

*New Object* is a performative project conceived for an art fair. Rather than presenting a conventional booth of artworks for sale, The Gallery brings a single object from New York. This object functions as the starting point of an ongoing exchange. Throughout the fair, visitors are invited to propose a trade by offering a New Object in exchange. Each proposal must be accompanied by a claim: an argument for why The Gallery should accept the trade. The gallery may approve or decline each proposal, making every trade a public negotiation of value rather than a commercial transaction. With every accepted exchange, the *New Object* immediately replaces its predecessor in the booth, becoming the next object available for trade. The booth is therefore in constant transformation, its contents determined through successive acts of negotiation. By deliberately excluding money from the process, *New Object* shifts attention away from market price and toward the narratives, meanings, relationships, and systems of value that objects carry. The project treats the art fair not as a marketplace, but as a site where value is continuously constructed, contested, and exchanged.

## **NEW OBJECT**

Riga Contemporary

5-8 July 2026

Participating artists:

Lucas Blalock, Robert Narkus, River, Viktors Timofeev & Bryce Hackford, Kristine Mifsud, Marleen Suvi, Aleksandrs Breze, Grieta Ose, Alise Gaile, Natalia Sielewicz, Inga Meldere & Elinas Vitolas, Evita Vasiljeva, Laimdota Malle, Jārmis Krišjānis, Anna Malicka, Kristine Mifsud, Elio, Robert and others

## **DAY 1**

### **Starting Object**

Deck Prism

Lucas Blalock (New York)

A glass deck prism originally socketed into the deck of ships to channel daylight into the lower decks before electric lighting. Brought from New York, it served as the first object in the performance and the point from which every subsequent exchange unfolded.

### **Trade 1**

Ceramic Glasses

Marleen Suvi

Artist from Estonia

Accepted in exchange for the deck prism.

The perforated ceramic glasses were inspired by a recurring nightmare in which the artist was held captive in a basement by a man attempting to possess and assault her. Unable to forget the dream, she translated it into sculpture. The work bore the title Good Dogs Main Basement, itself a failed Google translation from Estonian, leaving the original phrase suspended between languages and meanings.

### **Trade 2**

Three Hand-Rolled Cigarettes

The ceramic glasses were exchanged for three hand-rolled cigarettes.

The proposal succeeded largely because they were rolled using unusual licorice-flavored rolling papers, something none of us had ever encountered before. A small personal fascination unexpectedly outweighed conventional ideas of value.

(Several proposals were declined during this period, including a single strand of hair and a bottle of hand sanitizer.)

### **Trade 3**

Chinese Tea

The cigarettes were exchanged for a bag of Chinese tea.

Its owner explained that the tea had been given to her by a close friend, a Chinese professor who frequently traveled to China. During these long trips, his wife repeatedly had affairs. Over time the tea became less a beverage than a quiet monument to infidelity, distance, and the emotional cost of spending too much time away from home.

### **Trade 4**

Recycled Rubber Boot Keychain

The tea was exchanged for a keychain handmade from an old rubber boot.

Its owner had made it during a workshop in Tallinn together with close friends from Riga. For the past three years it had accompanied the keys to her Latvian apartment, becoming an everyday companion and a reminder of friendship maintained across cities.

### **Trade 5**

Dice Keychain

Robert Narkus

The keychain was exchanged for another keychain carrying six or seven miniature dice.

Offered by Robert, an artist from Slovenia, the object came with the admission that he struggled with gambling addiction. The dice had become symbolic companions, objects he carried everywhere because they helped him make decisions, sometimes metaphorically and sometimes quite literally.

### **Trade 6**

Travel-Worn Plush Unicorn

The dice keychain was exchanged for a tiny plush unicorn.

Originally white, years of travel across South America, India, and many other places had turned it gray with accumulated dirt and use. Its worn surface functioned almost like a passport, recording movement through the world without a single written stamp.

### **Trade 7**

Medical Ostomy Bag

The unicorn was exchanged for a medical ostomy bag offered by artist Maria.

Following a severe case of sepsis, Maria underwent emergency surgery during which she briefly died before being successfully resuscitated. She vividly remembers both dying and returning to life while Radiohead played in the operating room, making the music inseparable from that moment of death and rebirth.

The ostomy bag had collected bodily waste through a surgically created opening in her abdomen, becoming an object that had quite literally sustained her life during recovery.

### **Trade 8**

€0.20

The ostomy bag was exchanged for twenty euro cents.

The proposal came from River, a ten-year-old boy, who explained that he wanted to see what would happen if money entered an economy intentionally built around non-monetary exchange. Rather than offering twenty cents as payment, he proposed it as an experiment, asking whether inflation, deflation, and monetary value could alter the trajectory of the performance itself. The conceptual precision of the gesture outweighed the nominal value of the coins, and the trade was accepted.

### **Trade 9**

Valid Public Transport ID Card

The twenty cents were exchanged for a valid public transport identification card.

