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From Paris to Vilnius: curators Neringa Bumblienė and Émilie Villez on their upcoming show at the Contemporary Art Centre

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Author Echo Gone Wrong



Bumblienė and Émilie Villez. Photo: T. Chaptotot

Last autumn, the Season of Lithuania took place in France – a cultural programme organised through a partnership between the two countries, designed to introduce contemporary Lithuanian culture to French audiences in diverse and dynamic forms. Among the featured projects was the contemporary art exhibition ‘Les Frontières sont des animaux nocturnes / Sienos yra naktiniai gyvūnai’. Co-organised by KADIST Paris, the Palais de Tokyo, and the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) in Vilnius, the exhibition was presented across both Parisian venues. It brought together intergenerational Lithuanian artists and a collective of cultural workers from ‘post-socialist’ countries – some now based in Western Europe and the US. Now, six months after the exhibition in Paris, the project – curated by Neringa Bumblienė and Émilie Villez – is coming to Vilnius and opening on 12 June at the CAC. In this conversation, we speak with the curators about how the exhibition will evolve in its Vilnius iteration, its reception in Paris, and the ideas at its core.

CAC: *Let's start from the beginning. Could you elaborate a bit more on the title of the exhibition? What is its meaning, and how does it connect to the overall concept of the project?*

Émilie Villez: During our research for the project, we came upon an essay by Luba Jurgenson, a university professor and translator working on the representation of violence in literature, particularly in relation to the history of the ex-USSR and Central Europe. She is of Russian-Estonian origin and

based in Paris. *When we woke up. The Night of 24 February 2022: Invasion of Ukraine* (Verdier, 2023) is a text she wrote shortly after the large-scale invasion began, as a spontaneous and emotional reaction to this violent event. What we can read in this essay is a careful, almost didactic explanation of the chain of events that led to the invasion – a way to contextualise the situation for a French audience, as she puts it. At the same time, it is a very poetic narration of her own personal memories growing up. It powerfully underlines how the 2022 invasion triggered the resurgence of past traumas from the Soviet occupation.

This dual tone resonated strongly with our approach to the exhibition: we felt the need to historicise current events within a complex and recurring history of violence for both French and international audiences. At the same time, we wanted to take a sensitive approach, working our way through materials and atmospheres to convey emotion. I think you sense this directly in the title, which is a quote from the essay. The full sentence reads: 'Borders are nocturnal animals, they move while we sleep. We should always be vigilant.'

CAC: *At the moment, the French public is probably more familiar with your project 'Les Frontières sont des animaux nocturnes / Sienos yra naktiniai gyvūnai' than the audience in Lithuania. Could you briefly introduce the project for those who might not have heard about it?*

Émilie Villez: As we developed the project in the framework of the Lithuanian season, it felt obvious that it should be rooted in the geopolitical turmoil caused by Russia's war in Ukraine. The conflict has had huge international repercussions, but we wanted to focus on its specific impact on the region, particularly the feeling of history repeating itself. The double exhibition in Paris explored the colonial history of Lithuania and the wider region, in the context of a growing body of decolonial literature on the subject.

Our approach was to evoke these layers of time by inviting several generations of artists, each with different relationships to these historical events: Algirdas Šeškus for instance developed his practice during the Soviet occupation, while Deimantas Narkevičius managed to start an international career as soon as the 1990s when the country re-opened following independence. The younger generation, born after these events, is aware of them primarily through the stories they heard growing up. We also invited the collective 'Beyond the post-soviet', whose practice rethinks the vocabulary and narratives specific to the region, in order to broaden the perspectives and voices present in the exhibition. Through them, we included two Ukrainian artists, Anna Zvyagintseva and Danylo Halkin.

CAC: *The project was on view at KADIST Paris and the Palais de Tokyo for around three months. How was it received by the French public? Are there any particular reactions or feedback that stood out to you?*

Émilie Villez: I think that for the French audience, and perhaps some of the international audience, these histories are relatively unknown. In France, decolonial narratives and conversations are currently very present in the cultural field, but they emerged much later than in the Anglo-Saxon world. People tend to forget that this vocabulary is not only related to North/South dialectics. I think the exhibition felt quite relevant to audiences in the current geopolitical context. To me, it revived some conversations that had faded in recent years, but that shaped me early in my curatorial career: for instance the exhibition 'Les promesses du passé' at the Centre Pompidou in 2010, which retraced the history of art in the former socialist countries, or the long term project *Former West: Art and The Contemporary after 1989*, initiated by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst (2013–2016).

Neringa Bumblienė: For me, it wasn't just the reaction of the French and international audience, but the working process itself that offered so many valuable insights. Collaborating closely with Paris-based curators and institutions, and having deep conversations and exchanges, helped me better understand my own background and see it from a much wider perspective. It also taught me how to find my own voice – to tell my story, and that of my country and region. I told my friends that I had never spoken so much about Lithuania and what actually happened here. And it felt important to do that, especially now, in such a tense geopolitical moment. The fact that these conversations resulted in two exhibitions held simultaneously at major Parisian institutions amplified our voices much wider.

CAC: As I understand, the project will differ from the one shown in Paris. How does it shift in the Lithuanian version?

Émilie Villez: The project in Paris was largely focused on Lithuanian artists and the regional context, for various reasons but especially to highlight the current climate. We felt that bringing the exhibition back to Lithuania would be more challenging and interesting for the local audience if we widened the historic and geographic scope to create a dialogue between different decolonial narratives. We started from the newly produced works by the artists we had collaborated with in Paris and created thematic and formal dialogues with works from very different contexts, such as Southeast Asia or Latin America, thanks to the international resource that is the KADIST collection. It was made available to us by KADIST, our partner from the very beginning of this project. The topics covered in the exhibition are all intertwined: energy resources and extractivism in relation to geopolitics, shifting borders, scars left by war on landscapes and people's memories, resilience through cultural identity and pre-modern rituals.

Neringa Bumblienė: Yes, it's important to note that this exhibition is an entirely new entity. It started in Paris, but here it has grown into a much larger and more geographically wide-reaching organism. We kept the same list of artists from the Paris exhibitions as a core group, and then added twice as many new names to it. Speaking about this core group, we carefully revisited their works, and some Lithuanian artists are showing pieces in Vilnius which were not presented previously in Paris, such as Algirdas Šeškus and Andrius Arutiunian.

CAC: This exhibition will be the main show of the Contemporary Art Centre's summer programme, taking place in the Main Hall, North Hall, and the CAC Cinema Hall. Of course, every artwork in the exhibition is important, but could you highlight a few pieces that you feel especially shouldn't be missed?

Émilie Villez: I'm particularly excited by the connections established between the works. Some are very direct, such as the use of maps in the works of the Urbonas Studio and Louisa Bufardeci. Yet, in their form, they point to different ways of representing the world, according to different contexts. Urbonas Studio's sticky, tar-like map is a reproduction of a 19th-century map caricaturing the power relations at play in Europe and Central Asia, where nations are portrayed according to their folkloric history and 'personalities'. In contrast, Bufardeci's map is a data visualisation of the world's populations, regularly updated – offering another way to represent shifting relations and geopolitics. There are also works that will be interpreted differently depending on the context. The audio archive compiled by the collective Beyond the post-soviet brings together texts, songs and reflections by a diverse group of people – cultural workers, thinkers, and writers from different geographic and social backgrounds – responding in their own languages to the question: 'How can we be next to each other?' The installation reflects on how distance and borders affect individuals and communities.

Neringa Bumblienė: For me, working on this second chapter, it was very exciting – and even soothing – to find so many connections between colonial histories (and realities) of our country, the wider region, and those of other geographies. In this exhibition, we are not simply inspecting the

painful and damaging events of the past – though acknowledging them and paying respect is an important step – we also look for ways of survival and resistance. Nature is a recurring theme here, both as a source of strength, inspiration and ancestral knowledge, and as a battleground and witness, bearing persistent scars. Many works in the exhibition relate to this in one way or another. I would mention *Herbaria*, a sculpture by Emilija Škarnulytė, commissioned for the exhibition in Paris. Škarnulytė uses medicinal plants collected along the tense Lithuanian-Belarusian border, i.e. the eastern NATO border, in the vicinity of the notorious Astravets Nuclear Power Plant. There is also a work by Costa Rican artist Christian Salablanca, who also uses medicinal plants collected in another part of the world. Sandra Monterroso employs natural dyes and ancestral knowledge. When it comes to landscapes, it's important to mention Cambodian artist Vandy Ratana, who documents ponds formed in bomb craters in his photographs, and the traces of war left in Laotian forests in Pratchaya Phinthong's film. Andrius Arutiunian meditates on the Armenian landscape, framed by its complex mining histories.

CAC: This project brings together artists from different countries and is being presented internationally – first in France, now in Lithuania – reaching a wide audience. What lasting impact do you hope the exhibition will have on viewers, particularly in terms of understanding complex histories and imagining future narratives?

Neringa Bumblienė: I hope this exhibition will help us better understand ourselves and the world around us. That it will encourage us to speak and share our stories confidently and freely – even the most painful ones – healing us and teaching us how to find ways forward, even in the most challenging moments and situations.

Curatorial Reflections on Louis-Cyprien Rials' Exhibition 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things' at the Meno Parkas Gallery

June 12, 2025

Author Dovilė Morkūnaitė-Žilinskė



Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things', Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025. Photo: Airida Rekštytė

Presenting Louis-Cyprien Rials' work in the space of the Meno Parkas gallery in Kaunas brings out a particular kind of tension between the temporal and the invisible. As a curator, I see his visual language as a means of reconfiguring time through aesthetic form. Rather than contextualising the exhibition through thematic labels, the intention here is to stay close to the works' own logic, to think with them rather than about them. The following article remains mostly in its original form as an essay or curatorial reflection on why these works resonate so strongly in the present moment, and what it means to be contemporary. I only touch on a few of the works from the exhibition, but the weight of the rest remains the same.

The concept of contemporaneity seems to imply being in the present, a kind of synchronicity with the spirit of the time. However, this notion quickly proves too narrow: the 'present' is not a unified category, either historically or philosophically. In Jacques Rancière's work, we can read that to be contemporary means to be out of sync with one's time, or more precisely, to disrupt the order of visibility that defines what can be seen, heard and thought.^[1] Meanwhile, Alain Badiou proposes understanding contemporaneity as fidelity to an event that interrupts the usual flow of a situation and opens up the possibility of truth, not as factual accuracy but as the emergence of a new configuration of the world.

Both of these theoretical directions suggest contemporaneity as an active relationship with time, which is neither stable nor neutral. It is the tension between what is spoken and what is silenced. To be contemporary means to enter this tension and to articulate it. This perspective allows contemporary art to be analysed as a site where new relationships emerge with reality, history and the collective imagination.



Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things', Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025. Photo: Airida Rekšytė

In Badiou's theory of art, a position becomes evident that allows us to consider contemporaneity as a relation to what transcends the established order of meaning. Art is identified as one of four truth procedures, along with politics, science and love. In this context, truth is not a form of knowledge or empirical experience. It arises as what disrupts the structure of a situation and introduces a new field of possibility. Badiou inscribes art in this dynamic as a form in which truth becomes possible: 'Art is itself a truth procedure.'^[3] Thinking in art occurs autonomously; it need not be unfolded through philosophical systems, for thought functions as an independent structure. Badiou's formulation emphasises the fact that art generates its own conditions of thought.

The relationship between philosophy and art is defined by the concept of 'inaesthetics'. This term does not refer to an act of judgment or interpretation, but to a relationship in which philosophy recognises art's capacity to form truth independently. '[...] art, as a singular regime of thought, is

irreducible to philosophy.’[4] In this context, philosophy does not define art, but acknowledges its event. Contemporaneity emerges in situations where art opens up the possibility of new meaning. A work becomes relevant not through thematic or stylistic context, but through its participation in the production of meaning.

In this context, Jacques Rancière’s aesthetic theory provides additional tools for analysing artistic form as a reorganisation of the structure of sensibility. Rancière does not explicitly define what it means to be contemporary. However, the concepts distinguished in his aesthetic theory allow us to reconstruct an attitude that may be interpreted as contemporary. The main concept is the distribution of the sensible (*partage du sensible*), which denotes the social structure that determines what is visible, audible, and deemed valuable.[5] This is a political distribution that shapes the field of power and representation in society. In this theory, art becomes significant as a form capable of reconfiguring this distribution. The aesthetic regime is characterised by the recognition of art’s autonomy, its ability to operate outside academic or iconographic norms. Rancière emphasises that the political function of art is not instruction or critique, but the potential to create a new structure of sensibility, a different way of thinking.[6] To be contemporary, in this case, means to act through the form of art in such a way that a different order of meaning emerges.

The theoretical approaches underlying the concept of contemporaneity require viewing each analysed work as a structure forming a specific relationship with the image. It is important to attend to how the work constructs its own visual logic. This not only allows for the identification of contemporaneity as an aesthetic stance, but also reveals how artistic form gains meaning through interaction with historical, media or political contexts. This perspective becomes particularly relevant when a work develops not from a local tradition but from an established relationship with another culture, a shifting territory, or traumatic experiences.



Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things', Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025.
Photo: Airida Rekštytė

In Louis-Cyprien Rials' video *Oyuni* (2023), the transformation of the gaze becomes apparent, allowing the work to be understood as a site where a relationship emerges with time and the conditions of visual experience, central to contemporaneity. The work is grounded in a 15-year-long relationship between the artist and Iraq, during which a visual archive formed not through documentation but through an active, opening logic. The title of the work, *Oyuni*, translated as 'my eyes' or 'my love', already establishes a link between vision and affect, constructed in the work not as a mode of observation, but as the introduction of a cultural relationship.

The structure of the work combines several visual layers: 3D-printed objects in the shape of eyes from Sumerian statues worn by young Iraqis; a musical layer reinterpreting 1960s Iraqi pop music; landscapes captured near the Ziggurat of Ur and the Al-Chibayich marshes; and a performance by the Canadian musician Peter Pringle singing a hymn to Inanna on a reconstructed royal harp. This video material does not seek to unfold a coherent narrative; rather, it is a structure in which aesthetic form becomes a site for articulating a new order of sensibility.

According to Jacques Rancière's aesthetic theory, such a mode of operation can be interpreted as a transformation of the distribution of the sensible. In Rials' work, the mode of viewing is reorganised: what usually remains outside dominant representational practices, young, vibrant Iraqis with proud gazes, becomes the main point of attention. In this way, an alternative order of visibility is created, which, unlike documentary media images, does not offer a canonical iconography of war, violence or oppression. Instead, it establishes an act of seeing that is not representational but generative: it forms a cultural position through the interaction of gaze, object and historical context.

In Alain Badiou's art theory, such a structure can be identified as an artistic event, a form in which truth emerges by interrupting the prevailing logic of the situation and enabling a new mode of

understanding the world. *Oyuni* does not reproduce familiar visual schemes, but creates the conditions for a new relationship between viewer, history and culture. In this way, the work neither thematises nor declares; it functions as an autonomous condition of thought, what Badiou calls ‘the thinking of art’, which cannot be reduced to another form of knowledge.

The visual language in Rials’ work enables aesthetic operation as a stance towards contemporaneity. It is not just a reconstruction of the cultural heritage or a transmission of tradition in representational form. *Oyuni* creates a visual structure where the archaeological motif of the gaze (the statues’ eyes), a musical fragment of popular culture, and the glances of the younger generation, play as visual elements in which identity takes on an active form.



Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, ‘The Language of Flowers and Silent Things’, Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025. Photo: Airida Rekšytė

Louis-Cyprien Rials’ *Afghan War Rugs*, woven in Kabul, continue a tradition that began in the late 1970s. At that time, Afghan communities found themselves in an unending cycle of conflict, and during the war residents had to find new ways to survive. One way was to weave small military rugs that were sold as souvenirs to occupying soldiers. Initially, the rugs depicted Soviet tanks, Kalashnikovs, helicopters, and sometimes maps of Afghanistan. Later, after 9/11, when the Americans arrived, they began to depict US weapons, the Twin Towers, drones, and images of terror. These rugs are directly linked to the current reality, which left a profound impact on the artist.

Alongside the critical transformation of perspective, Louis-Cyprien Rials’ works raise questions about the distribution of visual positions in the global economy of visibility. The war rugs woven in Afghanistan, which may appear exotic or aesthetically intriguing to Western eyes, arise from a field of experience where violence and occupation operate as a lived regime. This disproportion between

the viewer's position and the work's genesis makes it possible to speak about the political division of visibility.

On the other hand, the very technique of rug-making, its material character and its slow rhythm of creation are significant as a structural counterpoint to the digital image stream dominating war imagery. Rials' rugs offer an alternative temporal logic: the weaving process is an act that destabilises the circulation of war aesthetics. It is precisely through this structure of labour that a new experience of time becomes possible, one that is not synchronised with the acceleration of informational warfare.

