

Death in Venice



Design by Krišs Salmani

On May 8 at 13:00, the Latvian Pavilion “Untamed Assembly: Backstage of Utopia” will open at the 61st International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale.

The upcoming event is overshadowed by the decision to allow Russia to participate in the Venice Biennale for the first time since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The organizers and team of the Latvian Pavilion strongly oppose the participation of the aggressor state, Russia, in the Venice Biennale and its presence in the international art scene, which normalizes its actions at a time when Ukraine’s cultural heritage is being deliberately destroyed and lives are being lost.

Participation in the Biennale is an opportunity for us to express our position—a protest against manifestations of Russia’s imperial thinking, hypocrisy, and cynicism. Therefore, the curators, artists, and team of the Latvian Pavilion invite guests and visitors present in Venice during the opening week, as well as throughout the Biennale until November 22, to take part in the campaign “Death in Venice.”

As a result of a protest workshop organized by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA), artist Krišs Salmanis has created an open access protest tool—the “Death in Venice” design. Everyone is invited to use the

template to print it on clothing or other message-bearing materials. The file is available free of charge [HERE](#)

In Krišs Salmanis's design, the Venice Biennale logo is transformed into a political message—the motif of ramparts becomes the Kremlin wall, highlighting Venice's accommodation of Russia and the betrayal of the idea of European unity. In this context, the red color in the Biennale emblem takes on an entirely different meaning—it becomes a reminder of blood, violence, and the price paid by those whose reality this institutional “neutrality” chooses to ignore.

The design also references Thomas Mann's iconic work “Death in Venice,” which, in a romantic and elegiac tone, reflects on the collapse of values and an era. Here, the reference is directed at the Venice Biennale itself. Its decision to accept Russia's participation becomes a symbolic judgment on the Biennale as an institution—one that, hiding behind a mask of hypocrisy and institutional corruption, pretends not to see reality.

If you choose to share your support for and participation in the campaign on social media, we encourage you to include the hashtags [#biennalearte2026](#) and [#deathinvenice2026](#) in your posts (photos and videos), and to tag the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art and the Latvian Pavilion so that we can share your content.

Facebook: [@Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art](#) and [@Latvian Pavilion](#)

Instagram: [@lcca.lv](#), [@untamedassembly](#)