

## **Retina**

Participants: **Andrejs Strokins, Germans Ermičs, Kaspars Vanags and Vents Vīnbergs**

**kim? Contemporary Art Centre**

August 25 – October 8, 2017

*Retina* is an exhibition based on a conversation of its four participants - **Andrejs Strokins, Germans Ermičs, Kaspars Vanags** and **Vents Vīnbergs** - on the obscure relationship between contemporary art and the visual image, and also pictures as such. It's also about sight and viewing. About seeing and the unseen. The exhibition was created as the notes following this conversation, each participant coping with the aftertaste of the exchange and the mentioned historic examples of visual culture.

*Retina* does not claim the status as an art exhibition, as each of the four makers' relationship with art might be interpreted as something uncertain. **Andrejs Strokins** is the closest to being designated an artist, but is joining this conversation as a collector, who believes in the creative potential of found photo-material. **Vents Vīnbergs** is an essayist and architecture critic, who is fascinated by the historic situation of architecture criticism in the pre-photography age, when the adventure of space was conjured up in the reader's imagination purely through language techniques. **Germans Ermičs** is a designer and, among other things, experiments with mirrors, allowing one to think about reflection as being physical, physiological as well as a taught construct. **Kaspars Vanags** is an art curator, who can't stop thinking about the idea of post-art utopias in the era of image inflation.

Their conversations often linger on the curiosities of the image-based world, and thus the exhibition has also been formed in layers, where the images and comments merge indistinguishably into a whole, just like an eye or the retina, which we might have to essentially consider as a growth from the brain.

## **Biographies**

**Vents Vīnbergs** (1979) graduated from the Rīga Technical University, becoming an Architect in 2004, but since 2007 he has been active in his field as a writer. Reflecting on current architectural and cultural developments, he is the author of more than 100 publications in Latvian and foreign media and in professional publications such as the series *Process* (Arhitektūras veicināšanas fonds, 2008-2013) and the book *V \* X. Latvian Architecture since 1991* (Nucleus, 2011). Vents writes a regular column for the cultural Annex of the largest newspaper *Diena* and he has been the scenography designer of multiple theatre shows as well as the co-curator of exhibitions. Vents stands by the idea of architecture as an essential component of cultural life and is interested in the role of individual personality in architectural processes.

**Andrejs Strokins** (1984) graduated from the Printmaking Department of the Art Academy of Latvia and he has furthered his education through photo-courses and workshops. He has been active in group exhibitions in Latvia and abroad. His solo exhibitions include: *People in the Dunes*, at the Kaunas Photo Gallery (2014) and the Photo Museum of Latvia (2015), *Disorders and Obstacles* at the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art's Office Gallery (2015). Andrejs Strokins works as an independent photographer and has won multiple significant photo-competitions in the last few year: *Foam Talents* in 2016, *Kaunas Photo Star* in 2013, and he also got second place at *La Quatrieme Image Foam* competition in 2015 and the *Photo Annual Awards* competition in the documentary photography category.

**Germans Ermičs** (1985) is a furniture and graphic designer based in Amsterdam. He studied graphic design in Denmark, where he interned at the *Rasmus Koch Studio* in Copenhagen, in 2011 he graduated from the Man & Living Department, with a focus on interior and furniture design at the Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands. He opened his own studio in 2014. Over the past three years, his work has focused on experiments with simple glass forms and in-depth studies of existing and potential relationships between the material and its colour options. In 2007 he co-founded the magazine *Veto* as its Artistic Director.

**Kaspars Vanags** (1970) is a curator and writer. In collaboration with other likeminded young culture practitioners he founded group "Open" in 1994 to organise interdisciplinary art events as creative mix

between visual arts, electronic music, new media art and literature. Curator of projects in which art had a critical role of a social platform, turning against or creating an alternative to consumerism culture – *Slaidlugas* (1998), *Subversion*(2000), *T-Shroom* (2002). Later studied art history obtaining MA at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Curator of the Latvian Pavilion at 56. Venice Art Biennale (*Armpit* by Katrina Neiburga, Andris Eglītis). Latest curated exhibition – *Slash: In Between the Normative and Fantasy (kim?)* Contemporary art centre, Riga, 2015). Since 2015 he is the Head of Art Programmes at ABLV Charitable Foundation and is working on the conceptual guidelines of the future Latvian Museum of Contemporary Art, planned to be opened by 2021.