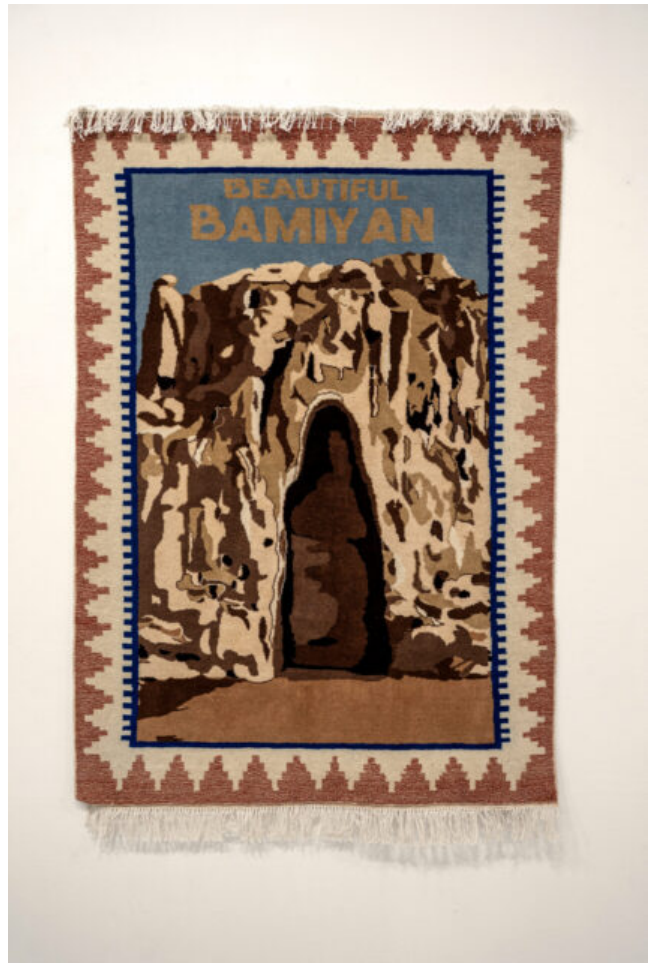
Rials' works register interruptions, in which the visual material resists its representational closure. The repetitive structures of rug weaving, like the artificiality of the gaze in *Oyuni*, maintain a tension between formal order and semantic drift. This tension, not as an effect, but as a condition of production, allows us to consider contemporaneity through a shift in the logic of vision. It is form that interrupts the established logic of perception and enables the emergence of a different distribution of seeing.



Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things', Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025.
Photo: Airida Rekštytė



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Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things', Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025. Photo: Airida Rekšytė



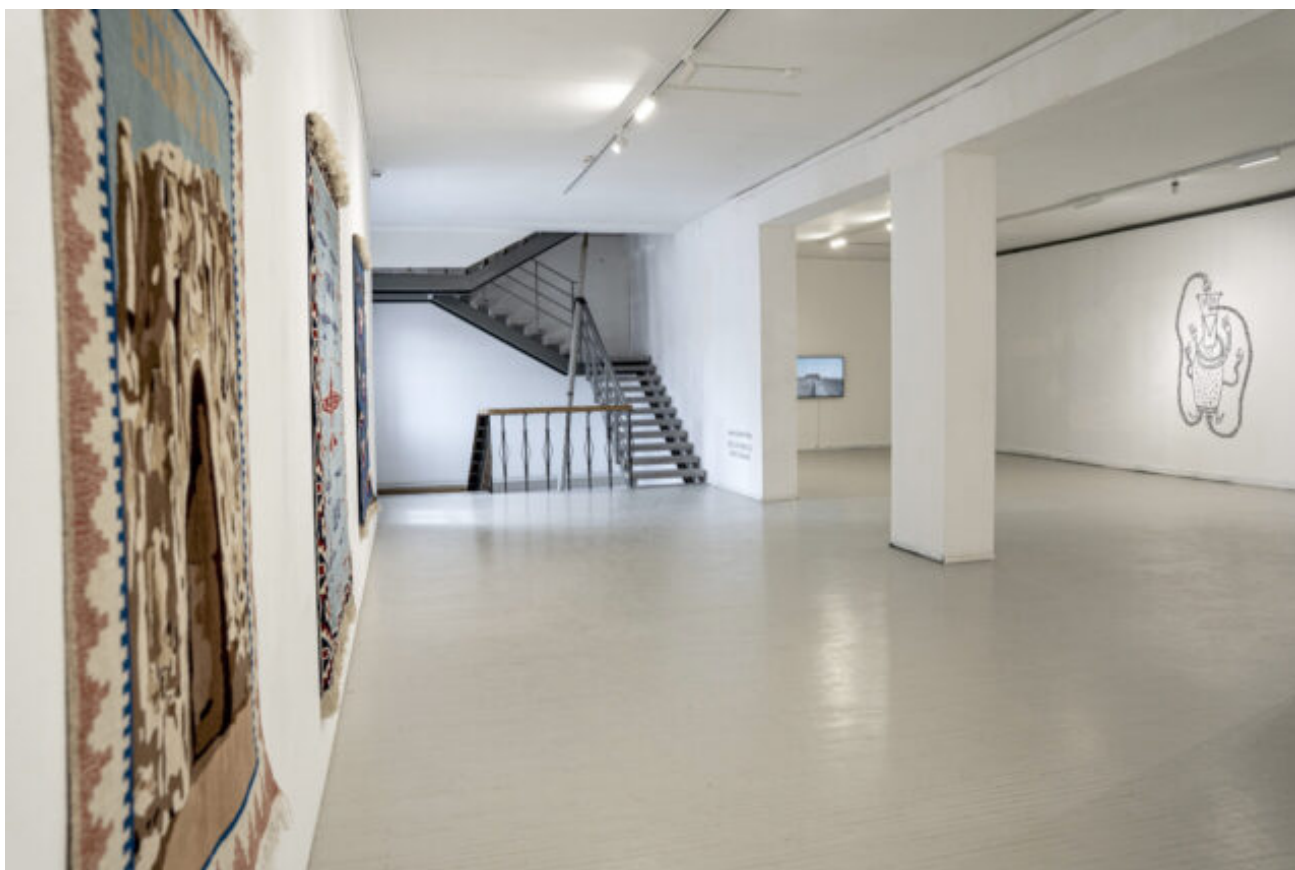
Exhibition view. Louis-Cyprien Rials, 'The Language of Flowers and Silent Things', Meno Parkas Gallery, 2025.
Photo: Airida Rekštytė



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Photo: Airida Rekštytė

[1] Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. London: Continuum, 2004, p. 22.

[2] Badiou, Alain. *Handbook of Inaesthetics*. Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 9.

[3] Ibid., p. 1.

[4] Ibid., p. 9.

[5] Op. cit. Jacques. p. 12.

[6] Ibid., p. 12.

Distinct Voices, Familiar Songs. A review of the Baltic pavilions at the Venice Architecture Biennale

June 20, 2025

Author Martynas Germanavičius



Estonian Pavilion, Let me warm you. Photo: Joosep Kivimäe

The 19th Venice Architecture Biennale opened in early May, featuring a strong focus this year on themes of renovation and maintenance, geological excavations, and technological optimism. Amid the abundance of themes and pavilions, this review invites you to listen more closely to the stories from the Baltic region, stories that, despite their differing voices, share a certain familiarity.

How deep do the roots of Lithuania's Tree Architecture Pavilion reach?

This year, Lithuania is presenting the project 'Archi/Tree/tecture' ('Medžių architektūra: iš vietos šaknų virsta' in Lithuanian translates roughly as 'Tree Architecture: Transformed from Local Roots') at the Venice Architecture Biennale. The pavilion's commissioner is Dr Julija Tutlytė, and the curator is the architect Gintaras Balčytis. As usual, the Lithuanian pavilion is nomadic: instead of being in the Biennale's main venue, it is located at the Church of Santa Maria dei Derelitti, the same site where 'Lithuanian Space Agency' was presented in 2021. But this time, visitors are invited to come down to earth and dig deeper into the current issues shaping contemporary Lithuanian architecture.

This is also the second time that the Lithuanian pavilion has explored the theme of trees. In 2023, the 'Children's Forest Pavilion', curated by Jonas Žukauskas, Jurga Daubaraitė and Egija Inzulė, presented a wooden installation that viewed the forest not only as a resource for the future but also as a cultural space and a habitat for the coexistence of diverse life forms. The pavilion became a site for play, where diversity was discovered through action. Visitors could experience the grammar of lichens (by Aistė Ambrazevičiūtė), create spatial texts using the alphabet of mountain pines (by Mantas Peteraitis), hunt for eco-monsters (by Gediminas and Nomeda Urbonas), or engage with a forest shadow theatre (by the Mustarinda organisation). Two years ago, Gintaras Balčytis criticised Lithuania's representation at the Architecture Biennale for lacking architectural substance, arguing that buildings and architectural projects were almost absent. In part, that critique appears to have inspired this year's dialectical pavilion, which continues the theme of trees, while offering its own variation on it.



Lithuanian Pavilion, 'Archi/Tree/texture' , Photo: Gvidas Kovėra

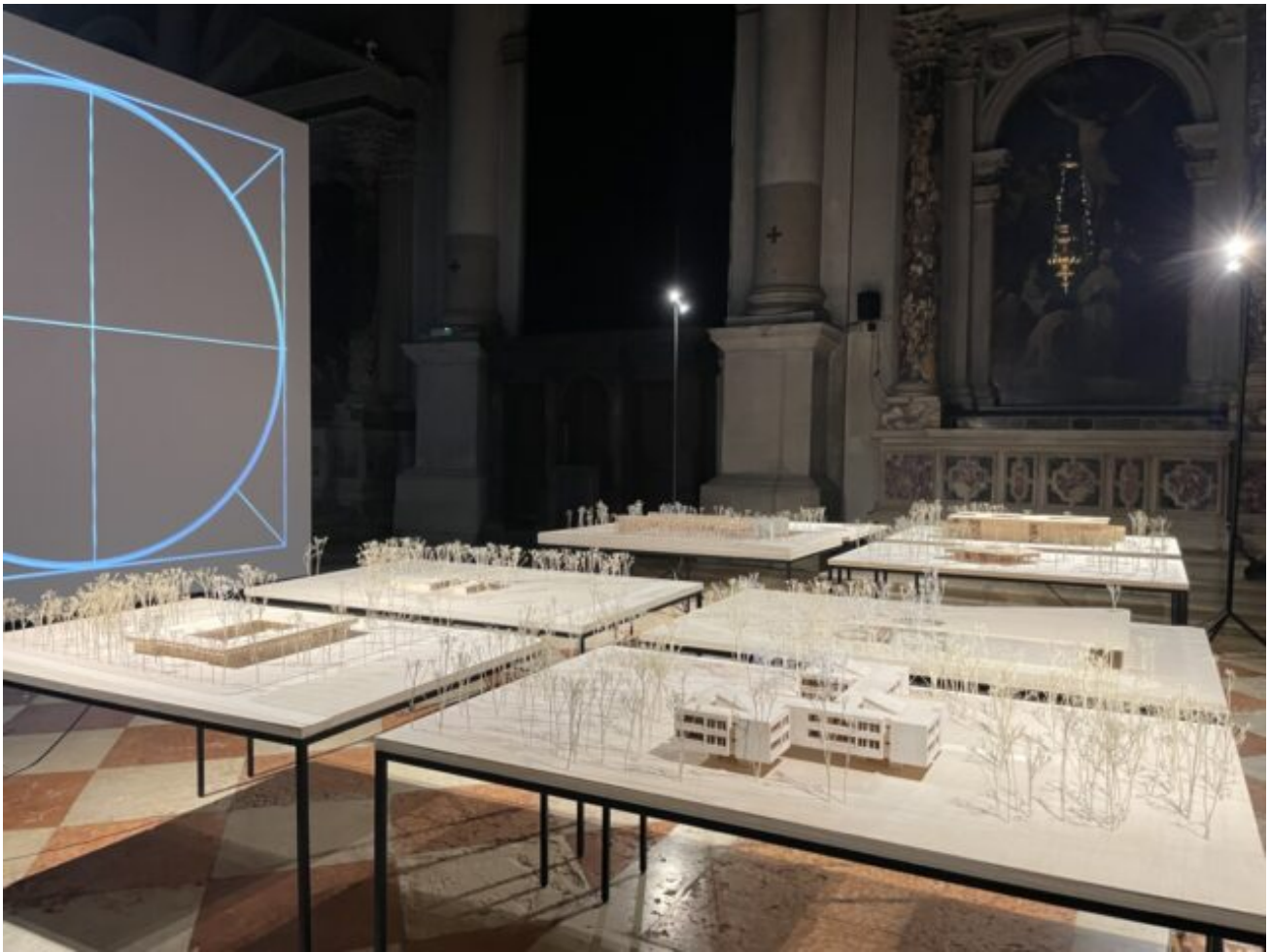
At the heart of 'Archi/Tree/texture', trees are presented as green elements, which, when integrated into architectural projects, could contribute to the uniqueness of the built environment. The exhibition presents six architectural projects. Three of them are late modernist buildings from the 20th century located in Palanga: a summer reading room and the Kupeta (Lithuanian for 'mound' or 'clump') exhibition pavilion designed by the architect Albinas Čepys, and the Žilvinas Hotel by the architect Algimantas Lėckas. Three of them are contemporary projects: two bus stations designed by Gintaras Balčytis' architectural studio in Vilkaviškis (completed) and Druskininkai (still under construction), and the State Forest Enterprise headquarters of the Vievis district, designed by the architectural studios After Party (Gabrielė Ubarevičiūtė, Giedrius Mamavičius) and Išora x Lozuraitytė.

The curatorial narrative of the pavilion unfolds symbolically, through a tree stump, a video projection, architectural models of the featured projects, and a publication reminiscent of a binder containing working drawings.

As the curator emphasises, the exhibition focuses on buildings that exist or are currently under construction in Lithuania. A significant source of inspiration for the pavilion was also the growing wave of urban protests in response to the destruction of green spaces driven by city development plans, symbolised, perhaps, by the tree stump that greets visitors at the pavilion's entrance. However, it stands out that the projects presented in the pavilion are not located in densely urbanised areas, but rather in forests, resorts or smaller towns, where natural greenery is already considered a value in itself. In contrast, in major cities, where the protests over tree-cutting are most common, existing greenery is too often treated by developers and even architects not as an opportunity, but as an obstacle preventing the planned programme from fitting into the designated plot. Perhaps this pavilion could be read as a wish by architects to themselves: to reconsider the importance of green spaces in urban contexts with greater care?

Although the pavilion touches on a timely and relevant issue, and presents visually appealing architectural projects, it unfortunately fails to put down deeper curatorial roots into the theme. As we move through the exhibition, it remains unclear if the juxtaposition of Soviet modernist and contemporary projects is meant to suggest a continuity of tradition. Or is the integration of trees into architecture truly the defining threshold beyond which we have nothing more to say about ecologically aware architectural practices in Lithuania?

Nevertheless, observing the pavilion's development process in Lithuania, it is worth acknowledging that the creators have managed to avoid the initially communicated, and rather pretentious, direction of simply criticising 'greenwashing'. After all, the bus station projects themselves exhibit tendencies towards declarative greenness: while the Vilkaviškis bus station raises questions about the choice of materials, the new bus station in Druskininkai, despite being a timber structure, will replace an older bus station that no one thought of renovating or repurposing.



Lithuanian Pavilion, 'Archi/Tree/tecture' , Photo: Gintaras Balčytis

Meanwhile, the ambitious State Forest Enterprise complex, aiming to set a national precedent with over 50% of its structure composed of organically sourced materials, is left underexplored in the pavilion. Also overlooked is the fact that the contemporary architecture on display not only integrates trees as landscaping elements but also uses them as a raw building material. But the question remains: what is the relationship between this newly created architecture and the forests where those materials originate?

At this point, it is worth mentioning Spain's pavilion 'Internalities', which centres on the trajectories of resources, from the places where they are extracted to the buildings where these materials are used. The exhibition is grounded in a fundamental contradiction: while we create spaces and infrastructure for living in one place, we leave scars elsewhere, often in invisible landscapes. That is why the pavilion's curators, the architect Manuel Bouzas and the architect-urbanist Roi Salgado, pose the question: how might we build architecture using local resources in a way that fosters conscious consumption and encourages a move towards more regenerative choices?

The pavilion presents a curatorial research project exploring local resources on the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands, alongside 16 contemporary architectural projects that incorporate these materials. Despite the complexity of the topic, the overall narrative of the pavilion is easily readable, and articulates architecture clearly as a continuous act of balancing across different scales. It is encouraging to see that the Spanish curators appear to have captured the core of ecological thinking in architecture. We can only hope that this pavilion draws more attention from across the field of architecture, as the often-declared 'eco-friendliness' still tends to be illustrated by idyllic portrayals of harmony with nature in urban settings, while the real environmental impacts remain externalised to unseen areas.

