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Eco-Critical Artistic Perspectives in the 'Missing' Exhibition at Tartu Art House

October 8, 2024

Author Francesca Arnavas



Flo Kasearu & Elina Vītola. Missing, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola

'I am a wanderer drifting through the waters.' The beginning of Kristina Õllek and Kert Viart's video installation 'As Earliest Carrier Emerges' might somehow also provide a description for the whole of the 'Missing' exhibition. Reams of water, and wandering through them, is a *leitmotif* of many of the artworks included. The visitors themselves experience the feeling of softly travelling through enchanted and enchanting waters. Fiona Tan, another featured artist (with the video installation

Depot), describes her creative process as 'an aquatic voyage'.^[1] Perhaps the depths of the sea populated by mysterious and archaic creatures, and the poetic imagery connected with them, offer the ideal vehicle for artistic reflections on our comprehension of nature, on extinction, on invasion, and on interrelationships among species. The exhibition, held in Tartu Art House and curated by

Marie-Laure Delaporte and Sara Bédard-Goulet, has the declared goal to ‘purposefully blur the boundaries between art and science to offer individual takes on environmental decline’ (in the words of the curators). Meandering through the depths of the exhibition’s rooms, my impression was of being led from one question to another, as if from one wave in the sea to another: all the works ask relevant and pressing questions about the environment, its complexities, and the relationships between human beings and other creatures living in it.

Eco-critical perspectives abound nowadays in artistic and literary manifestations: cultural artefacts help us reflect on our physical and material presence in the world, and on how this presence impacts and is impacted by our surroundings. Stacy Alaimo is one of several theorists who has proposed a shift in how we think about human and non-human bodies: the traditional scientific idea placing the human being, and its scientific, analysing and colonising eye, at the centre of the world is challenged by a conception where human corporeality is re-imagined as ‘trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world’. This idea ‘underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from “the environment”.’^[2] This perspective, often referred to as a ‘posthuman’ viewpoint, also entails the emergence of alternative conceptions of what ‘matter’ is, and how its agency is articulated, even in ways that are unexpected, surprising and impossible to label through human standards. The ‘Missing’ exhibition explores this posthuman and eco-critical stance through the artworks shown, which highlight the material agency of non-human creatures, and insist on suggesting novel possibilities to see and interpret it: a new openness.



Fiona Tan. Depot. Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Linda Knight. Mapping Extinction II. Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Tuning Group (Samuel Collins & Mo Langmuir), A Space for Solastalgia: Study & Logbook. Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola

The works shown in the exhibition pertain to different media: video installations (Kristina Õllek and Kert Viart, Fiona Tan, Justine Blau, Eliza Gleize), items from the University of Tartu's Natural History Museum (such as bone fragments, in the work of Flo Kasearu and Elina Vitola), drawings and woodcuts on paper (Linda Knight, Katrin Gattinger), a big textile installation (Louise Gügi), a sound installation (Diana Lelonek), bisque-fired clay depictions of endangered British birds (Jayne Ivimey), and an interesting series of 'anthotypes' (Katrin Gattinger). There are also archival digital prints on canvas (Ackroyd and Harvey), a poem (Jaan Kaplinski), and photographs (Alain Delorme). A more 'intangible' work of spatial and interactive art is proposed by Samuel Collins and Mo Langmuir.

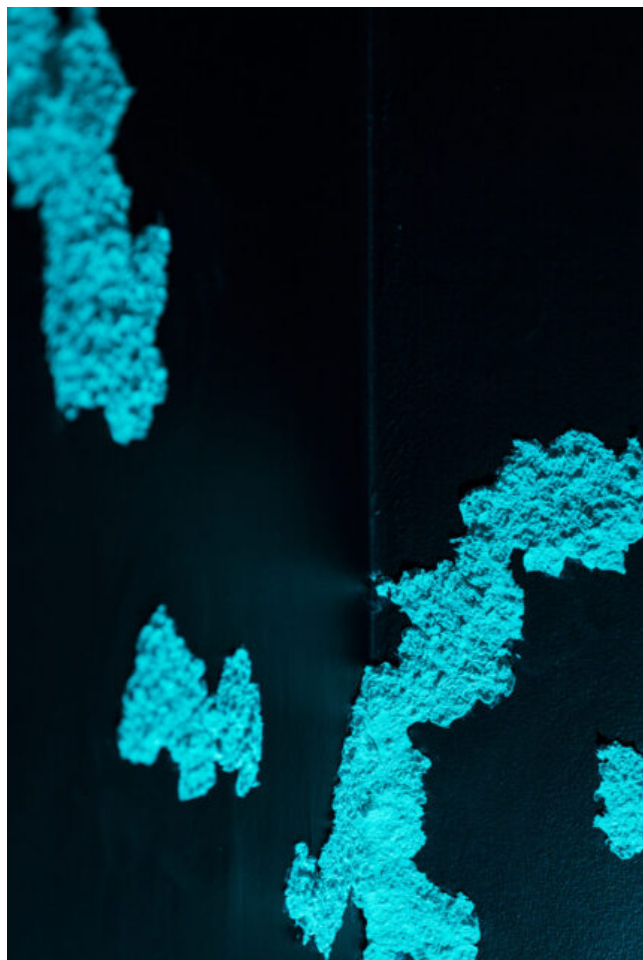
Through this wide variety of media, the artists often intentionally employ scientific methods, such as mapping and collecting, and items from natural history museums; the latter being both physically present in the artworks (in the above-mentioned piece by Flo Kasearu and Elina Vitola) and visually represented in Fiona Tan's video installation. The artworks ask questions about how we treat and categorise natural specimens, criticising the traditional anthropocentric scientific method, and at the same time proposing new ways to interact with them. As the artist Linda Knight points out with her series of drawings, she has tried to take 'a speculative, more-than-human ontological position', using 'inefficient mapping as an experimental cartographic practice and non-representational

methodological protocol for attuning to the subaltern genealogies of sites and places'.^[3] Katrin Gattinger's pieces are created through the anthotype process, which uses the photosensitivity of plants to produce images. More specifically, the images produced by Gattinger with a poppy and a black geranium are meant to represent a Breton octopus. In this sense, they display a potential not entirely human way to depict a natural being, through a natural process where other natural beings are involved.

The exhibition also has the aim to directly involve visitors, making them actively reflect upon their own interactions with the environment: in this sense, Ackroyd and Harvey's art piece comprises an open invitation to visitors, who are encouraged to overwrite a species of their choice on a canvas where the names of endangered species are already faintly printed. In this way, they bring to attention that particular species, and are thus stimulated to think about it. Samuel Collins and Mo Langmuir's *A Space for Solastalgia*, which is to be found both indoors and outdoors, provides visitors with a space to experience this very specifically environment-based feeling. Solastalgia is a word coined by combining the Latin *solacium* (comfort) and the Greek root *-algia* (pain), and is used to describe a feeling of melancholia and sadness (an emotion akin to grief) experienced as a consequence of environmental change. The artists thus urge visitors to explore and indulge in this feeling, asking them directly 'Can you think of an example from your own life?' and encourage them to share their thoughts in a notebook made available in the room. The pages written by the public are heartfelt and nostalgic descriptions of destroyed forests and natural places from their childhood that have been changed and mutilated because of harmful human interventions. Hence, the scope of the exhibition has a wider reach, not only to display and raise awareness, through a fruitful and creative collaboration of art and science, but also to make the public think about their own personal experiences, actively engaging them.



Kristina Õllek & Kert Viart. As Earliest Carrier Emerges, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Kristina Õllek & Kert Viart. As Earliest Carrier Emerges, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen

I would like to return to the water theme, which is so widespread in this inspiring exhibition. The protagonist of Öllek and Viart's video installation is a jellyfish (the wanderer), and the question insistently asked while the translucent creature moves across oceans is 'The wanderer wonders: Who invades who?' In Tan's video, the narrating voice keeps coming back to sea-related words 'sea-lily, sea-lion, sea-dragon, sea-urchin', the voice repeats like a strange lullaby, providing speculations and reflections on the dreams of fish, the memories of octopuses, and the myth of the narwhal's horn (the narwhal is the sea unicorn) used against melancholy. In the meantime, images of bottled sea-specimens appear in front of the audience's eyes. In Eliza Gleize's video, made through the video game *Second Life* many sea creatures feature, particularly a mermaid singing a haunting song about mistreated bodies. The exhibition's topic and artworks offer a wider reflection on the environment and extinction in general, but the thematic recurrence of watery beings and watery realms seems to recall what Astrida Neimanis writes about the physical and symbolic function of water in a posthuman perspective. Our own watery nature, Neimanis points out, works as a means to highlight the intermeshing of beings in a discourse about evolution and extinction: 'Our watery relations within (or more accurately: as) a more-than-human hydrocommons thus present a challenge to anthropocentrism, and the privileging of the human as the sole or primary site of embodiment.'^[4] 'Missing' is precisely focused on this challenge to anthropocentrism, creating an interactive and persuasive artistic space which inspires the audience to re-think environment-related categories.

[1] Fiona Tan, 'Depot', <https://fionatan.nl/publication/depot>

[2] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 2.

[3] Linda Knights, 'Mapping Extinctions', <https://lindaknight.org/mapping-extinctions/>

[4] Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (Bloomsbury 2017), p. 2.



Left: Linda Knight. Mapping Extinction II. Right: Justine Blau. Darwin's Finches, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Left: Katrin Gattinger. Drawing with Animals. Right: Katrin Gattinger. Hiding Amidst the Blossoms (Octopus Vulgaris). Front: Diana Lelonek. Endling, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Louise Gügi. Larves! Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



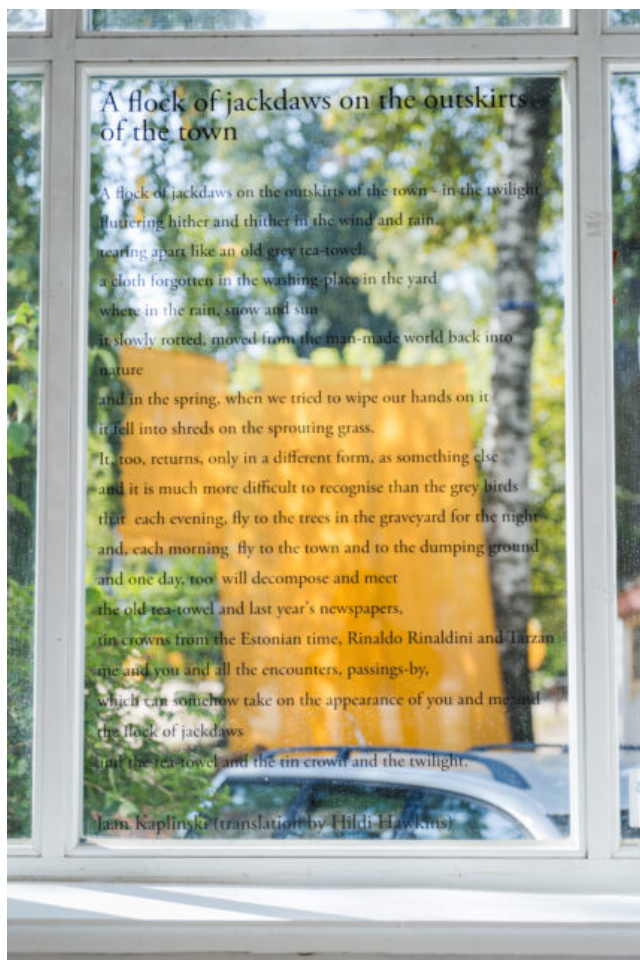
Katrin Gattinger. Hiding Amidst the Blossoms (Octopus Vulgaris), Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Katrin Gattinger. Hiding Amidst the Blossoms (Octopus Vulgaris), Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Front: Jayne Ivimey. Bird by Bird (The Red List of Endangered British Birds). Back: Alain Delorme. Murmurations, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Jaan Kaplinski, A Flock of Jackdaws on the Outskirts of the Town, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jügen Vainola



Ackroyd & Harvey. Seeing Red.. Overdrawn, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Tuning Group (Samuel Collins & Mo Langmuir), A Space for Solastalgia: Garden, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Tuning Group (Samuel Collins & Mo Langmuir), A Space for Solastalgia: Garden, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola



Flo Kasearu & Elina Vītola. Missing, Tartu Art House, 2024. Photo: Jürgen Vainola

‘Living in today’s system is living in a permanent and daily contradiction’—Interview with Paco Barragán

October 8, 2024

Author Dovydas Laurinaitis



Paco Barragán. Photo by Mika Savic iu te . Courtesy of ArtVilnius

Just this last week, ArtVilnius celebrated its 15th anniversary. As the biggest art fair in the Baltics, it spans five of LITEXPO’s halls, fusing offerings from local and international galleries with curated exhibitions, architecture and interior design showrooms, talks and awards. One such speaker at this year’s edition was Paco Barragán, writer, curator and art historian, who has written extensively over the last 16 years about art fairs, analysing their emerging place in the art world, especially in dialogue with other platforms such as biennials. Up until last weekend, I had never visited an art fair, for the simple reason that I wouldn’t be able to afford a single work there. I have never been a fan of window shopping, and perhaps too tied up in the idea that the ‘art market’ was an entity whose breath always smelt of lingering bitterness. This is why I was curious to find out what it was about the art fair as an event that impassioned Paco so.

Paco Barragán: It’s very simple, in Spain, if you live in Madrid, the main contact point with art is the ARCOmadrid art fair. For the people who are not specifically from the art world, the entry point is always the art fair because it’s not elitist; you go there and you are one among maybe a hundred thousand people. We had 40 years of dictatorship and it was ARCOmadrid that made us catch up, not the Reina Sofía museum. It was a moment in time when all these key players coalesced and participated—the state government, the regional government, the municipality, the chamber of commerce, also Caja Madrid, the local savings bank. In the 80s, there weren’t many contemporary art museums. I think the Reina Sofía started in 1992, but ARCOmadrid started in 1982 and they were bringing in international people to do panels.

Dovydas Laurinaitis: I was going to ask you about ARCOmadrid as in previous interviews, you've spoken about how it helped to transform its surroundings. Your talk at ArtVilnius is all about art fairs as tools of soft power, and Lithuania has a similar story to Spain, in the sense that after independence, there was a huge, concerted effort to advertise ourselves to the world and become part of various institutions. After a period of sacrifices, we are now at a point of growing prosperity. I'm curious how you would compare these two contexts, and how these art fairs, as instruments of soft power, help to transform their surroundings.

PB: Whether we like it or not, in today's capitalism, it's not politics, religion or philosophy that get people to sit around the same table—it's culture, an expanded idea of culture. It doesn't matter if it's a tennis tournament, the Olympics, a pop concert, art fairs, biennials or museums with blockbuster exhibitions, they're all part of this culture capitalism. Especially in the art world, you have to consider that since the 90s, everything has changed. In the US, it was always private so they needed to look for money and sell tickets, and the idea of a blockbuster was normal. But in Europe, since the 90s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the acceptance of neoliberalism by all the governments without critique, public funding has been decreasing everywhere. That means that you have to become part of the market and the art world has become part of the market and spectacle culture. In this new cultural landscape, most cities that don't have a big, important, relevant artistic structure, which Vilnius doesn't have—it's not like London or New York where you have these big museums and a solid gallery network—these cities need to compete with each other to attract high-end tourism. In a way, Vilnius has something exotic. I don't know if it's exotic enough like China or Brazil to get access to the big museums like MOMA and Tate, but it's exotic. You also want an art fair for the local audience to come in touch with contemporary art, and it's lowering the threshold for the general public. As an artist, you need galleries and the art market to sell your work. Art fairs have a certain objective that is very clear. When I talk about soft power, an art fair is a positive way for a country to showcase itself.



ArtVilnius'24. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



ArtVilnius'24. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

DL: I want to read your own quote back to you from 2008: ‘The debate about the market, the spirituality of art and the commodification of art belong in the last century. It’s more interesting to comprehend why art fairs have become so important, even if we consider them excessive.’. I found this fascinating because, for me, these debates are not of the last century, they feel very current. Especially, if we talk about the impact of AI, the internet, NFTs and so on, it feels like this discourse on the commodification of art has become more mainstream than ever before, and you have people totally uninvolved with the art world considering what is the value of art, what are we willing to pay for it, what quality are we satisfied with. Much later, you said your views from 2008 were very optimistic. So I want to put these things together and ask if you stand behind the assertion these debates and questions don’t belong in this century and why your views from that time, in your own words, were so optimistic.

PB: Eight years ago, working as a curator, I said to myself, ‘I don’t know anything’. Meaning, what you learn through art history is just a stupid narrative. You have to learn about the making of the art market, you have to research the history of collecting, you have to study museums. If you want to be a curator, you need to know all this. Most of the museums are the result of private decisions by aristocratic, bourgeois people. When you start paddling back in time, to look at Greece or Rome until today, and you read how the modern art market was made, it was always about commodification. But it was always a very small group of people interested in art. Even in the 1970s, when you read about dealers who went to art fairs in Basel and Cologne, they say clearly maybe 70 people came and then, one dealer went to have dinner with two artists and that was it. This is what I’m going to address in my talk at ArtVilnius. It’s from the 90s onwards that art became popular because trendy magazines started to think artists like Damien Hirst seemed like funky figures they could write about. You also have to consider how neoliberalism changed the whole game, and the most important game-changer was low-cost travel—what made art a global thing is being able to fly cheaply.

Yes, I was very optimistic when I did my first book. Those were the years when art fairs became curatorial platforms. As of today, you can’t imagine an art fair without a curated section. But then, I

came to the conclusion that all of that was just fireworks. It's fun, it's great, art fairs want to be like biennials, they want to have some artistic respectability. In the end, an art fair is a place where you go to buy and sell art. You have all these self-reflective panels about ecology, saving the world and feminism, which is all nonsense at an art fair. The big problem I see is that at many big art fairs, these parallel activities are taking collectors away from the fair, which is madness. It is good for the collectors but not for artists, because if you paid to be there, you want the collectors to be at the fair. The dealers were complaining, and they were right! I think this global art fair or experiential model has run its course. It's totally devaluated. You go to Miami and you have 30 parallel art fairs. That's insane! I was more positive about it, but now I don't appreciate it. I think art fairs need to be more professional and to the point. If you want to do all the other stuff, you can do a different kind of event like a festival or biennial. We need to call things by their name. And then, commodification has always been an issue, and the art world, until the 90s was very elitist and small, so commodification existing on a small-scale, it wasn't really an issue.

DL: But how much of that has to do with the relative explosion in economic prosperity? Those who have access to participate fully in the buying and selling within the art market also have to accumulate a certain amount of wealth, which is a barrier to entry, it's a different kind of elitism. Is it fair to say that elitism isn't present anymore?

PB: Let's cut to the chase—the art world has always been elitist. If you look from the end of the 19th century until today, most of the people in the art world are bourgeois. If you were not, like Camille Pissarro, you read his letters and he's always worried about money. The art world, like it or not, is very elitist and it is very competitive, and if you don't have good connections, it's very difficult to survive. Every year, many people enter the art market and those who have been there, stay there. The number of collectors entering the art market is not the same. We have an excess of art and we don't have the same demand. For some reason, the art world is unable to address other potential clients and attract new audiences, especially young professionals. The professionals who traditionally bought art were doctors, dentists, lawyers... those people have lost money, and they are not buying as much art anymore. We have these new professionals working in computer science, for example, and they're not buying art.

DL: I think that opens up a bigger question related to the inherent value of art, which could be understood as the 'spirituality of art', going back to your 2008 quote. When you can replicate and 3D print a model of any sculpture you want, it becomes a bit redundant to buy something from an artist. But I do want to ask—

PB: Hold on. I want to add something, which is very important to what we're addressing. It's the fact the profile of the collector has changed completely. I would call it a neoliberal profile. The key collector in the 60s and 70s was Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, he was part of the aristocracy, he travelled, he listened, bought, never speculated, sold, donated. Then, the iconic collector in the 80s and beginning of the 90s was Charles Saatchi, he was a publicist and a dealer. Today's collectors, like Steve Cohen, come from hedge funds, they don't even go to see the art or attend galleries, they buy at auctions. The profile of the collector has changed radically. To this person, people like Saatchi are role models, they just want to buy quickly, sell and make big bucks. This is becoming a whole different game. The key thing is that there is less and less knowledge, especially among collectors. The big galleries don't care, because they sell what the collector wants and this is also the reason why there is so much kitsch in the art world today. That's horrible, but kitsch is high culture. Not only Koons, Kusama but also Gerhard Richter; all those lovely abstractions have become the international kitsch style. In every apartment, you have that stupid abstraction with yellow and green... it's a matter of knowledge. This lack of knowledge is also affecting museums because it's these people with money who are on the committees, who are the trustees. This whole neoliberal thing, the money thing, is affecting art on all levels.



ArtVilnius'24. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

DL: On this note, I have another quote from you: 'The worst thing to happen to artists was art history. It pushed artists into a very subservient and insignificant role'. To me, art history has always been inseparable from the art market. What becomes art history is usually the thing that was sold, popularised and accumulated. My question to you is what if the worst thing to happen to artists was the art market? I'm not quite sure what your position is on this 'new capitalism', it sounds like there is some critique in it, but also an acceptance of the fatalism of capitalism, which the 'art market' represents: giving up on resisting and trying to find itself within this model. This feels counterintuitive to the idea of an artist as the one who is questioning and trying to reveal something about these structures, instead of becoming subservient to them.

PB: I think historically, it hasn't changed much. If you look at art history, at the Renaissance and the Baroque, the Medici and Raphael or Michelangelo, they were paid artists. Whether you have a boss, or you are Velázquez and work as the royal painter, you have to follow certain guides. Velázquez painted portraits of kings, but he was obliged to paint them in a certain way to serve a certain ideology. To me, it's not a big change. You work for a boss—you have to adapt and paint what the Medici wanted. You work for yourself, and you have to paint what you think people will buy. That's not much of a difference. You have to sell your art. About capitalism, there's no longer any opposition possible—

DL: Do you believe that, or is that how you observe things?

PB: No, there is no opposition possible. It's surrounding us on all levels, psychologically, physically... For some reason, today's intellectuals are unable to think of a system beyond capitalism, because when you think of post-capitalism, people think of communism or something like China, a mix of dictatorship. But a third system, I don't see big intellectuals like Slavoj Žižek proposing a different system. They critique all capitalism but they are part of it. For example, I paid Žižek ten thousand euros for a talk, so please... Hal Foster, and all these guys—it's very cool to be a critic when you live as a bourgeois. Naomi Klein—she has a one-and-a-half-million-dollar loft. Living in today's system is

living in a permanent and daily contradiction. The art market is a perfect example of these contradictions, it's a reflection of the rest of society. Also, in the last few years, for some reason, they have sold the idea that art could be a good investment so there has been a lot of speculation in the art market. I don't think it's a good investment. I think most things people have bought will be worth nothing.



ArtVilnius'24. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

DL: For the last question I would like to ask, you've spoken a lot about the distinctions between biennials and art fairs, such as the interpassive visitor at biennials versus the visitor that has been scheduled for at art fairs, or the narrative of biennials versus the non-narrative of art fairs, but a particular distinction I wanted your opinion on, is to what extent are art fairs able to avoid becoming overshadowed by their surrounding politics? We see at recent editions of the Venice Biennale, there have been protests and discussions about who is participating, and who shouldn't be allowed to participate. There's cynicism about the theme, for example, 'Foreigners Everywhere' against the background of colonial, imperialist politics. Is that the benefit of an art fair, that it is sort of politically vacuous as a place of commerce, so it almost has a neutrality that allows it to escape being implicated?

PB: You explained it properly, that's not the case with an art fair. But a biennial is politics because curators are social activists. They think they're going to save the world. If they work properly, a biennial should create this kind of trouble. It's also an instrument of soft power but it works from a different angle. If we establish a difference, a biennial is 'good' politics and 'good' soft power, and art fairs are 'bad' soft power. But this is a black and white distinction and reality is much more complex, and I think art fairs like ArtVilnius are very useful and necessary platforms. Biennials are intellectual, they're about saving the world, saving the seas, saving humanity... and then, the curators jump on business class.

DL: The contradictions of capitalism once again rear their ugly head—

PB: The contradictions of living it.