Unlike an expired document, the card was still in active use. By offering it for trade, its owner temporarily surrendered something woven into her everyday life. The proposal

transformed an ordinary administrative object into an act of trust, demonstrating that usefulness itself can become a form of value.

### **Trade 10**

Two Christmas Ornaments

The transport ID was exchanged for two Christmas ornaments, one green and one blue.

Their owner explained that they had originally been given to her by an overweight man attempting to flirt with her. She accepted the ornaments but rejected his romantic advances.

## **DAY 2**

### **Starting Object**

Two Christmas Ornaments

The pair of Christmas ornaments concluded the previous day's exchanges and became the starting object for Day 2.

### **Trade 1**

Abstract Drawing

River (10 years old)

The Christmas ornaments were exchanged for an abstract drawing by River.

River argued that the drawing represented something entirely original, made by his own hand. The proposal was accepted, making the drawing the first new object of the day.

### **Trade 2**

Broken Ferrari Sunglasses

The drawing was exchanged for a pair of broken Ferrari sunglasses.

Their owner explained that the glasses belonged to his father, who still did not know they had been broken after the son accidentally sat on them. Rather than confess, he proposed exchanging them for River's drawing, allowing the damaged object to begin a different story.

### **Trade 3**

Pencil

The sunglasses were exchanged for a simple pencil.

River returned to the booth with the proposal, arguing that a pencil allows anyone to write or draw their own story. Although I was away during the negotiation, the claim proved convincing enough for the exchange to be accepted.

#### **Trade 4**

Pink Ornament from the Art Academy of Riga

The pencil was exchanged for a small ornament reportedly stolen years ago from the Art Academy of Riga.

Its owner explained that the object had remained in her home ever since. Out of boredom she eventually painted it pink, and years later, tired of keeping it, brought it to the fair to begin a new life through exchange.

#### **Trade 5**

WD-40 Contact Spray (Sample Can)

The ornament was exchanged for a promotional sample can of WD-40 Contact Spray.

Offered by a young man training to become an auto mechanic, the proposal was strengthened by its immediate usefulness. Viktor Timofeev happened to need contact spray at that very moment, making practicality itself the deciding argument.

#### **Trade 6**

Cassette: Environments (2010)

Viktors Timofeev & Bryce Hackford

The WD-40 Contact Spray was exchanged for an original cassette edition of Environments by Bryce Hackford.

The cassette featured its original hand-spray-painted and hand-drawn cover, transforming a functional object into a musical artifact and artist's multiple.

#### **Trade 7**

Domination Powder

Aleksandrs Breze

The cassette was exchanged for a small packet of "domination powder" brought from Mexico by the Estonian artist Breeze.

Marketed as a ritual substance supposedly capable of dominating another person, it consisted of finely ground skull powder used within folk belief traditions. The proposal was so unexpected that refusing it seemed almost impossible.

#### **Trade 8**

Empty Cigarette Pack (Montenegro)

The domination powder was exchanged for an empty cigarette pack from Montenegro.

Ordinarily an empty package would not have been accepted. This one, however, featured an unusually restrained health warning. Rather than graphic medical imagery, the package depicted an improbably unmuscular man exercising, giving the object an unintentionally surreal Eastern European character that ultimately justified its acceptance.

### **Trade 9**

Wax-Dipped Flower Sculpture

Laimdota Malle

The cigarette pack was exchanged for a fragile wax sculpture made earlier that same day.

The artist had dipped a fresh flower into wax, preserving it in a delicate, translucent shell that transformed the plant into an object resembling human genitalia.

### **Trade 10**

Action Bag

Anna Malicka

The wax sculpture was exchanged for a handmade textile bag titled Action Bag.

Sewn together from various printed fabrics, the bag functioned as both sculpture and personal archive. One of the textile fragments reproduced a photograph of the artist's thirtieth birthday cake, embedding autobiography directly into the object's construction.

### **Trade 11**

Pierre Cadeau T-Shirt

Evita Vasiljeva

Action Bag was exchanged for a T-shirt bearing the name Pierre Cadeau, a fictional fashion designer from the television series Emily in Paris.

The shirt had belonged to the artist's former boyfriend, who had been obsessed with the series. Friends of his working in the Paris fashion scene produced the shirt specifically for him. Following the end of the relationship, the object remained with the artist until it entered the chain of exchanges through New Object.

### **Trade 12**

The Standard of Fallen Beauty

Rudolf Stammers

The T-shirt was exchanged for an assemblage titled The Standard of Fallen Beauty.

The work combined two found objects: the broken head of a sculpture and a rusted fragment of metal recovered from the seashore. Resting together, the fragments suggested a monument to decline, transforming discarded materials into a quiet meditation on beauty, ruin, and survival.

### **Trade 13**

Untitled Drawing

Elio (6 years old)

The Standard of Fallen Beauty was exchanged for a drawing made specifically for the performance.

Elio, a six-year-old visitor captivated by the idea of trading, created the work on the spot. Remaining intentionally untitled, the drawing depicted what appeared to be a flowing river of rainbows alongside an imagined Suprematist-like architecture, offering an unexpectedly confident vision of an invented landscape.