The ability to work with local resources is not foreign to Lithuanian architecture either. However, in today's practice, where materials from the furthest corners of the world are readily accessible, the mindful selection of local materials demands a heightened awareness from architects. This is precisely why Albinas Čepys' projects in Palanga can still be considered unmatched, standing among the finest examples of sustainable architecture in Lithuania. Often built without state funding, and initiated by the city's chief architect himself, these projects were constructed using whatever was at hand; for instance, repurposing coastal pines uprooted by storms.

Baltic realities: the European Union's border and the banality of renovation

The Latvian pavilion '30 km: Landscape of Defence' explores the politically sensitive topic of the eastern border, an issue that has become especially relevant to all Baltic countries in recent years. Located in the Arsenale, the pavilion is curated by Liene Jākobsone and Ilka Ruby, with architectural contributions by Sampling and Nomad architects. They present this narrative through bold colours and playful design elements, from soft furnishings to specially designed costumes. On entering the space, we might feel as though we have stepped into a playroom.



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene

The pavilion presents the militarisation of the border and the resulting transformation of the landscape, as well as the stories of people living in border regions. However, it remains completely

silent on another equally pressing issue: the politically instrumentalised migrant crisis and the infrastructure chosen to manage it.

Latvia is portrayed here as a bastion on the frontier of the European Union, protecting against the rising threat from Russia. Yet in reality, concertina wire and surveillance cameras first appeared along the border not in response to the military threat, but as a reaction to the migrant crisis orchestrated by Lukashenko's regime. The fates of individuals who encounter this brutal infrastructure is left unaddressed in the pavilion.



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene

Given that the pavilion's production involved not only the Ministry of Culture but also the Ministry of Defence, the soft, greenish 'brat summer' coloured anti-tank hedgehogs begin to resemble less a gesture of creative irony and more an illustrative image of 'soft power'. In recent years, as the Baltic States confront the realities of the borderland, the creative community has been rethinking its role in the public sphere, with the increasingly widespread recognition that culture is a form of soft power. However, when the concept of 'softness' is approached lightly or naively, there is a risk of slipping into the instrumentalisation of culture itself, where an artwork tends to reflect only a one-sided narrative. Balancing on this edge, the pavilion may have resulted from the creators' limited experience and the lack of time to engage deeply with a politically sensitive and unfamiliar topic. Due to the national selection process in Latvia, the pavilion team only had six months, from developing the concept to realising the exhibition.

Meanwhile, the Estonians seem to have hit the mark most precisely this year, both in content and in form. Without excessive commentary, they chose a painfully familiar theme: the renovation of Soviet-era apartment blocks, a subject that is still too often ignored in the architectural discourse of our region. The pavilion 'Let Me Warm You' brings a slice of Estonia's suburban reality straight to Venice's main thoroughfare, where part of a residential building is cloaked in insulation wool and standard plastic cladding panels. The visually jarring installation by three young curators, the architects Keiti Lige, Elina Liiva and Helena Männa, leaves no one indifferent. Outwardly simple, even somewhat primitive, the pavilion invites visitors to explore the deeper dramaturgy of the

renovation process, and to imagine the future of these homes. It is encouraging to see that this project has been noticed not only by architecture critics but also by tourists and even locals, making it one of the most widely discussed national pavilions this year.



Estonian Pavilion, Let me warm you. Photo: Joosep Kivimäe



Estonian Pavilion, Let me warm you. Photo: Joosep Kivimäe

Unlike in Lithuania, where the production of the pavilion was entrusted to the Lithuanian Union of Architects through an open call, in Estonia and Latvia the pavilions were commissioned directly by the respective ministries of culture. However, these two cases highlight how differently such an approach can affect cultural production. In Estonia's case, ministerial involvement allowed for a budget twice the usual size, which undoubtedly contributed to the higher overall quality. In contrast, Latvia's dual ministerial involvement appears to have contributed more to shaping a message that serves the state's public relations, prioritising the more convenient narrative.

Still, when assessing the pavilions, we get the impression that the themes explored by Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia could easily have been addressed collectively. Strategies for integrating trees are fairly universal; after all, a love of trees does not suddenly stop somewhere near Pape (by the border between Latvia and Lithuania). Meanwhile, it is clear that eastern border-related issues, whether it is migration or the military threat, are shared as regional concerns. Not to mention the legacy of Soviet-era apartment blocks and the urgent need for their renovation, which remains relevant across all three Baltic States.

Thus, looking at Norway, Sweden and Finland, which have shared a single pavilion since 1968, it leaves me asking: do the Baltic States, which is each less than a third of the size of the Nordic countries, really need to strive to present their individual voices separately? Perhaps, as we approach the tenth anniversary of the 2016 Baltic Pavilion, it is worth recalling the power of polyphonic chants and considering the revival of a joint regional pavilion, this time not as a one-off exhibition, but as a long-term cultural infrastructure. Such a shared platform could enable the presentation of Baltic architectural issues in a way that is not only more comprehensive and of higher quality, but also more sustainable, with sufficient time and pooled resources for proper

preparation.



Estonian Pavilion, Let me warm you. Photo: Joosep Kivimäe

Cosy defence, invisible migration

June 26, 2025

Author Anna Elizabete Griķe



Photograph by Elvīra Brinkmane-Druze from Latvia-Belarus border, autumn 2024

The 19th Venice Architecture Biennale opened with the Latvian National Pavilion presenting ‘30 km: Landscape of Defence’, an exhibition that translates the lived experience in the borderlands

adjoining Russia and Belarus into spatial installations^[1]. Through the lens of both, the pavilion adopts the lens of ecological transformation and local inhabitants’ perspectives to explore what it is like to inhabit the external borders of the EU and Nato amid the growing militarisation. The Latvian contribution has attracted significant media attention. Notably, during its development phase, a thematic discussion was held with the Austrian architect and researcher Theo Deutinger^[2], whose insights have catalysed the rethinking of the role of architects in civil defence^[3].



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene

When I first encountered the concept of the Latvian pavilion, I was intrigued to see how it would address the inconvenient issue of migration. However, as I continued to read and reflect on the project, my irritation grew, as migration was conspicuously absent. I began to view the material through the lens of erasure, particularly considering the escalating tensions along the Latvian-Belarusian border, including reports of violence^[4] and migrant deaths^[5]. I can only hope the pavilion's authors will explain their decision to exclude migration from their work. The justification that this border fence is not equivalent to the one on the US-Mexico border will not suffice^[6].

Last October, I participated in the television discussion show 'What's Happening in Latvia?' on migration, border security, hybrid warfare and humanitarian aid to refugees^[7]. The discussion was prompted by a shooting in Staburags, about 150 kilometres from the border. In this incident, a minibus carrying 47 individuals, mostly Somali men and women, was stopped, and the uninjured passengers were sent back to the border and forcibly pushed into Belarus. During the conversation, I suggested to the panel of high-ranking officials that migration should be considered separately from military threats. Ivars Ruskulis, the deputy head of the State Border Guard, responded with a dismissive laugh, saying: 'You can't do that!' Now when I reflect on his words in the context of the pavilion, they acquire another meaning. It turns out that migration can be conveniently separated from security when it suits a particular agenda: this seems to be the case here.

What would the border landscape look like if it included people jumping over and falling from the almost three-metre-high fence, or people pushed back to Belarus by border guards through animal passages? What if it included the bodies of unidentified migrants buried in small borderland cemeteries? How would the soft hues of the installations, the fluffy ‘hedgehogs’, and the costumes designed specifically for the exhibition’s mediators by Laima Jurča, looking like camouflage and visually attractive, look against the backdrop of such brutal suffering? Well, they would look *unnecessary*.

But on the other hand, why not, once and for all, create a work about the border that does not talk about migration? Even from a purely conceptual standpoint.

First, the work includes the voices of borderland residents. Since 2018, I have frequently visited the border area and interviewed more than 100 inhabitants. My most recent fieldwork in the border area was last summer, when I went directly to residents whose houses and properties extend to the border fence. I aimed to capture the different ‘faces’ of the fence: on water, across swamps, along rivers, adjacent to the road or someone’s potato field. I sought to understand how people experience the transformed border, and how it affects the environment from their perspective. Two key themes emerged from their stories: 1) the completion of the fence and the removal of the temporary fence have stopped animal migration in many places, but, paradoxically, this has also reduced animal suffering, as the barbed wire often caused severe injuries; 2) border patrols and controls have always been, in a sense, a daily reality for borderland residents, and their intensification is not particularly surprising, precisely because everyone has experiences and stories about migrants. And holes in the fence.



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene

Thus, I arrive at the second argument, which underscores the impossibility of separating migration from the current discourse on border security. Suppose we are discussing the sense of safety felt by borderland residents. In that case, I find it hard to understand how the presence of anti-tank obstacles and pyramid-shaped barriers can enhance a feeling of security when, as the hybrid warfare

narrative since 2021 has suggested, the real threat is seen as coming from the border crossers. When we learn that the State Border Guard is apprehending around 100 individuals a day, it becomes undeniable that many of these people are found hiding near or within the border zone. It is difficult for me to grasp how detached from reality the perception of the border must be if someone can argue, as the architect and researcher Liene Jākobsone does, that in the border area 'surveillance is visible, and even the quietest, most monotonous streets of small villages are monitored. This is one of the elements that locals must live with'[8]. This justification serves as the rationale for displaying the stories of borderland residents on a screen resembling a video surveillance control panel. But how can we fail to notice that this heightened surveillance is not intended to spot advancing tanks (the hedgehogs and dragon's teeth would stop those) but rather to track individuals crossing the Belarusian border into Latvia? The authorities ordered the swift construction of a fence along the European Union-Belarus border precisely for this purpose.

Third, it would be naive to think that architecture is separate from politics. The authors of the work recognise this, acknowledging that people's attitudes towards the various military objects in the borderlands 'are far from unanimous'. Moreover, they stress that this work not only aims to make Latvia's commitment to protecting the EU and Nato external border known to the broader world[9], but also to normalise the militarisation of the border at a national level, which, among other things, involves the display of environmentally degrading objects and the expropriation of land from borderland residents[10].



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene

I strongly disagree with the portrayal of the Latvian borderland presented by the authors of the pavilion, but I can admit that the attempt is noteworthy. Delicate, fluffy hedgehogs, the voices of border residents expressing in Latvian their concerns about a potential invasion (but who in Latvia doesn't have those?), and photogenic shots of the construction of the fence, where no expense has been spared. However, what stands out most about this work is its incomplete context. Visitors to the Venice Biennale might have found this perspective more fully realised in other works on borders that address not just security but also migration, such as the Kosovo pavilion in 2023^[11], and the Swiss pavilion in 2021^[12]. It will be hard to convince me that the omission of migration from the Latvian pavilion was merely an unintentional artistic choice rather than a deliberate political decision.



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene



Latvian Pavilion, Landscape of Defence. Photo: Michiel De Cleene

Anna E. Gri?e PhD is an anthropologist, lecturer and researcher. She teaches in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Latvia, assists the course of economic anthropology at SSE Riga, and is a member of the board of the Latvian Association of Anthropologists and the 'I Want to Help Refugees' association. Gri?e currently carries out border monitoring, and coordinates humanitarian support for people on the move, refugees and asylum seekers at the Latvian-

Belarussian border.

The original article in Latvian was published on 9 May 2025: <https://satori.lv/article/aizsardziba-roza-un-pukaina-migracija-neertais-konteksts>

[1] sampling.lv/en/project/30km & <https://nomadarchitects.lv/landscape-of-defence>

[2] <https://www.fold.lv/2025/03/aicina-uz-diskusiju-un-lekciju-par-aizsardzibas-infrastrukturu/>

[3] <https://www.delfi.lv/193/politics/120070445/patvertnu-projektesanu-nemaca-vai-arhitektiem-jabut-latvijas-aizsardzibas-sastavdalai>

[4] <https://www.1188.lv/zinas/ar-latvijas-paviljonu-venecijas-arhitekturas-biennale-velas-paradit-drosibas-vidi-pierobezas-ainava/47246>

[5] <https://nra.lv/latvija/490304-uz-latvijas-baltkrievijas-robezas-atrasts-imigranta-likis.htm>

[6] <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/25.04.2025-robezсарgs-pielieto-saujamieroci-agresivu-robezparkapeju-aizturesanai.a596725/>

[7] <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/kas-notiek-latvija/raidijumi/16.10.2024-video-kas-notiek-ar-nelegalo-migraciju-robezapsardzibu-hibridkaru-un-palidzibu-begliem.a572812/>

[8] <https://www.1188.lv/zinas/ar-latvijas-paviljonu-venecijas-arhitekturas-biennale-velas-paradit-drosibas-vidi-pierobezas-ainava/47246>

[9] <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/kultura/dizains-un-arhitektura/24.04.2025-mezu-un-prettanku-ezu-ieskauti-latvijas-paviljons-venecijas-biennale-vestis-par-aizsardzibas-ainavu.a596592/>

[10] <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/24.04.2025-austrumu-robezas-atrakai-stiprinasanai-plano-atvieglot-zemju-atsavinasanu.a596641/>

[11] <https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2023/kosovo-republic>

[12] <https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2021/switzerland>

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Expectations' by Gerda Paliušytė at the Contemporary Art Centre

June 30, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



'Expectations', exhibition view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

The Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) in Vilnius launched its summer 2025 season with three exhibitions, including 'Expectations', a solo show by Gerda Paliušytė that opened on 12 June.

In 2024, during the Lithuanian Season in France, Paliušytė's solo exhibition 'You Look at Me' was presented at the Château de Tours. It featured two photographic series – **Guys** (ongoing since 2021) and **Blue Flowers** (ongoing since 2022) – which were conceived and exhibited as a single, unified work. 'Expectations' at the CAC continues this photographic project, introducing new works by Paliušytė alongside contributions from artist Gediminas G. Akstinas.

In the lead-up to the exhibition, we spoke with the artist about her practice and the presentation at the CAC.

CAC: *How did your journey as an artist begin?*

Gerda Paliušytė: I began my artistic practice while still studying at the Vilnius Academy of Arts, collaborating with artists Gediminas G. Akstinas and Jurgis Paškevičius. At one point during our studies, the three of us created events and staged situations that responded to specific locations – such as 'Exhibition Closing' (Paupio g. 26, Vilnius, 2011) and 'Scenario for a Swimming Pool' (Lazdynai Swimming Pool, Vilnius, 2012). We also worked with other artists and individuals we were interested in, combining texts, objects, and performances within these events. At the time, we were particularly inspired by the work of Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe, whose practices revolve

around space, the viewer's interaction with the work, and the collective experience. Another significant influence was the curatorial practice of Raimundas Malašauskas, who often masterfully transcends conventional exhibition formats. It was a brief but intense and beautiful phase. A few years later, at the invitation of the CAC, I made my first documentary film, which followed the visit of the American hip-hop group Onyx to Vilnius. The film was presented at the 12th Baltic Triennial and remains a key reference point in my practice to this day, as I continue to work with various documentary strategies.

CAC: *In your upcoming exhibition, 'Expectations', you continue the Guys and Blue Flowers series presented in 'You Look at Me' at the Château de Tours in 2024. According to curator Asta Vaičiulytė, in this exhibition, 'fragmented nude male bodies that almost blend into their surroundings are placed in distant dialogue with macro images of flowers, painted blue for a stronger aesthetic appeal'. What led you to explore the relationship between male bodies and flowers?*

Gerda Paliušytė: This project emerged from a reflection on the history of photography and its traditional subjects. I was initially interested in how flowers and the nude body have long been established genres – often linked to the work of women photographers or depictions of female nudes. As the project evolved, I began thinking more deeply about shifts in the photographic canon, changing notions of intimacy and gender, and our relationship with theatricality and staging.

When photographing, I consciously move away from narrative, focusing instead on form, materiality, texture, and light. The blue-painted flowers – roses, orchids – were captured primarily as an industrial phenomenon. What interested me was how these painted flowers eventually resist the paint, and the pigment on the blossoms fades. In a sense, they are a disappointing economic object. In the **Guys** series, meanwhile, the details of the surrounding environments and interiors stretch out the bodies being photographed – they act as extensions of those bodies and offer a certain timestamp.

CAC: *The project Guys and Blue Flowers has already been presented in both international and local contemporary art contexts. How do different audiences receive your work? How does knowing where your work will be presented affect your preparation? Have you encountered different interpretations or expectations?*

Gerda Paliušytė: So far, the project has always been shown in contemporary art contexts, so I wouldn't say it has reached very different audiences yet. Perhaps there are slight differences in age, social background, or experience, but not in terms of expectations or openness to various forms of contemporary art. When preparing for an exhibition, I usually take into account the space – both conceptually and architecturally – so the venue often determines the preparation process. For example, when we installed the exhibition in Tours, in an 11th-century castle, the architecture itself dictated certain exhibition solutions. By closing off one of the transitional rooms with a transparent partition and limiting direct access to the work, we altered the viewer's typical trajectory through the castle's spaces. Exhibiting in Lithuania also carries a different resonance – it means being in dialogue with the art scene I'm part of.