Content Coloured All Confused or Awash with Uncoded Crackles

October 9, 2024

Author Toby Üpson



Reinis Lismanis: Audit, 12 September - 12 October 2024, Gerald Moore Gallery, London, UK

It seems appropriate that I am approaching the artworks included in 'Audit' digitally, across my phone, laptop and tablet computer screens. Personally, reviewing Reinis Lismanis' paintings in this way evokes a sense of stuttery LCD-like latency; a tone-of-feel that complements the materialities of Lismanis' tech-coloured streams as they mutter breathlessly. My thoughts bleed into these backlit moments, filling the space between them, like magnetised ink, overfilling them too, like an error in printing or a screen clogged by rain. Suspended between buffering images and the arrival of words, my eyes ebb and flow; I drift from screen to screen to screen, then out to my immediate surroundings, a coffee cup, a design magazine, before returning, again and again, to screen and screen. This is a particularly nonsensical way of surveying, both the constitutive parts of this exhibition as well as the casual clutter that logs my homely living. It is a process whereby time and space get lost in a spiral of preambled looking, where even the smallest of chance encounters invites ruminative serendipity. To say Lismanis' artworks load as a clockwise swells is a truism. But hold up, this is not a siloed chrono- or logical movement, nothing like the streamlined imagery appearing on my ever optimised news feed. Lismanis' artworks crystallise at different speeds, through innately painterly motions. Like a wave, his artworks become with and through a breaching of material borders; they become through pulsating leaks; through a process where a machine's functioning is pushed to its tipping point. That is, here, an artistic process perforates standardised movements, so as to allow little details to shimmer anomalous. In a way, Lismanis' paintings instantiate how images

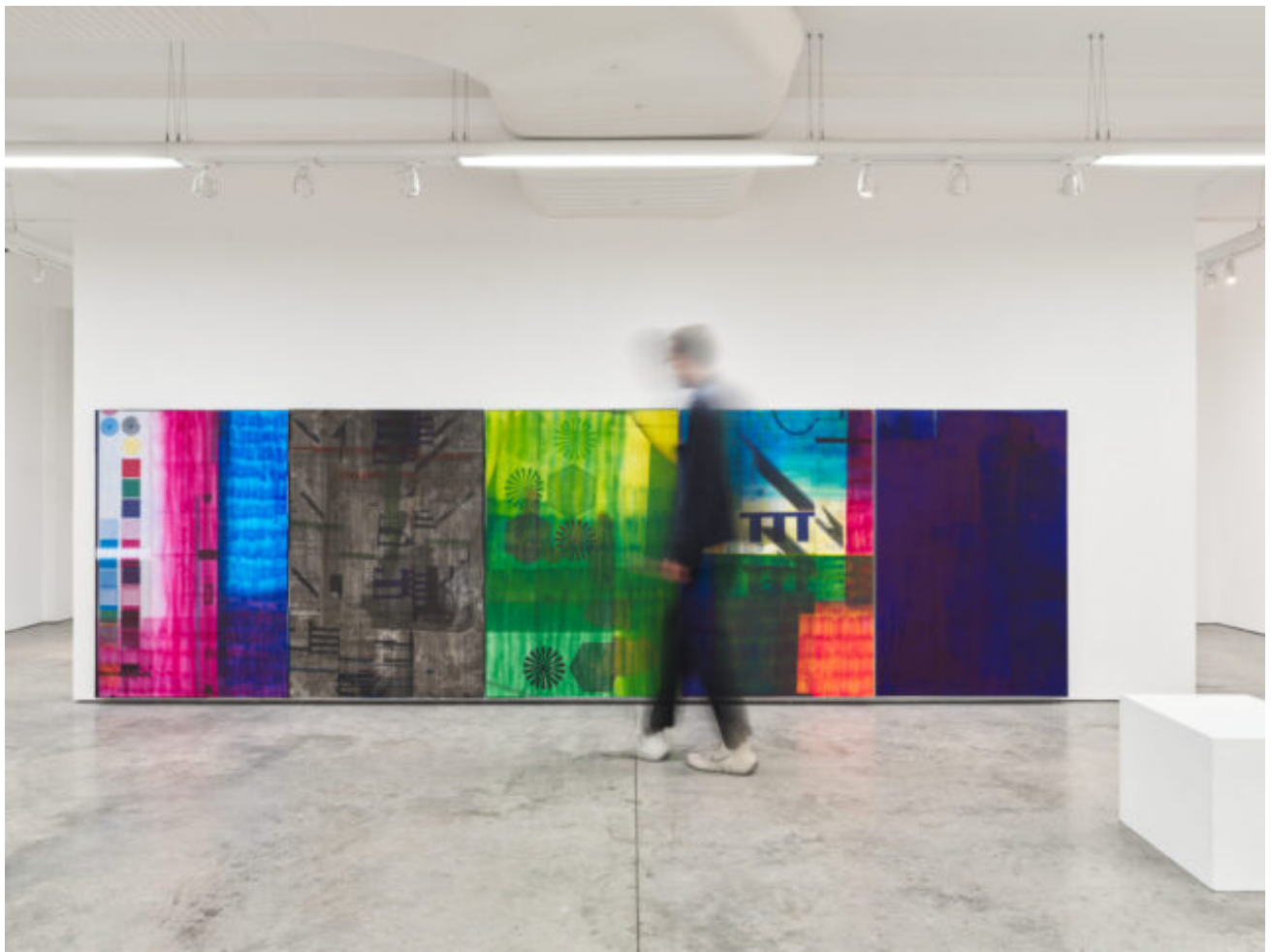
wash onto and across my screens, foregrounding the central throbs of creation (those 'background' operations that circle a burgeoning image's life, which we ignore, or vilify, as meek procedural residue soon be upgraded out of existence). To flow deeper into this philosophical fuzz, we can think about this asynchronicity in relation to the death of time: if the vertical structures of doom-scrolling (a downward whirl that pulls the stuff of everyday life from its plain of sensual existence) kill time then the becoming nature of Lismanis' artworks reincarnate a horizon (a horizontal plain and place-time beyond knowing, where the commodification of operations is futile because everything is felt as a means not as an ends). That is, his paintings picture a life's becoming in and as an inky haze. I feel this. Sitting before Lismanis' images as they load, my eyes drift free from a small screen's vertical death grip with the stuffy refuse of and on my horizon becoming newly animate and available. I wonder if there is there something political in this practice (in this leaky load looking; in this reclaiming of image space, and spaces in-between; the shift from vertical death to horizontal lifelines; in surveying assurances and making set standards shake; in the timorous picturing of horizons?), an audit provokes organisational fear after all. To me, Lismanis' seems like a practice of *refraction*, to use a loaded phrase: ***a change in direction, or a division in parts, caused by some oblique shift in medium***. Or at least this seems like a practice where the process of refraction becomes a protagonist. With production and product confused, systemic markers, once fobbed off as merely form bearing and faulty, lag or tip-tap anew with life. Appearing soft, as if thumbled, worn-out or frozen on route to a phone's feed, the small parts of this exhibition have an enlivening touch; I feel like we could touch them or that they have already been touched and we are now left with the painted traces of an existence unmoored from deadtime operations. This audit is about the joy of looking, looking deeply at, with and around. It is an exhibition coloured by a life's refuse and its constituting details. It is a review of how things bleed together, all leaky and ... *loading* ...

Reinis Lismanis 'Audit'

Gerald Moore Gallery, London

12 September – 12 October 2024

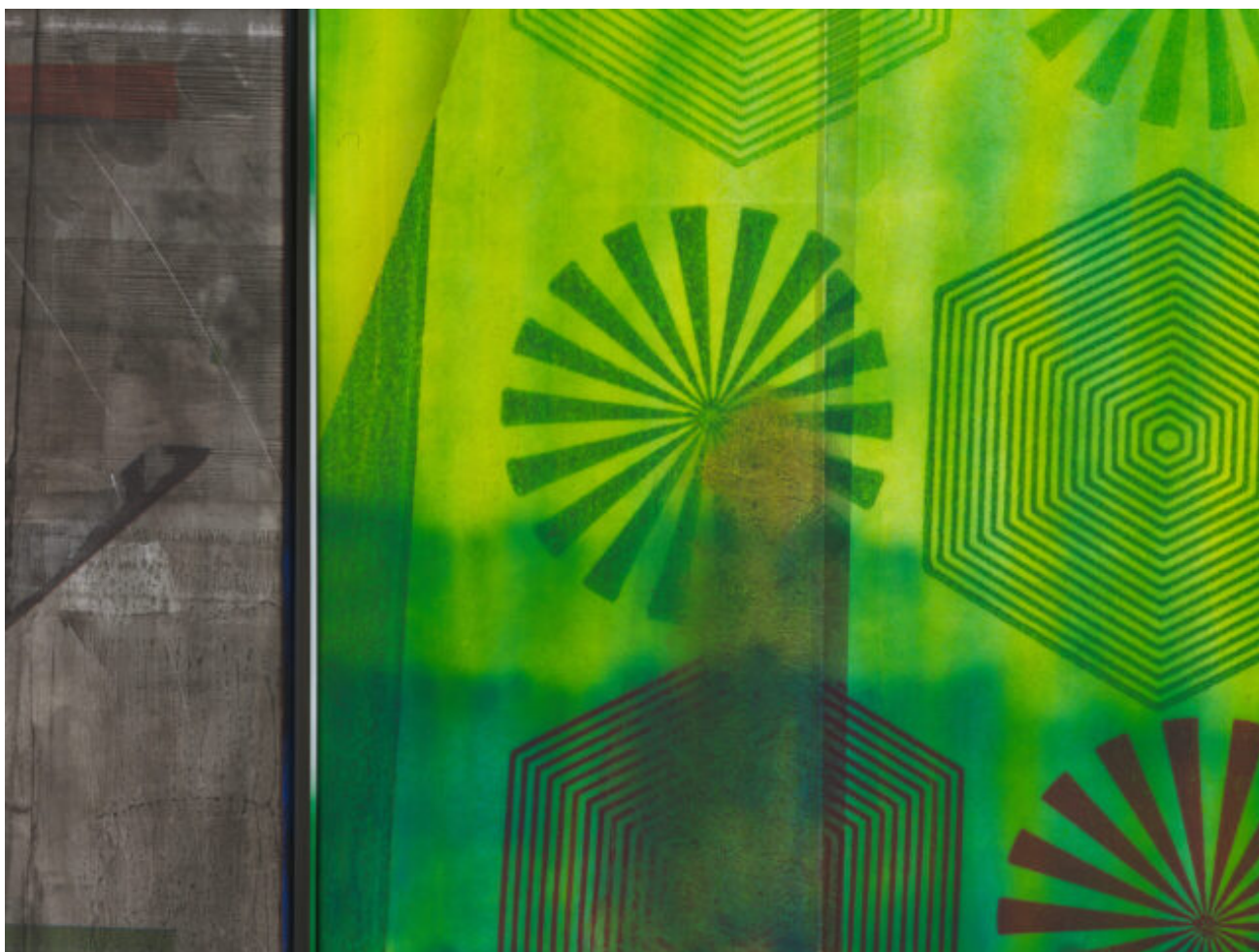
The photographs are courtesy of the artist.



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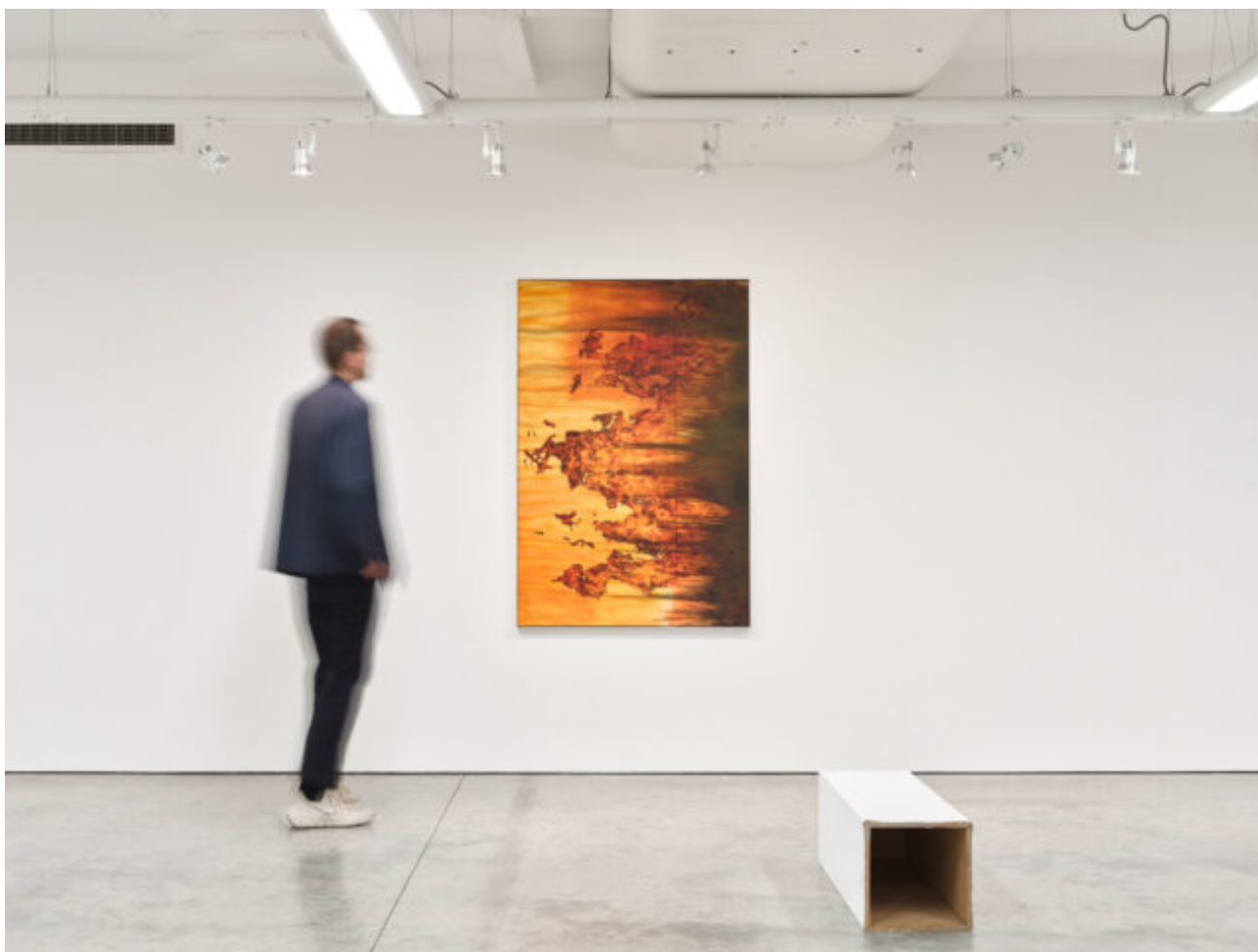
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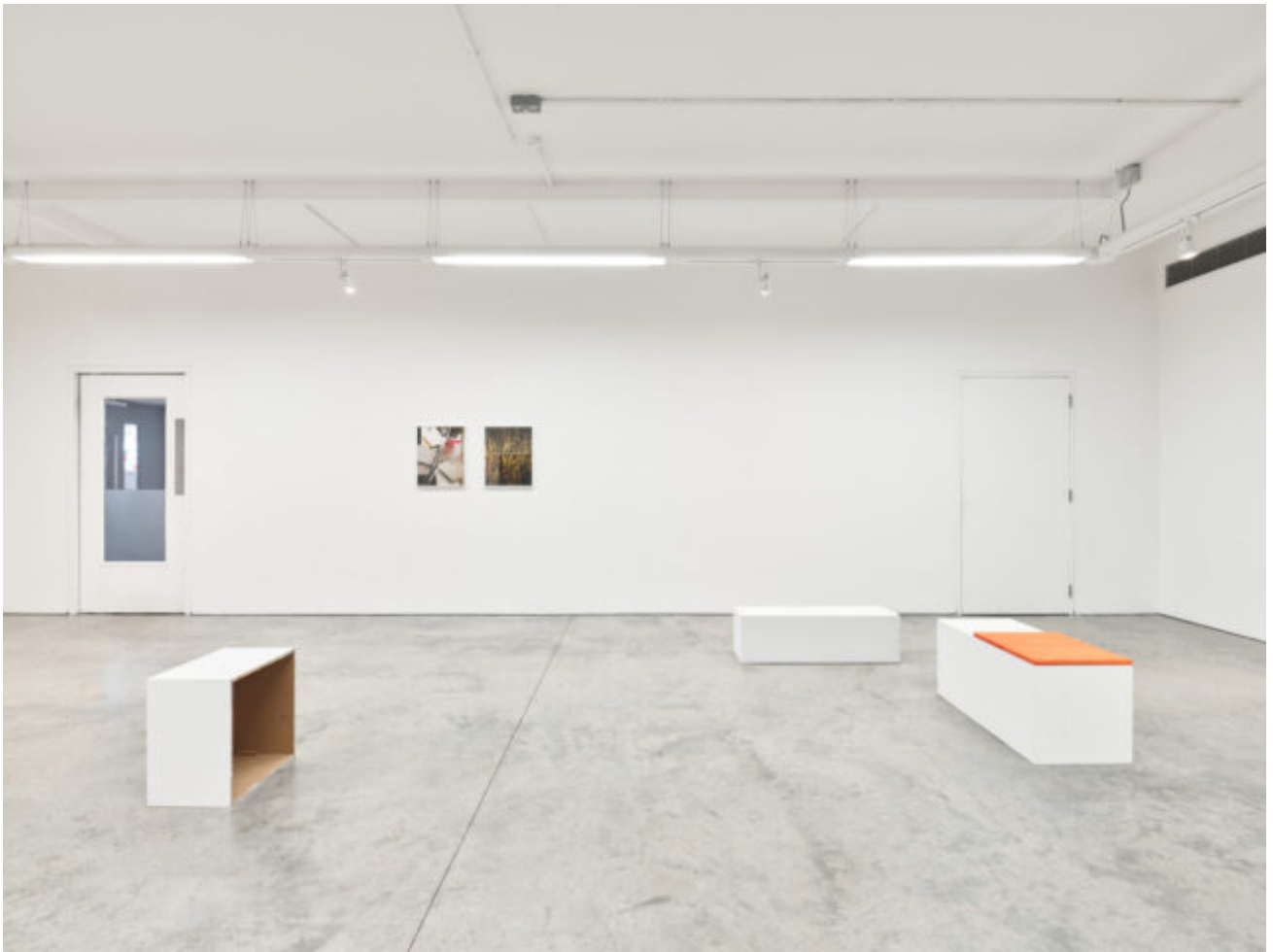
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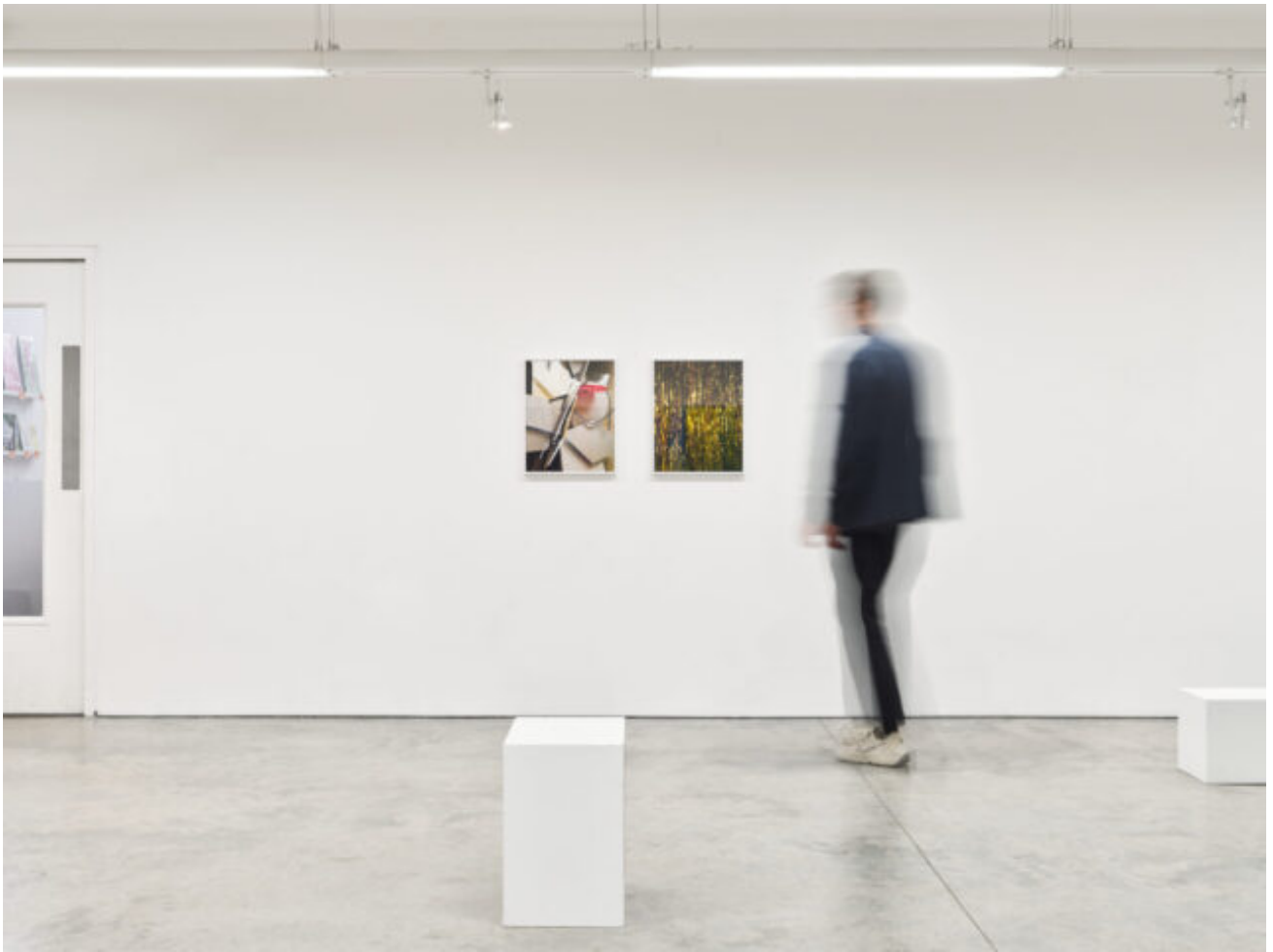
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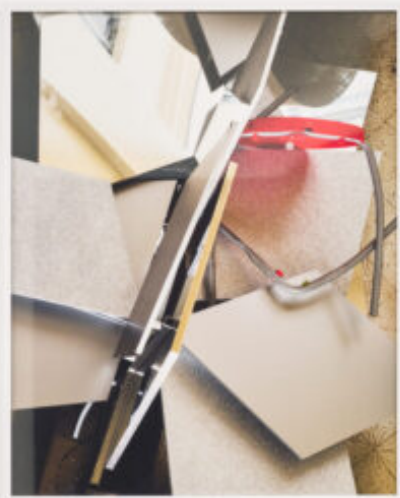
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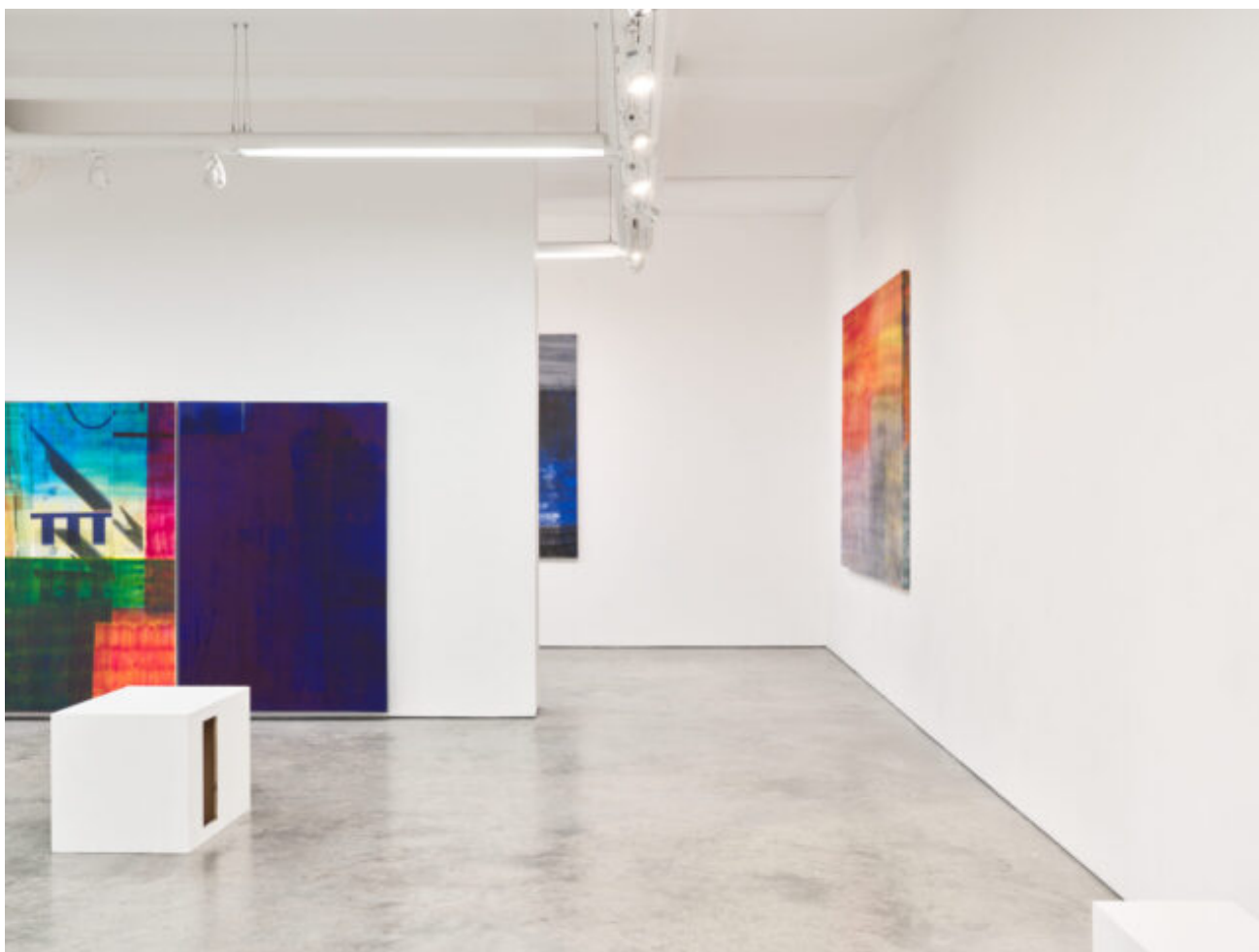
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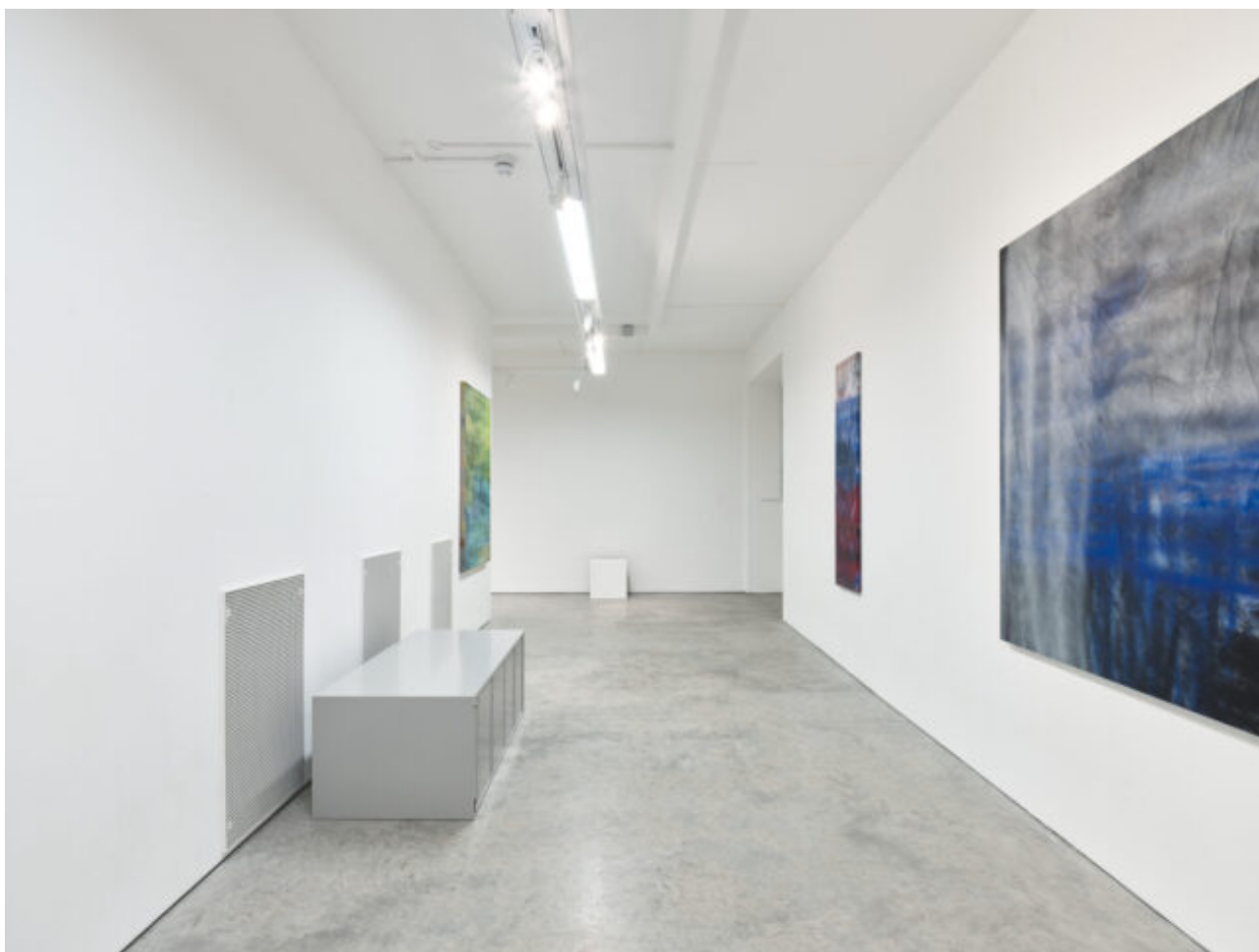
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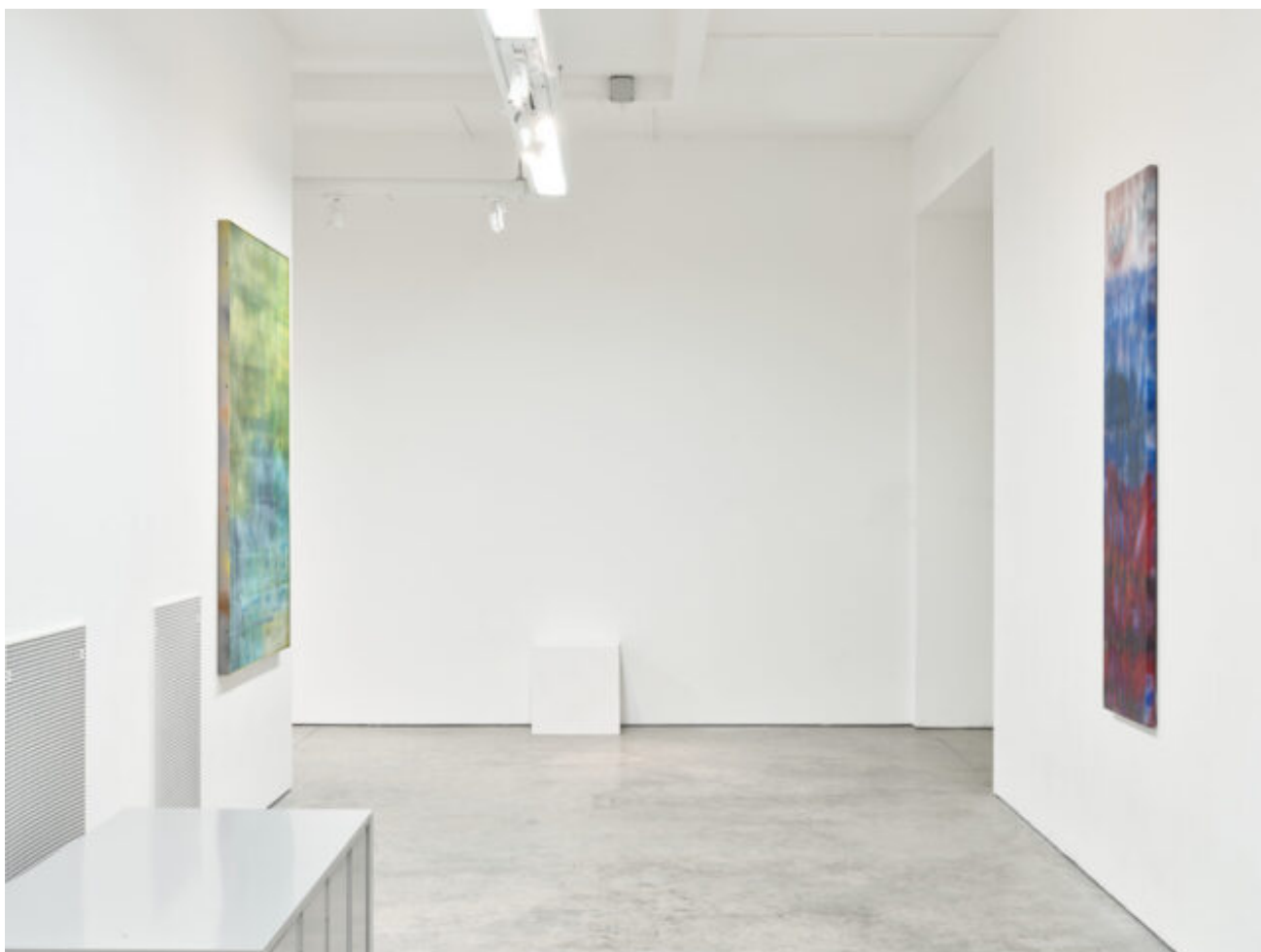
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An obligation to visualise tenderness. Conversation with Sirja-Liisa Eelma

