

Exhibition install: Andris Maračkovskis, Jānis Noviks
Executive Director: Elīna Drāke
Project Manager: Evita Goze

Conference participants: Helēna Demakova, Dace Dzenovska, Anastasiia Federova,
Santa Hirša, Jana Kukaine, Mark Allen Svede
Conference: December, 2021
Event location: Art Academy of Latvia (new annex)

Catalogue launch: December, 2021
Design: Eltons Kūns
Banquet: Daria Melnikova

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Luste and everyone who shared with their stories from the 1990s.

Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga
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Kim?

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Where My Cards Lay

Ieva Kraule-Kūna's solo exhibition (featuring works by Ēriks Božis, Andris Breže, Ieva
Iltnere, Ojārs Pētersons and Sarmīte Māliņa)

Curators: Līna Birzaka-Priekule, Zane Onckule

Where My Cards Lay, a new solo exhibition-installation by Ieva Kraule-Kūna's (b. 1987), deals with the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union in the newly minted post-Soviet Baltics. An arrangement of culturo-historical and sociopolitical testimonies, the exhibition is based on the artist's memories, emotions, and experiences growing up in 1990s' Riga. It addresses things experienced, misunderstood and imagined. In line with the title pronouncement, the exhibition embodies the conjuncture of fortuity, fate and circumstance that dictated events in the "unconquered" decade of the 1990s, a time that, as the artist argues, is still here.

The final decade of the past century was a time of radical change in the post-Soviet Baltics – a political, social and economic vertigo accompanied by national elation, on the one hand, and fear, insecurity and confusion on the other. This was a period of intense change, in which processes of renewal and self-redefinition took place across all aspects of life, including economic, interpersonal, and cultural. At the same time, a novel state-concept was introduced to Baltic life, ushering a strange parallel world into being – including a cultural avoidance of top-down policy and its conventions. Everything had to be learned and consumed anew, as the space-time of culture was radically reorganizing itself into newly revised chaos, with no map or means of navigation along the way. Instead, a simultaneity, changeability, and murkiness ("fogginess") introduced by the postmodern era prevailed, evidenced by new state and protection rackets, Ponzi schemes, bribes and forgeries, raves and banquets, easy money and violence, a rise of different spiritual practices and ideologies, shadow economies, and growing rifts between local Latvian and Russian speakers.

While elsewhere (in the West) the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the Soviet Union (1990) brought about the formation of a "global" art world accompanied by blurring national boundaries, an evening out of the center and the periphery, as well as the rise of the internet as a means of global cultural exchange, Riga was mostly preoccupied with the task of making things "normal" by making up for lost time. Instead of making a social turn, – to become a situation or a process – the new living conditions were played out in 1990s' Riga. These were based on a situation in which, against the backdrop of limited theoretical, financial and infrastructural organization, existence (of art) itself was called into question.

With this tactic, Kraule-Kūna transfers these circumstances to the present day, making use of art practice to tell of the era's duality, the permanent clash between the relativity of time and things, and the impressions its influence has left. Each of the four Kim? exhibition rooms has assumed the meaning of a tarot card, respectively: *Six of Swords (reversed): magical thinking after the vacuum of belief*; *Three of Coins: at the supermarket with only acorn and a paperclip in the pocket*; *Five of Clubs: the violent lust for life*; and *Four of Cups: the realities of everyday life*, all of which simultaneously depict an image of Kraule-Kūna's subjective experience, further revealing the reality of 1990s' Riga. Despite being deeply personal, these images conjure up symbolic sign-sets of the collective unconscious. Similar to memory formation, they are not – and in fact, cannot be – perfectly replicative, instead storing eccentric details, which often dissipate and transmute in time, transformed by subsequent experiences to better fit the individual life narrative of one's own making.

These "stage designs" of memory work are evocative of the 1990s', which their authors Ēriks Božis (b. 1969), Andris Breže (b. 1958), Ieva Iltnere (b. 1957), Sarmīte Māliņa (b. 1960) and Ojārs Pētersons (b. 1956) have reinterpreted upon Kraule-Kūna's request, looking back at their creative output and experiences of the era with today's eyes and "erasures", or corrections through the lens of today. Together, these testimonies from the past are tied to contemporary items, giving visitors the chance to experience and lose themselves among archival materials and video collages, sculptural objects and installations, paintings and ready-mades, sidestepping the breach between the documentative and the fictitious/imagined, between authorship and (self)-citation.

