

GALERIJA ALMA

TĒRBATAS IELA 64 RĪGA LV - 1001

+371 29155572

alma@galerija-alma.lv

www.galerija-alma.lv

ZANE TUČA

**We sit together, the
mountain and me, until
only the mountain remains.**

- Li Bai

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Tērbatas iela 64, Rīga



«Now» is a unit of space, not time. Sometimes a vast, opaque field, sometimes a unit of unmistakable proximity.

Any moment now, Betelgeuse, the red cross on Orion's right shoulder, will blow up. Every moment for the next hundred thousand years. When that happens (and it may have already happened at any point in the last 600 years), a large amount of the material that forms planets will enter space.

Gravity, pressure and temperature, electromagnetism, complex chemical reactions, volcanism, rock formation and dissolution in the primordial ocean - all these forces interacted to ensure that life would soon emerge on at least one dust ball of doomed stars. And since its birth, it has been an active participant in geological processes and world transformations.

First there were bacteria and viruses, then came plants and animals, and everything they transform transforms them. «Now» is a place where we can try to see this, for example by looking at things in a cross-section. In southern Kurzeme, there is now a layer of dolomite about 50 metres thick, some 350 million years old. Fossils of *Ventastega curonica* and *Livoniana multidentata* found there are now known to be evidence of the first attempts by animals to start life on land.

Tanzania is now roughly where those brave fish tried to come ashore, only to be found far to the north, displaced by tectonic forces. There, in 1976, Mary Leakey made a famous find. It is a fossilised trail made up of the footprints of two hominids, *Australopithecus afarensis*, dating back some 3.5 million years. «They were probably walking hand in hand!» cried Richard Dawkins.

«Now» creates the possibility of complete presence, but it is possible when one sees the inextricable connection of all these events - the connection of a dying star to future life, of past life forms to future ones, of the drifting of tectonic plates to the idea of home, and of us, the most recent participants in this orgy, to cosmic forces. All of this is happening simultaneously, so the «now» is a unit of place, not time. And this vision transforms Orion, ancient rocks, trees, ourselves; transforms the world.

Vents Vinbergs