October 9, 2024

Author Brigita Reinert



Artist Sirja-Liisa Eelma. Photo: Roman-Sten Tõnissoo

At the beginning of September, Sirja-Liisa Eelma's personal exhibition *Longing for lost space* opened in the project rooms on the third floor of the Kumu Art Museum. Eelma is a minimalist conceptual painter whose oeuvre mainly deals with emptiness, silence and the relationship between the visible and the invisible. The initial impulses for the exhibition *Longing for Lost Space* were a sense of silence and timelessness emanating from 19th-century Biedermeier interiors, and the possible meanings and interactions between hidden and visible spaces. Eelma was inspired by the painting *Interior of the Bluhm House in Tallinn* (1841) by Carl Sigismund Walther, included in the permanent exhibition of Kumu. This Baltic-German painting is exceptional because it depicts with historical accuracy a concrete family and their house in Tallinn. Eelma conducted thorough research and a picture analysis; she also visited two flats in the building at 57 Pikk Street and recorded her findings. Brigita Reinert, the curator of the exhibition, talked to the artist in more detail about her creative work.

Brigita Reinert: *What is your creative process like in general? Where do you find inspiration?*

Sirja-Liisa Eelma: I am inspired by a yearning for beauty, emptiness and silence, a yearning for something that I feel is absent. It has changed over time. In addition to beauty, I have a need to crystallise some sort of sparseness and in-betweenness. In connection with inspiration, it requires discipline to come to the studio, and then things start happening. Practice feeds inspiration and that in turn keeps me working.

I see emotionality around me, lots of stories and details, colours, shapes and images. Occasionally there is too much of all this and fatigue sets in. I wish to create a space with no single clear image, colour or narrative, where one can be quiet and at the same time look deeper into oneself.

BR: Some critics have used such key words as “meditativeness”, “emptiness” and “aesthetics of boredom” when writing about your oeuvre. The more I think about your work, the more I think about it as “the art of silence”. Where does this interest in silence come from? Can it be said that, in the modern world suffering from information overload, you prefer silence and want to create a meditative state in the viewer, to clear the mind of excessive noise?

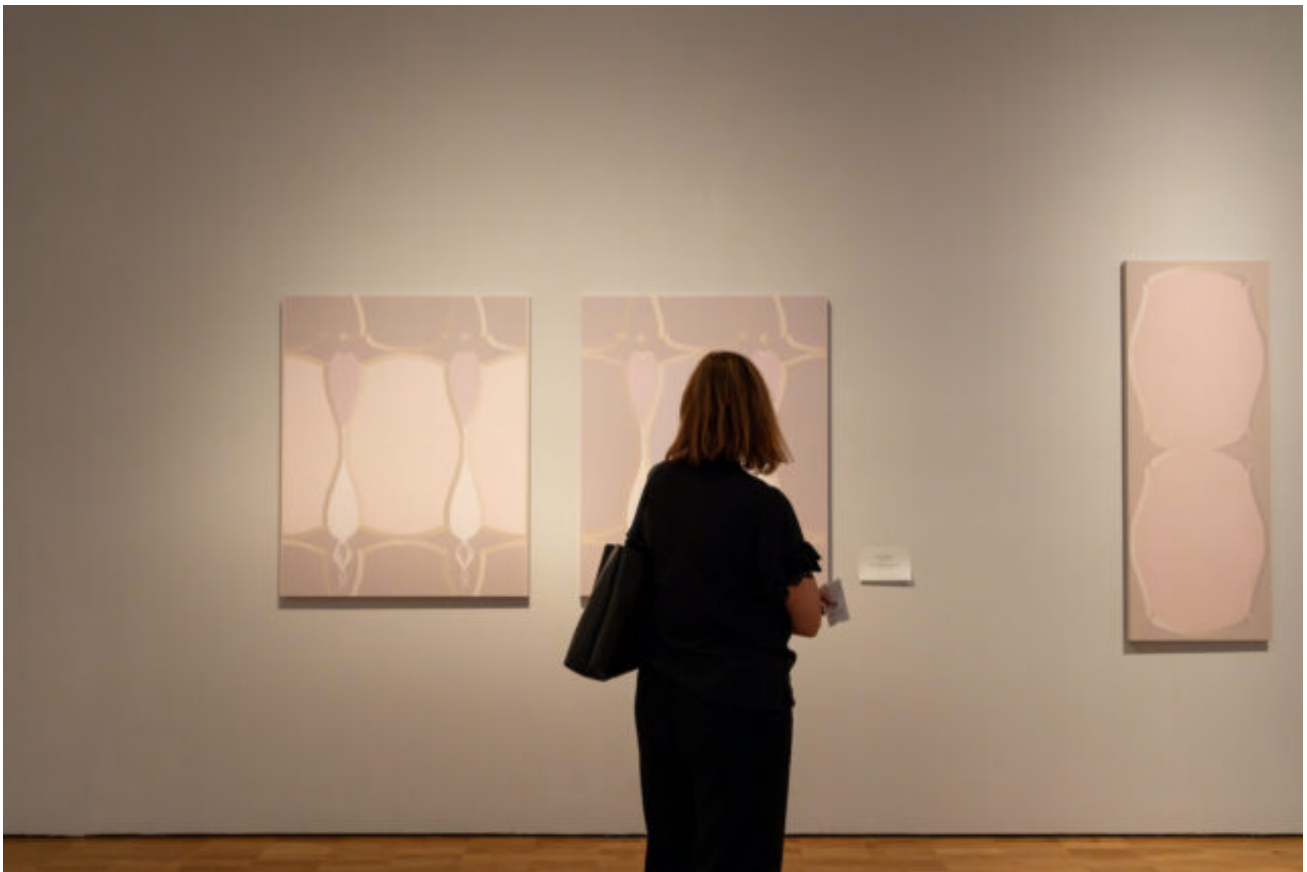
SLE: Yes, I strive for all of those things, but it is difficult for me to talk about it. For example, the expression “meditative silence” and the word “emptiness” are so heavily charged that they turn into heaviness. Everyone has so many experiences and associations with those words, plus some negative connotations. I would not like to be against anything. I’d rather be for something. That which I am for, or which I support, I think I can best express in painting.

BR: When you look at paintings, what do you observe and look for? What do you expect a painting to do?

SLE: I look for craftsmanship, but also simplicity and a certain sense of metaphysical timelessness. At a painting exhibition, I inevitably experience some sort of unconditional love. Paintings often bring about a physical reaction in me. I might, for example, feel an urge to start painting. The smell and feel of a painting, the presence of a mass of paint and the touch of the artist, the physical fixation of the image: all those things have effects.

BR: Do you think we can still speak of painters nowadays or should we describe them as contemporary artists who sometimes paint? How do you define yourself?

SLE: I like to think of myself as a painter, even when I am drawing, taking photos or making graphic art. I think via colours, pigments and oils, subtle and unambiguous proportions that are initially liquid and then become solid in particular forms. When I think of myself as a painter, I feel there is a link between myself and the people who painted before, and that the practice of painting and painters still exists.



BR: *How did you come to painting? Are there any artists who have inspired you?*

SLE: There was a particular moment in my childhood that led me to painting. When I was five years old, my father and I used to visit Aili and Toomas Vint every now and then. During one of those visits, I ended up in a dark corner of the corridor, and there was a door ajar that led to the studio. That smell, light and an unfinished painting on an easel: that moment was what I have been trying to recreate my entire life. Perhaps that is the room I have yearned to return to all this time.

BR: *How is painting different from other media and what does it enable an artist to do?*

SLE: Painting facilitates and also demands solitude. It is a truly direct, immediate and physical medium. I think that because there are so few hands-on art practices left, painting is becoming an elitist and special medium in the process of re-establishing itself.

In addition, painting takes time. It is a slow medium regardless of the style: even if it is expressive and fast, even if it is action painting, it is still time-consuming. The time spent is stored in the painting and it becomes available to the viewer. We seemingly get access to “more time” when we look at a painting. The time yielded by artists accumulates in paintings, which are like time banks. A painting gives its viewers a longer moment, like a gift, and it forces both the artist and viewers to take time off.

BR: *Time is an interesting topic in the context of painting. How do you perceive yourself: would you say you are a slow and analytical painter? How much improvisation does your painting process involve and how much do you plan beforehand?*

SLE: Yes, I like being slow: it enables me to spend more time in the company of a painting and to see things from a distance. I have therefore made certain choices that allow me to paint longer. On the other hand, as I deal with repetitions, I have acquired a certain proficiency, which means that it is

starting to take less time to complete my works. In general, I would love to be slow, but occasionally my works are completed surprisingly fast.

There are some decisions I like to make before painting, to analyse and ponder for quite some time. Yet, a painting cannot be entirely figured out beforehand, even though I have a bit of an inclination to do that and an urge to start carrying it out at once. Planning needs to stop at the right time, i.e. at the moment when I feel an appetite for a particular image. I use an initial drawing in my paintings as a visual reference, but actual decisions are made in the process of mixing colours, and working with colours is very much intuitive.

BR: Your use of colour is nuanced, sensitive and considered. You have mentioned having read up on colour theory and the history of the colour pink, for example. What is your view of the role of colour in a painting?

SLE: What interests me about colour is delicacy and in-betweenness. I deal with reconciling and appeasing opposites. Even if I buy some rather exquisite halftone paints, I tend to mix them according to my own “recipes”. I experiment with coloured greys, in-between and changeover hues. When I’m applying paint to a large canvas with a small brush, I stand really close to the painting surface. I breathe onto the canvas and the painting becomes kind of animated and alive. At one point I started to consciously add “skin tones” to my paintings to express subtle corporeality.

I consider my choice and use of colour to be conceptual: I mainly work with colour as an image or an idea. Colour carries meaning more than anything else. In European culture, for example, the colour pink (the younger brother of the colour red, so to speak) used to be the colour of men and emperors. While we associate red with war, blood, Mars, fire and passion, pink was somewhat weaker but essentially the same. For a long time, pink used to be the colour of young men, but at some point it changed. Pink entered my paintings because of the association with the human body. Some colours on my palette are similar to make-up foundation.

BR: It seems to me that the world you create is occasionally truly tender, sensitive and one might even say feminine. Have you thought about it that way yourself?

SLE: Yes, to some extent I agree. I remember how I painted the series *Emptying Field of Meaning*: the series ends in three large black paintings, and all that cuboidness, squareness and angularity... the clear and rigid geometry and dark colours all turned out too strong and masculine. I wanted to escape that, so I started painting a series based on the art nouveau floral motif found on a floor tile at the HOP Gallery. I felt an obligation to visualise tenderness.

I have nothing against the differences between sexes: life is based on the interaction of opposites. Tenderness is intriguing when juxtaposed within the pictorial space with the vigorous and concrete nature of painting. I do not have a boudoir in my home, but when I paint, I have the liberty to use such aesthetics.



Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition Longing for lost space. Photo: Roman-Sten Tõnissoo

BR: *Your paintings are often based on conceptual repetitions. How did you reach such a visual language, or where did this motif of repetition come from? Where does the appeal and the potential of repetition lie in your opinion?*

SLE: There was a period in my life when I did not paint at all. I did not want to add to the volume of images, stories and pictures. Then, the idea of citing occurred to me: using already existing images or pictures or works of art, and by multiplying them creating more empty space or altered meaning.

Repetition is a fascinating and paradoxical phenomenon: it can emphasise a message, but at some point, it may change into a vibration or a rhythm in which the initial meaning is lost. Repetition enables me to be present in the process of painting for a long time. I do not need to worry too much about new situations and fast change-overs. I can stay in the moment and revive the process. I believe that repetition redeemed painting for me: it unveiled opportunities in painting which I still find meaningful. Repetitions create emptiness, and you find yourself like a thief in an empty room: nothing to steal, nothing to take with you, and no need to run away from anyone.

There is a photo of an interior captured at a metro station in early spring in Vienna when I was in residency there. Light is coming in through a window on the left and falling on a white wall. In 2012, I used this image in a series of 13 repeated works in various sizes. I consider that series to be the predecessor of my current painting practice. At the same time, I also realised that depicting reality did not satisfy me: I wanted to stage situations and environments rather than depict them. My painted structures and patterns tend to activate exhibition surfaces and spaces that surround them. If the paintings themselves take a step back and are visually delicate and quiet, they expose and highlight the space in which they have been displayed.

BR: *Even if at first glance the works in some of the series seem the same when observed from afar, but they are all different and unique when examined up close. What do you have in mind as an artist when you occasionally introduce these minor or barely noticeable differences? Do you*

expect the viewer to take more time and be attentive when looking at your paintings?

SLE: This may seem like a paradox, but it is a case of a human error: a quiver of the hand or an impreciseness occurring in comparative orderliness. That is why I consider it important to use as few technical aids as possible which might facilitate achieving a flawless outcome. The charm of repetition and dissimilarity is just like each heartbeat or breath being similar and yet unique.

Images change little by little, from painting to painting, and series and exhibitions grow out of one another. For example, while painting a motif, I may start thinking of other ways to render it: altering a certain shade or creating a changeover. Dissimilarities also occur due to colour transitions and differently mixed shades. As I work on large series, I get to make small decisions and movements over a longer period of time. Each painting is a new thought or perhaps even a fraction of a thought.

BR: You have been regarded as a representative of Estonian conceptual minimalism. Johannes Saar has described that tradition nicely by saying that it is a movement “which primarily explores art’s capacity to evoke spatial illusions, serene mental states and abstract still lifes: elements that inherently defy simple translation into written form” (KUNST.EE 3/2023). What is your take on that? And what is important for you as an artist in your painting practice?

SLE: Yes, I just recently thought about that. Somehow, my students and I ended up talking about how Estonian art in the 2000s was conceptual and cold. That was the time when I reached maturity as an artist, and that period definitely influenced my oeuvre. As conceptuality means a certain thought-out decision, naturally I base my paintings on concrete ideas and deal with issues of meaning. On the other hand, intuition plays an important role in how the idea evolves and what aesthetic choices I make.

In Dolores Hoffmann’s monumental art classes, she told us about the way art is positioned in space: that no work is ever a lone vagabond, and that it should always be in some kind of symbiosis with the space that surrounds it. I have followed this principle as an artist, and some essential choices derive from it. I might also add that a work of art is placed in a certain conceptual situation or a mental environment.