CAC: *You've been developing the project Guys and Blue Flowers for several years. How has it evolved? Have new thematic directions or personal discoveries emerged? In what direction are you taking it in 'Expectations'?*

Gerda Paliušytė: While the core themes have remained, my relationship to them has naturally shifted over time. The process of taking pictures and reflecting on the results helps me better understand which aspects of the original idea really resonate – what it is I'm actually looking for. On one hand, it's important for me to define the direction and purpose of my work. On the other hand, I equally value the openness of the process – the freedom to deviate from the original storylines, only to return to them from a new angle. One significant discovery has been how the project is shaped by

time – how it can change depending on the situation or space in which it's shown. *Expectations* explores some of these discoveries.

CAC: What led you to choose the title 'Expectations'? Is it more about the viewer's experience or their relationship to the exhibition itself? Is there something specific you hope they experience or take away?

Gerda Paliušytė: We live in a world where the economy runs on expectations – yet many of us feel deeply frustrated with the current situation in which economic principles are driving the systematic destruction of the world. That frustration played a key role in shaping the exhibition. The title also speaks to the expectations placed on artworks and exhibitions by institutions and audiences – the notion of art practice as a kind of investment with predictable, fixed returns. 'Expectations' explores different ways of experiencing both time and environment (including the works themselves), emphasising the importance of attentiveness and free choice today.

CAC: The spaces where your work is presented often become an extension of your exhibitions. What makes the CAC space special to you?

Gerda Paliušytė: For me, the CAC is the institution where I grew up and formed as an artist. It's where many artists who are important to me have exhibited, so I'm grateful that this exhibition will become part of the CAC's exhibition history. Like any institution, the CAC is shaped by the people who work there. I'm glad to be continuing my collaboration with curator Asta Vaičiulytė following our work together on the exhibition in France. Working with Asta is an inspiring and smooth process that genuinely enriches my practice.

CAC: The exhibition 'Expectations' will also include works by Gediminas G. Akstinas. How does your collaboration work? How does his practice complement your photographs?

Gerda Paliušytė: The objects and sculptures Gediminas created add a necessary plot twist to the exhibition, especially in relation to the space itself. I admire how his artistic practice engages with contemporaneity – how the current economic situation is reflected through architectural or industrial materials – as well as how it foregrounds craftsmanship, imagination, and a signature style. Although the exhibition's starting point is *Guys* and *Blue Flowers*, its full script and spatial architecture will emerge through the dialogue between my photographs and Gediminas' sculptural objects.

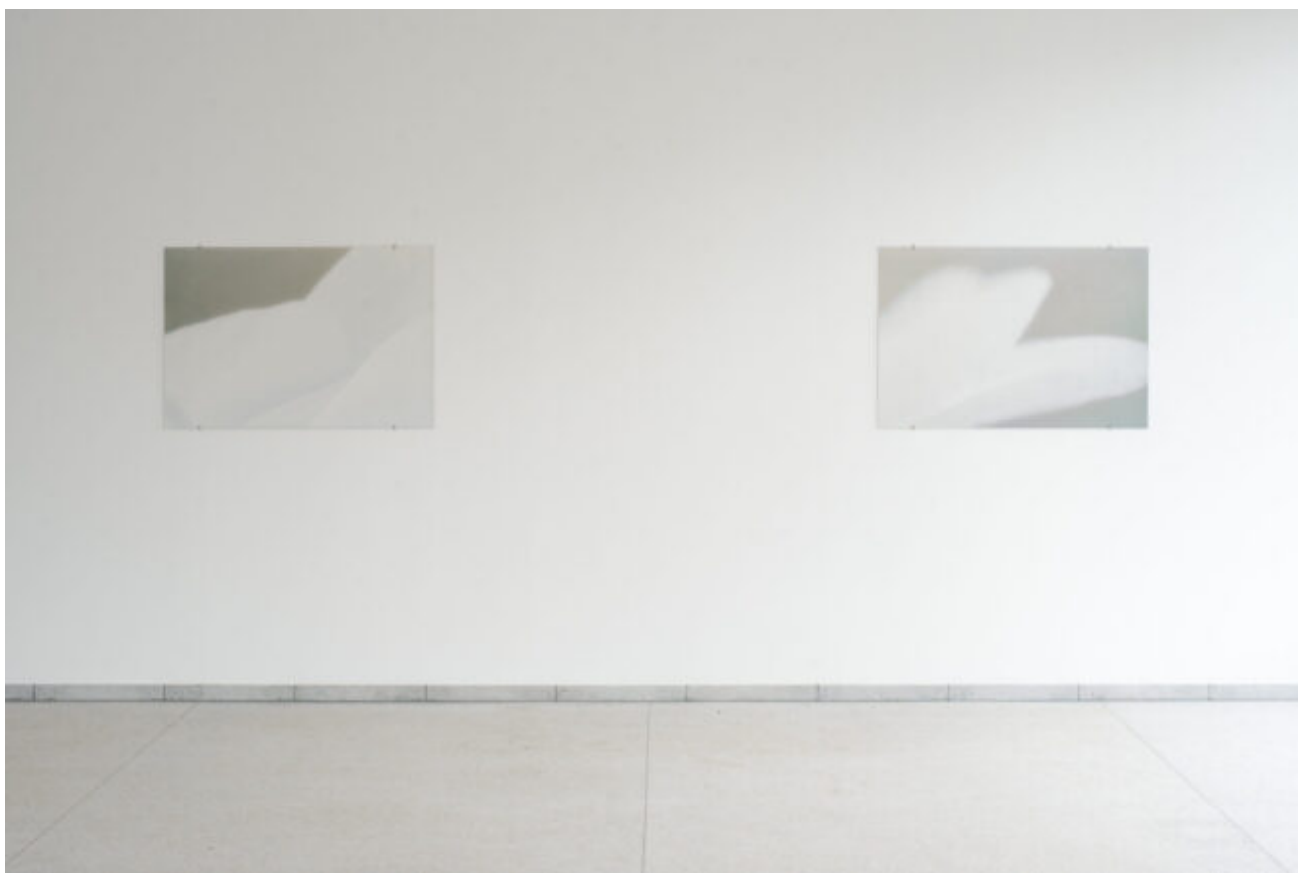
Gerda Paliušytė's exhibition 'Expectations' at the Contemporary Art Centre (Vokiečių g. 2, Vilnius) is open until 14 September. The exhibition is curated by Asta Vaičiulytė.



'Expectations', exhibition view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



'Expectations', exhibition view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



'Expectations', exhibition view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



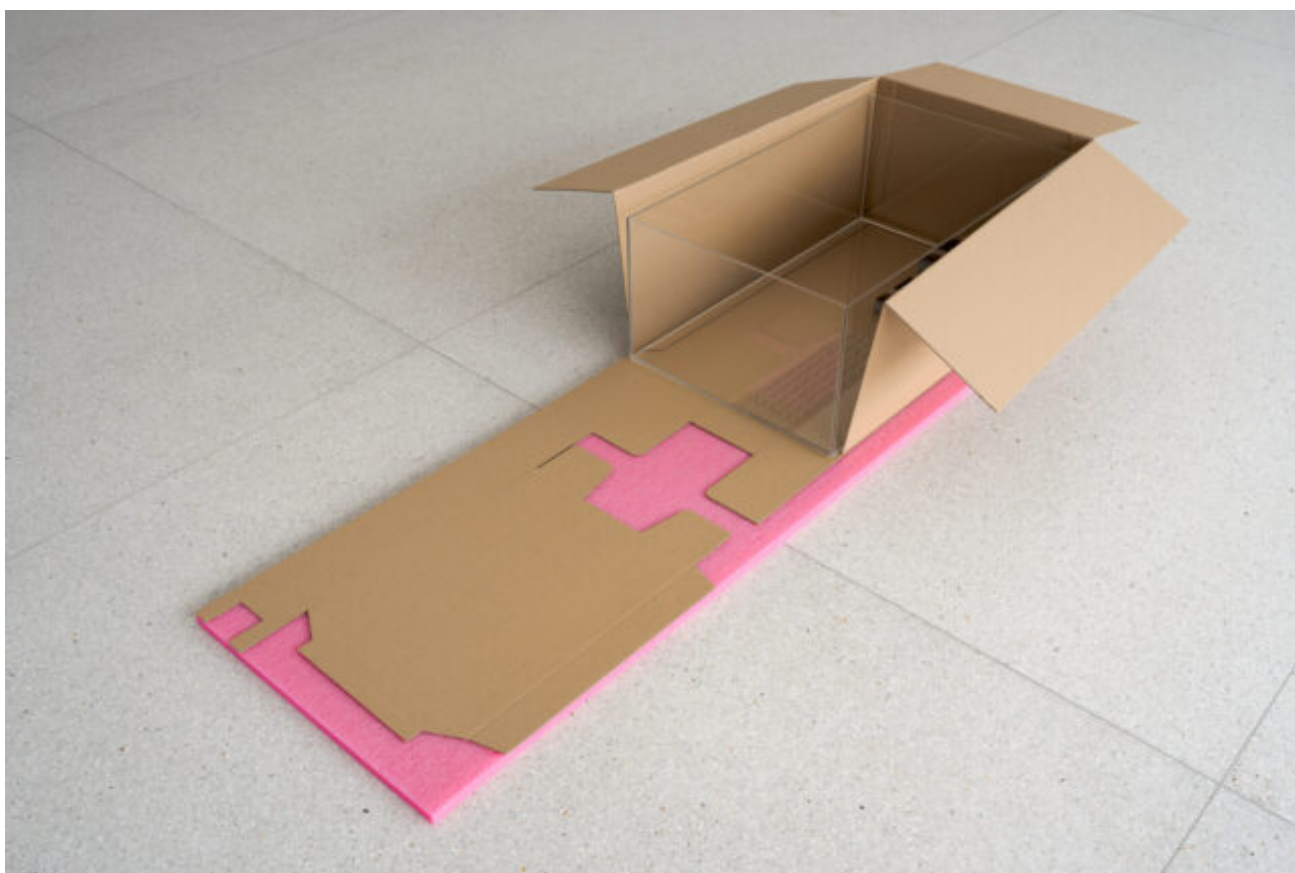
Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė, 'Blue Flowers', 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



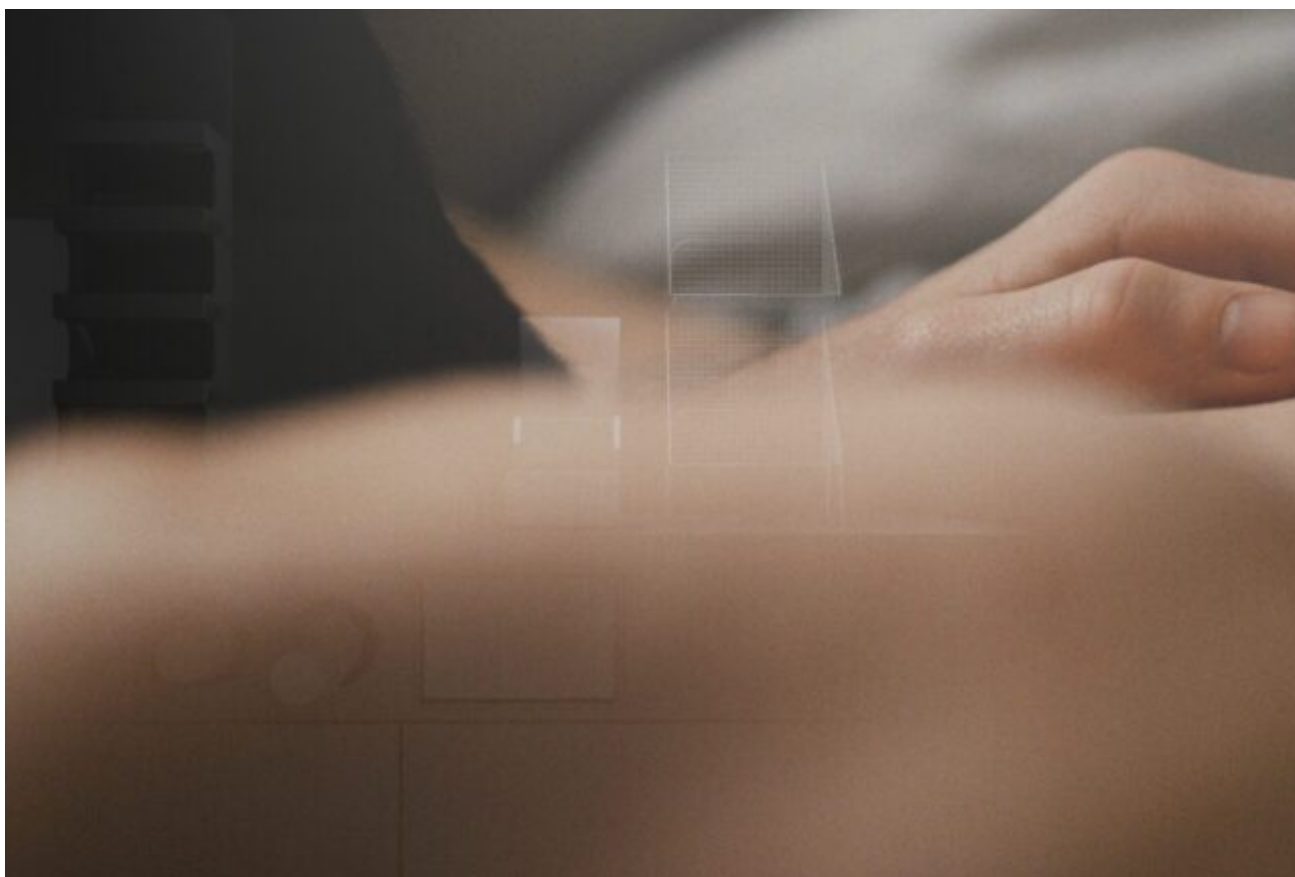
'Expectations', exhibition view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



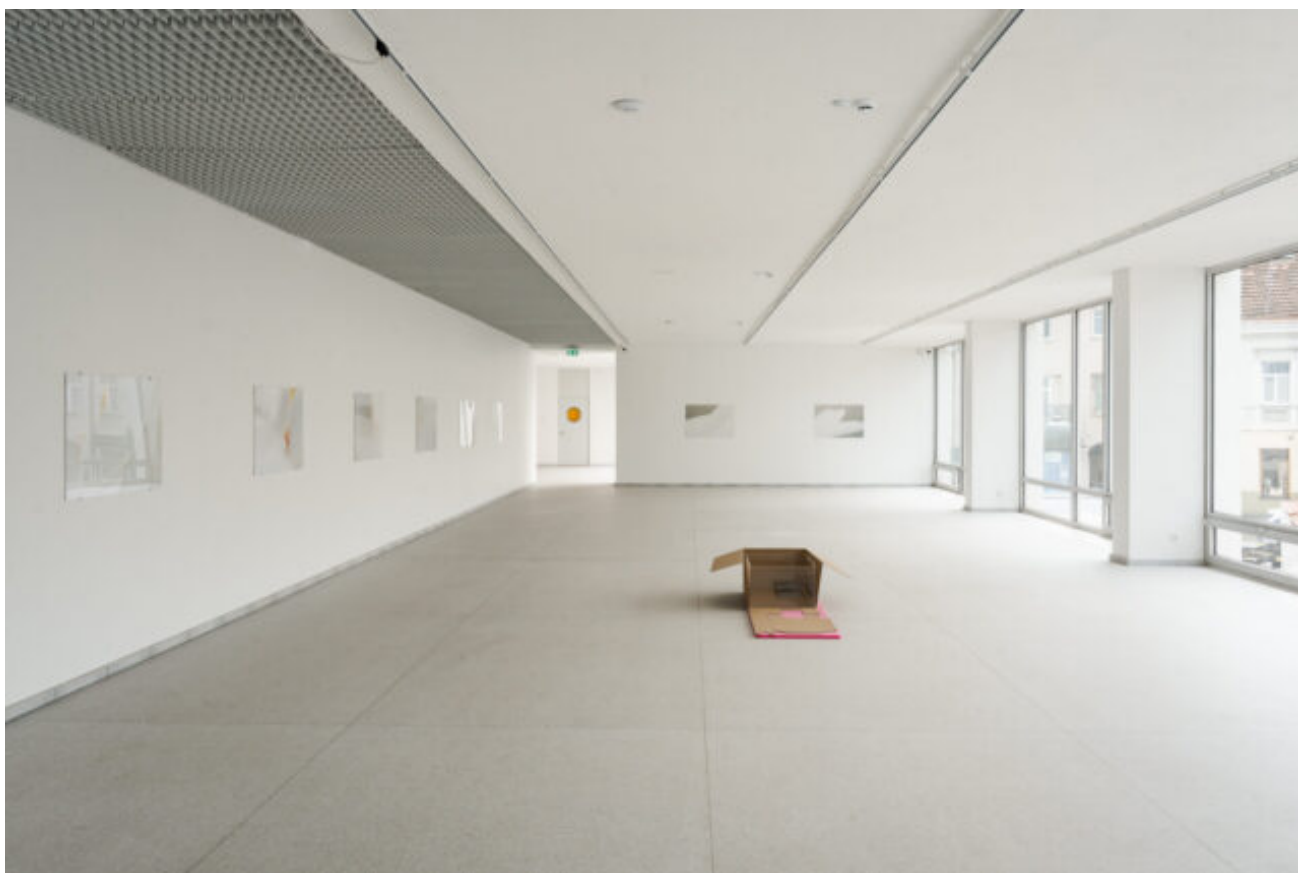
Gediminas G. Akstinas, sculptural work 'We', Gerda Paliušytė and Gediminas G. Akstinas, image for take away „Guys“, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gediminas G. Akstinas, sculptural work 'We', Gerda Paliušytė and Gediminas G. Akstinas, image for take away „Guys“, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko



