

RIBOCA1 Curatorial Concept Announced:

'EVERYTHING WAS FOREVER, UNTIL IT WAS NO MORE'

Press preview and Vernissage:
Thursday 31st May & Friday 1st June 2018

RIBOCA1 opens to public on:
Saturday 2nd June (running until Sunday 28th October 2018)



Aerial photo of Riga. Photo credit: Elena Spasova for Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA)

Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA), a major biennial event in Latvia, announces the curatorial concept for their first edition of the biennial entitled *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*. The chief curator of the inaugural edition of the biennial is Katerina Gregos.

Rīga International Biennial of Contemporary Art

The 1st Riga Biennial will reflect on the phenomenon of change – how it is anticipated, experienced, grasped, assimilated and dealt with at this time of accelerated transitions. The title, *Everything Was Forever, Until it Was No More*, is borrowed from Alexei Yurchak's book of the same name. Yurchak discusses the collapse of the Soviet Union and one particular characteristic that defined it: the sense that although the Soviet system was felt to be permanent and immutable, its demise was at the same time perceived as completely natural. The shock of being thrust into a new order came only later. The title of his book suggests the slippery nature of change; the fact that what might seem eternal can suddenly come to an end. He calls this a case of 'fast-forwarded history'. The title of Yurchak's book resonates in the entire post-Soviet sphere, the Baltic states included; but it can also be seen as a potent metaphor for our own era.

Whereas many biennials and large-scale exhibitions recently have been quite retrospective – anachronistic, even – looking to the past and harking back to lost political and social utopias, the 1st edition of the Riga Biennial will set its eyes firmly on the present and the near future of the human condition. It will explore the shifts that have been taking place in the region but will also contextualise these into a broader picture, as the world is now decidedly interconnected. The biennial will be regional in its geopolitical focus but global in its examination of the issues that concern us all. From the personal to the political and social, to the philosophical and the existential, the Biennial will probe how contemporary artists are responding to some of the major challenges of the day, how they register change, and how they imagine the future. Riga is the perfect place to do this, as a place that has often experienced pivotal change. While now part of Europe and having experienced the transition to capitalism, following Soviet occupation, the city retains its own rhythm and identity and is far from being or becoming yet another high performance metropolitan hub. It maintains a human scale and livable pace, and its inhabitants – like most Latvians – have a close relationship with nature. Riga's atmosphere as well as history allows us to re-focus on important values such as slowness, de-acceleration, and pausing to reflect upon and understand our changing present as well as consider alternative ways of being and acting.

The biennial will highlight artists from the Baltic and Nordic region as well as include international artists who will reflect on the multiple parameters of change, taking the temperature on the human condition at this moment. The exhibition will focus on several pressing issues, from the 'great acceleration' most of us experience today in urban centres and mega-cities, the transformation of social life and work, the end of privacy and 'post-truth', to the im-

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Impact of rapid advancements in science and technology and the negotiation of constant crises – of ecology, capitalism, democracy. Many of these changes have radically altered the way we experience the world and have undermined - or overridden - all of our senses except vision. A part of the exhibition will also thus refocus on the sensorium - the sum of the human organism's perceptive tools - creating moments that trigger the senses that have been marginalised, allowing for a much-needed deceleration of perception. The 1st Riga Biennial aims to paint a political, but also personal and existential, portrait of the unprecedented times we live in and to relate the tectonic shifts that are taking place in the public as well as private realm today. Whether one defines the current era as the 'Anthropocene', the 'Capitalocene' or the 'Chthulucene', it is certain that we have entered an era of epochal shifts. This is at once both exciting and frightening. The artists in the Riga Biennial will look into these changes and how we adapt to them, summoning ghosts from the future and recalling prophets from the past.

(excerpt from the main curatorial text by Katerina Gregos).

[To download the full curatorial text, please click here](#)

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