A hybrid-conference-readings is held as part of the exhibition, with participating theorists, critics and curators expanding upon the project's topics in felicitously named presentations: "*Why Iveta?*", (Helēna Demakova), *The Order of Chaos* (Dace Dzenovska), *Fear of Feminism in Latvia* (Jana Kukaine), *Adidas made me hardcore* (Anastasiia Federova), *In Search of Wild Capitalism. Struggles of Self-Definition in Latvian Contemporary Art Under Post-Socialist Conditions* (Santa Hirša), and *A Bellyful of Valuta, A City Full of 'Chanel': Buying Art in Post-Soviet, Proto-Capitalist Riga* (Mark Allen Svede).

At the conclusion of the show, *Where My Cards Lay*, a bilingual catalogue, will be published, collecting Ieva Kraule-Kūna's exhibition materials, essays presented in the readings, and a broad collection of visual images. The presentation event will be held in the aesthetic of social gatherings in the nineties, with artist Daria Melnikova (b. 1984) setting up a banquet at the exhibition premises.

Ieva Kraule-Kūna (1987) was born in Riga. She has an MA in Fine Arts from Sandberg Instituut in Amsterdam. Artist mostly produces sculptural objects using various materials (ceramics, stone, metal, etc.), accompanying them with short stories, where absurd adventures of fictive characters alternate with cockeyed interpretations of historical facts. In her works, Ieva Kraule-Kūna references fetishism, history, artisanship and aesthetics of the Soviet era while tracing origins of both personal and collective aesthetic codes. She has participated in group and duo-exhibitions in Riga, New York, Paris, Vilnius, Moscow. Kraule-Kūna is the recipient of the Kim? Residency Award 2017 in collaboration with Gasworks, London and the finalist of the Purvītis Prize 2021. She is a co-founder of Gallery 427 in Riga and co-curated its program from 2014 to 2016, and co-headed LOW gallery.

Ēriks Božis (1969) is an artist. Since 1994 he has taken part in many local and international exhibitions (*Manifesta 2*, Luxembourg, 1998, *N.E.W.S.* Szczecin and Visby, 1999, Latvian Pavilion in Venice Architecture biennale, 2008). In his installations, environmental objects and photographs he has explored everyday reality and questions of perception.

Andris Breže (1958) is an artist. He has taken part in exhibitions since 1977 and is one of the so-called "trespassers" generation which introduced a new brave expression and message to Latvian art in the 80s. In the 90s he participated in many exhibitions abroad. In his posters, graphics, installations he had focused on traces of Soviet and Post-soviet reality. He has written poetry and published poetry collections *Tetovējumi* (*Tattoos*, 1988) and *Šņabji. Blaknes* (*Vodkas. Side effects*, 2007).

Ieva Iltnere (1957) entered the art scene in the 1980s; she is a member of the "Gentle Fluctuation" group of artists, who became the vanguards in expressing the spirit of *perestroika* in art. Iltnere's paintings are characterized by elaborate, subtle and laconic depiction, perfection of form and pronounced aesthetics, sensitive color, and interest in light and ornament. Over a period of more than thirty years, Iltnere has developed a system of recognizable images-character that, through precise, age-defining and at the same time intimate stories, ironically and critically looks at topics that affect human nature, family typologies and dynamics, and current events in society.

Ojārs Pētersons (1956) is an artist, teacher and curator. He has participated in exhibitions since 1976 and is one of the so-called "trespassers" generation which introduced a new brave expression and message to Latvian art in the 80s. In the 90s, he participated in many exhibitions outside Latvia and created the first Republic of Latvia exposition at the 48th Venice Biennale (1999, together with Inta Ruka and Anita Zabiļevska). In his posters, graphics, installations and video-installations he has used metaphors and symbols, which comment on the specific time. Since 1990 he has been a teacher at the Art Academy of Latvia's Visual Communication Department.

Sarmīte Māliņa (1969) is an artist. She has taken part in exhibitions since 1986, when she created performances in the public space (together with Oļegs Tillbergs and Sergejs Davidovs), in the 90s – installations, which recorded the subjective feelings of the time with the help of their minimalistic form and sensitive materiality. She was the artistic editor in *Avots* magazine (1987-92), an outstanding publication of the period of change, and since 1994 has been employed at the *Diena* newspaper as artistic editor. She has carried out contemporary art projects with Kristaps Kalns since 2004.