BR: When you think about your journey as an artist thus far, do you feel that there have been any significant changes, shifts or reassessments?

SLE: The period 2003-2006, when I gave up painting for a while, was significant. Creating new pictures, images and narratives felt completely pointless. I was actively involved in other types of art practices at the time: socially relevant art projects and various cooperative efforts. I thought about painting without painting and about the withdrawal of art from the elitist gallery environment. I focussed on the meaning of a work of art as a visual marker but also as a broader, e.g. linguistic, signifier. My paintings displayed after 2006 in Vienna, the Tallinn City Gallery and the Hobusepea Gallery dealt specifically with language issues or, to be more specific, with the materiality and polysemy of words and letters. The birth of my daughter was another important event that triggered a change. It showed me very clearly what the measure of human existence was, and I realised that if I did not paint the pictures I was dreaming of, nobody would. Since my daughter turned three, I have purposefully been dealing with one specific “visual programme”.

Prior to 2003, my oeuvre was occasionally more colourful and depictive, but there has always been a fluctuation between depiction and abstraction, accompanied by a play with decorativeness, and this exhilarates me: flirting, for example, with the idea that a pattern and an ornament could also be a painting, etc.



Opening of Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition *Longing for lost space*. Photo: Roman-Sten Tõnissoo

BR: *Speaking of self-reflection, you have also used the mirror motif in your works on several occasions. Where did it come from and what does it mean in the context of your oeuvre?*

SLE: Yes, I have indeed used mirrors on many levels in my works. I heard someone say that “mirrors in an art hall are bad taste”, and that is something that intrigued me: I immediately wanted to challenge it. At the exhibition *Repeated Patterns* (with Mari Kurismaa), I displayed one of my first paintings with a recognisable mirror motif. I have been using this image for quite some time in my oeuvre.

I have also thought about my own paintings as mirrors. A mirror is not a picture, but we always see a picture on its surface, and my paintings are the same: there is a lot of emptiness and/or suggestiveness and no unambiguous colours or images in them, yet on closer observation they reveal something in the viewer or in the surrounding space.

There is a parallel with the black mirror or Claude glass, which was supposedly first used by the French 17th– century landscape painter Claude Lorrain to paint the surrounding landscape. The dark convex glass harmonises and generalises the reflected image and tones down the colours. With the help of a black mirror, an artist can easily paint a rear-view image of a landscape. When Tiina Sarapu and I had an exhibition in the Draakoni Gallery in 2022 titled *Black Mirror*, for which we constructed dark mirrors of black and grey pieces of glass, the association with our contemporary version of the black mirror that we carry in our pockets every day – the mobile phone – became quite obvious.

BR: *I have a feeling that your art in some ways hints at a hidden or invisible world, and there is a discernible element of holiness. The nature of this reality, imperceptible to human experience, that you refer to seems to be bright and lucid. Have you ever thought about transcendence or even sacrality in the context of your work?*

SLE: It is obvious that as an artist I am not interested in (common) reality: it has already been created and I see no reason to recreate it. Let's say that I depict a reality that clearly exists but is not visible until I make it visible [laughs].

I have thought a lot about how to speak of sacred and significant things without harming them with words, without doing a disservice to them. Things that cannot be spoken of directly could be spoken of in an abstract manner, via something else.... If there is a lucid sacrality in my works perceivable by the viewer, then I have accomplished my purpose.



Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition Longing for lost space. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko

BR: *Tell me a little about the background of the Kumu exhibition. You found Carl Sigismund Walther's work Interior of the Bluhm House in Tallinn at the permanent exhibition, and it inspired you. The work is said to be exceptional as it is one of the few interior paintings from that era painted in an identifiable building in Tallinn and depicting people known to us. Why did it inspire you so much initially and what have you discovered during the research that has fascinated you?*

SLE: The painting caught my eye because of the silence emanating from it. The silky pink screen and the matching dress of the young woman caught my attention so completely that I overlooked the scene that the painting was depicting. The woman in the pink dress is Julchen von Haaks (Julchen Haecks), stepdaughter of the city doctor of Tallinn, Hermann Bluhm, and his wife Sophia. In the painting, she is handing a cup of tea or broth to her stepmother, who is lying ill in bed, and Julchen exudes mercy and lightness in the context of the gravity of the depicted scene, which refers to moving from one reality to another: Sophia Bluhm never recovered from her illness. The mood of the painting is, nevertheless, peaceful, not dramatic. I sense beauty and tenderness here.

The scene in the painting takes place at 57 Pikk Street in the Old Town of Tallinn. When I was preparing for the exhibition, I visited two flats there in which the scene could have taken place. I hoped to find a certain timelessness and get a sense of a room which existed before me: the room in which the scene depicted in the painting happened. Space is like a backdrop to the whole drama of

life: it is something permanent in the continuous state of flux. An interior is a space, a model of the world. Not outer space, but a human-sized cosmos, a room in which, and a wallpaper against which, the drama of life unfolds, constant within the volatility of life. Some rooms existed before me and will go on existing after I am gone.

Windows in both flats face the back gardens and the walls of the opposite houses. My grandmother Salme lived in this neighbourhood, in Old Town, in Vene Street, and the windows of her flat also faced the back garden. I remember trying on a pink striped blouse with a ruffled collar in front of a mirror in my grandmother's flat, and the mirror is placed between two windows, just like the mirrors in Walther's painting. In the painting, the pink screen is reflected in the mirrors between the windows. There is a yearning in me to visit that flat in Vene Street, which since the late 1990s has not been in the possession of our family.

On the spot where the young woman in the painting is standing, the current owner of the flat has hung an icon depicting the coronation of the Virgin Mary. I feel as though I am witnessing a link between the times and the grand pattern of life. The Virgin Mary is crowned in heaven and she is our heavenly mother. She is always by our side: she was also by Sophia Bluhm's side at the moment of her passing. I sense a metaphysical dimension in this interior scene, which is partly hinted at by the screen, which is used to hide something. Behind the screen there appears to be a door, symbolising a concealed passage to another side of life. This is what I look for in art: mystery and an unexplained silence, and capturing that in a picture is one of the most important things for me in the art of painting in general.



Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition Longing for lost space. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko



Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition *Longing for lost space*. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko

BR: *Does this topic of death and evanescence also carry over to your works in the context of this exhibition?*

SLE: I think I do not deal with death directly. I am more interested in timelessness or transcending time: how people who have lived at various times can experience situations that are in some ways similar. And I believe that death is not a negative concept. It is a secret, and we can believe it is beautiful and that after death we will experience unprecedented beauty we cannot even imagine with our limited earth-bound senses. For me, silence and emptiness are definitely not negative signifiers. I am amazed whenever they are treated in some context, even in a mundane situation, as negative. Multitudes, abundance or opulence exhaust me, and I find them difficult to handle, but emptiness and silence are manageable and understandable.

BR: *A screen has been made for the Kumu exhibition on which paintings are displayed. Can you shed some light on the meaning of this particular object, and on working with spatial installations in your oeuvre in general?*

SLE: I have had a few installation objects before which have either complemented the paintings or served as comments on them. They have not been very large: I have, rather, been engrossed in playing with meanings. For example, the object ***Cabinet of Decreasing Value***, which was purchased for the collection of the Art Museum of Estonia, is a small object that is reminiscent of a shelf or a cupboard with sliding doors that fill the entire depth of it, so that its worth as a place for preserving something is questionable.

The object included in this exhibition is the largest object I have created thus far. The installation directly refers to the screen in Walther's painting, but it deals with the art of painting in general, too: it reveals the back side of the painting, which is normally not visible to the viewer. The Walther painting is also displayed so that both sides can be seen. We can see the artist's comments on the painting, the names of those depicted, etc. The issue of delicacy is also important here: a gesture

that transgresses a rule or norm has to be carried out in a precise, firm and subtle manner, and it needs to have a strong conceptual basis.



Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition *Longing for lost space*. Photo: Stanislav Stepashko

BR: *Your oeuvre includes references to different epochs and architectural styles. Some of your works have had depictions of elements from the architecture and interiors of surrounding galleries, for example. One of the main topics of the current Kumu display is engaging in dialogue with details of the interior depicted in Walther's painting. What is it about spaces and interiors that fascinates you?*

SLE: I mentioned before that I perceive space/interior as something that exists eternally. There is nothing eternal about interiors, of course, but from the perspective of human life and temporality we may think about them in this way. I am not interested in any particular architectural style or historical accuracy, but rather in the emptiness and silence manifested through spaces. I yearn for the existence of space itself, for an empty room, and I think that I am generally attracted to a sense of nostalgia and to using nostalgic elements or ornaments which enable me to travel from this day and age to somewhere in the past.

BR: *What new topics and keywords do you see emerging at the Kumu exhibition? What are the thoughts and moods that visitors might pick up on?*

SLE: Emptiness and silence, for which I have thus far not succeeded in finding better terms, have been permeating topics in my art for quite some time. And, as I mentioned, holiness or sacrality, which I have tried to represent and crystallise. Perhaps with the latter I have taken a step forward.

My last exhibition in the Tartu Art House dealt with the idea of superficiality, and I was satisfied with both the process and the outcome. Now, I have moved somewhere deeper, and although I am intimidated by an excess of meanings and prefer sparser semantic fields, because I wish to remain humble before great words, I sense that I have opened a box or a cabinet door that I can no longer

close. I am very honest, open and a little frightened in the works at this exhibition. I would encourage the viewer to see invisible links and pictures in places where they cannot be seen at first glance.



Opening of Sirja-Liisa Eelma's exhibition *Longing for lost space*. Photo: Roman-Sten Tõnissoo

Estonians in New York. Interview with Margot Samel

October 21, 2024

Author Shameema Binte Rahman



Esther Art Fair, New York, 2024. Photo: Pierre Le Hors

The gallerist, art dealer and owner of the Margot Samel Gallery in New York, Margot Samel has become a much-quoted name on the Baltic and north European art scene, particularly for the Esther Art Fair, which has been acclaimed by the media and critics as an ‘alternative’ art fair. Teaming up with her fellow gallerist Olga Temnikova, Margot has created a space in New York City for art and artists who are rarely exhibited there. Esther took place in May this year at the Estonian House on East 34th Street in Manhattan. Margot shared her insights about her experience with Esther, and how Baltic and north European art was received in New York with *Echo Gone Wrong*. The interview was conducted by Shameema Binte Rahman via email.

SBR: *You opened the Margot Samel gallery in Tribeca, currently the hippest art district in New York, which fills the absence of Baltic art and artists on the city’s art scene. Can you please share the ‘seminal image’ that has driven you all the way to become an art entrepreneur, gallery owner, curator and collaborator, and to make your mark in a foreign land? (I am quoting the ‘seminal image’ from Umberto Eco, which is like a striking image/moment around which the rest of the story revolves.)*

Margot: When I first contemplated opening a gallery, I was fully aware that the last thing New York needs is another art gallery. But seeing that at the time there were no Estonian artists represented by galleries in the USA, and only a handful of artists from the Baltic States had visibility here, it seemed there was a huge gap that needed to be filled. Although the gallery’s programme presents works by artists from international backgrounds, a key area of focus is contemporary artists from the Baltic region, beginning with the gallery’s inaugural exhibition of work by the Estonian multi-

disciplinary artist Kris Lemsalu. This show, Peace @ 295 Church Street, could be seen as my seminal image: not only was it the first exhibition at the gallery, but it also brought together many of my interests in art and life in general. Lemsalu used unexpected materials and created multitudes of meaning for the show in works that manifested the stages of life: from birth to death, and 'the bit in the middle', with an unwavering quest for peace. The show is also my seminal image because so many elements of that inaugural exhibition are still reflected in my programme today: I often introduce artists to US audiences who are better known abroad, and they often use unexpected materials or push the boundaries of their mediums in unusual ways.



Esther Art Fair, New York, 2024. Photo: Pierre Le Hors

SBR: I am super curious to know about your experience of the Esther Art Fair in New York in the first week of May this year. I noticed that many notable online newspapers and art websites mentioned it as an alternative art fair. Why do you think it was labelled 'alternative'? I would also like to dive into your collaboration with Olga Temnikova of the Temnikova & Kasela Gallery in Tallinn, Estonia. How did you both come up with the idea of Esther, even though one of you lives outside Estonia and the other inside?

Margot: I think it was about a year ago when Olga Temnikova came to me with the idea to organise a collaborative project in New York. We were both familiar with the Estonian House in New York, and thought it would provide quite an unexpected and experimental environment for artists and galleries to interact with. We felt there was a need for a type of art fair that is not just centred around financial transactions but can also provide more meaningful and long-term relationships between artists, galleries and visitors. We also felt New York was missing this experimental platform that brings together emerging, mid-career and established galleries, so in a way we were trying to flatten these hierarchies that are often specific to art fairs. Esther doesn't completely fit into the category of an art fair or an exhibition; maybe that's why it was quickly labelled as an alternative art fair.



Esther Art Fair, New York, 2024. Photo: Pierre Le Hors

SBR: Why do you think Estonian art should be on the New York art scene? Have you ever had the feeling that you are making visibility from the frontier? What is the reception of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, or Baltic, art like?

Margot: The year 2024 has definitely been the year my programme has focused most on artists from Estonia and the Baltic in general, starting with solo exhibitions by the Estonian artists Merike Estna and Kris Lemsalu, and most recently a group exhibition curated by Lilian Hiob that featured a number of artists from the Baltic, such as Johanna Ulfsak, Anastasia Sosunova and Jaanus Samma. I think that, just like with other artists on the periphery making work, artists from Estonia bring a unique perspective and narratives to what can be seen as the ultimate centre, the art scene in New York. I'm definitely seeing a shift and more interest from the centre towards alternative narratives.

SBR: You have written articles for Estonian news sites, studied in Estonia and later in Scotland, and now you are working in New York in the USA. How do you see the Estonian art scene in terms of its nature, distinctive features, artistic techniques, colours and subjects? Can you share some intriguing scenes that you have observed through your experience?

Margot: It's hard to generalise about the art scene in Estonia, but what I'm seeing now is how so many women artists born in the 1980s are having a real moment in Estonia and internationally. This generation witnessed the transition from the Soviet Union to independent Estonia, and was also the first generation to be able to study abroad and return to Estonia with a different perspective. From my own experience, I distinctly remember having to adapt to the currency changing from the rouble to the kroon when I was a child, and then again to the euro about fifteen years later. It makes you really understand early on how quickly things can change, and how money and society are a construct. I think this period of transition and constant flux has had a major impact on ways in which contemporary artists from Estonia approach their work.

SBR: How do you choose the artists you represent? Can you describe the process of putting together an art exhibition?

Margot: Representing artists is a huge commitment for me. I remember the day I asked Kris Lemsalu to be the first artist on my roster. I was so nervous I couldn't even get my words out, it felt like I was proposing to her, ha ha. But it just needs to be the right match between the gallery and the artist. You might love someone's work, but if the chemistry or trust is not there, then the working relationship is probably not going to work. Now that I work with a group of artists, another factor that I often think about when showing new artists is how they fit in to the programme, particularly in terms of other artists I represent.



Esther Art Fair, New York, 2024. Photo: Pierre Le Hors

SBR: What projects are you currently working on? Is there any collaborative project coming up, like Esther from the Baltic?

Margot: I have just opened a group exhibition 'Thank you, I'm rested now. I'll have the lobster today, thank you', which is a collaboration between us and the Pangée gallery in Montreal. My next exhibition is also a collaboration, a gallery swap I'm doing with Kendall Koppe, who will be presenting Miguel Cardenas' work at my space in August, and I'll be presenting one of my artists, Narcissister, at that space in Glasgow in October. As the costs of running a small or mid-size gallery get higher and higher, while the economy remains uncertain, it's becoming more and more important that galleries think of non-traditional ways to collaborate and help each other out. This involves being creative about how we can share costs or innovate through exchanges that are not monetary.

My forthcoming solo exhibition in September is with Elizabeth Radcliffe, an Edinburgh-born textile artist, whose weavings memorialise moments in her life and are imbued with a considerable amount of labour. In each piece, a garment, a waxed motorcycle jacket or designer tennis wear, points to the

sartorial sensibility and personality of its wearer, who is only suggested by a truncated silhouette. She has been weaving for over fifty years, and I'm thrilled to be presenting her first solo exhibition outside Scotland.

SBR: Thank you, Margot, for your time.

What if Barbie was a Boxer?

October 21, 2024
Author Anette Pärn



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, *Bruised Lilac*, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula

On entering any space, my first instinct is to scan it: a silent mapping of potential threats and hidden beauties, decoding its cherished and punished identities, seeking a place for the 'I' to fit in. A creature of habit, shapeshifting to merge. A specimen of evolution, driven by self-preservation.

At Maria Izabella Lehtsaar's *Bruised Lilac* in the basement hall of Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, lilac whispers from nearly every object, a hushed song in shades of light purple. Hilde greets me with a smile and a chocolate, which we break and share, laughing, our teeth stained brown. The defences soften. I think it's safe to let our guard down.

Boxing shorts, gloves and bandages, crafted not from leather but from soft silk and velvet, stuffed with foam rubber, challenging the traditional image of the sport. The usual associated roughness is replaced by a surprising tenderness, the potential for violence subverted by the delicate nature of the materials. Metallic chains and cold surfaces hang alongside velvet chains plump with cotton, creating a visual and tactile dialogue. There's a treasure box, delicate, girly and precious, a miniature world of the sport: in it a tiny velvet boxing ring, diminutive gloves, all arranged with a childlike care that belies the seriousness of the ritual they represent.



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula

'What does lilac mean to you?' Hilde asks.

'It's gay,' I offer. 'But also the colour of wildflowers gathered for Mother's Day. A colour reclaimed, embraced in my early twenties after years of shame for being "too girly", too sensitive. It's the hue of a bruise on his abdomen, a testament to violence against those who refuse to conform. The colour of a stuffed pony, once blissfully unaware of gender.'

Across the room, there's a nasty blue gym mat in the corner. I know its sweaty, rubbery smell, the scent of 25 compulsory push-ups under the judging gaze of ten-year-old classmates. The shrill whistle declares time's up: you're too slow. Toes touch the mat too late, a hula hoop clatters to the floor, my coordination shattering with it. The smell of shame, imprinted before I had words to name it. It still lingers, no amount of scrubbing can erase it entirely. Does the scent of soap ever truly conquer that hint of imprisonment?

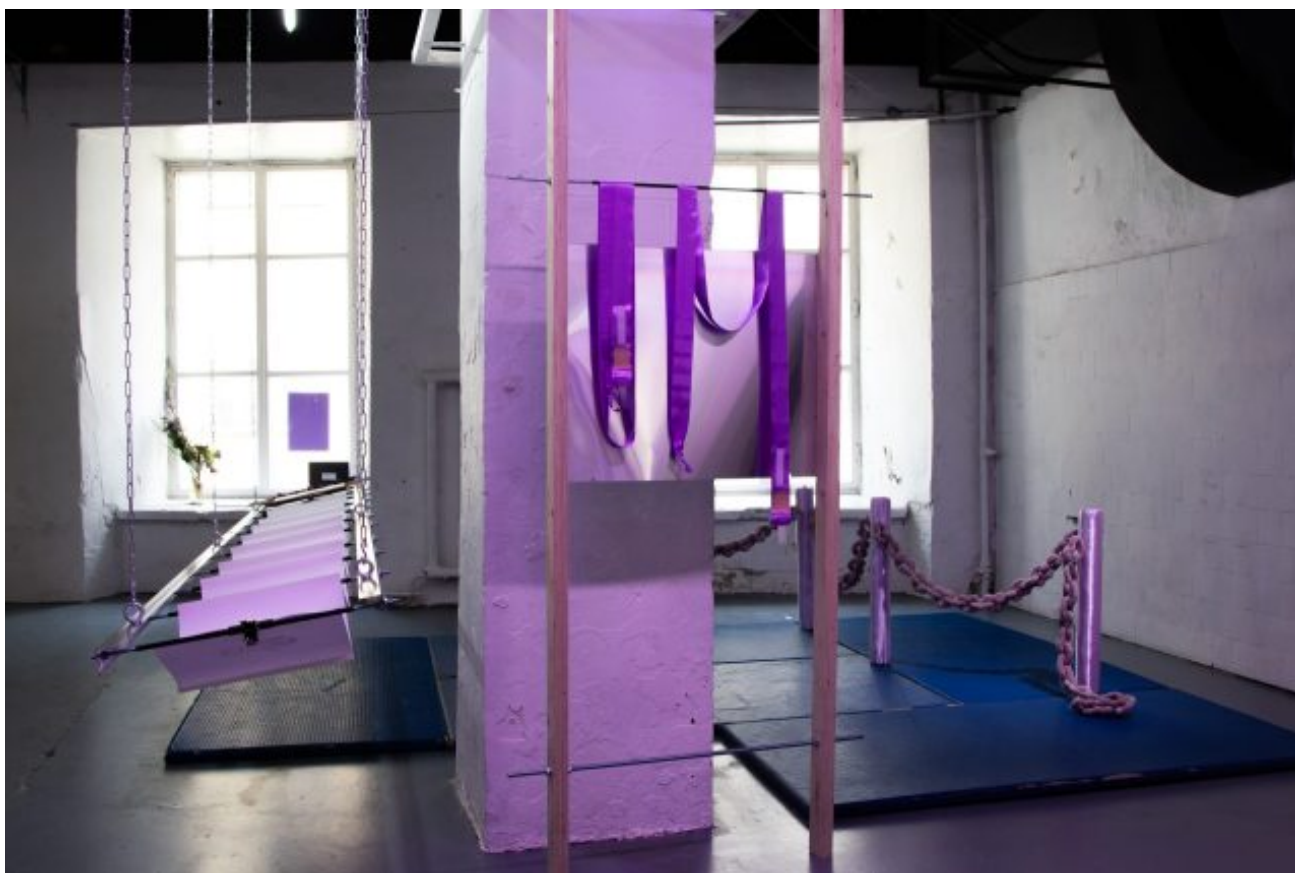
The blue mat is a battlefield of 'right' and 'wrong' physicality, where femininity and masculinity are rigid binaries. Nothing flows, nothing grows. Winners and losers etched in the cold rubber, one leaving with a trophy, the other beaten to lilac. Strength or weakness: no ambiguity allowed. Emotions are the loser's domain, tears a slow drowning, leading to societal expulsion. The blue mat births the universe's alpha males, promising them a kingdom of untouchability.



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula

The curatorial text reads: 'Boxing is inherently violent, hypermasculine and deeply performative. Violence is central to a patriarchal society, and boxing as a sport enables it to normalize and celebrate this through carefully constructed rules, chosen attire and choreography [...] Maria Izabella Lehtsaar explores the common ground between boxing and gender performance. According to stereotypical gender norms, boxing symbolises everything that one must not represent when growing up as a girl in society. Both boxing and gender conformity involve violence: it can be painful to force oneself to adhere to societal expectations, and failing to conform to these expectations often leads to punishment.'

The Paris 2024 Olympic boxing epitomised these dynamics. Gender became a fight preordained for loss. Anyone outside the cis-hetero-male norm – puff, towering, easy to categorise – is ultimately deemed 'wrong'. Too girly? No place for you. A 'woman' who doesn't perform femininity according to the binary? A fool, a fraud. Those threatened by ambiguity cling to self-righteousness, wielding language as a weapon against any whose performance of gender challenges their own.



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula

What if Barbie was a boxer, though? Feminine, cute and harmless, giggling while punching the air, never having heard of war. Her heels, unbreakable, forged from the material of pure innocence, nothing in the world can disturb them. In this lilac room, boxing's tools are transformed into harmless accessories, drained of their function. The commercial capitalised aesthetics guarantee the future of never-ending happiness.

Kitsch becomes a sanctuary, transmuting the violence of rigid stereotypes into self-irony. The lilac monotones and straightforward forms conceal the mazes and nuances of queer experience. Those unversed in the secret language, blind to the queer codes, will never find the hidden depths. These forms, seemingly void, are brimming with lived experience: vessels of tenderness, camouflaged from the outside gaze.

Tenderness lies at the heart of queer experience: a yielding, a staying-soft in the face of relentless pushing and pulling, this constant pressure. The goal is not a diamond-hard invulnerability, but something more earthy, more humble, less defined: something found in the shared space of 'us'. Queer existence thrives not in the singular 'I', but in relation, in vulnerability, in the openness of tears.