Gerda Paliušytė and Gediminas G. Akstinas, image for take away „Guys“, 2025

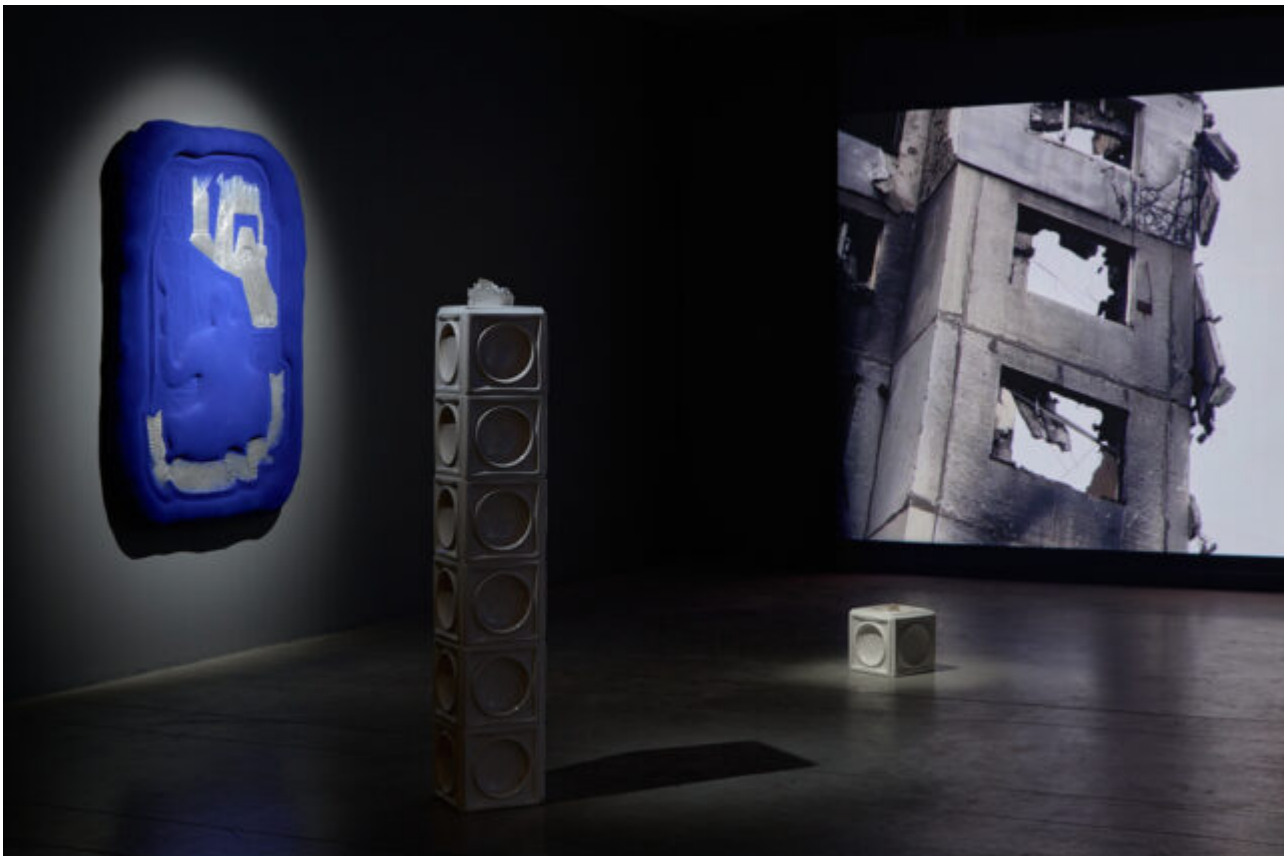


'Expectations', exhibition view. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) Vilnius, 2025. Photo: Andrej Vasilenko

Photo reportage from Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025 exhibition 'Chronosphere' by Lesia Vasylchenko at the Riga Contemporary Art Space

June 5, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



View of the Lesia Vasylchenko's solo exhibition 'Chronosphere'. Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025. Photo by Madara Kuplā

Until 6 July Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025 exhibition 'Chronosphere' by Ukrainian artist Lesia Vasylchenko (UA/NO) is on display in the Intro Hall of the Riga Contemporary Art Space. Curators: Inga Brūvere (LV) and Marie Sjøvold (NO).

Lesia Vasylchenko works across a range of media, including video, photography, installation and curation. She holds a degree in journalism from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and in Fine Arts from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. In her research-based practice, Vasylchenko explores encounters between visual cultures, media technologies and chronopolitics. Vasylchenko has recently exhibited at the Pochen Biennial for Multimedia Art (Ex Oriente Ignis), the Munch Museum's Triennale (The Machine Is Us), and the Henie Onstad Triennale for Photography and New Media (New Visions) and her work is part of the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma/Finnish National Gallery in Helsinki, Finland. 'Chronosphere' is the artist's first exhibition

in Riga.

The 'Chronosphere', a constellation of interconnected works, explores the intricate interplay of temporal scales, ranging from the microtemporal, such as remote sensing of planetary surfaces and computational cycles, to the macrotemporal, including ecological trauma and the nuclear age. The 'Chronosphere' exhibition extends its exploration of time to the context of the current war in Ukraine. The exhibition uncovers how war disrupts, ruptures, intersects with and reshapes the temporal fabric of human and more-than-human existence, embedding itself in personal and collective time.

Taking as a starting point Eduard Suess's concept of Earth's envelopes and Volodymyr Vernadsky's notion of the Noosphere – the "sphere of human thought" – the 'Chronosphere' represents an additional layer where time itself becomes a medium of interaction. Historical narratives, cultural artifacts and the scars of systemic inequities form the foundation of the now, while technologically predicted futures unfold as a response to these legacies.

The 'Chronosphere' encapsulates the dynamic interactions between scales of time, highlighting how individual experiences are interwoven with planetary infrastructures and visionary technologies. It builds on Vasylchenko's call to rethink the temporal dimensions of contemporary existence, urging us to move beyond linear narratives and into a realm of interconnected and simultaneous temporalities. It invites viewers to navigate the continuum of temporalities, uncovering the intimate and often invisible threads that bind us to one another and the world around us.

The Riga Photography Biennial (RPB) is an international contemporary art event, focusing on the analysis of visual culture and artistic representation. The term 'photography' in the title of the biennial is used as an all-embracing concept encompassing a mixed range of artistic image-making practices that have continued to transform the lexicon of contemporary art in the 21st century. The Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT offers visibility and provides a platform for promising young artists and helps to announce themselves to a wider audience and context. Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025 program from 24 April to 6 July offers a wide-ranging program of exhibitions and education events, giving the floor to emerging artists and curators from the Baltic and other countries who have addressed aspects of the theme 'invisible but present'. For more information:

www.rpbiennial.com

Supporters and partners: State Culture Capital Foundation of Latvia, Riga City Council, Exhibition Hall 'Riga Contemporary Art Space', Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia, Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OKA), 'Riga Art Week' (RAW), printing house 'Adverts', 'Rixwell Hotels', 'Arctic Paper', Valmiermuiža Craft Brewery, Arterritory.com, Echo Gone Wrong, NOBA



View of the Lesia Vasylchenko's solo exhibition 'Chronosphere'. Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025. Photo by Madara Kuplā



View of the Lesia Vasylchenko's solo exhibition 'Chronosphere'. Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025. Photo by Madara Kuplā



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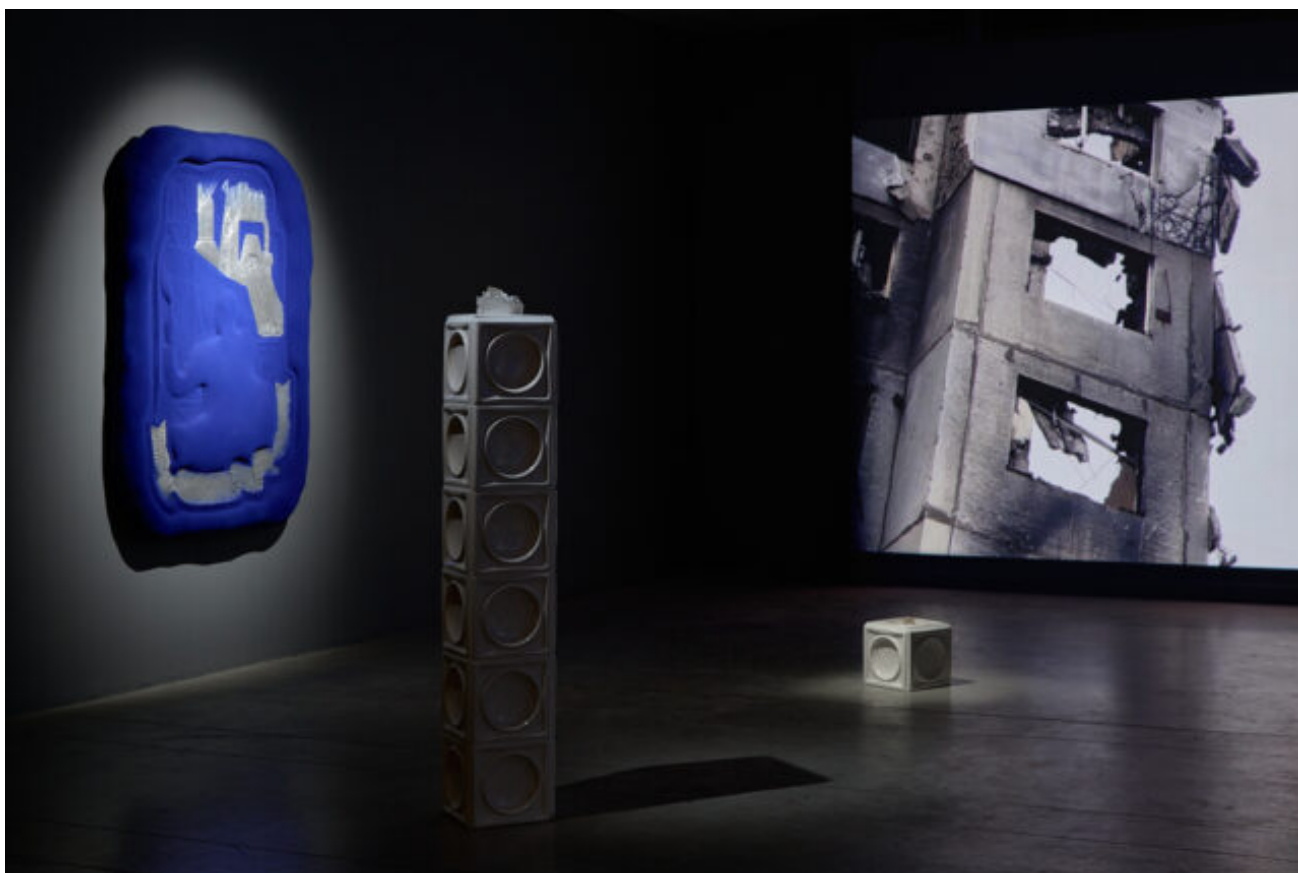
View of the Lesia Vasylchenko's solo exhibition
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View of the Lesia Vasylchenko's solo exhibition 'Chronosphere'. Riga Photography Biennial—NEXT 2025. Photo by Madara Kuplā

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts' by Zwaantje Kurpershoek and Indrė Liškauskaitė at EKA Gallery

June 12, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



View from the exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Ako Allik

The exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts" is the first joint exhibition by Dutch artist Zwaantje Kurpershoek and Lithuanian artist Indrė Liškauskaitė. Both artists have spatial practice: the work of Zwaantje Kurpershoek comes from an interaction between physical materials and fictional stories resulting in mainly paintings and installations, Indrė Liškauskaitė creates drawings that she weaves with everyday found objects and that occupy the exhibition space in unconventional ways.

The selected works offer a glimpse into the personal relationships the artists have with their four-legged companions. Zwaantje Kurpershoek observes and depicts in her painting series the differences and points of contact between two living beings sharing a living space. How, in passing moments, she becomes close with her cat Nami, then distant once again. Her second work is an installation of pastel colored sculptures — part toy, part survival tool — that guides the viewer through a landscape evoking a mythical, ambiguous feeling of childhood. Indrė Liškauskaitė, who researches dog-human play and train dog agility sport with her non-human companions Delta and Delfina, suspends her four-legged collaborators' toys and leashes within the exhibition space, also making her drawings go through obstacle course-like physical objects.

Artists: Zwaantje Kurpershoek & Indrė Liškauskaitė
Curator: Kaisa Maasik

Graphic design: Fatima-Ezzahra Khammas
Technical support: Karel Koplimets, Karmo Migur

Exhibition is supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Erasmus+ Mobility Programme and Sadolin Estonia.

Opening drinks from Põhjala Brewery.

Zwaantje Kurpershoek & Indrė Liškauskaitė

“Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts”

EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia

24.05.–17.06.2025

Photos by Ako Allik and Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition “Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts”, EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Ako Allik



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View from the exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Ako Allik



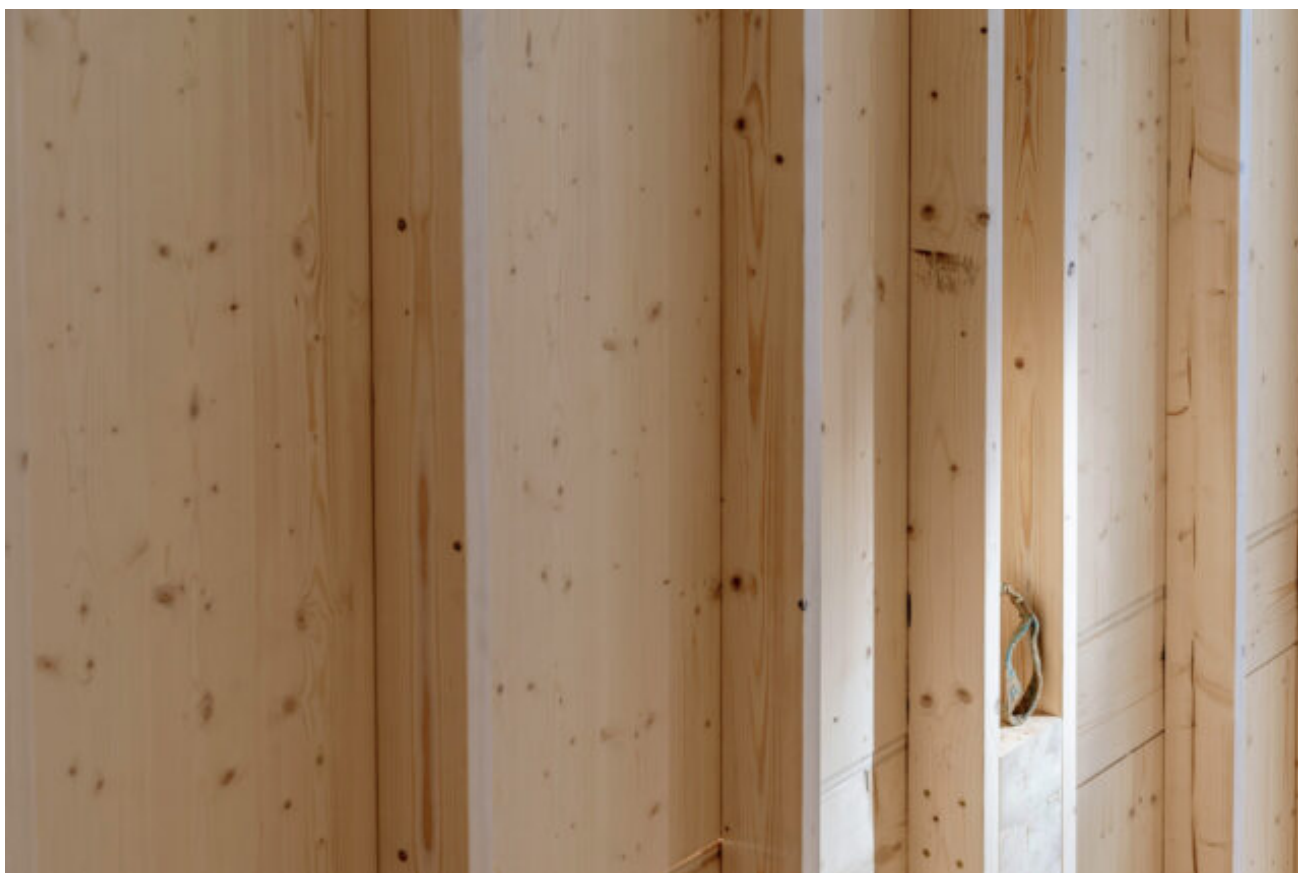
View from the exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Ako Allik



View from the exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Kaisa Maasik



View from the exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Ako Allik



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View from the exhibition "Pastel Paws and Resting Rafts", EKA Gallery, Tallinn, Estonia, 2025. Photo by Ako Allik

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important' by Eike Epik at Kogo Gallery

June 16, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Epik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma

At Kogo Gallery in Tartu, Estonia, a solo exhibition *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by sculptor and installation artist Eike Epik is currently on view and will remain open until 9 August. Returning to the imaginative world of childhood, Epik invites visitors to loosen the strings of control and awaken a sense of unlimited possibilities that childlike openness and curiosity can offer. The exhibition is curated by Šelda Puķīte.

