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Performance by Finnish Lena Kehl Photo series Arturs Aizikovičs

Stage **Author: Līga Buševica** (*consultant of contemporary culture*)

Challenging openness, indulging in the unpredictable and courage to face the collision of emotions and intellect – it was part of the attractiveness of the festival "Intermediate Space", which attracts both the audience and the participants to indulge in the flow of performances.

The festival in Riga took place for the seventh time, offering a dense and saturated programme for almost a week – four evenings were an opportunity to experience a diverse live performance programme at the Zuzeum Art Centre and K.K. von Stricka villa. This year's slogan "More-Than-Human" - called for reflective about the synergy of man and the outside world, retreating from human dominance and calling for indulging in the outside. I managed to be present in all of four days and see more than half of the performances, experiencing a wide range of emotions and reflections created by performance artists from Latvia, Scandinavia, Great Britain, other European countries, as well as America, Canada, South Korea and other countries of the world.

One of the most effective "tools" of performance art is the direct presence, proximity and the possibility of interaction with the viewers, which prevents the viewer from becoming indifferent – it pleases, saddens, hurts and provokes not only to feel and think, but also to engage, resist and protest.

I suppose that this naked direct link with itself is one of the reasons why performance art brings together a certain circle of people ready for such unpredictable, adventurous and experimental experience and emotional and intellectual clash with one's own identity, notions and assumptions.



Inese Bērziņa's voice performance "I Go Wherever You Go" (I go where you are walking)
Photo: Arturs Aizikovičs

One of the warmest impressions of the festival was provided to me by the introductory performance of the inconvincing festival by artist Inese Bērziņa (Latvia). Singing and giving the viewers the removed accessories, clothing items and shoes, the artist sets the visitors of the opening event with a thread on the web and dragged the performances indoors. This simple, open and heartfelt overture was like the key to the festival to the hearts of visitors to let everything unexpected, which the festival promised to discover.

Laura Jasmane's (Latvia) performance with a washing machine, which conceptually cleanly and symbolically was able to embody a person's doom to the whirlpool of myriad roles, tasks and duties, which in the long run "sitting batteries" also gave a vivid impression.



Park Kjongha Hwa performance Photo: Arturs Aizikovičs

Sharing his impressions, one cannot fail to mention the performance of the artist Park Kyeong Hwa, South Korea, which involved a goldfish as an element. The activities carried out with the living organism created confusion, protest and even intervention in the audience, interrupting the performance for a while. Although at the end of the performance the fish again floated vigorously in the aquarium, the performance left a confusing feeling and a lot of questions about the ethics of using such art elements.

In turn, pleasantly surprised the beekeepers of the Danish artist Mark Tolander's laconic ode in the world without bees, who, with the help of sounds, movements and bells, probe of survival in a new, uninhabited space. The performance of the Finnish woman Lena Kehl, in turn, read out a fine irony about the means available to us for survival, and what and under what circumstances is able to survive at all. Thoughtful and suggestive was also the artistic manifestation of the death of Dutch artist Peter Baren, the symbolic image of which, the completely black-equipped skier, concentrated the slow but inevitable destruction of all things.



Performance by artist Peter Baren. Photo: Arturs Aizikovičs

On the closing day of the festival, Inese Bērziņa was again surprised by the visually and sound-conspicuous – the creature dressed in cellophane layers pulsating in the sound and light synergy, as well as the unsemitable impression was left by the enigmatic "uncomfortable" steps and bare body performance of the candid man in the middle of the world's eyes, and as an untamed symbol of existence, leaving the vigorous performance of the world's.

The uniqueness of performance art, in my opinion, is that it blows up a form of everyday perception, creating mental interspaces in which we can step out as the first time on the moon and discover a lot of previously unrealized painters of experiences, emotions and thoughts, so I listened with interest to other visitors of the performance festival, as well as artists related to performance.

Music theatre playwright and curator Evarts Melnalksnis points out: "The Performance Festival "Interspace" is a unique phenomenon in the field of Latvian culture with the most dense living arts programme and a very wide presence of international guests.

It is important that what is happening in Riga, making it an annual meeting place for professionals and spectators in the field – and I really appreciate the work of selfless curators under the guidance of Laine Kristberga. It was the performance of the students of the Performance Centre. Andris Freibergs' conceptually precise work is a great daring in the local context. It addressed the desires and trends of male men, the dependence of pornography, bodily desires and themes that are not going around in the wider society, revealing it with some, purposefully selected signs and actions. In turn, Ernests Valts Circenis, following the principles of the butoh movement aesthetics provided by Simona Orinska, survived a transformative, fragile individual path accompanied by breath and sound landscapes, and which also thrilled me as a viewer."



Ilze Mazpane performance. Photo: Kristaps Dublāns



Performance by Andris Freibergs.
Photo: Arturs Aizikovičs

In the court's view, both young artists allowed to observe the male's subjectivity in Latvian art in rare manifestations that do not meet the usual patriarchal standards.

Viktors Kravčenko, an expert in contemporary art, who is interested in contemporary art, notes that he has the main insights about the festival: firstly, the art of performance speaks about the current one – about what affects us all in modern society, secondly, it is democratic, it speaks not from high stages, but takes place in the everyday space and interacts with every viewer who wants it, and thirdly, it is a very humble art, because everyone can

"The carried out performances concern ethical issues of living with each other in society and in the world. Impressive are performances that practically demonstrate and update how important ethical decision-making skills are today. It is one of the most important skills of the 21st century," Kravchenko emphasizes.

"South Korean artists "Akvarijs" touched on a large-scale issue of questions and problems – cultural, tradition, universal ethics and existential issues. It all twisted into an interrogation and at this festival was even dealt with the interfering with the audience in the performance.



