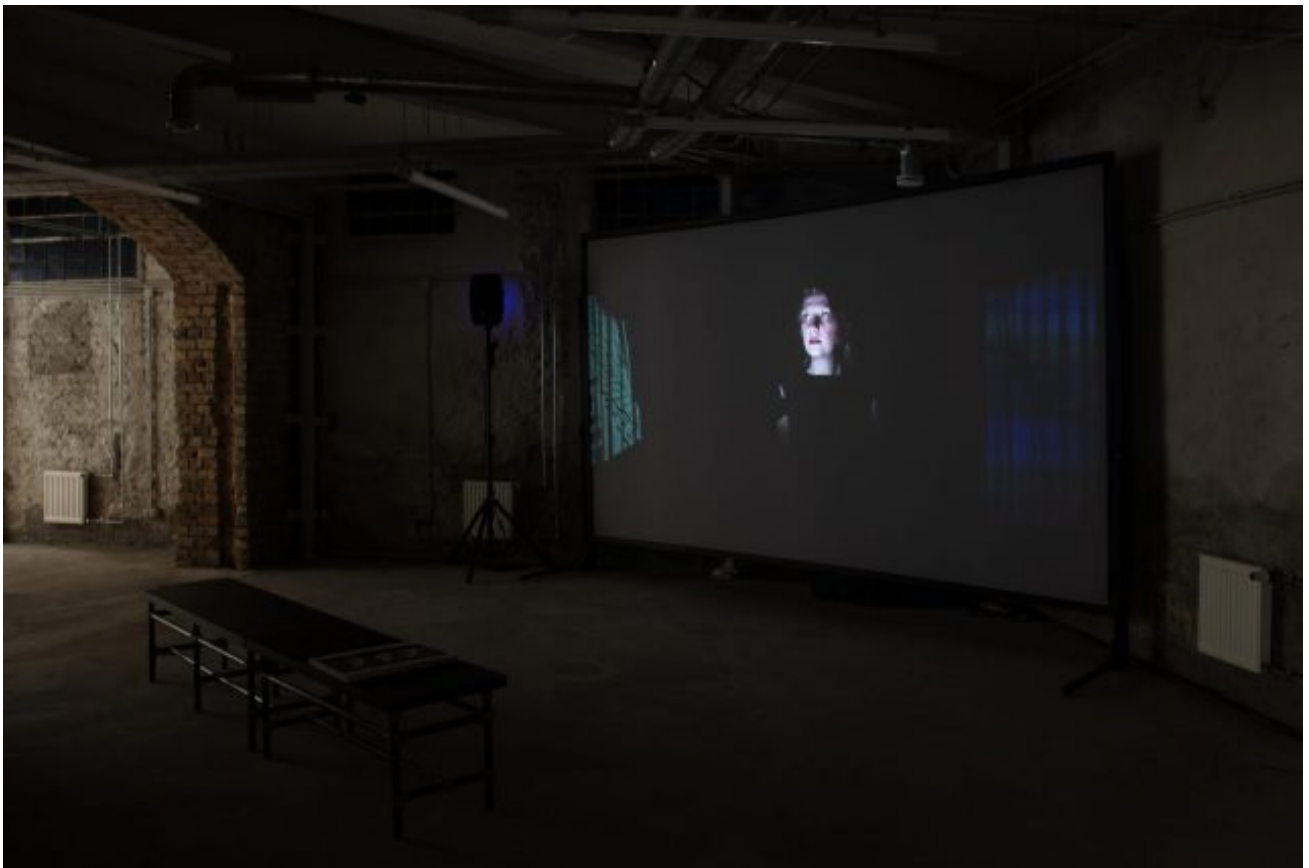
Kristoffer Ørum 'Monuments of a Fictional Past', 2024



Jon Benjamin Tallerås 'I watched the sun rise over the cliffs', 2024 & Kristoffer Ørum, 'Monuments of a Fictional Past', 2024



Kristoffer Ørum 'Monuments of a Fictional Past', 2024



Lou Mouw & Isabella Solar Villaseca 'They Know We Know They Lie', 2024



Luīze Rukšāne 'Everything Goes in an "O" (Circle)', 2024



Aimée Zito Lema 'Rond de Jambe', 2015



Jeremy Deller 'Putin's Happy', 2019



Monia Ben Hamouda  
'About Telepathy and other Violences VI (Aniconism as Figuration Urgency)', 2023



Luīze Rukšāne 'Everything Goes in an "O" (Circle)', 2024



Yuri Pattison 'open stacks', 2023–ongoing



Eero Yli-Vakkuri 'Our Greatest Times', 2024



Līga Spunde 'Episodes About Not Knowing How It Will Be / Riga Edition', 2024



Vidha Saumya 'Naap (measure)', 2008



Linda Bojšakova 'Unearthed', 2024



Linda Bojšakova 'Unearthed', 2024



Jaana Laakkonen, 'sheets crusts reach', 2024





Laura Soisalon-Soininen 'Scales', installation, 2024



Luna Lund Jensen 'Dreaming of dunes, and valleys of glass', 2022