Eike Epik offers her new exhibition as the platform for an intuitive, even visceral exploration of oneself. The exhibition is a playground for exhausted grown-ups who have forgotten the transformative effects and freedoms that a childlike openness and curiosity can present. Through playful rediscovery of her natural and youthful self, she questions the limitations and lack of imagination that the world of reason presents. Becoming a mother and observing her child's free-spirited engagement with the world awakened in Epik an urge to seek the same unapologetic courage to explore and nurture her inner child. In its own way, this project is a return to Epik's childhood world in the countryside near Rapla. This is a place where your fantasies create different worlds to explore, and neither the space nor the body suffers from limits built by rules. The closet can become a nightclub, the outdoors an extension of one's body, melting into the forest or the mud.

In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important is open at Kogo Gallery from 23 May to 9 August 2025. The Kogo Gallery is located in Tartu, Estonia, at Apraaditehas, on Kastani 42. The gallery is open for visits from Wednesday to Friday from 12.00 to 18.00, and on Saturdays from 12.00 to 16.00.

The exhibition is part of Kogo Gallery's this year's programme *Thrifters and Transformers*. The show is curated by Šelda Puķīte, who works at Kogo Gallery as a curator of the exhibition programme and head of international projects.

The exhibition is funded by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and the City of Tartu.

Eike Eplik (b. 1982) is a sculptor and installation artist based in Tartu. She creates sensitive and imaginative works full of personal mythology through different visual expressions and materials such as clay, plaster, metal, wood and ready-made. She holds an MA from the Sculpture Department at the Estonian Academy of Arts and a BA from the Sculpture Department at Tartu Art College. Eplik's recent exhibitions include *White Dwarfs and All Those Beautiful Nebulas* at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre in Riga (2024), *Down In The Bog – Sporulation* at EKKM in Tallinn (2024), *Emotional Landscapes* at Arka Gallery in Vilnius (2023), *Growing Out? Growing Up?* Contemporary Art Collecting in the Baltics at Zuzeum Art Centre, Riga, Latvia (2022); *My Bitter Sweet Frankenstein Body* at Titanik, Turku, Finland (2022); *Shared Territory* at Tartu Art Museum, Tartu, Estonia (2021). In 2025, her works were presented at the contemporary art fair Esther II in New York and in 2021 at Liste Art Fair Basel. Eplik is a recipient of the Annual Prize of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and several other awards, and was one of the recipients of Estonia's national artist's salary from 2021 to 2023. She is represented by Kogo Gallery.

Šelda Puķīte (b. 1986) is a Latvian curator, writer and researcher based in Estonia. Her formal education includes a Master's and a Bachelor's degree from the Department of Art History and Theory at the Art Academy of Latvia. She has worked on several international exhibitions, curated stands for art fairs including Liste Art Fair Basel, viennacontemporary and Art Brussels, published art albums, created catalogues for contemporary art festivals Survival Kit and Riga Photography Biennial, as well as written several essays for Baltic culture publications. Her most recent curated exhibitions include Eike Eplik's solo exhibition *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* (2025) at Kogo Gallery, Tartu, *Silver Girls. Retouched History of Baltic Photography* (2025) together with Agnė Narušytė and Indrek Grigor at National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, and *White Dwarfs and All Those Beautiful Nebulas* (2024) at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga. Since 2020, she works at Kogo Gallery as a curator of the exhibition programme and head of international projects.

Photography: Marje Eelma



View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025.
Photo by Marje Eelma



View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025.
Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, *Mother with Child*, 2025. Ceramic, 49 × 37 × 29 cm. View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Look, here is an earthworm!, 2025. Stainless steel, 86 × 127 cm. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Look, here is an earthworm!, 2025. Stainless steel, 86 × 127 cm. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Detail of an installation *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* (2024–2025) by Eike Eplik. View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



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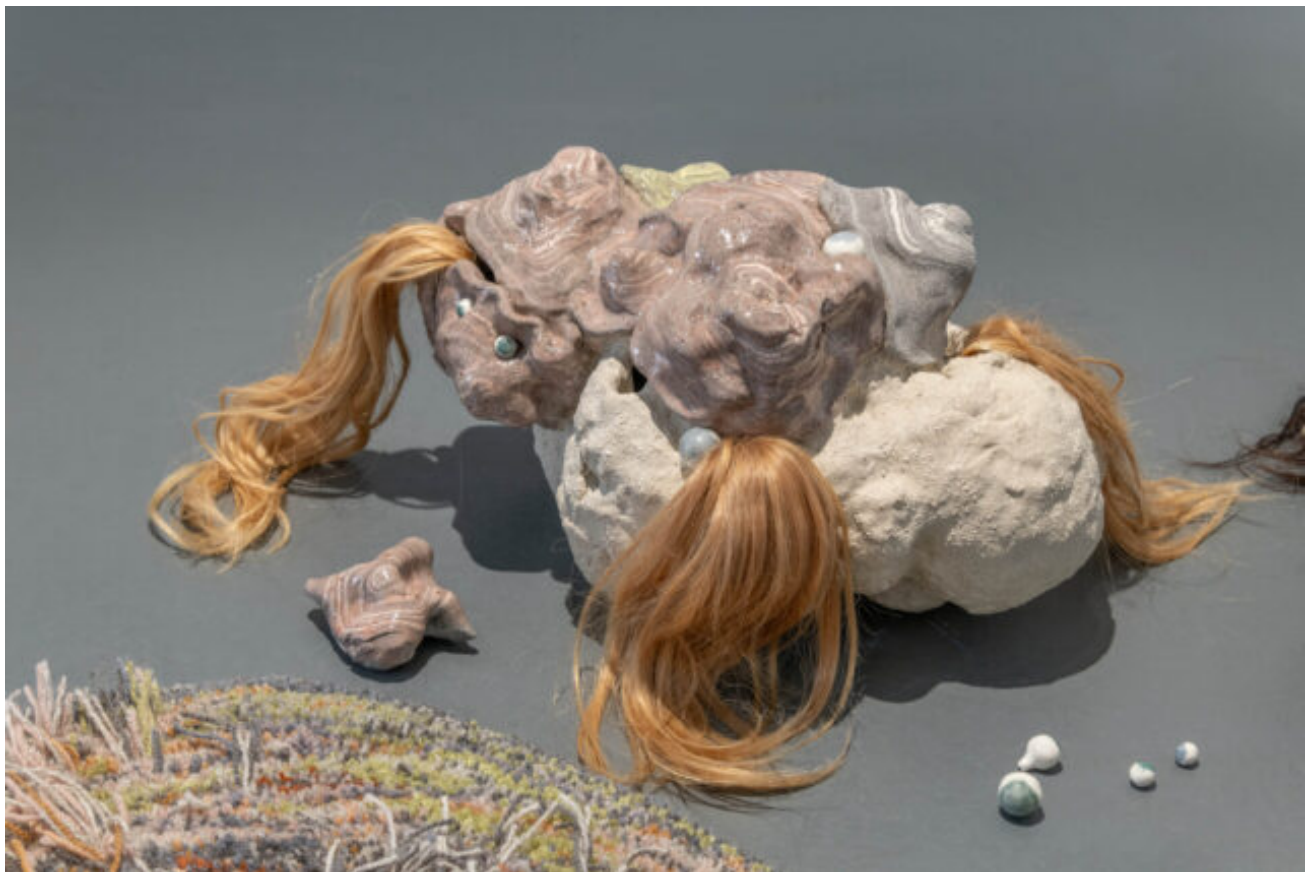
Eike Eplik, *Soft Meadows*, 2025. Tufted wool carpet, 105 × 76 cm. View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Games with Turtle, 2025. Ceramics, hair, dimensions variable. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Games with Turtle, 2025. Ceramics, hair, dimensions variable. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Games with Turtle, 2025. Ceramics, hair, dimensions variable. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Dweller of the Garden, 2025. Ceramic, iron, 130 × 50 × 30 cm. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



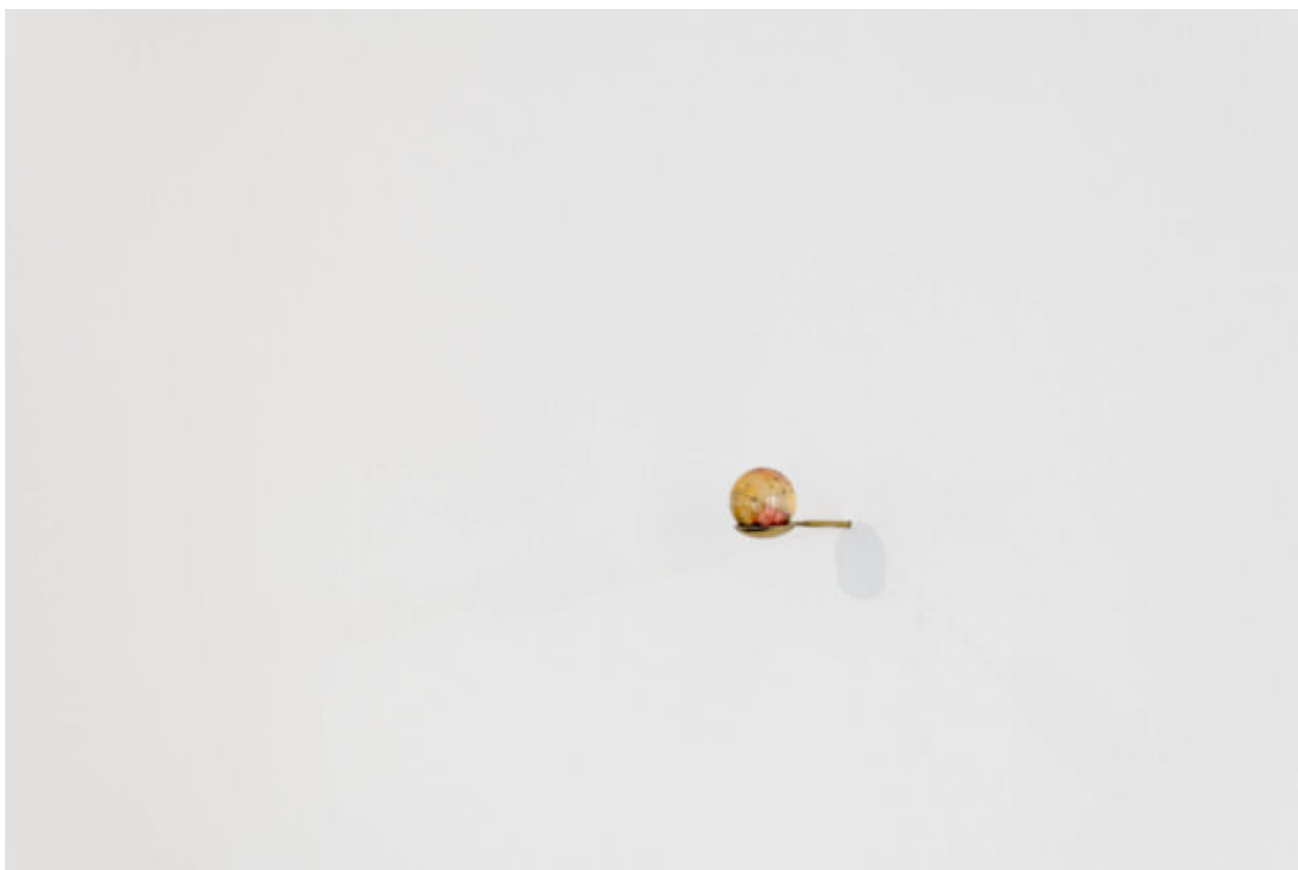
Detail of the work *Dweller of the Garden* (2025) by Eike Eplik. View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Detail of the work *Dweller of the Garden* (2025) by Eike Eplik. View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Detail of the work Dweller of the Garden (2025) by Eike Eplik. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, Lucky Charm, 2025. Spoon and stone. 4.5 × 7 cm. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



Eike Eplik, A Carrot Monster and a Shark, 2025. Stainless steel, rope, 49 × 59 cm. View from a solo show In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025. Photo by Marje Eelma



View from a solo show *In Times When Everything Else Seems More Important* by Eike Eplik, Kogo Gallery, 2025.
Photo by Marje Eelma

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'This Machine' by Bob Dempfer at TUR

June 17, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Bob Dempfer, This Machine. Photo: Kristine Madjare

The global financial markets are vast, complex systems governed less by individual intention than by algorithmic velocity. At the top, immense fortunes are generated not through traditional trade but through milliseconds – automated decisions executed by servers housed in secretive data centers. In this arena, capital doesn't sleep; it accelerates. Servers are the infrastructure of power, not unlike oil fields or railroads in previous centuries.

These forces form the backdrop for Bob Dempfer's artistic practice. As both a visual artist and filmmaker, Dempfer builds environments that explore contemporary structures of power. For This Machine, his exhibition at TUR, he has constructed an installation that operates as both a work in its own right and, when needed, as a set for his ongoing feature or longer film project, begun in 2019.

Dempfer constructs environments that hover between the familiar and the fabricated. They resemble movie sets in their capacity to suggest narrative and hold atmosphere. These are not stages in the theatrical sense, but sculptural scenes – carefully arranged, tonally specific, and suggestive rather than prescriptive. They do not explain; they evoke. In This Machine, the viewer is invited into a space where meaning is not fixed, but flickering — where a story might begin, or where a question might take root. The work quietly proposes that the global financial system – dominated by opaque algorithms and automated trades – has become so complex, so abstracted, that no single human fully understands its operation. And perhaps that's the point: in systems without oversight, power becomes invisible, and reality itself begins to distort.

At the core of Demper's ongoing project is Donny, a burnt-out financial worker drifting through a landscape shaped by the aftermath of institutional logic. The film is not constructed in a conventional, linear fashion. Instead, it evolves through fragments – scenes filmed in and around each exhibition, shaped by the material and spatial qualities of the installations themselves. For *This Machine*, Demper introduces a new character for the first time: Donna – Donny's coworker, not boss and neighbour – marking a shift in the unfolding narrative.

At the heart of *This Machine* is a tension between visibility and concealment, artifice and infrastructure. What is real anymore, when decisions that shape our economies, societies, and futures are made not by people, but by code? The global financial markets – so often abstracted, algorithmic, and unreachable – operate with a kind of surreal detachment from daily life. Demper mirrors this quality: blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality, constructing worlds that feel both intimate and estranged, credible and illusory.

This Machine doesn't provide answers or explanations. It offers a space of suspension – where complex systems are not decoded, but felt. It invites viewers to sit with uncertainty, to sense the contours of forces that are normally hidden from view. In doing so, it opens up a quieter kind of attention: one that acknowledges how much we don't know, and how urgently we need to learn to see in the dark.

Bob Demper (b. 1991, The Netherlands) is a visual artist based in The Hague. With a background in filmmaking, his practice spans film, installation, video, and sculpture. Demper's work is characterized by a meticulous engagement with structures of power, particularly as manifested in financial systems, corporate aesthetics, and emerging technologies. He has exhibited at institutions including 1646 (The Hague), Museum Helmond, and Art Rotterdam, and has participated in numerous group exhibitions and screenings across Europe. His current research explores the sociopolitical consequences of algorithmic and automated financial models through speculative environments that blend cinematic tropes with sculptural precision.