In this space of self-aware sincerity, the belief in Love despite the horror, I imagine a boxing ring reborn: a lilac trampoline, bouncy and queer, a celebration for our everlasting re-birthday. Come, sister, rest with me. I'll kiss away the lingering taste of old blood: the bitterness of deceit and paranoia, the sting of manipulation. Let us surrender to the softening embrace of lilac. Let us once again become tender.



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula





Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar, Bruised Lilac, Tallinn's Kanuti Guild Hall, 2024. Photo: Kertu Rannula

Maria Izabella Lehtsaar's solo exhibition 'Bruised Lilac' ran from 21 August until 6 September 2024 in Keldrisaal at Kanuti Gildi Saal, Tallinn, Estonia.

Exhibition team:

Artist Maria Izabella Lehtsaar (they/them)

Curator Mikk Lahesalu (they/them)

Workshop conductor Nadya Tjuška (they/them)

Exhibition designer Riin Maide (any/all)

Graphic designer Agnes Isabelle Veevo (she/her)

Editor Emilia Kõiv (she/her)

Olga Temnikova: If one wants to play a big game one needs to invest in networking

October 25, 2024

Author Shameema Binte Rahman



Olga Temnikova. Photo by Diana Didyk

Olga Temnikova, a gallerist, curator and co-founder of the Temnikova & Kasela Gallery in Tallinn in Estonia, envisioned the idea for the Esther Art Fair during the Covid-19 pandemic. She later teamed up to launch the fair with her fellow gallerist Margot Samel. Esther, which opened in May at the Estonian House in New York, features 26 galleries from around the world, including less often seen countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Georgia and Romania. The inclusion of artists from this part of Europe, with its Soviet past, brings a dynamic focus to the periphery at the centre of New York's hip art scene.

Olga spoke about her experience with Esther and her artistic journey in a Zoom interview with *Echo Gone Wrong*. The interview was conducted by Shameema Binte Rahman.

SBR: You have attended numerous international art fairs, and you have just returned from the Liste Art Fair in Basel, Switzerland. As a co-founder of the Esther Art Fair in New York, which was highlighted by the media in May as an alternative art fair, can you share your insights into your experience, and describe the unique aspects of Esther compared to other art fairs?

Olga: We started working on Esther with the aim of doing something different. We even tried to avoid the term 'art fair', because we wanted to create a unique experience: we started calling it an exhibition. Our exhibitors are not the just gallerists. I wouldn't even call them that in the context of Esther. I refer to them at Esther as colleagues, and it is definitely partly a communal project. I think that amid the rush of art fairs and market pressures, gallerists do not have enough time to analyse what they are doing, what the long-term vision of the development of the art scene is, and what upgrades might be needed in the current situation.

We thought of offering an additional platform for colleagues to exhibit slightly more experimental projects, to be together in the stimulating context of an intense fair week in Manhattan, and to relieve some of the pressure on gallerists by charging them a symbolic 1,500 US dollars. Esther has no booths, the architecture is very site-specific, and the space is quite different from traditional fair spaces.

Participants were selected subjectively by contacting our friends, who, coincidentally, happen to be very good gallerists running galleries on different scales in different parts of the world.

SBR: And Esther took place in New York ...

Olga: New York is a very complicated place for an art fair. Personally, I have participated in every art fair in New York. I've participated in the Frieze, NADA, Armory, Independent and even Moving Images art fairs. All of them are great platforms, but it's very hard for European galleries to make money, and even not to lose money, because of the very high additional travel and logistics cost.

We are a discovery-type gallery, so our price range is not so high. However, the USA is the biggest and one of the most educated markets, so we want to be there. We were trying to imagine what an effective and sustainable model could be.

SBR: I'm coming to the second question, but regarding the first question, I just want to know one thing. As you said, the alternative approach: what is this alternative approach? Is it a community approach, or something else that you just said?

Olga: Yeah, I would say it is. We wanted to do something *pro bono* for the community, and that was our impact. Margot and I worked for a few months without having much time to run our own businesses, but it was all worth it.

During Covid, I felt a strong desire to connect with other galleries and talk about common challenges. The IGA café calls hosted by the International Gallery Alliance on Zoom during Covid were very inspiring. I wanted to spend more time with my colleagues and create something meaningful.

SBR: So it was firstly from your calling to do something during Covid?

Olga: Yes, during Covid I realised that being together is very important. My gallery is off the beaten track, so that is something I miss. Margot can discuss problems and brainstorm with other gallerists as part of her daily routine in NYC, but it is not like that for me. Margot and I had slightly different motivations, but we both wanted to create something pressure-free and fun.

Also, from a collectors' perspective, during fair week one goes to dinner with a gallerist who has just paid a minimum of 24,000 US dollars for participation in the fair, and 10,000 US dollars or more for accommodation and transport. You're literally sitting with someone who needs to sell 68,000 US dollars' worth in four days to cover the gallery's expenses. How relaxing is this dinner?

SBR: OK. So charging a 1,500-dollar participation fee is also a unique thing, I assume?

Olga: Yes, it's very unique, and almost impossible. But Estonian House, the venue, was very supportive of our event. They didn't charge us much because we are members of this old private club, but also because we were doing our Estonian thing (*laughs*). They think that what we do is fun and professional. We also got some support from the Estonian Ministry of Culture.

SBR: How has your experience running Temnikova & Kasela influenced your approach to organising the Esther Art Fair? What inspired you to establish the Esther Art Fair, and what are your aims for it?

Olga: If one wants to play a big game, one needs to invest in networking. Art fairs are usually places to sell art, and they also claim to be places to network, but you really have no time because it's so expensive. You need to just sell, sell, sell. So we wanted to create a place where you can sell without pressure, and definitely connect with your peers, collectors and institutions in New York, who are usually quite exciting people.

We were expecting 500 visitors, but ended up with 2,300, and they were all great people. The way it was promoted definitely spoke to professionals. We had quite a few sales and follow-up sales. With New York, it's always a long shot. You meet a person, start talking, and you never know where and when it will take you. That's why it's great not to have too much pressure.

On a few evenings we had pretty wild music performances, followed by an Estonian-style invited dinner. The venue at the Estonian House has a café with traditional food, so we worked out the menu together with the resident chef. Galleries could invite their own guests, and also show them around the fair in a casual way after hours.

I think we succeeded in creating site-specific installations, which made it such fun. We didn't hope to sell much, and in the end we did; we also got good exposure.

SBR: Why do you think the Esther Art Fair is important for Estonia and the Baltic countries?

Olga: Artists from our region have the same interests as anyone else. Initially, we wanted to include more galleries showing art from northern and Eastern Europe. Maybe we might go on with that in the future, but I think we had a good mix of everything: emerging, established, European and American.

SBR: Yeah, I mean, when it's called Esther, it sounds as if it's linked to Estonia. Will Esther promote more regional art on the global stage?

Olga: It does sound like Estonia or the East, yes. We didn't consciously programme it towards the East, but we did invite another gallery from Estonia, Kogo, and the Latvian Kim?. Kauffman Repetto

presented the artist duo Skuja Braden from Latvia and the USA. We had a Romanian gallery showing the Romanian Simona Runcan, London's Seventeen showing the Hungarian Botond Keresztesi, the Russian-born Vladislav Markov with the New York gallery Management, and the Warsaw-New York Wschód gallery showing the American Anders Dickson.

SBR: Are there any current trends in the art world that particularly excite or concern you as an Estonian gallerist?

Olga: I think there are a couple of things. One is the general move towards the decentralisation of art and its approach, which was the core of the Venice Biennale this year (and many more exhibitions in the last twenty years). This means trying to depict narratives other than the European art narrative.

We've seen this happening for decades. Coming from Estonia, our art looks and feels different. We deal with different problems and come from a different context, slightly attached to the European narrative, but not fully because of our history.

SBR: Completely, yeah. That's the identity, isn't it? That's the point where it differs.

Olga: Yes, the colonial past and the fact that we were occupied by Denmark, Germany and Russia make our art different. These days I don't feel provincial any more. This decentralisation trend is setting in, and it's beautiful. We have been working towards this for years, and there is a lot of work lying ahead.

Another trend is maybe abstract art coming back. Also, the inclusion of crafts like textiles and ceramics, which were historically considered female mediums. There is no longer a lot of subordination of fine art and design. And of course, not only females are using these mediums these days.

SBR: Thank you, Olga, for your time.

A Carrying Bag for Cinematic Auto-Fiction

October 25, 2024

Author Miki Ambrózy



You are entering the space between myth and fairy tale, haunted by the curious and generous spirit of artist-cinéaste Kipras Dubauskas.

I first met Kipras and his moving image work in 2018, when the second artist-run photochemical laboratory was getting established in Vilnius. His film work is in a rich dialogue with his different media, human and non-human. He is weaving threads out of urban spaces, environmental interventions, world-building acts, performances, and sculptural objects, turning them into a playfully critical field of experiencing. The two 16mm films in this exhibition attest to a remarkable spirit, making his reliance on symbolic matter necessary.

Kipras's artistic practice uses tactics of psychogeography, and the exhibition is best experienced in this light. Psychogeographers decode urban space by being in it, moving through it, exploring it and shifting the ways in which space can be read. Consider space as nobody's and everybody's, in an underground gesture, where the artist's acts are critical of the whims of private ownership and curious about urban history. Abandoned buildings act as interfaces between ruining and rebuilding. Hidden infrastructures are revealed to question why we should experience life's comforts as "natural" givens.

Genius Loci and 'Firestarter' are both bringing us into a series of experiences enacted by their author, based on impulses that are sometimes conceptual, other time based on gut-feeling. Using the concept of *filotopia* (a love of place) developed by the philosopher Arvydas Šliogeris, the artist is setting place and inner feeling side-by-side. Then there's the urge to go against processes of gentrification and permission, executed through the act of walking into zones of artistic interest. The films themselves recount these experiences, relying on the conventions of fiction (costumes) and

creative documentation (montage). The adrenaline of trespassing is at the same time dampened and heightened by the filmer, who wants to safekeep a trace after his actions. This tension makes the moving image works expand beyond what is seen and staged, into the broader narrative of the artist's life and daily practice.

In *Genius Loci*, the artist stages himself entering the Vilnius Heat Plant dressed as a municipal worker, climbing into the back of a truck. In the vein of the flaneur, we follow him drifting to a destination mostly unknown, carried by the urban flow. In Walter Benjamin's anecdote of 1840s Paris, people would take their turtles for a walk to "set the pace for them" in order to claim the right to gentlemanly leisure. In *Genius Loci*, the artist's gesture underlines the desire for making the city accessible beyond regulations. More importantly, his transgressive act claims our right to both space and pace within a private-property driven world order.

'Firestarter' begins as the documentation of St. Anthony's procession somewhere in Italy, which soon turns into a quest within overlapping worlds, complete with tricksters, underground passages, and abandoned industrial sites. We are all entities with very important agendas.

A present-day re-incarnation of St. Anthony the Great emerges as the protagonist early on, but we are soon reminded of the unstable nature of cinema when the images begin to skillfully alternate between found footage, stop motion animation, cinema vérité, and scenes with non-actors. Props and settings, such as St. Anthony's fire hook, gain a life and agency of their own. Abandoned spaces, polluted waters, and underground tunnels allow us to navigate the enchanted chain of events that make up the film.

The different layers of narrative carry associations in the artist's personal mythology. The film refuses labelling by playfully avoiding a single story, a simple interpretation, or formal consistency. 'Firestarter' is a work of contemporary experimental cinema that is personal and subjective, yet fluid and free in its hybrid forms. Without completely abandoning a narrative plot, it allows the viewer to contemplate how meaning emerges from moving images, including the stereotypes of the saint and the pyromaniac. The cultural representations of fire are challenged and emplotted vividly. The priest brings the fire to the village community, only to end up causing damage. The phony and faceless art public, outraged when the Artist-Saint paints an image of fire over a neatly "framed" artwork. The toy firemen who put out the painted image with real water. The pyromaniac who sets an abandoned truck on fire, extinguished by a group of tricksters carrying flashing buckets of magic potion.

While these variations critically question representation, truth, and religious myth, they also acknowledge our need for a narrative, even if it is one of dissent. In our Lithuanian context, the male artist's figure casts a long shadow. The winding dirt roads of experimental film are full of nomads with cameras, but most of them settle in other habitats eventually. The lineage of Kipras's films may include, in my reading, the professionally amateur filmmaker Arturas Barysas, the documentary experiments of Audrius Stonys, but in equal measure moving image artists like Gintaras Šeputis and Tomas Andrijauskas, who begin to blend and blur film and video in the mid-1990s. Passing through the artists-run film spaces of Rotterdam and friendships with the informal gathering of the Tree Lab (2008-2012), Kipras's carrying bag of film art is both wide and deep.

Let us celebrate this exhibition as a living argument for Lithuanian experimental film, standing at the spacious crossroads of cinema, art and life.

The exhibition 'Firestarter' by Kipras Dubauskas runs at the Meno parkas gallery (Kaunas, Lithuania) until 10 November.

The exhibition is part of Meno Parkas Gallery's project 'Ether. 2024'. Project is financed by the Lithuanian Council for Culture.

Sponsor of the exhibition: UAB 'GOTAS' (Kaunas branch).





















Without Stepping Back. The Beginning of the Lithuanian Season in France

October 28, 2024

Author Rosana Lukauskaitė



Anastasia Sosunova, Agents, 2020, Art contemporain en Lituanie de 1960 à nos jours. Une donation majeure, Pompidou Centre, 2024. Photo: Greta Skaraitiene

In recent days, my thoughts have kept returning to the article I have to write in the context of the 'Lithuanian Season in France'. Although I have visited extraordinarily impressive exhibitions that should inspire me, I cannot shake off a certain inner doubt. Seeing artists from my country exhibited in such prestigious spaces as the Pompidou Centre undoubtedly evokes a sense of pride, but at the same time it raises the question, Why do we need to leave our country to view our cultural heritage through different eyes? Could we not experience the same sense of discovery at home? This question puzzles me and holds me up: I don't know where to begin. How can I find the right narrative that not only meaningfully analyses the exhibitions but also avoids being superficial? This internal conflict between pride and doubt compels me to rethink my approach. Does our culture require external recognition for us to value it as something special? Why do we feel the need to 'validate' our cultural identity on an international stage? Perhaps this contradiction is at the heart of my reflections. Maybe there is no need to seek a forced, artificially complex analysis. If there is a continuous dialogue in my mind between pride and subtle disappointment, perhaps that is exactly what needs to be discussed.

I want to emphasise that the disappointment is not directed at the work of our artists: they are undoubtedly of the highest calibre and worthy of global attention. However, our efforts to appear 'special' often seem forced, as if we are striving to showcase our uniqueness, while in reality, many of the exhibition visitors are the same Lithuanian curators, guides or cultural figures who come as

tourists, eager to see Lithuanian art outside the country, but still maintaining a closed, familiar circle. Judging by the opening events and the predominantly Lithuanian audiences in attendance, one wonders whether these events truly reach the French public, for whom they are intended. On the other hand, the season has only just begun, so it will take time to assess whether our art will attract a broader French audience. As the French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu asserts, cultural and social groups compete for symbolic capital: recognition, status and prestige. It is precisely international recognition that becomes this symbolic capital, granting a nation the opportunity to enhance its self-esteem. We feel an existential need to be recognised in order to recognise ourselves.



Exhibition 'Origins' by SetP Stanikas, Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in France, Paris, 2024. Photo: Eglė Marija Želvytė

The dilemmas of the reflection of identity are revealed clearly not only in the impressions of the visitors but also in the artists' works, as is exemplified by Paulius and Svajonė Stanikas' exhibition 'Origins' (curated by Julija Palmeirao). Their longing and search for a place between two cultural spaces become the central axis of the exhibition. Displayed in the former residence of the French composer Ernest Chausson, now the halls of the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, the exhibition exposes the tension between concepts of place and identity. Despite spending several decades abroad, the artists cannot fully detach from their Lithuanian roots: there is no escape. The labyrinth of installations in the exhibition feels insistently uncomfortable, as the space allotted for their massive drawings seems too confined: they need more room. It is in this aesthetic and physical friction that a dissonance of perspective emerges: the ghost of their spiritual homeland seeps through the aura of the aesthetic homeland (France), where the artists now work. This confrontation between two cultural spaces not only highlights the interplay of personal and national identity, but also reflects broader contemplations of contemporary artistic practice.

The artists delve into the creative legacy of Oscar Milosz, the first envoy of independent Lithuania to France, a poet who wrote in French yet maintained a profound connection with Lithuania throughout his life, despite never having lived here. With his paradoxical dualism, representing Lithuanian culture while living and working in a foreign cultural context, Milosz serves as a symbolic key to the narrative of this exhibition. His work encodes universal themes of exile and origin, resonating with contemporary artists seeking connections between personal and national identity. This existential divide between two worlds, two languages, becomes the central idea of the exhibition, inviting visitors to reflect not only on Lithuania's cultural diplomacy, but also on the nature of national identity and its place in the global context

When 'home' becomes an abstract concept rather than just a physical place, the artists consciously integrate fragments and narratives from their personal lives into their work: models of sculptures by Paulius' grandfather Petras Vaivada, a drawing by their granddaughter, eggs purchased cheaply while wintering in Argentina, nicotine gum. These elements of everyday life intertwine with narratives reminiscent of Milosz's fairy-tale motifs, while also exploring the contemporary and historically significant themes of the diaspora, particularly among Lithuanians in France. In this way, their work becomes a field for both personal and collective memory, where cultural migration and the search for identity meet with intimate reflections of daily life. In order to rethink our identity, beliefs and values, we are compelled to go through a symbolic act of catharsis, burning them, so to speak, in a metaphorical eternal flame, where destruction and rebirth are inseparable. The artists express this idea in an installation where a projection of flames is set beneath a piano, and a cross rising from the piano connects earthly creation with transcendent, spiritual atonement.

In one space, the poignant lament from Aukštaitija, a historic region in northeast Lithuania ('Farewell, farewell, my dear home / Farewell, my native village ...'), evokes associations with the documentary 'The Language You Cry In' (directed by Angel Serrano, Alvaro Toepke, 1998). The film tells the story of an African-American family who passed down a song from generation to generation that was long thought to be a meaningless lullaby. It was only later discovered that the song's lyrics were, in fact, a preserved fragment of an ancient language from Africa, dating back to pre-slavery times. This discovery revealed deep cultural connections, demonstrating how, even under conditions of oppression, authentic identity and heritage can be preserved. The lament and the film's story create a meaningful parallel: both reflect the enduring preservation of cultural memory, transcending geographical and historical constraints.



Exhibition 'Origins' by SetP Stanikas, Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in France, Paris, 2024. Photo: Eglė Marija Želvytė

This exhibition interestingly resonates with the discourse established by Anastasia Sosunova's video work *Agents* (2020), currently on display in the Pompidou Centre's exhibition 'Art contemporain en Lituanie de 1960 à nos jours. Une donation majeure' (Lithuanian Contemporary Art from the 1960s to Today. A Major Donation). Sosunova's piece not only reflects on the history of folk art, but also explores the fluidity of cultural identity, revealing the agents of the times, both symbolic and real. The film explores the impact of strict lockdown measures on people and their creativity, while, set against a backdrop of traditional wooden sculptures typical of the region, the artist documents the spontaneous creation by visitors of objects of folk art and temporary structures in forests and parks. A video work by S&P Stanikas, displayed on a manger-like structure crafted from chairs, similarly explores the examination of collective and symbolic frameworks. It incorporates folk dance choreography, where the synchronised movements of many people form various geometric shapes and symbolic patterns. At first glance, the simple folk dances evolve into a complex narrative, speaking to the relationship between community and individual identity. However, the artists give this seemingly nostalgic composition a fresh perspective: filmed in a contemporary setting, presented in black and white and sped up, it adds a light but unmistakable tone of irony. The video subtly balances between a respectful gaze towards tradition and a critical reflection on contemporary identity, as if questioning how much of this synchronisation remains authentic and how much becomes trapped within the confines of formal rituals.

In *Agents*, Sosunova reflects on the myths related to national identity that were forcibly imposed on us during the Soviet era. These myths emerge like a carved golem, rigid and mechanical, representing a distorted reality that we were forced to accept as an authentic expression of national identity. Using this imagery, Sosunova questions how much these constructed symbols of identity truly reflect our cultural essence, and how much they were manipulatively created constructs. One of the most striking examples is the folk dances performed at song festivals, which we now perceive as symbols of the national identity. However, as Sosunova points out, the majority of these dances

were created or reworked during the Soviet period by the choreographer Juozas Lingys. This fact prompts us to reconsider our relationship with so-called 'national' symbols. Do they genuinely convey our authentic cultural experience, or are they simply projections of Soviet ideology? Sosunova asks uncomfortable but important questions in her work: How do we perceive our identity when much of it was shaped under political oppression? Can we rewrite these imposed narratives and rediscover the roots of our identity beneath the layers of historical manipulation?

However, perhaps more important than the fact of Lithuanian artists' exhibitions taking place in Paris are the meetings and discussions that these art events provoke. For instance, during my visit to Jonas Mekas' exhibition 'Summer Manifesto' at The Film Gallery, I struck up a conversation with a gallerist, originally from Romania, and her friend, who had come from Lebanon. What started as a discussion about Mekas' work soon expanded into a conversation about pop culture and various socio-cultural and socio-political events across the globe. We spoke not only about the situation in Lithuania, but also about their respective home countries, reflecting on how these issues mirror global trends and impact us all. I believe such discussions form the core of cultural dialogue, freeing us from isolated cultural perspectives and engaging us in a broader, more inclusive conversation. We are citizens of the world, not just participating in European culture but actively shaping it. In this context, national identity becomes one of many aspects that enriches the broader dialogue, rather than the sole focus through which we define ourselves.

this illusion

October 30, 2024

Author Dovydas Laurinaitis

When Rupert appeared on the horizon, I don't know how widely the message was spread. There were a lot of very interesting people involved and you felt as if you had some kind of... bonus track, you felt privileged being part of that programme. It was during an up moment in the Vilnius art scene and Vilnius Art Academy was lacking behind—it had no ambition to be an international institution. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We would meet in different places with different guests, sometimes in bars, once at a student hostel, it was never just one space. I remember it as a kaleidoscope of random moments. Our group went on these funded trips to Kassel and then New York for a month. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 'Wow, this is what an artist's life looks like'. It's a warm feeling to remember, always.

This is a text about the death of two texts. See, I'm starting to think I'm cursed. This year, I've tried to write about Rupert—a centre for art, residencies and education, and a staple of the art scene in Vilnius—twice. First commissioned by Rupert themselves to review their symposium 'Earth Bonds II', and more recently, a text I began working on in November 2023 about the 11-year history of Rupert's Alternative Education Programme, retold through the fused memories of its participants. Although the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of these texts are different, I believe they share a common thread that reflects the relationship the art world (people) has with the art world (idea). I think these two cases reveal the contradiction of living an illusion without wanting to be reminded of it. Perhaps even about the limits of honesty in a tangled web of relationships, allegiances and the information economy, through which often disempowered artists navigate the lives of the institutions that offer them conditional housing, and institutions maintain carefully curated images.

I suppose this begins with the question of how to conceive what an artist or an institution is, as this determines one's expectations. Which metaphor is suitable? I have no place to begin with other than myself.

An artist says what might be uncomfortable to hear. An artist is weird and wishes to share that weirdness with the world, in the hope it will endear them to others. An artist has too many thoughts, like an overflowing penny jar wishing to be spent. An artist is an emotional, irrational creature. An artist sees below the surface, understanding the invisible structures that create the visible world through the prism of whichever philosopher they read first, or last. An artist is imbued with prestige and denigrated in the same breath. An artist lives their life hoping it will become a great story one

day. An artist creates because they have no choice otherwise.

In 2022, at the end of my time on Rupert's Alternative Education Programme, I felt proud, burnt out and heartbroken. Following the launch of the final exhibition, I waited for the Instagram posts from the opening containing my accumulated efforts to drop, only to see myself be the only one excluded. I must admit, a part of me found the irony funny, as much of my practice is built on the wish to belong and overcome the loneliness of being misunderstood. Receiving a blunt response from the institution with the explanation that there were no photos to post as the photographer didn't manage to capture a moment with anyone viewing my installation, I took the only step I felt was available to me, the only power I could exercise—making a series of Instagram stories venting my frustration. It's not a moment I'm particularly proud of, but we've already established I'm an emotional and irrational creature. This made the institution pay attention and begin responding much more caringly and empathetically, while letting me know that in trying to get back at the institution, I ended up hurting the people working there, for there are no institutions, only people.