Performance "Convenience Price" by artists Mailo Moon and Grieta Butyankova
Photo: Kristaps Dublāns

The performance "The Price of Convenience" by Latvian artists Mailo Mēness and Grieta Butjankova shows a discrepancy of consciousness – we are indulging in aesthetic procedures, making a tattoo, reading about the gradual contamination of everything by the general safety with microplastics, at the same time we understand that this situation is an existential doom, which we live with respect in one way or another – protesting, engaging in politics, creating art, doing research, carrying out research.

The artist, co-organizer of the performance festival Laura Feldberga notes that this year's Riga Performance Festival was one of the most powerful to date – content dense and intellectually and emotionally effective: "Special satisfaction was to watch the participation of graduates of the course organized by the Latvian Performance Centre – the first evening of the festival was dedicated to their works, starting with Inese Bērziņa's voice performance "I Go Where You Go"



Performance "Sometimes A Wild God" created by "Butoth Lab"
Photo: Arturs Aizikovičs

In her opinion, the most ambitious work of the festival was the large-format performance "Sometimes A Wild God" created by "Butō Lab": "The Gorgeous, intoxicating and retracting movement and sound performance. It was both energy charging and a discharge – an experience, in which viewers were involved not only as observers, but also as participants. The performance conjured up a euphoric sense of communion, in which the bodies, rhythm and space merged into one large, pulsating whirlpool. The opposite experience was provided by Annija Sprivules performance "The Daugava – our pain nanny". Its activity is minimal and slowed down - the artist invites one of the viewers to join herself and simply hugs her, holding her hands – long, quietly and without haste, embodying an act of healing and a confirmation of mutual trust. It also gave an emotional experience to the observers from the outside. In the dense ghost of the festival, such a performance provided a respite and at the same time led into deeper layers of consciousness and emotions."

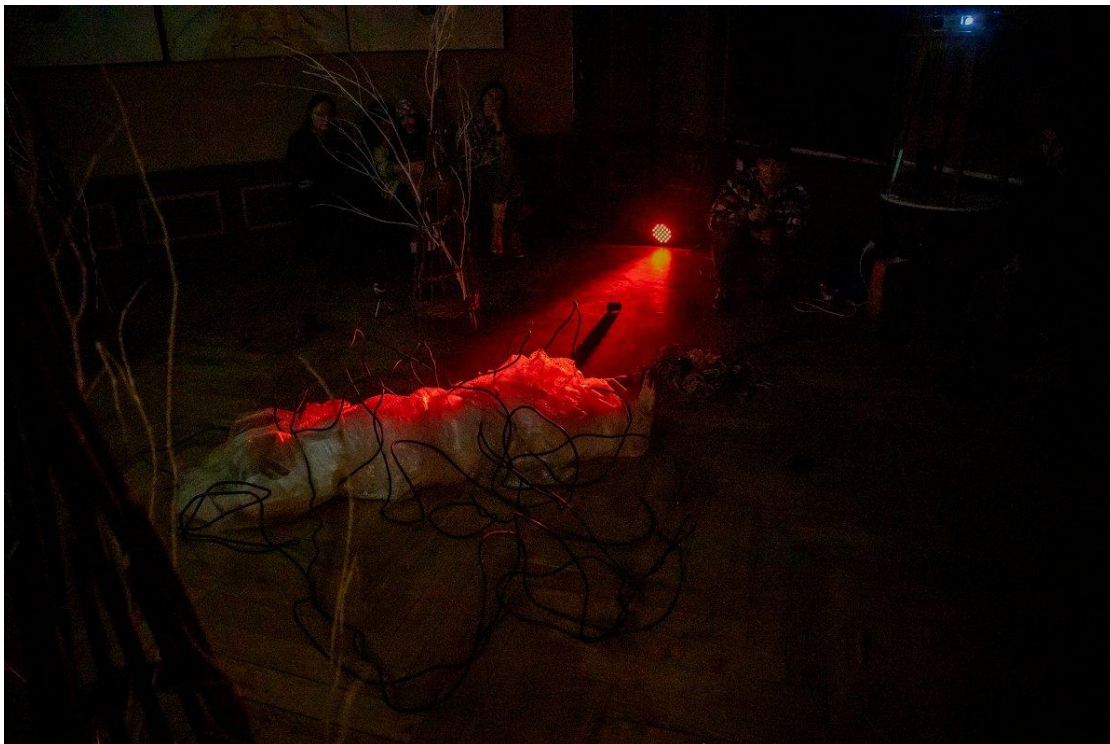
Dutch performance artist Peter Baren meanwhile, said: "At the festival, I was particularly and on several levels addressed by three performances. One of them – Andris Freibergs' performance – on porn, lust and pain - created a dramatic and continuous long-lasting tension that held its pace.

The second – Anna Moscow's "The Body of the Ends II" - the artist's subtle and inviting gestures, gathering around herself, the public and smoke, in which the audience was wrapped in various ways, was a catalyst for the poetic power of the performance, which attracted my attention and created a desire to remain in the room, although the second part was formed by a story in Latvian."



Anna Moscow performance "The Body of the Ancestors II" Photo: Dace Kundrate

As the third favorite, Baren names the Portuguese performance "Kūniņa" (Cocoon), which was both physically and emotionally a complicated work with precise and limited gestures. The artist was wrapped in plastic film – like a larvae – and secured with steel wire, from which she gradually, but persistently broke out of. The ability to contrast between synthetic, restrictive beginning and organic, liberating conclusion created a strong thrill in me, both physically and emotionally."



Performance "Kūniņa" Photo: Kristaps Dublāns