Exhibition Curator and text: Edd Schouten

Project Manager: Kristīne Ercika

Production Manager: Ada Ruskiewicz

"This Machine"

Bob Demper

28.05 – 28.06.2025

TUR, Riga



Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare



Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare



Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare



Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare



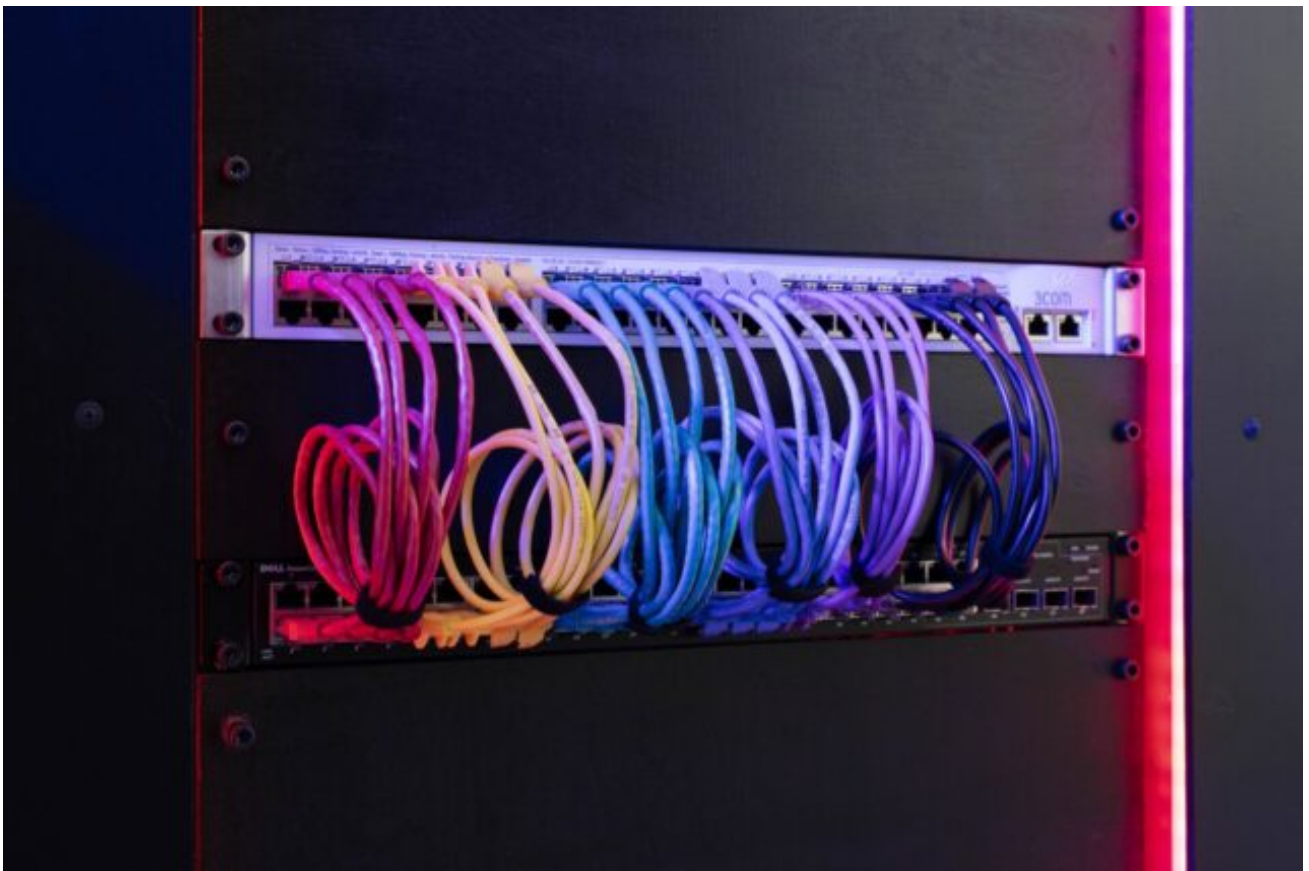
Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare



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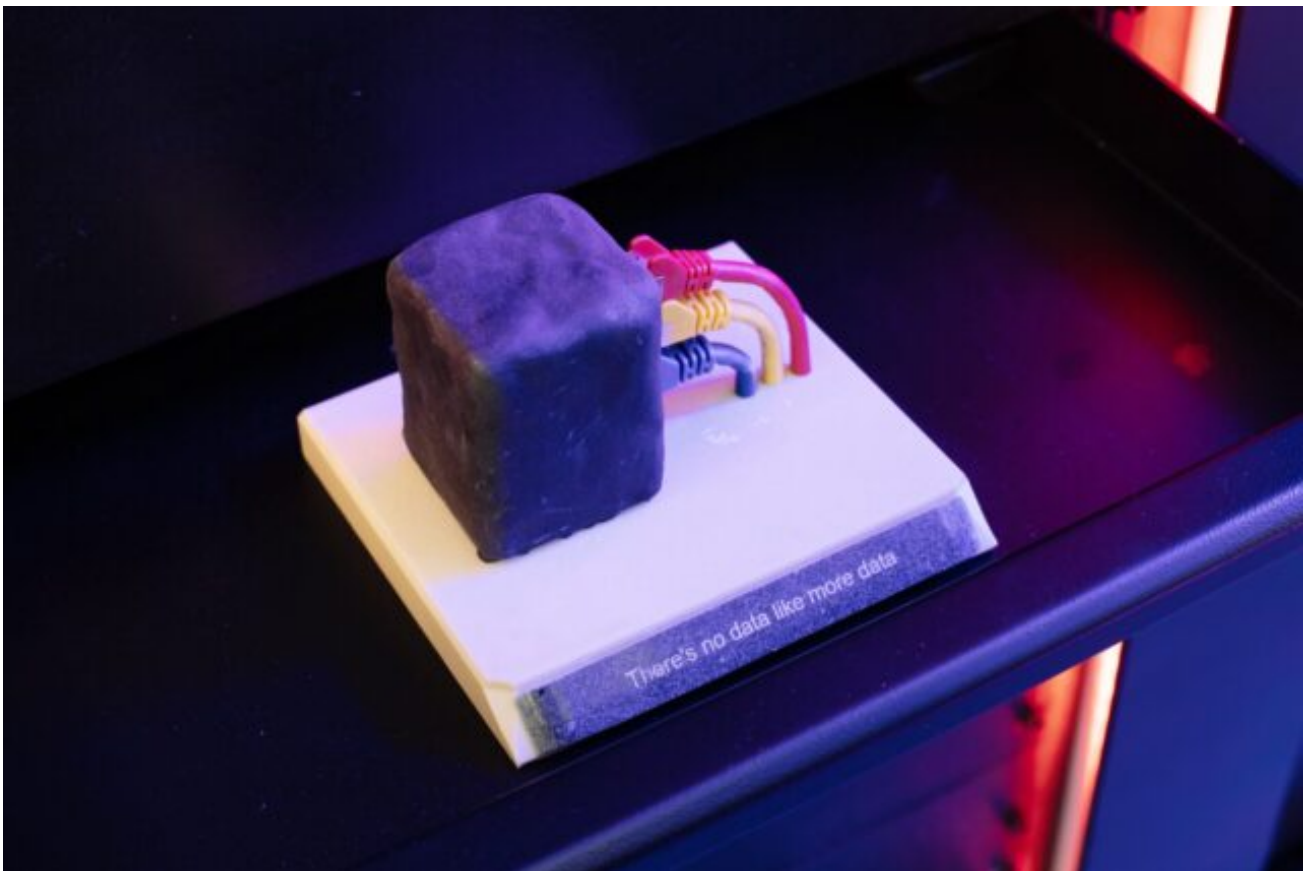
Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare



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Bob Demp, This Machine. Photo: Kristīne Madjare

Photo reportage from the exhibition 'Via Sacrum' by Kornelija Skarolskytė at the Kaunas Artists House

June 19, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Via sacrum – a title derived from Latin, where *via* means “path” and *sacrum* – “sacred.” In English, *sacrum* also refers to the base of the spine, historically regarded as a point of connection between the physical and spiritual dimensions. Within religious and esoteric traditions, this region has often been seen as a passage linking distinct layers of reality.

The exhibition presents a series of paintings and drawings that evoke states of transformation, impermanence, and liminality. These works suggest transitional conditions in which relationships between self, world, and image shift. Symbolic elements from the Western visual tradition are employed, including references to religious iconography and esoteric signs.

A central concept explored is hierophany – the manifestation of the sacred through material presence. This phenomenon contains a fundamental paradox: a familiar object retains its form while acquiring a significance that transcends its physical boundaries. In this way, it becomes not merely a symbol but a medium – a surface through which unseen realities may be encountered. In painting, such experiences can emerge not only through the depicted motif, but through the act of painting itself, where visual form becomes a means of passage or transformation.

Painting technique is regarded not just as a method of depiction, but as essential to meaning-making. Technical choices reflect conceptual concerns: transformation through dissolution, radiance

emerging from darkness, or moments in which figures seem to disintegrate, dissolve, and reassemble – gestures that mirror existential tension and renewal.

The sacred, in this context, is not addressed in doctrinal terms but understood as a cultural and existential phenomenon. It may emerge through subtle memory, symbolic distortion, or formal ambiguity. Thus, painting becomes a space to reflect on boundaries between the visible and invisible, between material form and meaning, between personal experience and collective imagination.

Even within secular frameworks, an underlying, often unspoken mythology or folklore persists – inseparable from cultural inheritance. Motifs and symbols associated with religious or mythological art are employed not as affirmations of belief, but as poetic tools through which a kind of personal mythology is formed: a visual narrative shaped by interior states and symbolic intuition.

'Via Sacrum'

Kornelija Skarolskytė

Kaunas Artists House,

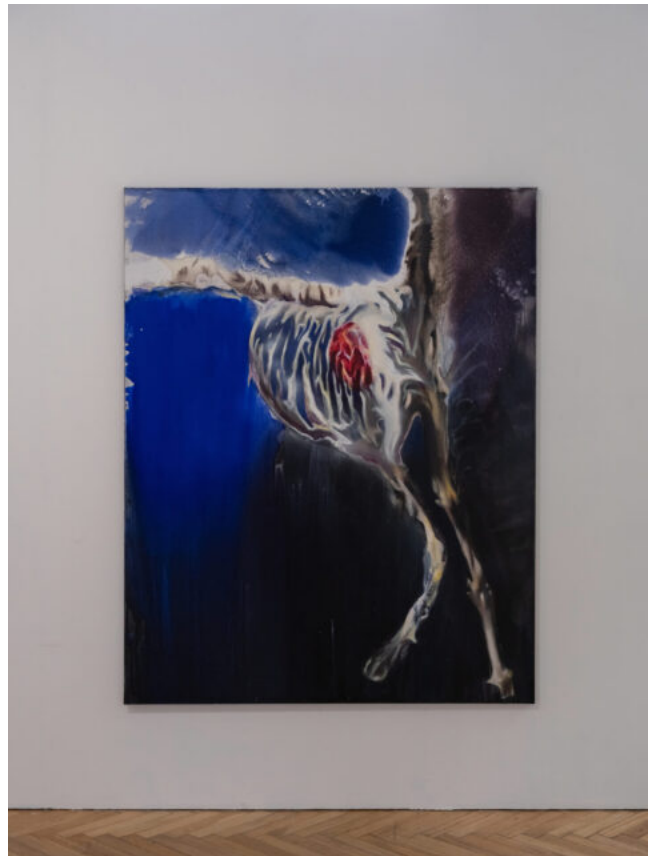
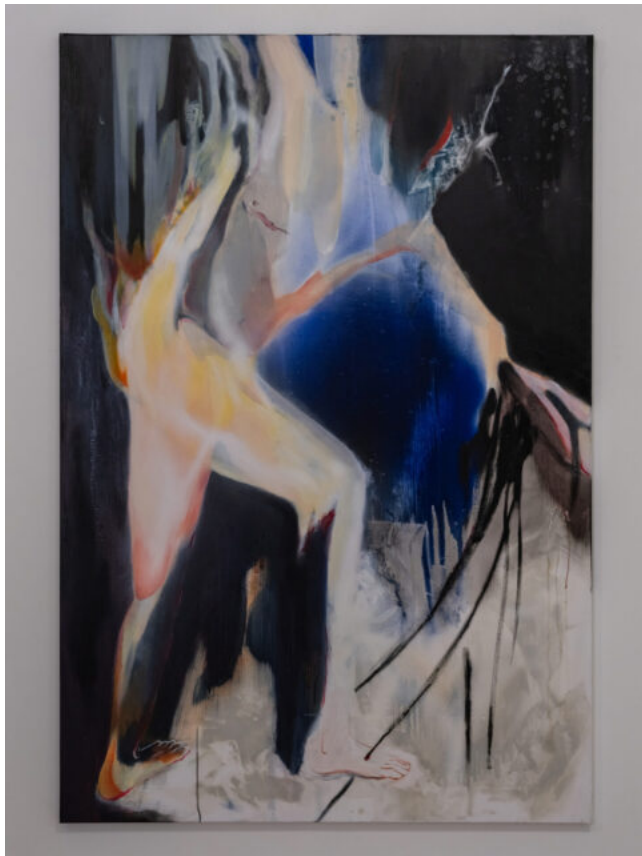
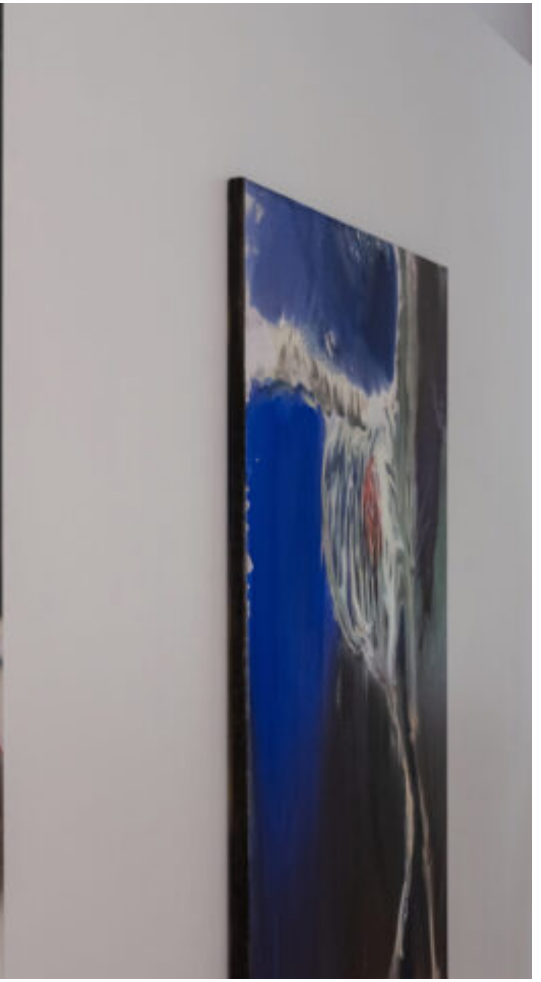
V. Putvinskis st. 56, Kaunas,

Lithuania,

May 29 – June 16.