That thought has stayed with me. Can that really be right? Or is it more convenient, that an institution cannot decide if to use 'they' or 'it' pronouns? Turning a rented smoke machine on and off, disguising and revealing, centralising and dispersing, as circumstances demand. Like those optical illusions with hidden images inside I never managed to see no matter how hard I squinted. An institution is a group of people, but it's also the narrative, myths and rumours built around them. An institution is its history, but it's also a carefully curated version of that history, legitimised through the media. An institution is an accumulation of power and capital, but based in the economy of imaginary numbers that will fail should enough people wish to withdraw their money at the same time.

I remember in December 2021 dragging my sister to see the final exhibition of that year's Alternative Education Programme, having missed the once-per-hour bus that goes to this exclusive part of Vilnius and needing to dredge through a snowstorm that swallowed us until our knees. Afterwards, we sat wet and shivering at the bus stop, and I told her, 'Next year, I'll be here'. After so many years of trying to go at it alone, out of a desire to 'prove something', I had grown resentful and tired. I was ready to play the 'game', if that's what it would take to have a rope thrown into the quicksand. It ended up being a humbling experience, where I met some of the most brilliant people, and had wonderful experiences that softened my heart and injected excitement into the staleness of my life. It took only the first lecture to receive what I needed to learn most—how to position and market myself. Branding begets recognition, recognition begets success, and success begets ease. Things felt so accessible. In a way, it was utopic. The feeling I could just make art, without any conditions. That expression could be its own reward. The feeling of solidarity, community and understanding. Of course, it all mostly evaporated when the programme finished and what remained were these beautiful and complicated relationships. And having seen the sparkling rewards each level of the game offered, like a magpie, I couldn't refuse my instinct to latch on, even if it meant I was carrying a silver lighter to the top of a thatched roof.

'Brave'. This is the main descriptor I heard of my texts, once I decided to resume writing art criticism in 2023, following a four-year break after moving back to Lithuania from London. It was, and still is, baffling to me that publishing overt criticism is considered brave. I was later told almost no one agrees to write a review in Vilnius if they have something negative to say. The field is small, you don't want to upset the connections you have. It was good for me that I didn't really know anyone, so I felt immune to this fear. My approach to writing art criticism stems back to when I read Peter Brook's 'The Empty Space' as an impressionable teenager. In it, he talks about the critic as the one that prevents theatre from dying in repetition, cliché and kitsch. Perhaps arrogantly, it imbued my 'honesty' with a sense of social responsibility. Truth is a paradox. Like an idea that degrades when you try to vocalise it. More than anything else, truth is a critical mass of agreement.

My 'bravery' garnered me a reputation. Friends half-jokingly told me they were afraid of me reviewing their work. So when Rupert invited me to write about their 'Earth Bonds II' symposium in May 2024, telling me 'Write what you want, this is not a press release :)', I was taken aback. Did they truly mean it? If so, it represented a refreshing twist in the way an institution allowed itself to relinquish control of their image in favour of nurturing an artistic eco-system in which criticism encourages constructive dialogue between all agents, complicating their pristine exterior.

As with most things, my response was ambivalent. The symposium was tasked with the gargantuan task of answering the question of how cultural institutions should respond to the climate crisis. My main criticism was, if the programme was to be interpreted as an answer, how safe and limited that answer felt. I didn't feel there was a curatorial throughline. At the same time, I appreciated how the talks and workshops stimulated my thinking, in trying to conceptualise more radical versions of their intellectual inputs. And how the soothing performative moments, which approached the question from the affect level, made me reflect on the paralysis of not only being an individualised subject under the weight of the world's problems, but an institution that somehow needed to 'lead' while being similarly restrained by our shared social, political and economic circumstances. The more honestly I wrote, the more self-conscious I felt. Maybe this was the time to soften my tone and minimise my criticisms. But that would feel disingenuous to the point of nullifying all the engagement I had done with their offerings, and the ways I wished to expand and continue this important conversation they had initiated.

Our original agreement was for me to shop the text around to various contacts they had provided. When the text was done, haunted by the worry in the back of my head, I decided to first ask the curatorial team to go through it, leaving comments and responses I would then include in the final version, allowing the text to unfold a larger dialogue between intent and outcome. At first, I received an enthusiastic agreement. This was followed by a few weeks of silence. And then, the notification they decided 'not to proceed with the text'. They still paid me, for which I was glad. It didn't help much to alleviate my sense of disappointment at the squandered opportunity.

Citing the precarious position of being both the commissioner and subject of the text, their main argument was that if they allowed the text to be published, it would be seen as an endorsement of the criticisms against the artists and speakers they had curated for the symposium. It was difficult for me to see it as anything else than them having made a bed they no longer wanted to lie in. Wasn't this 'conflict of interest' apparent from the start? I also didn't agree with the subtext that my criticism of the artworks and talks couldn't be separated from criticism of the people. I'm sure the news that followed a few months later that they had lost their strategic funding played into this decision as now, they were put in a position of needing to prove their worth in the cultivation of the Lithuanian cultural field, inviting previous residents and programme participants to share positive testimonies to use in a response to the Lithuanian Culture Council.

At the end of 2023, I was heartbroken. I had become very close with several participants from that year's Alternative Education Programme and, as the year before, they were about to leave to resume the winding paths that led to their wishes. For the second year in a row, I had to accept the sun was setting and there was no more time left to play outside. Inspired by this sense of longing, I decided to write about the programme, and the joy and pain of forming these tender temporary communities. I also understood it as an opportunity to foreground the participants' voices, who often lose control over the public framing of their experience. And so, I began interviewing participants of the past 11 editions of the programme, one from each edition, and before I knew it, I had around 26 hours of recordings to transcribe, along with written responses through a Google form I had set up.

I remember meeting one of the biggest artists in Lithuania for the first time over facetime from a 7/11 in Thailand, putting myself on mute while I grabbed snacks. And the gratitude of being able to learn through the experiences of all these fascinating and passionate artists not only about their time at Rupert, but also about their perception of what they do and why. I had a vague feeling of what I was reaching for—a chorus of voices, totally anonymised, with all names removed and no indication of where one ended and another began, cobbling together individual experiences to reveal a larger, collective picture. The stories I heard were touching, sensational, sentimental, provocative, critical and affirming. 30,000 words became 16,000, and then 5,000. Sensing I had accomplished something close to that vague feeling, I shared it with all those who gave an interview as, after all, they were co-creators of the text.

The response was crushing. The text was a collection of gossips. It was a destructive piece of journalism. It wasn't factual. Who was it interesting for? It left readers with heavy hearts and anxious feelings. Some asked for alterations, as details began to blur and faces became indistinguishable. Another person asked for their parts to be completely removed, effectively killing the enmeshed text. I felt I had betrayed those who trusted me. Of course, I understood their hesitations and respected their wishes. Were our subjective experiences valid enough to form the basis of understanding how this institution functions? The text was never intended as a piece of journalism, more so an experiment in the way we could conceive what Rupert meant to the local art scene and those it temporarily housed. Should someone's firsthand experience be designated gossip, if the custodian of the archive is the unreliable narrator of their own memories? The response wasn't totally negative, but I couldn't muster the strength to fight for the text. A part of me was just glad to be done with it after an eleven-month-long process. But as I continued to reflect on this experience in real-time with those around me, a sense of defeat and anger came out like a Freudian slip. Why had we ended up in this Stockholm syndrome relationship with our experiences?

I wasn't even grieving the tedious amount of work I had put into both these texts. I was grieving for the fact that one didn't want to be implicated in the experience of the other. Criticism was to be traded privately in the information economy, but the record had to remain vague. The social contracts we all supposedly signed being part of this community had to be upheld. If not for comfort, then for market value. I was naive and failed to recognise just how much was at stake for all involved. I understood that telling the emperor he was wearing no clothes only made sense if he was hypothetical. We have these stories we tell ourselves about the meaning and importance of what we do, but they shouldn't be read too closely, as otherwise, we risk falling into the plot holes.

A friend of mine once said she admired how I always knew the right time to exit. I guess the trade-off is never quite knowing when to arrive. I wish my timing wasn't so inconvenient, and I fear the perception I'm kicking Rupert while they're down. So let me be clear—I do hope for the survival of Rupert. It's an integral part of the Vilnius art scene, and without them, the cultural landscape would become less adventurous and nuanced. Their ability to nurture the development of artists and cultural workers is as clear as looking at their list of past curators, residents and programme participants, who across time, tell the story of the changeover between art movements, opportunities for self-realisation, many overlapping relationships and the rebelliousness to offer an 'alternative', no matter how murky that wish became.

And lastly, dear reader, I would like to turn to you. What are your expectations of a text like this? By which matrix do you measure the acceptable level of professionalism that allows criticism to be levied in a comfortable way that feels safe, intelligent and non-confrontational? Who are you? Are you part of this bubble community, or did you just happen to stumble through the doors of the wrong text? Perhaps you feel confused, for I haven't offered an academically systematic breakdown of the philosophical and sociological underpinnings of the subject matter. Is my experience, the only thing I'm left to stand behind, enough to say something meaningful about a topic that has been

written about and then meme'd into oblivion? Should I have detached my emotions from my observations? Am I saying anything you don't already know? I wish I could propose a solution, an answer, or give some sort of clarity, but in the end, all I have are these contradictions and the uneasy realisation of my limitations. Yet, if there's hope to be found, it's the same idealistic hope I've always found myself clinging to—that open dialogue can mend the fractures between us, if we have the will to soothe our ego and release ourselves from the pressures of keeping up appearances.

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Children's Room' by Mykolas Sauka at the Galerie Olivier Waltman in Paris

October 7, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



These days, France is full of events related to the Lithuanian Season in France. Within the framework of this season, Mykolas Sauka's solo exhibition "Children's Room" opened at the "Galerie Olivier Waltman" in the bustling Marais district of Paris. The opening event lasted for a good half of the day and attracted a crowd of Lithuanian art lovers, Parisians, visitors to the city, and French people who are just beginning to discover the gems of our culture.

The exhibition "Children's Room" is a continuation of Mykolas Sauka's ongoing creative project. In 2022, the same-titled solo installation of wooden sculptures by M. Sauka was presented at the exhibition halls of Vilnius Academy of Arts "Titanikas". A year later, part of this exhibition was showcased in Paris during the exhibition "Iron Wolf" (curated by Julija Palmeirao), dedicated to the 700th anniversary of Vilnius. Olivier Waltman, a Parisian gallery owner, who attended the exhibition featuring artists creating in Vilnius, was captivated by Mykolas Sauka's work and immediately proposed organizing a solo exhibition at his gallery the following year.

Gallery owner Olivier Waltman does not hide his admiration for Mykolas' work:

“The theater of our inner self unfolds in a spectacular staging of finely crafted small objects or immense totems carved with an electric saw. The accumulation of sculptural groups and abrupt changes in scale are essential elements of Mykolas Sauka’s sculptural vocabulary. In his works, we see references to traditional sculpture, as well as a strong influence of sacred art. Monumental twisted columns lift cherubim and seraphim towards the sky, inviting both reverie and a transcendent experience. The sculptures of this artist, who is also a writer, give material form to emotions felt in childhood, which one never fully outgrows.”

At the “Galerie Olivier Waltman” exhibition “Children’s Room,” only the main sculpture group from this artistic series remains – the twisting gates featuring the key “room” figures – a la baroque chubby cherub-like angels perched on columns. All the other sculptures presented in the exhibition are the result of nearly a year and a half of work in preparation for this show.

“Mykolas Sauka’s ‘Children’s Room’ immerses us in a captivating and unsettling world that explores the connections between human existence and the surrounding environment. While a veil of purity seems to envelope the exhibited works, mysterious and sometimes deformed bodies capture attention, evoking conflicting emotions: calm and chaos, security and alienation. Behind this innocent title lies a world far from idyllic, and this contrast lies at the heart of Mykolas Sauka’s artistic quest. He explores dichotomies: beauty and ugliness, purity and filth, creation and destruction, tradition and the self-destruction of the modern world. Each sculpture becomes a microcosm of human experience, resonating with narratives of vulnerability, resilience, and the passage of time. As we wander among the sculptures, we confront our fears and oddities, realizing that our subconscious sometimes accepts strangeness as an inevitable fate,” says the exhibition’s curator, Julija Palmeirao.

The artist himself has mentioned more than once that he views this artistic project as a playground, where we all become players. The element of play remains in his newest works. However, it is not just that – in this exhibition, the artist confronts the viewer with contemporary society, where the cult of body deformation is popular. “Body modification trends are spreading, where bodies are tattooed, ears and noses are cut off, fingers, breasts, genitals, or hands are removed, tongues are split, and various implants are placed under the skin, all in an effort to become something other than human, something more or less – another type of animal, alien, or plant. It seems to me that this is about searching for identity, the desire to stand out at any cost, but at the same time to blend in with an exclusive community. However, this trend mostly stems from discomfort with being in one’s own body. And then there are the perfect bodies and perfect people on social media, in movies, and in advertisements. In such a backdrop, I feel the need to depict as imperfect and uncomfortable bodies as possible. Here, form merges with content: I choose to depict deformed figures and body parts, but the sculpture itself is deformed by my inability to represent them accurately, by my crooked knowledge of anatomy and lack of skill. In other words: my naivety,” explains Mykolas Sauka.

Already in the first half-day of the exhibition’s opening, “Children’s Room” attracted the attention of several hundred visitors, reflecting the high level of interest in Mykolas Sauka’s work. Undoubtedly, each of them left with a lasting impression of the unique world of wooden sculptures, infused with the artist’s irony and sincerity. Sauka masterfully combines the simplicity of everyday life with a profound and multi-layered visual world, inviting viewers on an experimental journey through the depths of imagination. As the “Children’s Room” exhibition at Galerie Olivier Waltman runs until November 2nd, it is expected to attract not only art enthusiasts but also a broader audience eager to discover one of the most prominent creators in contemporary Lithuanian art.

The exhibition runs until November 2nd.
Address: 16 rue du Perche, 75003 Paris.













Photo reportage from the group exhibition 'Amphibian State (of Mind)' at the EKA Gallery

October 9, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen

The group exhibition ‘Amphibian State (of Mind)’ at EKA Gallery runs until 13th October.

The international exhibition ‘Amphibian State (of Mind)’ explores the ambiguous relationships between artworks and the discourses they generate. This concept draws from Per Nilsson’s philosophical essay ‘The Amphibian Stand’*, investigating themes like the interconnectedness of bodies, nature, and animism. The exhibition showcases artistic practices where material knowledge is applied to objects – such as a lashing belt, copper plate, fabric, or clay – to transform their discourse and reveal new forms of understanding. Techniques like printmaking, drawing, textile work, and ceramics emphasise the sensitivity of touch and its power to engage with surface textures. Through deliberate gestures and care, the artists activate the latent ‘thing-power’ of their materials.

Informed by a posthumanist, multidisciplinary approach, the artists seamlessly apply the logic of one medium to another. This process can be understood through Karen Barad’s concept of ‘intra-action’**, which emphasises entanglement rather than simple interaction. The exhibition looks at the sets of relationships between the bodies of the maker and the body of the art object that are inherently intertwined through the discourse they create through intra-acting. The exhibition further navigates the intersection of digital and analogue processes, materiality, and human experience. By incorporating AI-generated imagery, sound waves, and the translation between digital and physical forms, the artists explore the “glitch” that exists between these realms. Additionally, the exhibition addresses intimate themes such as identity, generational trauma, and guilt, or shame. Through the

blending of narrative and material-based knowledge, the artworks become metaphors for existential reflections, uncertainty, and personal challenges. They engage with human relationships, nature, and self-image, expressing both individual and collective emotions in response to everyday struggles while contemplating broader aspects of the human condition.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the Department of Graphic Art at the Estonian Academy of Arts and Print and Drawing study area at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

* Nilsson, P. (2009). *The Amphibian Stand: A Philosophical Essay Concerning Research Processes in Fine Art*. Umeå: H:ström-Text & Kultur.

** Barad, K. (2012). Interview with Karen Barad. R. Dolphijn, I. van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (pp 48–70). Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, MPublishing – University of Michigan.

Participating artists: Ida Montgomery Emblemsvåg (NO), Othelie Farstad (NO), Birk André Fredhjem (NO), Dan Grönlund (SE/NO), Sara Marie Hødnebo (NO), Oskar Jensen (NO), Maria Izabella Lehtsaar (EE), Signe Fuglesteg Luksengard (NO), Vilma Lundholm (SE/NO), Rajat Mondal (IN/NO), Triin Mänd (EE), Marten Prei (EE), Sandra Puusepp (EE), Paul Rannik (EE/DE), Elise Marie Skaug (NO), Mathilda Skoglund (SE/NO), Kristian Trana (NO), Nora Hultén Törnerud (SE/NO)

Curator: Maria Erikson

Exhibition design: Maria Erikson, Paul Rannik

Graphic design: Mirjam Varik

Translation, editing: Maria Erikson, Liina Siib

The exhibition was supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, KUNO and Sadolin Estonia.

Photos by Ya-Chuan Chen and Kaisa Maasik



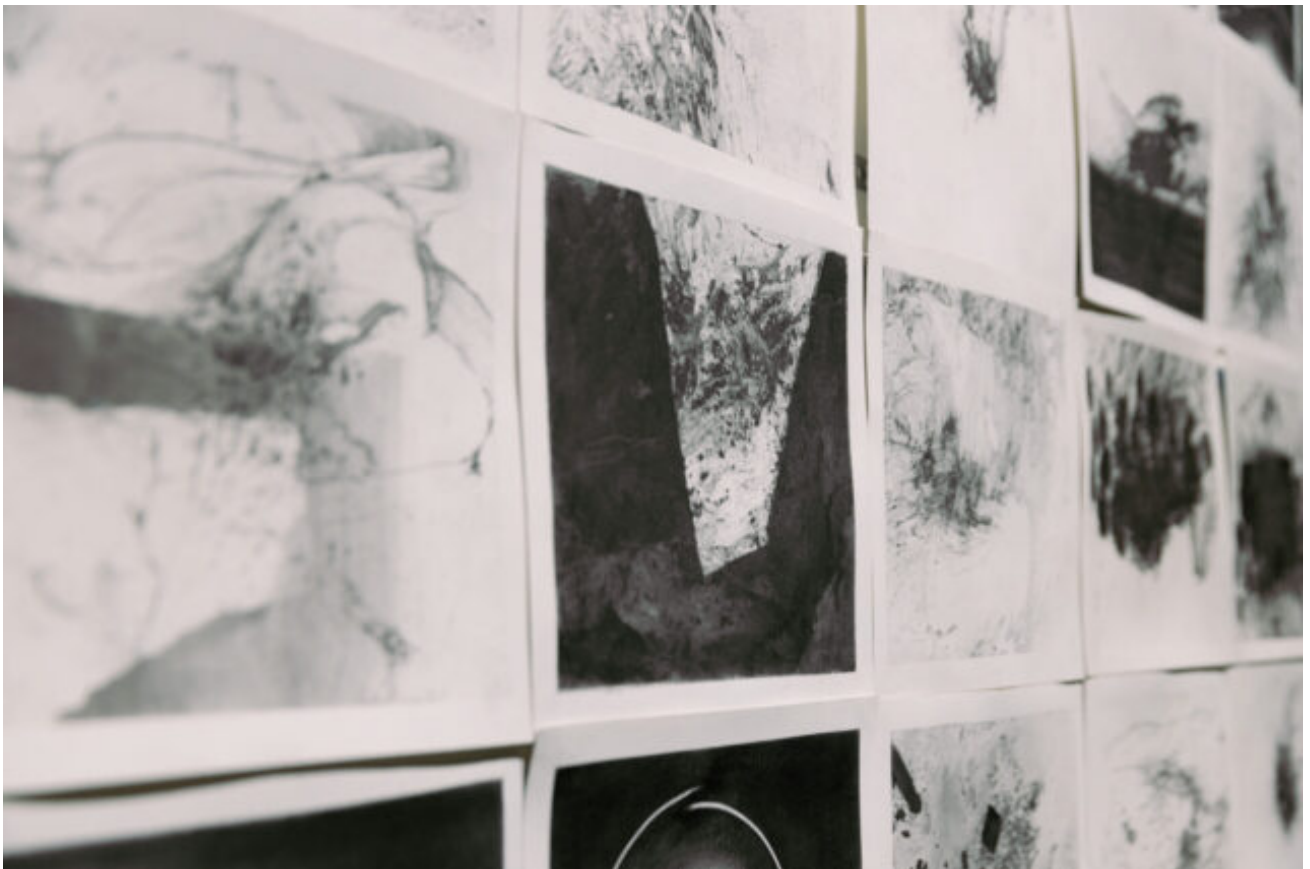
View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Rajat Mondal "Plumbago" (2023–2024), sound wave vibration drawing with graphite dust on paper, à 18 × 21 cm. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Rajat Mondal "Plumbago" (2023–2024), sound wave vibration drawing with graphite dust on paper, à 18 × 21 cm. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



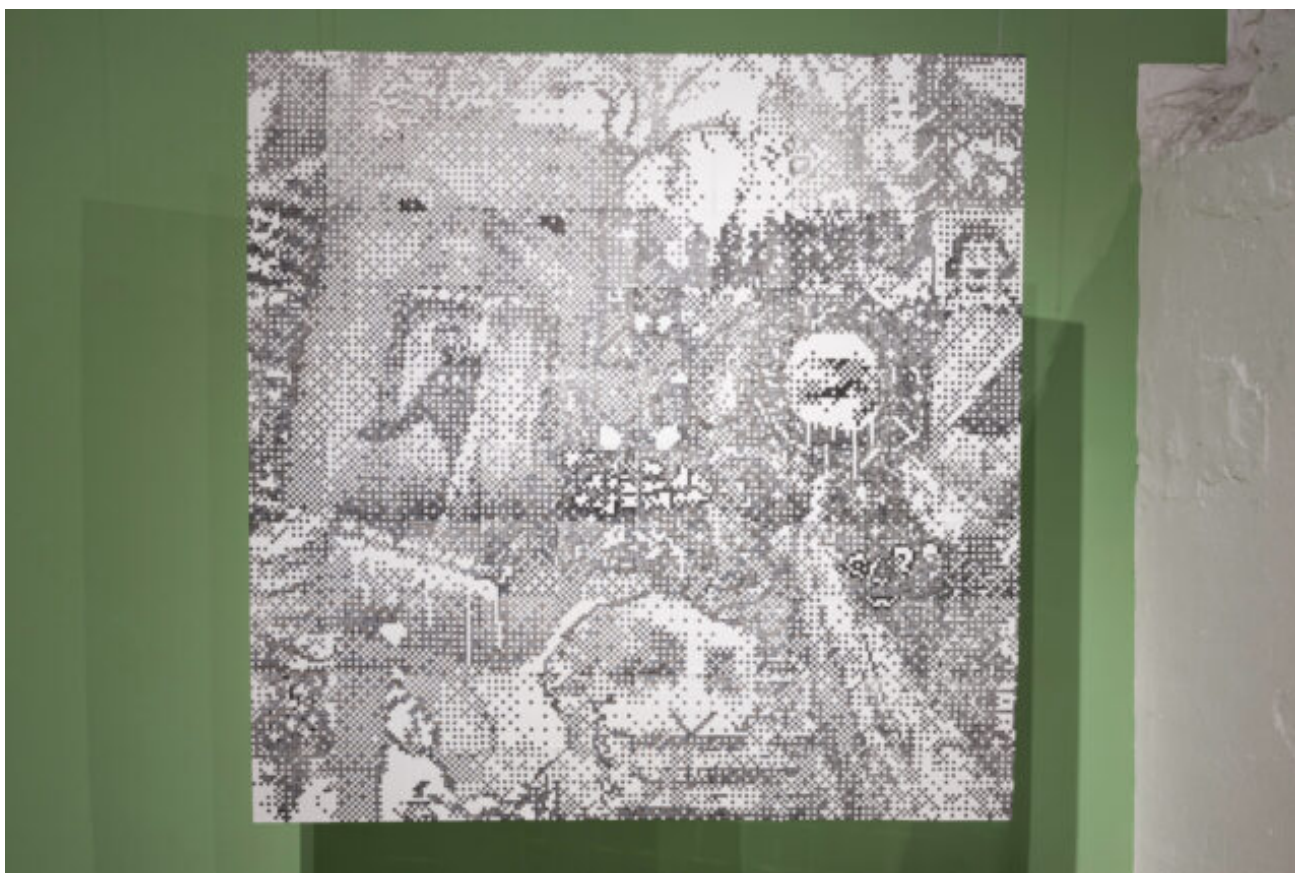
View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