### **Trade 14**

One Antidepressant Pill and Prescription Packaging

The drawing was exchanged for a prescription antidepressant.

Initially, only the empty medication box was offered. The proposal was declined, as the object itself had to accompany its story. After some negotiation, the participant agreed to include a single prescribed pill alongside the packaging, despite explaining that the medication was tightly regulated.

### **Trade 15**

Unknown Cassette Tape

Daniel Fomichev

The antidepressant was exchanged for an unlabeled cassette tape inherited from the artist's grandfather.

His grandfather, a Latvian artist and musician, had left behind numerous personal belongings after his death. Although Daniel had inherited the cassette, he had never found a way to listen to its contents.

### **Trade 16**

Wooden Bracelet

Jārmis Krišjānis

The cassette tape was exchanged for a wooden bracelet that had belonged to the participant's late grandfather.

Having passed through several generations before arriving at the fair, the bracelet carried familial memory rather than monetary value. At the close of the day, it remained on display as the current New Object, awaiting the next proposal for exchange.

## **DAY 3**

### **Starting Object**

Wooden Bracelet

Jārmis Krišjānis

The wooden bracelet concluded the previous day's exchanges and became the starting object for Day 3.

### **Trade 1**

Customized Pack of Tissues

The wooden bracelet was exchanged for an improvised object: a pack of tissues.

The participant transformed the ordinary package into a unique object by drawing a friendly creature across its surface. She argued that, unlike most artworks, someone would inevitably find themselves in urgent need of a pack of tissues.

### **Trade 2**

Customized Five-Dollar Bill

The tissues were traded for a five-dollar bill.

The proposal came from three children who had recently returned from a trip to the American West Coast. The bill had become a souvenir of their travels, further personalized by covering Abraham Lincoln's portrait with their own handwritten names, transforming official currency into a collaborative drawing.

### **Trade 3**

Double-Exposed Film Roll & Small Painting

Robert

The five-dollar bill was exchanged for two objects offered together by Robert, a photographer from Riga and friend of Alise.

The first was a roll of double-exposed film containing a second series of photographs he had shot that very day at the fair using a fisheye camera. The second was a tiny painting

Alise had previously given him, dedicated with the inscription: "I hope you become the most provocative photographer in Latvia."

#### **Trade 4**

Female Structures (Fresco)

Inga Meldere & Elinas Vitolas

The film roll and painting were traded for a collaborative fresco titled Female Structures.

Created by two artists, the work had only recently been completed and was still in the process of becoming. Coated with mineral pigments, the fresco required approximately twelve days for the pigments to crystallize into the plaster, allowing the image to slowly settle into permanence rather than simply dry.

#### **Trade 5**

Found Baltic Amber

The fresco was exchanged only minutes later for a piece of naturally found Baltic amber.

The artist had discovered it during a nighttime search along the Baltic coast using ultraviolet light. She explained that under UV illumination only a few things reveal themselves: amber, old chewing gum, and dead fish.

#### **Trade 6**

"Fuck Off" Painting

The amber was traded for a small painting reading Fuck Off.

Its maker was a Latvian filmmaker who had only recently begun working as a visual artist. Although she was not exhibiting at the fair, she wanted to become part of it through the performance by contributing an artwork to the chain of exchanges.

#### **Trade 7**

Jar of Pine Tar

Kristine Mifsud

The painting was exchanged for a glass jar filled with pine tar.

The artist recounted how her family had been expelled from Latvia during the Soviet period and was unable to return for decades. After finally coming back only four or five years earlier, she processed a dead tree that was living on her family's reclaimed property into pine tar as a way of working through this history of displacement and return.

**Trade 8**

Silver Earring

Natalia Sielewicz

The jar of tar was traded for a silver earring.

She described the earring as an object that had persistently injured and infected her ear, refusing to be worn. Before completing the exchange, she proposed dipping the earring into the tar, permanently staining and transforming it. The act converted a failed piece of jewelry into a newly altered object marked by both materials and personal experience.

**Trade 9**

Metal Bracket (Alternative Currency)

The tar-covered earring was exchanged for a large metal bracket.

The artist explained that within her own artistic practice these industrial brackets function as a form of alternative currency. Their value increases according to their size, making the unusually large bracket one of the highest denominations within her personal economic system. We gladly accepted the proposal, exchanging one symbolic currency for another.

**Trade 10**

Painting

Alise Gaile

The metal bracket was exchanged for a painting by Alisa.

She had brought the work to the fair specifically to participate in NEW OBJECT. (Title and further details to be added.)

**Trade 11**

Sketchbook

Grieta Ose

Alisa's painting was exchanged for Grieta's sketchbook.

For the previous three months, Greta had carried the sketchbook with her almost every day. It contained notes from school, including pages from her mathematics classes, alongside observational drawings of passersby and quick sketches of visitors made while working for The Gallery throughout Riga Contemporary.