Photography: Lukas Mykolaitis





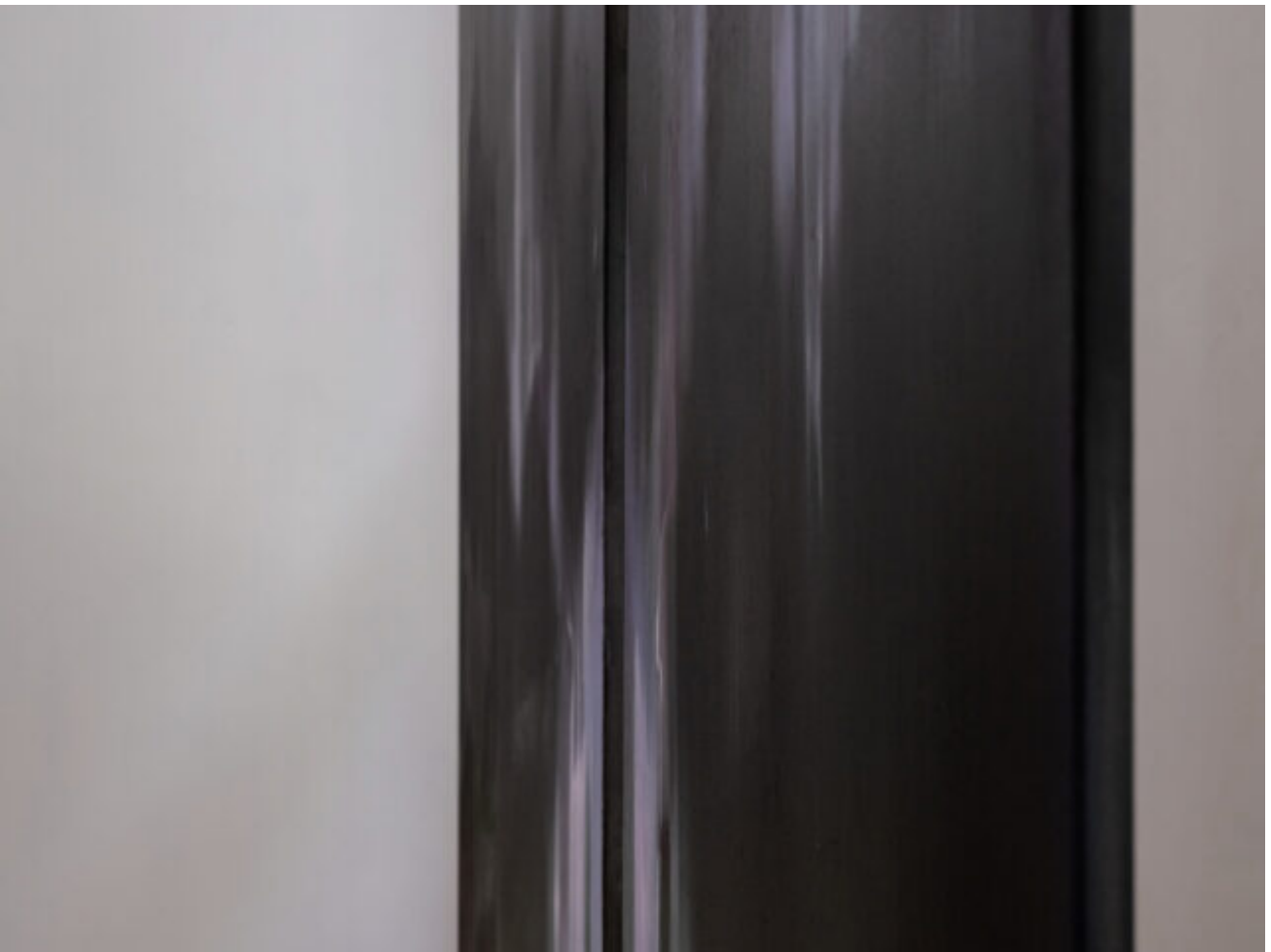
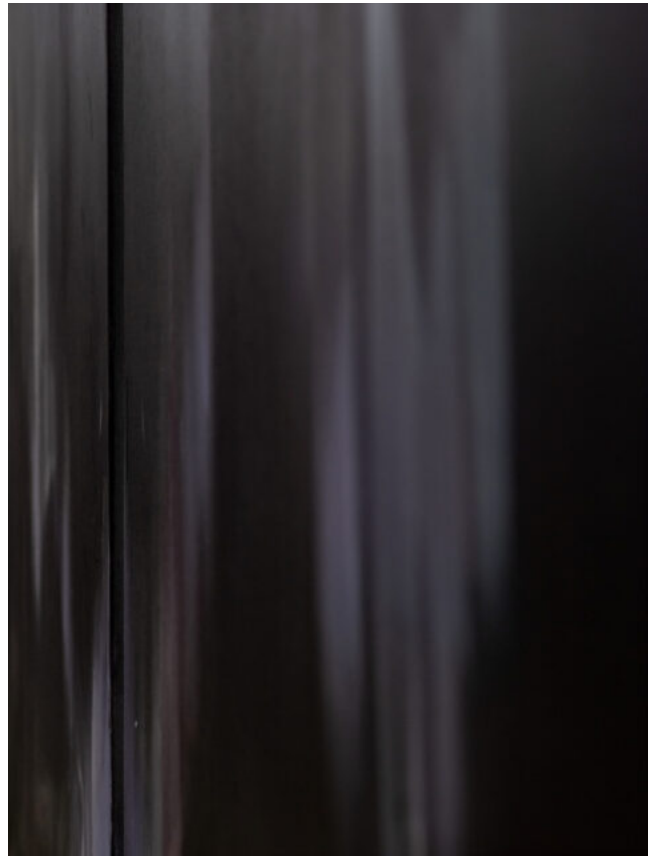














Photo reportage from Justina Moncevičiūtė's exhibition 'A [] in the shape of a monster / the skies are full of them' at the Vilnius University's Observatory of Ideas

June 25, 2025

Author Echo Gone Wrong



Justina Moncevičiūtė. A [] in the shape of a monster / the skies are full of them. Exhibition view. 2025. Photo by Gedvilė Tamošiūnaitė

The solo exhibition “A [] in the shape of a monster / the skies are full of them” (Lith. “[] monstre s pavidalu / dangų s ju pilni”) by Justina Moncevičiūtė at the historical venue of Vilnius University’s Observatory of Ideas takes inspiration from the history of the site, literary references, and women astronomers. It’s the artist’s first exhibition in Lithuania.

On view is a selection of works that exemplify Moncevičiūtė’s practice, positioned at the intersection of sculpture and textiles. The exhibition’s choreography carefully places each piece throughout the

premises. The artworks discerningly inhabit the observatory, transforming it into an otherworldly heterotopia full of conceptual turns and subtle references to astronomy, science fiction and historical female figures. The exhibition also extends beyond the interior spaces by including a site-specific intervention on the building's façade.

The two sculptures from the "Skūrà" series dynamically morph: modular ceramic elements are connected into flexible, fabric-like volumes, and thus their shape and scale respond to the mode of display. The works are reminiscent of an animal skin slough ("Skūrà III") or shredded leather pieces ("Skūrà IV"). "Un-heimliche" is made of enlarged porcelain spherical modules, it evokes a system of astronomical bodies that form an intricate, unintelligible network. Yet it also gestures toward the contours of a creaturely or human form. A different approach is taken in "Cepheid RX Aurigae". The white, continuous roll of paper serves as a canvas, pierced with glass beads tracing astronomical diagrams, a nod to the firmament where astronomers track and map stellar constellations. The fluctuating lines and embroidery stitches are based on astrometrical data of proper motion, recorded in the early 20th century at the observatory by Wilhelmina Iwanowska (b. 1905 in Vilnius, d. 1999 in Toruń) and her colleagues.

Also included in the show is "[missing entry]", the most recent work, a sculpture consisting of glass beads, presented in a museum's vitrine among scientific artefacts and tools. Its play of reflections and shimmering points to the ephemeral cosmic light on which the discipline of astronomy is based on. The common formal feature of the works is a void—an empty space existing between the singular modules—yet one which is intrinsic to hold them together, and which grants them their composition, appearance, and movement.

The leitmotif of the void and emptiness resonates with the artist's research into the history of the observatory, astronomy, and women astronomers. Wilhelmina Iwanowska, a mathematician and astronomer, was one of the scientists actively involved at the Vilnius observatory until the end of the Second World War. After fleeing to Poland, she co-founded the renowned Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and continued making seminal scientific contributions. Iwanowska's predecessors—women who dedicated their lives to the science of stars—include Henrietta Swan Leavitt, Caroline Herschel, Maria Cunitz, Maria Clara Eimmart, among many others. The marginal positions of these scientists attest not to their work or achievements but to a systematically biased redaction of the history of science that erased women and belittled their discoveries. Moncevičiūtė's research into women astronomers goes way back to Hypatia, the late-Hellenic astronomer and philosopher of Alexandria, who was violently murdered by a mob, motivated by prejudice against the advancement of knowledge as well as educated women. The history of astronomy (and of all scientific disciplines, as a matter of fact) is thus incomplete, consisting of gaps, redactions, and voids.

But the science of astronomy also tells us about the importance of emptiness: the expanse of the universe is, for the most part, void — an empty vacuum in which matter is scattered yet interconnected into elements, materials, astronomical bodies, and galaxies. Moncevičiūtė's objects poetically translate this idea, memorializing those researchers who have been forgotten or eradicated but are nevertheless intrinsic to the collective weaving of knowledge.

The exhibition's title is borrowed from a poem by Adrienne Rich (b. 1929, d. 2012 in US), "Planetarium" (1968): "A woman in the shape of a monster / a monster in the shape of a woman / the skies are full of them."

Justina Moncevičiūtė invites us to take a closer look:

at how the fabric of beads is held together and falls seemingly effortlessly, yet demonstrates elemental laws of nature; at the linear science that has meaningful depths in its shadows and margins; at the night sky, its monsters, and its mesmerizing, all-captivating emptiness of expanse.

“A [] in the shape of a monster / the skies are full of them” is on view at Vilnius University's Observatory of Ideas (M. K. Čiurlionio st. 29, Vilnius) till 1 August 2025. The exhibition is open Mon–Sat, 9am – 6pm

Curator: Milda Dainovskytė

Exhibition text: Ignas Petronis

Text translation in lithuanian: Justina Moncevičiūtė

Text editing: Christian Lerch

Installation: Greta Vileikytė

Poster and exhibition documentation: Gedvilė Tamošiūnaitė



Justina Moncevičiūtė. A [] in the shape of a monster / the skies are full of them. Exhibition view, 2025.

Photo by Gedvilė Tamošiūnaitė



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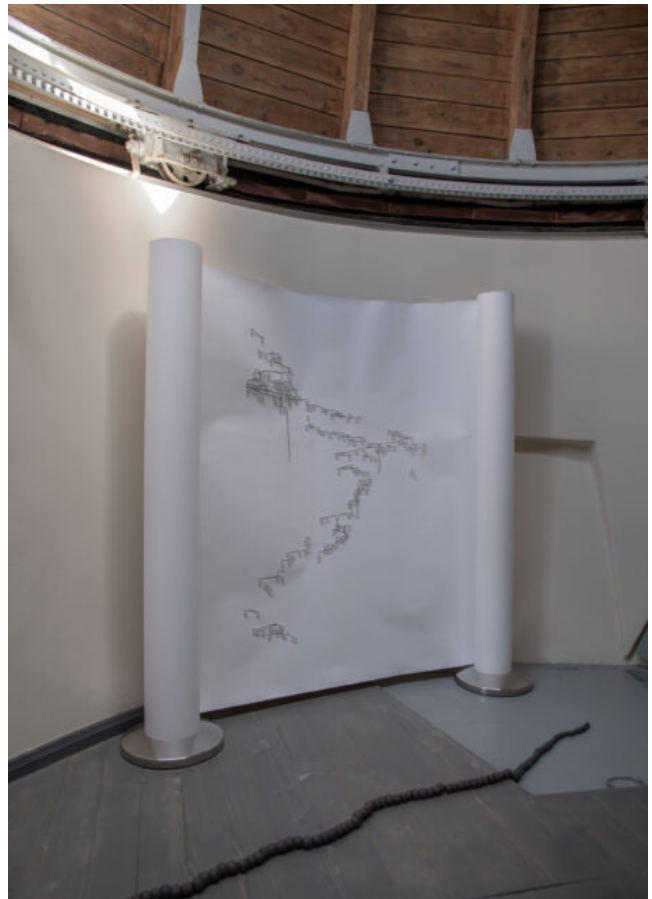
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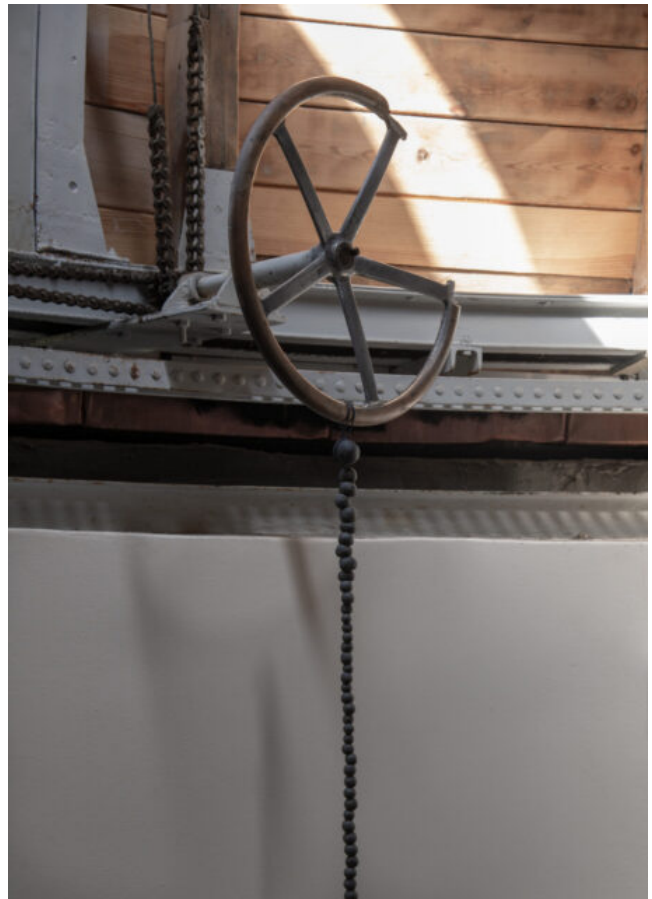
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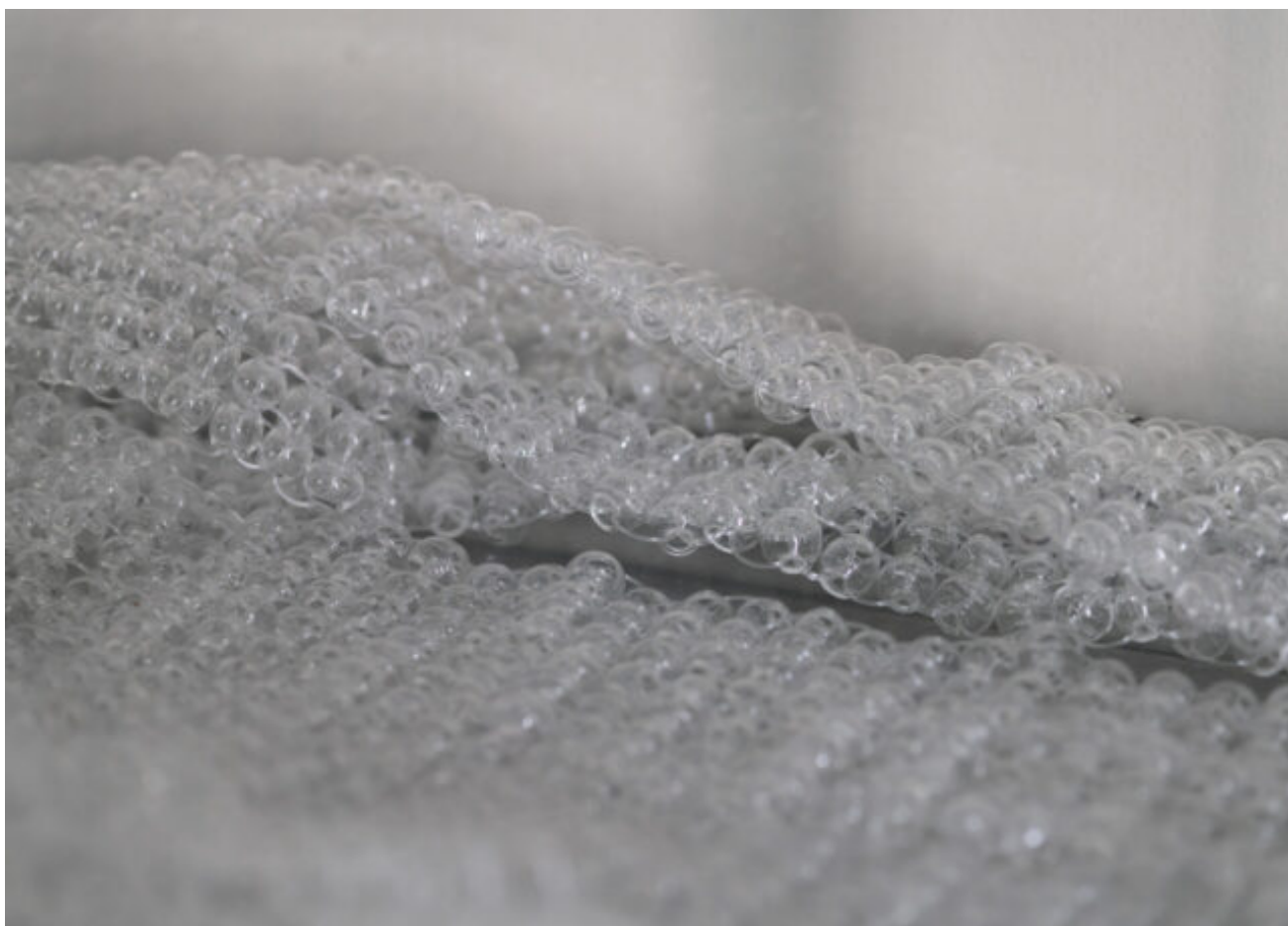


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