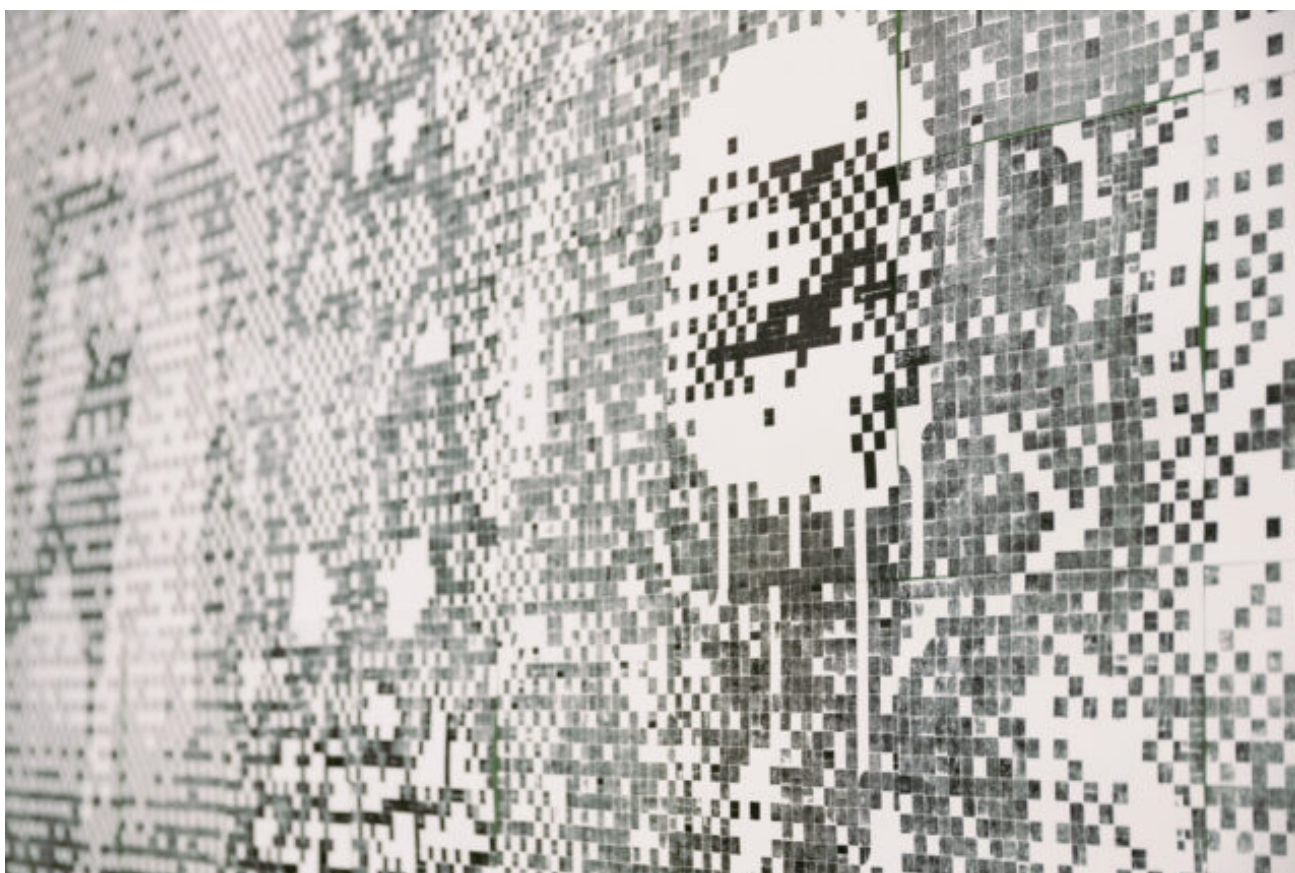
View from the exhibition "Amphibian State (of Mind)", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Maria Izabella Lehtsaar "Unknown Pleasures" (2023), linocut, fabric, chains, à 29.7 × 42 cm. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Marten Prei " 48.400" (2024), letterpress, 198 × 198 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Marten Prei " 48.400" (2024), letterpress, 198 × 198 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Triin Mänd "Kuma (Gleam)" (2023), aquatint, waterbite, 47 × 44 cm. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



View from the exhibition "Amphibian State (of Mind)", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Paul Rannik "Imprints Where There Shouldn't Be Imprints" (2024), screen print on Stonehenge paper, à 76 × 56.5 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Paul Rannik "Imprints Where There Shouldn't Be Imprints" (2024), screen print on Stonehenge paper, à 76 × 56.5 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition "Amphibian State (of Mind)", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Vilma Lundholm "The Routine" (2024), porcelain, ceramic pen, tiles, various measurements. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Vilma Lundholm "The Routine" (2024), porcelain, ceramic pen, tiles, various measurements. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Vilma Lundholm "The Routine" (2024), porcelain, ceramic pen, tiles, various measurements. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Vilma Lundholm "The Routine" (2024), porcelain, ceramic pen, tiles, various measurements. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



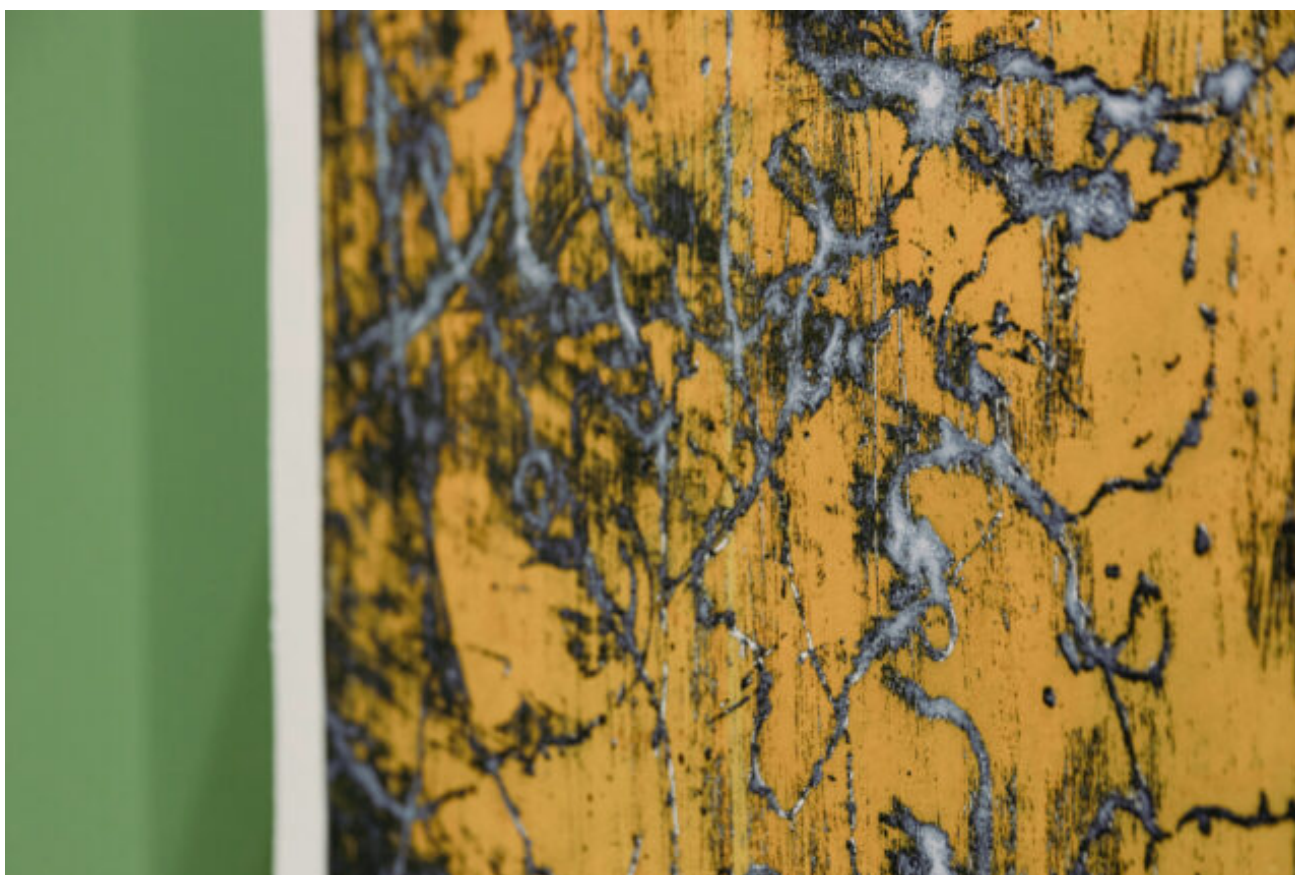
View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Sara Marie Hødnebo “Dropp Skygge (Drop Shadow)” (2024), spray paint, cork notice boards, 55 × 72 cm, 42 × 63 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Ida Montgomery Emblemsvåg, Othelie Farstad, Birk André Fredhjem, Dan Grönlund, Oskar Jensen, Signe Fuglesteg Luksengard, Elise Marie Skaug, Kristian Trana, Nora Hultén Törnerud "NI(O)" (2023), etching, zinc plate, colour viscosity, 99 × 79 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Ida Montgomery Emblemsvåg, Othelie Farstad, Birk André Fredhjem, Dan Grönlund, Oskar Jensen, Signe Fuglesteg Luksengard, Elise Marie Skaug, Kristian Trana, Nora Hultén Törnerud "NI(O)" (2023), detail. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



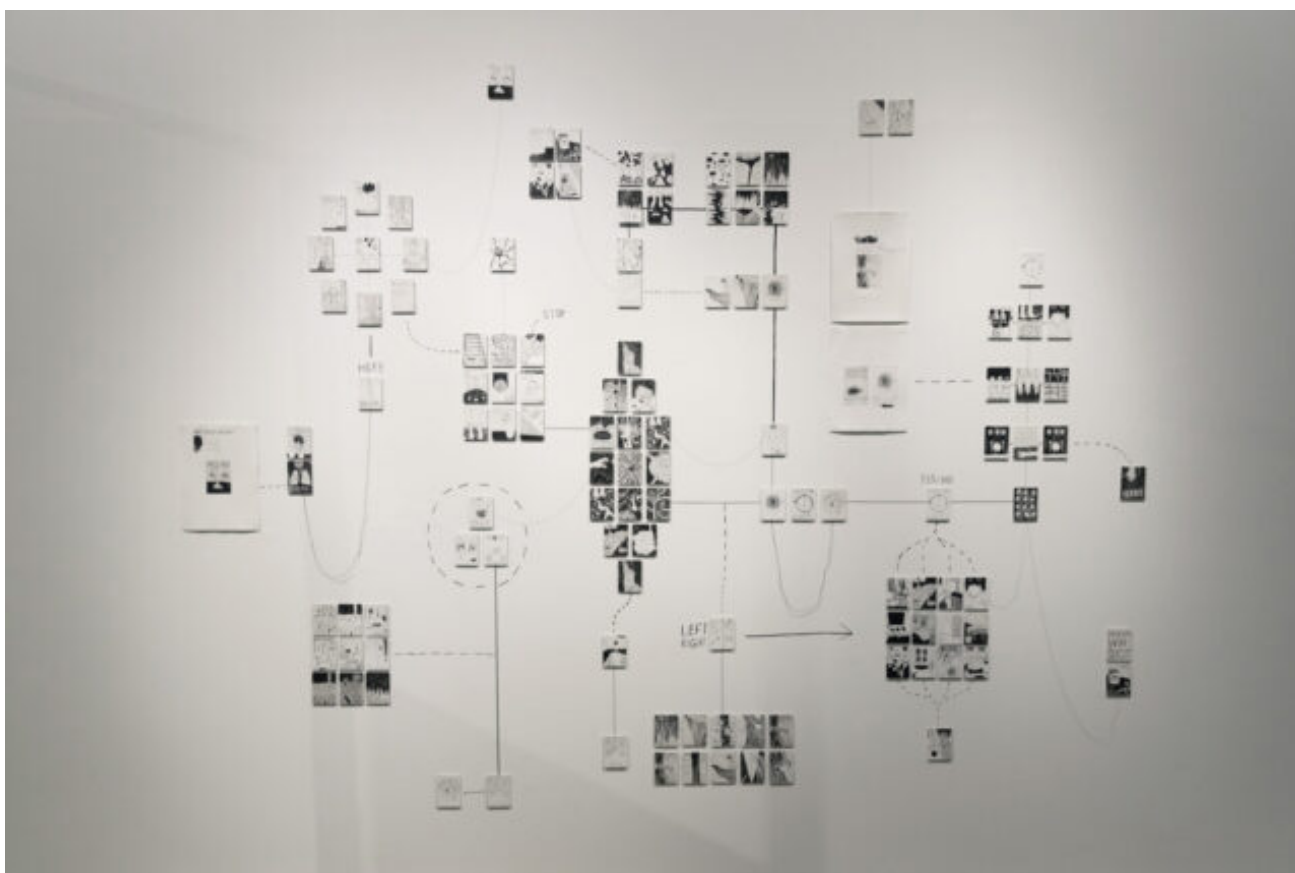
View from the exhibition “Amphibian State (of Mind)”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



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Ida Montgomery Emblemsvåg, Othelie Farstad, Birk André Fredhjem, Dan Grönlund, Oskar Jensen, Signe Fuglestad Luksengard, Elise Marie Skaug, Kristian Trana, Nora Hultén Törnerud "NI(O)" (2023), detail. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Vilma Lundholm "Inner World Tour" (2023), drypoint, ink and acrylic pen, cardboard, tape, thread, various measurements. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Vilma Lundholm "Inner World Tour" (2023), detail. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Sara Marie Hødnebo "Den lyse veven (The light loom)" (2023), steel drying rack, various textiles, household twine, 73 × 188 × 110 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Sara Marie Hødnebo "Den lyse veven (The light loom)" (2023), detail. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Mathilda Skoglund "Spännet (Tension)" (2023), detail. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



Mathilda Skoglund "Spännet (Tension)" (2023), letterpress, lashing belt, 400 x 4 cm. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Mathilda Skoglund "Spännet (Tension)" (2023), detail. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



View from the exhibition "Amphibian State (of Mind)", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



Sandra Puusepp "Matrix I-III" (2023), lithography, à 70 × 53 cm. Photo by Ya Chuan Chen



View from the exhibition "Amphibian State (of Mind)", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2024. Photo by Kaisa Maasik

Photo reportage from the group exhibition 'The Letters of The Lioness' at Drifts gallery

October 15, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



The Letters of The Lioness

Multiple currents converge in the historic spaces of the city: particles of centuries-old materials float through the air, gradually becoming part of pavements or buildings. Like dust, they settle on windows or drift down the river, carried away by the water. Something is absorbed by the clothes, skin, and hair of people, whose conversations, whispers, songs, quarrels, and the clapping of horses' hooves have changed over time, while their scents fade away. The theme of this exhibition emerged from an attempt to grasp the porous and fluid nature of history.

Situated within the multi-layered cityscape of Vilnius, right between the Cathedral and the mighty River Neris, the location chosen for the exhibition was a significant starting point. It was here that we first encountered Countess Klementina Potockytė-Tiškevičienė (1856–1921), who initiated the construction of a majestic palace nearby. Known as the 'Lioness of Vilnius,' Klementina was an ardent fan of parties and entertainment, with her palace hosting grand balls, salon gatherings, live painting performances, and cabaret shows – events that likely tested the moral boundaries of the era and the rigid notion of women's roles in society. Art historian Dr. Aistė Bimbirytė, who shared some of her research on Klementina's personality with us, notes that the term 'lioness' had almost become a common term in society, used to describe a woman who used emancipation as a guise for entertainment. The main historical sources on Klementina's personality are her letters and the press of the time: while the latter reports cases of men urging young ladies to avoid Klementina's company, the same men would later write love letters to her. Klementina's biography is full of intriguing and sometimes spicy details, some of which we will attempt to recount. However, at the

heart of this exhibition are the artists' works, created and placed within the influence of historical stains and currents.

In developing the exhibition, we met with historians, learning about the city's image in the 19th and 20th centuries, leisure culture, and women's roles in society. All this information and the accompanying visions hovered in the background of the creation of the works and the exhibition's body, influencing its content. The exhibition raises questions about the experience and perception of history, as well as the artistic means used to speculate upon and explore historical themes. Letters are treated as historical sources, yet ultimately everything is perceived as letters; thus, the artworks become historical sources in themselves. Through the displayed works and the exhibition space, a sensory perception of porous and fluid history unfolds.

19 September 2024 – 31 October 2024
Drifts gallery, T. Vrublevskio str. 6-2, Vilnius

Curated by: Monika Lipšic

Participating artists: Eglė Pilkauskaitė, Elvyra Kairiūkštytė, Ieva Rižė, Ieva Rojūtė, Barbora Šulniūtė, Monika Jagusinskytė, Samuel Barbier-Ficat

Exhibition scenography by: Barbora Šulniūtė and Monika Lipšic

Graphic design by: Jonė Miškinytė

Text editing and translation by: Alexandra Bondarev

Historical consultancy by: Dr. Aistė Bimbirytė and Dr. Juozapas Paškauskas

We are grateful to Regina Norvaišienė for lending us Elvyra Kairiūkštytė's works for the exhibition, to Gasparas Zondovas, Eugenijus Byčėnkovas, Vadim Šamkov and Mantvydas Vilius for the help to install the exhibition.

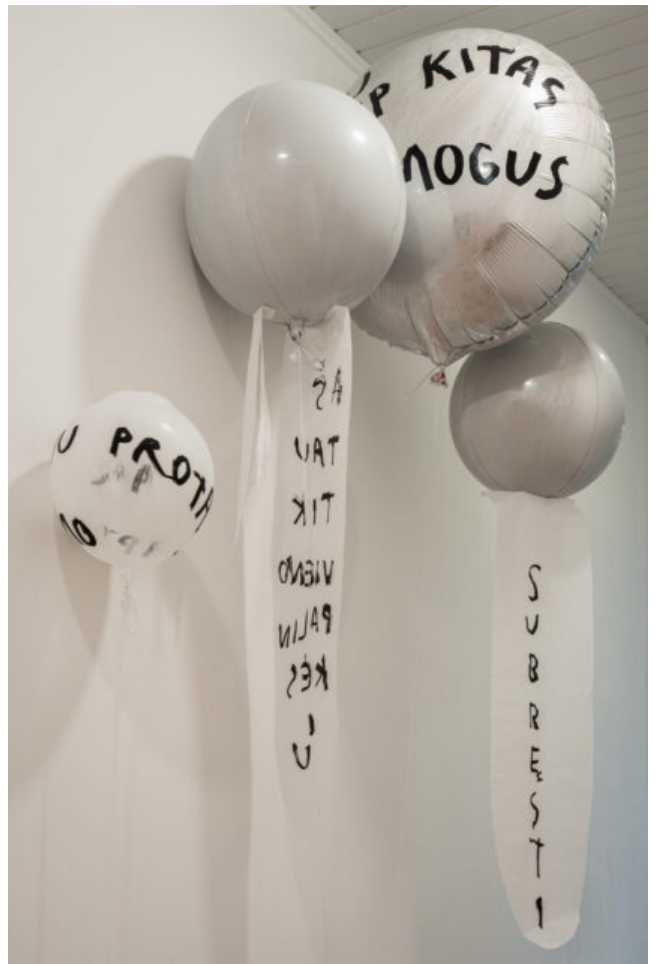
The exhibition is financed by the Lithuanian Council for Culture.

Photo reportage by: Andrej Vasilenko









... 1913 m. gruodžio 2 d. Kurier Krajowy pasirodė žinutė
apie grafiinės rūmuose įkalintą Anną Sahut.
Pasak laikraščio korespondentų,
prancūzų kilmės panelė Sahut su grafiene susipažino Paryžiuje.
Pastaroji už nemonetą mokėstį merginai pasiūliusi ją
lydėti kelionėse ir tapti jos dame de compagnie.
Anot nukentėjusiosios, kurį laiką grafiinės elgesys nekėlė įtarimų,
tačiau ilgainiui, ir ypač atvykus į Vilnių, jų santykiai ėmė kardinaliai keistis.
Ponia savo palydovę ėmusi nuolat žinaityti, besiteisindama, jog tai daro „iš meilės“,
bei liepusi pildyti „užgaidas, kurias būvę sunku įvykdyti nesugadintai merginai“.
Vieną dieną tarp jų kilęs konfliktas ir
panelė Sahut buvusi užrakinta pirmo aukšto kambaryje.
Čia ji buvo palikta be maisto ir tik kartais gaudavusi duonos bei vandens.
Prancūzė mėginusi išsilaivinti, parašiusi raštėlį ir išmetusi jį pro langą.
Tąkart nesulaukus pagalbos, parašė antrąjį, kurį rado penktadienį 9 val. pro šalį ėjęs žmogus.
Šis buvo rašytas prancūziškai ir nedelsiant buvo atiduotas į vietos pareigūnų rankas.
Jį nelaimingoji adresavusi Prancūzijos konsulatui Varšuvoje,
aprašiusi savo bėdą ir net grasinusi atimti sau gyvybę, jei nebus imtasi atitinkamų veiksmų.
Pagalbos šauksmas buvo išgirstas ir jau kitą dieną A. Sahut,
išvargusi ir sulysusi, buvo išlaisvinta.
„Tiškevičių rūmų paslaptis“ sukėlė ant kojų pareigūnus ir visuomenę,
vyko nuolatiniai ginčai, buvo apdelsiamai liudininkai
bei grasinama teismais žinią paskelbusiam leidiniui.
Kurstydama susidomėjusių skaitytojų smalsumą
spauda net prisiminė 1911 m. žiemą grafiinės sode rastą
nupjautą merginos galvą (!).

