



LATVIAN PAVILION AT  
THE 59TH INTERNATIONAL  
ART EXHIBITION –  
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA



La Biennale di Venezia

59. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

For the Latvian Pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia the artist duo *Skuja Braden* presents ‘Selling Water by the River’ – a rich installation of more than 300 objects, which features new commissions alongside work from the last 20 years. Curated by Solvita Krese and Andra Silapētere, Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA), the exhibition sees the artists move their shared living space, located in the Latvian town of Aizkraukle, to the *Arsenale of La Biennale di Venezia*. This personal recreation will endeavor to address the shifting borders between private and public space within a wider social context. The exhibition is available for visits from the 23rd of April until the 27th of November, 2022.

For ‘Selling Water by the River’ *Skuja Braden*, an international artist collaboration born in 1999, between Ingūna Skuja from Latvia and Melissa D. Braden from California, have created a multilayered installation that maps the mental, physical, and spiritual areas of being and self within the artists’ own home. In doing so they hope to offer insight into different readings of the history of the Baltic region and to test the readiness of its current society to live up to the challenges of the present day, including the growing polarization of opinion. In the exhibition, home thereof is echoed by deeply personal images in porcelain, a material which the artists have mastered.

What shapes our understanding of public and private space, and what is our role in constructing these views? How can we fashion our surroundings to be as inclusive and open as possible? Where disagreements and conflicts often arise is where private and public spaces meet; a place where different values intersect. For example, the presence of the LGBTQIA+ community is still a sensitive topic in the Baltic and the broader region of Eastern Europe. Although times

are changing, even within these regions, that which is different from heteronormativity has often clashed with conservative worldviews linked to a nationalist discourse within the framework of a tradition of a patriarchal society.

Co-curators Solvita Krese and Andra Silapētere say, “*Skuja Braden* have chosen such a framework for their exhibition at the Latvian Pavilion, because of the coming-to-be of their unique selfhood and their queer self-identity and the time that they spent together at a Zen Buddhist monastery in California that has influenced it. Their confidence drawn from Buddhist teachings, when mixed with a Californian free spirit and experiences of post-socialist life into a singular *mélange*, helps when it comes to finding solutions in these areas of conflict both everyday situations and creative practice. Is the water different in California, where Melissa is from, to the Daugava River, the Latvian body of water on the banks of which lies Aizkraukle, a town built under the auspices of Soviet industrialization, where Ingūna grew up and where the artist duo lived and worked for many years?”

COMMISSIONED BY



Ministry of Culture  
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LATVIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

The Latvian Pavilion is commissioned by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, commissioner Solvita Krese (LCCA), organised by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) and executed by the creative team: artists *Skuja Braden* (Ingūna Skuja, Melissa D. Braden), curators Andra Silapētere and Solvita Krese (LCCA), producer Kitija Vasiļjeva, architect Līva Kreislere, graphic designer Rūta Jumīte, audiovisual solutions Alise Zariņa, art handlers Aleksejs Beļeckis and Pauls Jēgers, light designer Romāns Medvedevs, project manager Ieva Krūmiņa (Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia), project assistant Gerda Čevere-Veinberga, and the communications team of *Copywriter/Levelup* (Olga Procevska, Igors Gubenko, Jekaterina Firfjane), Sofija Anna Kozlova (LCCA) and Alexia Menikou (international communication). Assistants in Venice: Mariona Baltkalne, Dita Miska, Ketrisa Petkeviča, Marta Luīze Skābarde, Agnese Trušele and Karīna Volbeta.

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

*Skuja Braden* is an artistic collaboration, born in 1999, between Ingūna Skuja from Latvia and Melissa D. Braden from California, USA. Their work is a fusion of decorative styles, touching on literary and art historical themes, grounded in the politics of now, and interpreted entirely through the experience of their shared existence.

Their solo exhibitions have been held at the Decorative Art and Design Museum in Riga, the Contemporary Craft Museum in Oregon, and the John Natsoulas Gallery in California. The duo has participated in numerous group exhibitions, the latest being held at the Latvian National Museum of Art in Riga and the Whitechapel Gallery in London as well as art fairs, including *SOFA-Chicago*, *Ceramic Annual of America*, San Francisco, *Start Art Fair*, London; and *SCOPE Art Show*, Basel. *Skuja Braden's* works have been published in *Contemporary Studio Porcelain*, *A Human Impulse*, and the *Lark Books* 500 series on Ceramics. They have also been featured in *Ceramic Monthly*, *New Ceramics*, and *Curve Magazine*. Their works appear in public and private collections including the *White Memorial Medical Center* in L.A., the *Kellogg Art Collection* in Maryland, the Museum of Contemporary Ceramics in Dominican Republic, Latvian National Museum of Art, *Museé Ariana* in Switzerland, *World Ceramic Center* in South Korea,

*Changchun Ceramic Center* in China, ASU Art Museum in USA, Westerwald Keramike Museum in Germany, and *Zuzeum* in Latvia.

#### ABOUT THE CURATORS

**Andra Silapētere** is a curator and researcher based in Riga. Since 2012 she has been part of the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art team. Her research and curatorial practice focus on identity and belonging, which have been important concepts also while curating exhibitions at the Latvian National Art Museum, Riga (2021), *District*, Berlin (2019), *James Gallery* at CUNY, New York (2019).

**Solvita Krese** lives in Riga and has been directing the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA), where she also works as a curator, since 2000. She has curated and co-curated a number of large-scale international exhibitions and was the commissioner of the Latvian Pavilion in the 56th and 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2015 and 2019).

#### ABOUT THE LATVIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

LCCA is an NGO that propels contemporary art events in Latvia since 1993, via critically and creatively approaching social processes.

LCCA organizes art events and exhibitions, carries out research and education projects, and creates publications addressing the most up-to-date processes in art and society and examining the histories thereof. The center's chief areas of focus are the cultural and political contexts of Latvia, the Baltics, Eastern Europe, and the wider post-socialist region, with matters concerning genders and minorities, the layers of individual and cultural memory, and perspectives on the environment and ecology at the fore. LCCA finds cooperation with local and international artists and institutions to be of particular importance, and this is reflected in the nomadic scope of the center's activities – exhibitions, education programs, and other events are held variously in museums, schools, libraries, abandoned buildings, and urban spaces. One such event is the international contemporary art festival *Survival Kit*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [LATVIANPAVILION.LV](http://LATVIANPAVILION.LV)  
FB: @LVPVILION IG: @LV\_PAVILION TW: @LVPVILION

LATVIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART: [LCCA.LV](http://LCCA.LV) FB: @LLMC.LV  
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