

UNTAMED ASSEMBLY BACKSTAGE OF UTOPIA

Untamed Assembly: Backstage of Utopia presents newly commissioned work by the interdisciplinary artist duo MAREUNROL'S in dialogue with the archives of Untamed Fashion Assemblies (UFA), experimental festivals of fashion, art, and performance founded by the artist Bruno Birmanis and held in Latvia between 1990 and 1999. The pavilion approaches the Assemblies as a space where freedom is rehearsed, binding the past and present as moments of political rupture in need of utopian artistic thinking.

Emerging in the unstable interval of the Soviet empire's collapse, and before global capitalism took hold, UFA dissolved the boundaries between fashion and visual art through intersections with music, drag, dance, and club culture. The second edition took place in 1991 amidst a politically charged atmosphere, shortly after the Barricades, a flashpoint of civic resistance against the Soviet forces in Latvia. Defying both systems, the Assemblies were driven by a desire to test freedom in its uncontained forms.

Playful, collaborative, and at times chaotic, UFA brought students and international stars together on the same stage. Young Baltic designers such as Bruno Birmanis, Juozas Statkevičius, and Sandra Straukaite

appeared alongside Paco Rabanne, Vivienne Westwood, Zandra Rhodes, and Andrew Logan. Viktor & Rolf were among those who passed through the festivals as students and went on to become global icons.

The pavilion is conceived by MAREUNROL'S as a backstage—a space of preparation, invisible labour, misunderstandings, improvisation, and joy, where a utopian dimension becomes most palpable. An architectural assemblage of clothing racks holds artefacts and stories, becoming a metaphor for the dreams and tensions of the past and present alike. Recurring motifs from the duo's practice, textile sculptures and birds, here evoke an atmosphere of fragility and hope. Across the installation, thematic sections bring together transregional exchange, political freedom, avant-garde experimentation, ecstatic celebration, and gender play. A multi-channel video installation re-animates the Assemblies through footage from filmmaker Henry Stein's video archive.

Today, as political and cultural systems again face rupture, the Latvian Pavilion returns to the Assemblies to ask how freedom, risk, and the future might be imagined—and what can be carried forward from past dreams to envision alternatives to the present.

ARTISTS: MAREUNROL'S
(MĀRĪTE MASTIŅA-PĒTERKOPA & ROLANDS PĒTERKOPS)
– NEW COMMISSION

BRUNO BIRMANIS – FOUNDER OF UNTAMED FASHION ASSEMBLY
(1990–1999), ARCHIVE CUSTODIAN AND ADVISOR

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LATVIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

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ENTRANCE