Dr. Aistė Bimbirytė



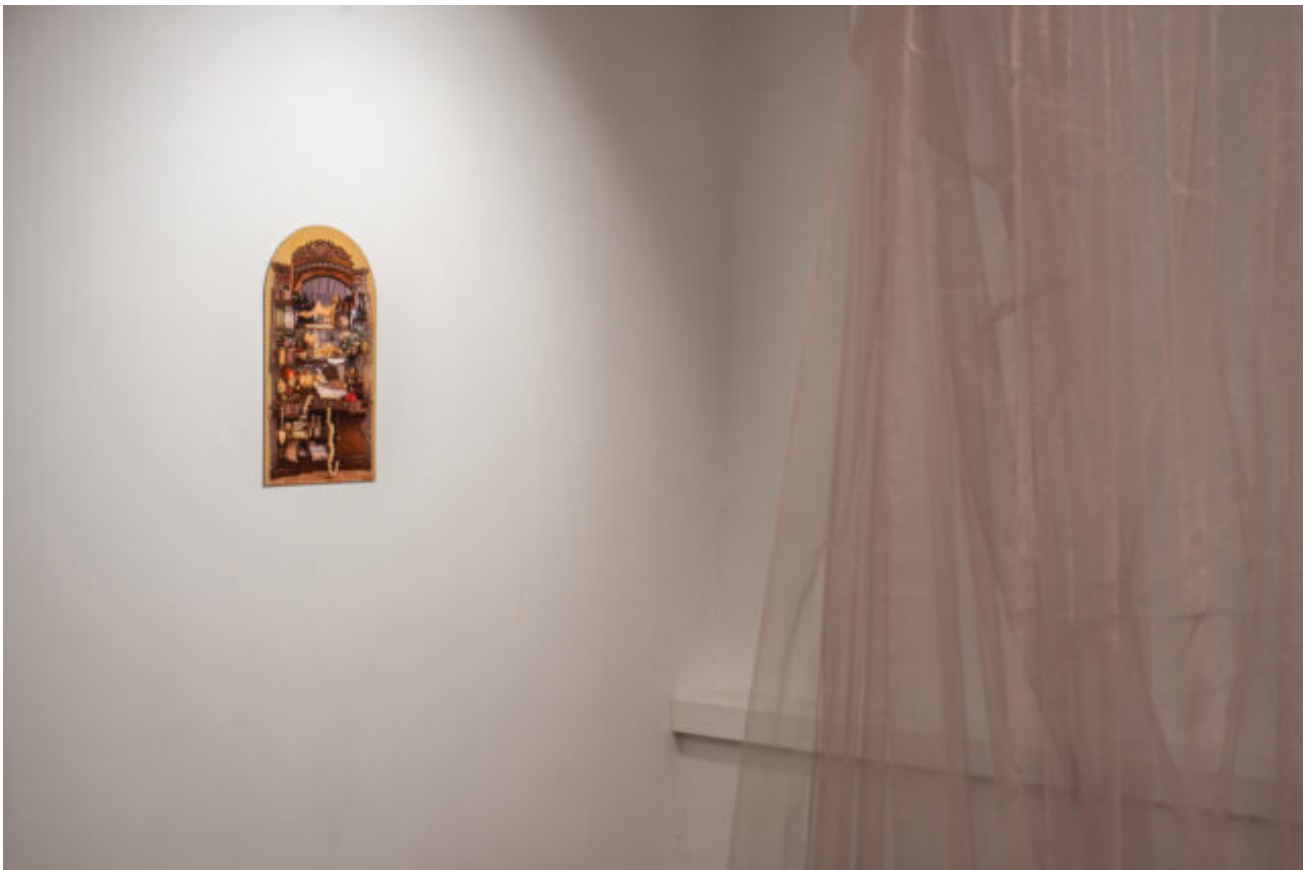






Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Wanderers' by Helēna Heinrihsone at the Latvian National Museum of Literature and Music

October 16, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Scorching Night (Triptych), 198 x 147 cm, oil on canvas, 2024

From October 11 to November 9, 2024 the solo exhibition of the prominent Latvian artist Helēna Heinrihsone, is open at the Latvian National Museum of Literature and Music (LNMLM) in Riga. The show “Wanderers”, curated by Auguste Petre, raises the internal conflict between human feelings and sense. Through the exhibition, visitors will be able to visit the LNMLM premises at Mārstaļu Street 6 for the first time, where the museum’s exhibition “Procrastination and Creation” will be opened in 2025.

Wanderers, nomads, thinkers. At a time when the ability to communicate and converse emerges as one of the fundamental values of existence, objective reality demonstrates the disappearance of this skill in society. Individualism often turns into egoism and unwarranted, tense competition. Tension creates misunderstandings in relationships, rushed movements, and heightened emotions. We see each other as images.

Helēna Heinrihsone’s art has always been a subtle visual observation, documenting and analysing surrounding/outside events through a feminine perspective, almost as in a diary. In her new works, Heinrihsone continues to bring attention to the inner conflict between human emotions and the mind. The figurative compositions reveal the importance of physical contact in forming relationships. The protagonists of her new paintings are primates; their silhouettes and portraits remind us of

existential themes that have long been important to the artist. Movement and facial expressions seem to clearly indicate the physical belonging of these figures, yet Heinrichsone's abstract painting allows for interpretation of perception and meaning. The primate becomes a symbol of life and coexistence. In certain episodes, they are surrounded not only by electrifying colour but also by roses, which have defined beauty in Helēna's art since the early 1990s.

Wanderers can be both allies and outside observers. Accidental presences and creations of the imagination. In Heinrichsone's work, they mark a new turning point – a distinctly psychological portrayal that now reflects not only individual experiences and the place of the primate/human/rose today, but also the impact of international social events on contemporary society. The figures, gazes, feelings, and the context of the pulsating pure colour in Helēna Heinrichsone's paintings reflect the time and way of thinking of today.

Helēna Heinrichsone (born 1948, Riga) has been active in the art scene since the 1970s and is one of the most noteworthy Latvian artists. The theme of interpersonal human relationships has always dominated in her works, she also explores the inner world of women and depicts the psychological aspects of social processes. Heinrichsone has described her method as “representational painting of pure colour” where colour plays a central role in revealing the content and idea behind her works.

Opening hours on time slots with prior registration:

Tuesdays – Thursdays: 12 PM, 3 PM, 6 PM.

Fridays – Saturdays: 1 PM, 3 PM, 5 PM, 7 PM.

Register here: <https://biletes.rmm.lv/lv/timeslots/view/57/10/2024>

Curator: Auguste Petre

Visual identity: Estere Betija Grāvere

Spatial solutions: Anna Heinrichsone

Producer: Kristiāna Bērza

Curator's assistant: Anete Liepiņa

Latvian National Museum of Literature and Music

Director: Iveta Ruskule

Head of exhibition “Procrastination & Creation” at Mārstāļu 6: Elīna Drulle

Head of the Communications and Marketing Department: Ilona Matvejeva

Communication project manager: Paula Peredistaja

Deputy director for administrative and legal affairs: Ilgvars Imša

Text: Auguste Petre

Photography: Kristīne Madjare

Supporters of the exhibition:

Riga City Council Education, Culture and Sports Department, State Culture Capital Foundation, Signet Bank, Novum Riga Charitable Foundation, Magnum NT, Clear Channel, JCDecaux, Kalve Coffee, RDG, Vilhelms.

Technology Partner: Samsung

Informative supporter: Arterritory.com











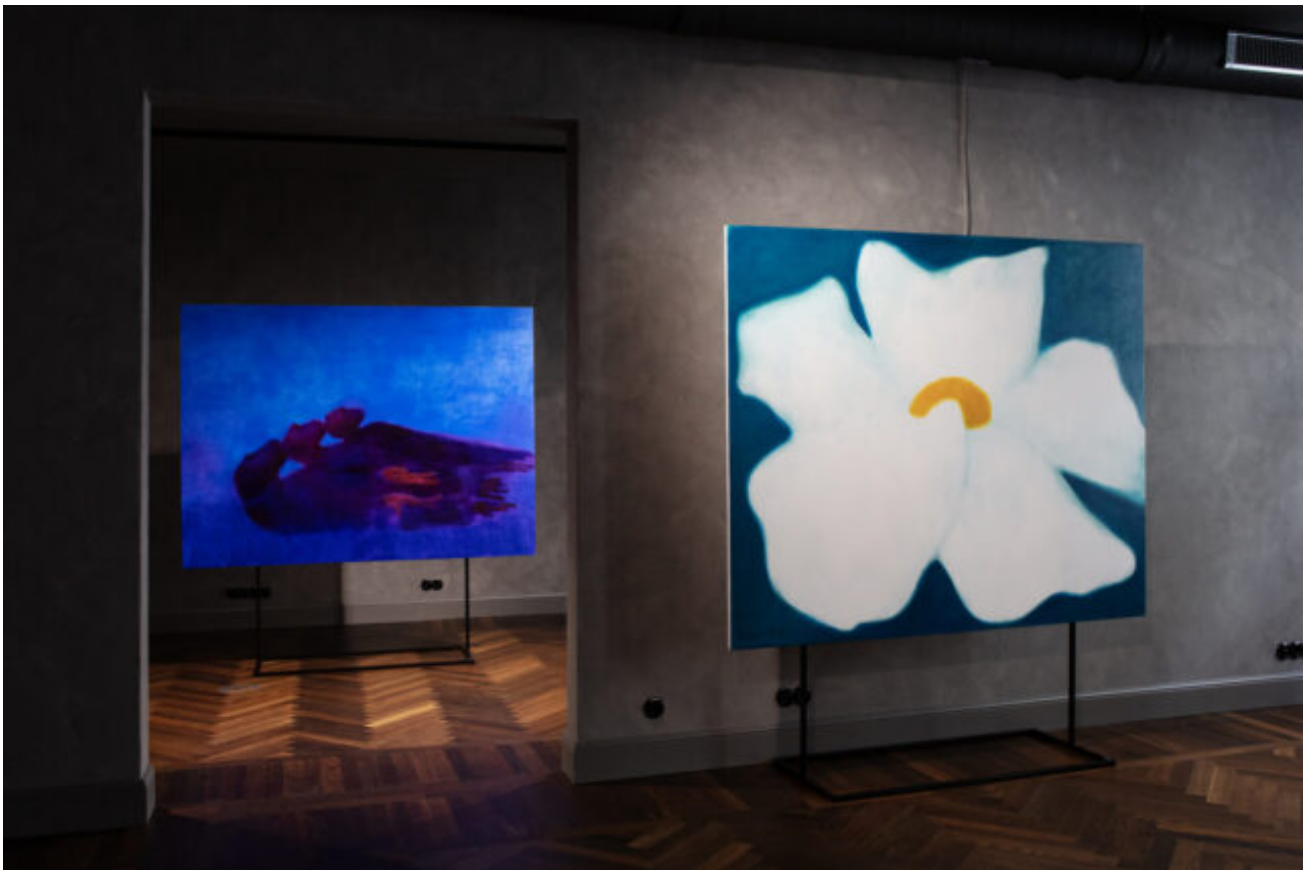










Photo reportage from Andris Eglītis' solo exhibition at the Latvian National Museum of Art

October 21, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



View from Exhibition. *Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter* by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis

Andris Eglītis, one of the most prominent Latvian painters of his generation who also works with installation, sculpture and building, currently has his solo exhibition at the Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga, Latvia. ***Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter*** curated by Aleksejs Bejeckis is Eglītis' largest solo exhibition to date. The exhibition is on view until 3 November.

Espousing the unity between the painter and the painted, Andris Eglītis explores the most radical forms of landscape painting as much as painting as a unique form of thinking. Eglītis converses with the earth, wood, algae, snow, clay and other materials by using them as natural colours and, by carefully observing nature's gestures on his canvas, responds to them in the precisely controlled gestural language of painting. Eglītis does not perceive colour merely as a tone – he listens to its story and gives it a voice, working in close collaboration with everything that surrounds him. As the artist invites nature to be an active participant in the painting process and avoids passing aesthetic judgements upon it from an anthropocentric perspective, he is able to look into the very essence of painting and the painted. His painting neither demonstrates nor represents and explores human beings and nature in their pre-hierarchical relationship.

"In the exhibition, both the 'outcome', a format favoured in Western culture for specific spatial experiences, and the 'process' as the emergence of ecosystems and collective consciousness, as well as the exploration of identity and context, are equally significant," says Andris Eglītis.

Andris Eglītis' new works in *Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter* created over the past three years combine in conversation with earlier painting series and works by invited artists. It contains new commissions created expressly for the Exhibition — a photo series by photographer Sandijs Ruļuks, a sculpture by artist Laimdota Malle, a special tea performance by Alise Kiampo, a new painting series by Jānis Blanks – as well as artworks, objects, texts and installations by more than 20 invited artists in some way connected to Eglītis or his artistic practice. The preparation of the solo exhibition involves public program curator Agnese Krivade, spatial artist Liene Pavlovskā, designer Una Grants, carpenter Augusts Eglītis, architects Tils Zigmunds Ozoliņš and Mārtiņš Sarvuts, and artists Kei Sendak, Oto Holgers Ozoliņš, Alise Builevica, and Mirdza Eglīte.

“It is essential that Eglītis and the exhibition team do not view painting solely as a visual phenomenon. We also explore painting beyond the physical visual apparatus, which is why several events and processes in the exhibition are directed toward other senses,” reveals Aleksejs Beļeckis.

Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter is open from 24 August until 3 November at the Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga, Latvia. The exhibition is organised by the Latvian National Museum of Art and producer Kitija Vasiljeva. The project is supported by the State Culture Capital Foundation, Riga City Council and Arctic Paper.

Andris Eglītis was born in 1981, he lives and works in Riga and the Savvaļa open-air art space. Since 2008, the artist has held more than 20 solo exhibitions and participated in more than 30 important group exhibitions in Latvia, Belgium, Lithuania, USA, India, Germany, and other countries. In 2013, he received the Purvītis Prize, the most significant visual art award in Latvia, for the series Earthworks. In 2015, Eglītis represented Latvia at the 56th Venice Art Biennale (work Armpit, together with Katrīna Neiburga). Andris Eglītis has designed sets for theatre performances and operas as well as made commissioned paintings for the ceiling of the Festival Hall of the Latvian President's Palace (2020) and the iron curtain of the stage at the Latvian National Opera and Ballet (2023). In 2020, Eglītis and a group of like-minded people founded the outdoor art space Savvaļa in his studio in Drusti municipality, and he is one of its organisers.

Aleksejs Beļeckis is a cross-disciplinary artist and curator based in Riga focusing on collective art and space as an art medium. Their curatorial practice is based on merging positions in exhibition making, transitioning from curator to spatial artist, as well as art handler, producer, writer and designer. Over the last decade, they created over 70 exhibitions, films, performances, festivals, public programs, books and concerts. They have curated such shows as fashion brand FyodorGolan retrospective Harmonious Collision at the Latvian National Museum of Art, art and science group exhibition Lauka pētījumi / Fieldworks commissioned by Institute for Environmental Solutions, were a deputy commissioner for Latvian Pavilion at 58th Venice Art Biennale, co-founded dance festival HOROS and are one of the organisers of the art and residency space Savvaļa. Their projects were continuously nominated and awarded national prizes, such as the Purvītis Prize, Dance Prize, Design Awards, Latvian Public media awards, etc.



View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



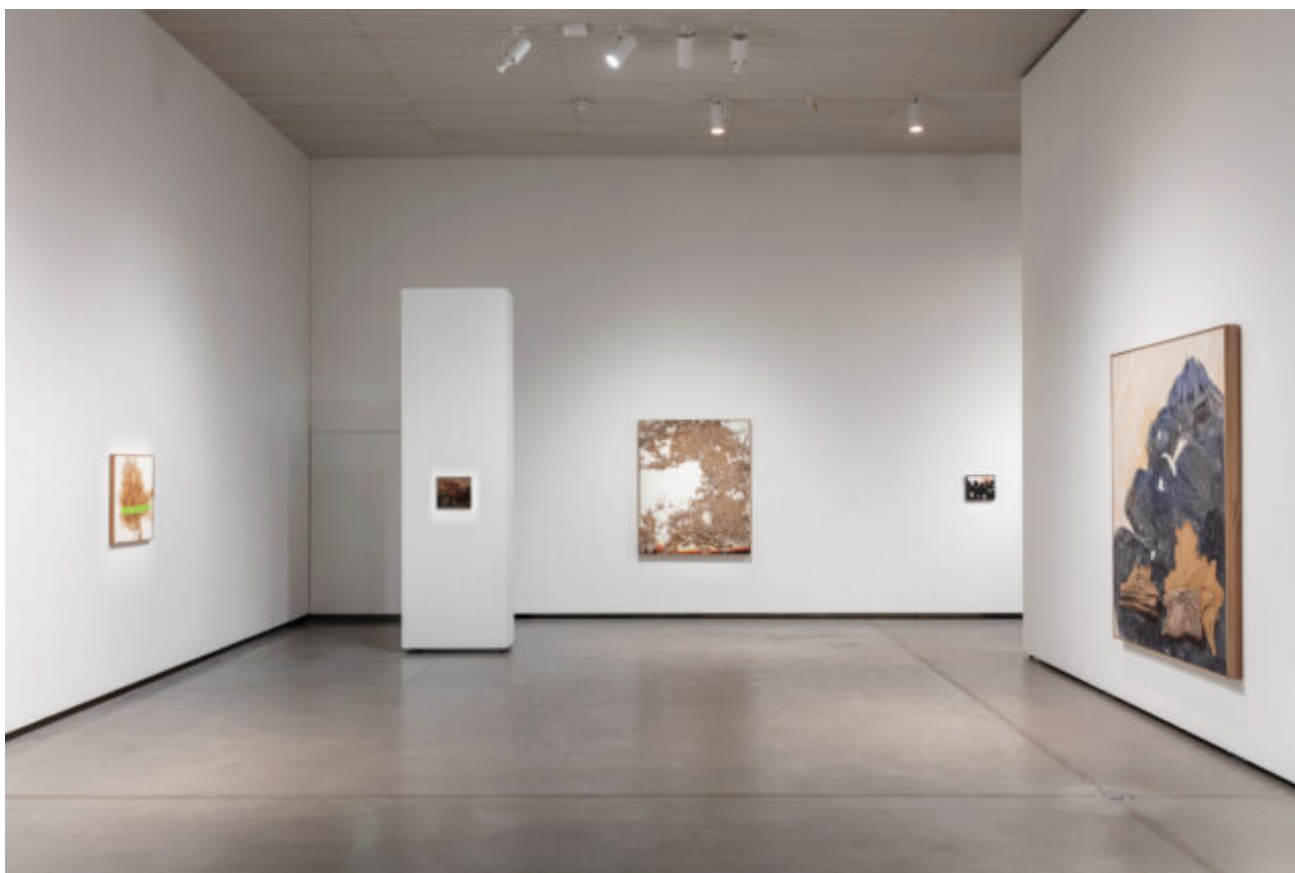
View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



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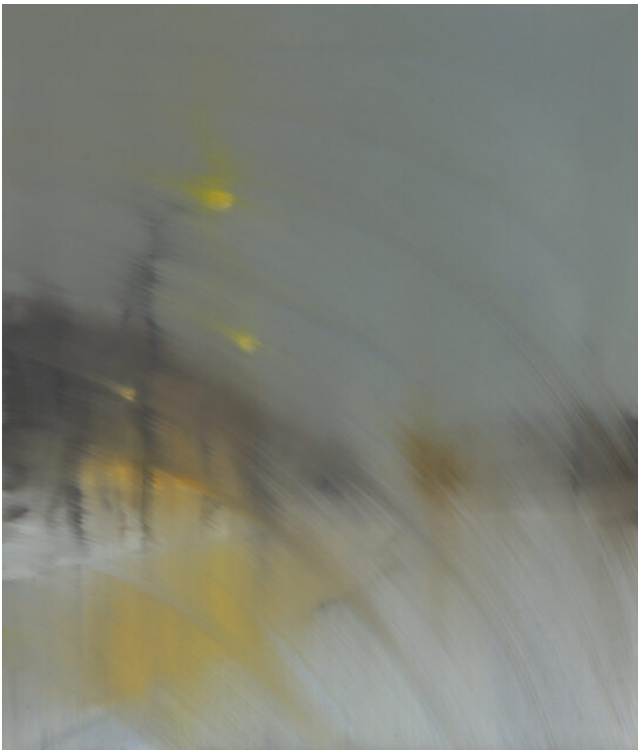
View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



View from Exhibition. Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter by Andris Eglītis at the Latvian National Museum of Art, 2024. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



Andris Egli tis, from the series Through the Darkness, 2023. Oil on canvas, 70 × 60 cm. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



Andris Egli tis, from the series Through the Darkness, 2023. Oil on canvas, 70 × 60 cm. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



Andris Egli tis, from the series Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter, 2023. Minerals, earth pigments, acrylic on weathered canvas, 370 × 504 cm. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis



Andris Egli tis, from the series *Some Instances of Encounters Between Imagination and Matter*, 2024. Minerals, earth pigments, algae, oil on canvas, 71,5 × 52 cm. Photo by Reinis Hofmanis
Photo By Reinis Hofmanis

Photo reportage from the exhibition of the 9th Tallinn Applied Art Triennial 'The Fine Lines of Constructiveness' at Kai Art Center

October 24, 2024

Author Echo Gone Wrong



The exhibition The Fine Lines of Constructiveness is on view at Kai Art Center (Peetri 12, Tallinn, Estonia) until February 16. This year's triennial focuses on artists from the Baltic and Nordic countries, showcasing the diverse oeuvre of 27 solo artists and one artist group. The curator of the exhibition is glass artist Maret Sarapu.

The main exhibition of the Applied Art Triennial 'The Fine Lines of Constructiveness' highlights interest in new symbioses, ways of use, and a concern for sustainability. "Constructiveness can be characterized by clarity, straightforwardness and optimality. It is aimed at development, creative progress, (re)constitution. Constructiveness may emerge when means are scarce, energy is low, or when the need to sustain one another has been acknowledged," says the curator Maret Sarapu about the main theme of the triennial. "The artists exhibited at the triennial are interested in experimenting with new symbioses, finding new ways of usage, and there is clearly also a concern for sustainability – what happens to the material before and after the life span of the object," commented Sarapu.

Many of the exhibited works use time-consuming technologies, which, in addition to highlighting the importance of sustainability, raise the question of whether handicraft as a soothing activity is a basic need, a luxury, or, paradoxically, both. The triennial includes textiles, glass, ceramics, jewelry, and installations – while many of the works are experimentations with a view of the future, they also value techniques from thousands of years ago. For example, the Swedish artist Karin Roy Andersson

discloses how to sculpt pieces from reindeer skin while taking a responsible approach towards nature and animals without producing waste. Riikka Anttonen (Finland) emphasizes in the form of marble mosaic technique how queer history dates back much further in the past than people would like to acknowledge. Sofia Björkman (Sweden) has revived the therapeutic art of basket weaving, employing biodegradable materials. Vincent Dumay (Sweden) builds columns using the thousands of years old rammed-earth technique, while Hanne Haukom (Norway) uses similarly ancient craft techniques to create her vase-like forms.

The following artists are participating in the 9th Tallinn Applied Art Triennial: Karin Roy Andersson (Sweden), Riikka Anttonen (Finland), Ieva Baltrėnaitė-Markevičė (Lithuania), Sofia Björkman (Sweden), Per Brandstedt (Sweden), Vincent Dumay (Sweden), Signe Fensholt (Denmark), Ellisif Hals in collaboration with Yuvia Maini and Cassius Lambert (Sweden/Norway), Hanne Haukom (Norway), Liisa Hietanen (Finland), Severija Inčirauskaitė-Kriaunevičienė (Lithuania), Kati Kerstna (Estonia), Lauri Kilusk (Estonia), Karel Koplimets (Estonia), Arja Kärkkäinen (Finland), Krista Leesi (Estonia), Alves Ludovico (Finland), Jennie McMillen (Sweden), Anda Munkevica (Latvia), Kadi Pajupuu (Estonia), Anu Penttinen (Finland), Tiina Puhkan (Estonia), Saara Renvall (Finland), Vilde Rudjord (Norway), Taavi Teevet (Estonia), Margit Terasmees (Estonia), Ketli Tiitsar (Estonia), and Linda Vilka (Latvia).

During the opening weekend of the main exhibition, the audience is invited to join the curator's tour as well as to meet the artists. On Saturday, October 5th from 12pm–1pm, an exhibition tour with the curator Maret Sarapu will take place, and from 1:30pm–5pm, a program of artists' presentations will be hosted in the Kai Art Center auditorium. The presentation program will be held in English and the artists introducing their practices will be: Saara Renvall, Arja Kärkkäinen, Karin Roy Andersson, Alves Ludovico, Liisa Hietanen, Jennie McMillen, Ieva Baltrėnaitė-Markevičė, Linda Vilka, Anda Munkevica, Kadi Pajupuu, Lauri Kilusk, and Ketli Tiitsar. The presentation day will be led by Keiu Krikmann.

On Sunday, October 6th at 2pm, a workshop titled We Really Are Allowed to Get Tired by the Latvian artist Linda Vilka will take place in English. The artist explores mental and physical conditions related to fatigue, encouraging viewers to acknowledge their feelings and to find ways to cope with exhaustion. The aim of the workshop is to approach tiredness through creative self-expression.

The main exhibition of the 9th Tallinn Applied Art Triennial The Fine Lines of Constructiveness is open at Kai Art Center from October 5, 2024 until February 16, 2025. Kai Art Center is open every Wednesday to Sunday from 12pm-6pm.

The Tallinn Applied Art Triennial is an international art event that has been taking place since 1997, organized by the NGO Tallinn Applied Art Triennial Society, formed by Maret Sarapu, Merle Kasonen, Anu Almik, Keiu Krikmann, and Katre Ratassepp. The aim of the triennial is to contribute to the development of contemporary and conceptual applied art. The triennial is supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, the Tallinn Culture and Sports Department, DHL Express Estonia, Puumerkki, Raitwood, Mull Drinks, and OnTheGoSystems.

Photography: Hedi Jaansoo





















