

17th

YOUNG

Painter

PRIZE

2025



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PAINTER
PRIZE



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YPP Founder:

Vilmantas MARCINKEVIČIUS

YPP 2025 Organiser:

Giedrė MILLER

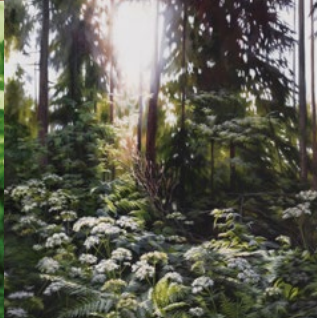
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Ieva **Kampe KRUMHOLCA**
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Katrīna **LEVĀNE**
Anastasiia **MAGLIONA**
Rasmus **MARKS**
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The *Young Painter Prize* (YPP) is one of the most significant and enduring contemporary art initiatives in the Baltic region. Since its establishment in 2009, it has served as a vital platform for identifying, showcasing, and **supporting the next generation of painters from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and, since 2022, Ukraine**. The YPP aims to highlight emerging artistic voices that contribute to the evolving narrative of Baltic identity and to introduce them to a broader international context through curated exhibitions, expert engagement, and cultural exchange.

Since 2022, in an act of solidarity with Ukraine's ongoing fight for freedom against Russian aggression, the YPP has welcomed young Ukrainian artists to participate. This inclusion supports not only the preservation and continuation of Ukrainian cultural identity but also **affirms that art holds political and symbolic power in times of war**. The YPP stands with Ukrainian artists and gives them a platform to be seen, heard, and recognized internationally.

In the current cultural and political landscape, the YPP plays a crucial role in connecting young artists to their heritage while encouraging critical reflection and new creative directions. It **promotes artistic authorship, supports dialogue across borders, and opens opportunities**

for meaningful participation in the international art scene.

The main objective of the YPP is to **discover and promote the most promising young painters, aged 18 to 33**, from the participating countries. The competition invites open submissions from early-career artists, offering them visibility, recognition, and professional growth. The project speaks to a wide audience – art professionals, critics, curators, collectors, and the general public – who seek fresh perspectives and innovative visual language.

In 2025, the **YPP celebrates its 17th edition, making it the longest-running event of its kind for young artists in the Baltics**. A panel of five respected international art professionals selected twenty-five finalists whose works form the core of the YPP Finalist Exhibition, presenting a compelling view into the themes and ideas that define this generation of painters.

This year marks a historic moment for the project, as the **finalist exhibition takes place across all three Baltic countries** for the first time. Each venue brings a distinct cultural context and audience, expanding the reach and relevance of the initiative across borders.

Art Academy of Latvia Gallery

Riga / LV

The cultural and symbolic centre of Baltic art education

The central exhibition opens at the *Art Academy of Latvia Gallery* in Riga – an institution that plays a defining role in shaping the visual culture of the Baltic region. Founded in 1919, the *Art Academy of Latvia* is the country's leading institution for higher education in the arts, housed in a striking neo-Gothic building that has become a symbol of academic and creative excellence.

The Academy's gallery functions not only as an exhibition space but also as a public platform where tradition meets experimentation. Its location in the heart of Riga places it at the crossroads of Baltic art history and contemporary innovation. As the intellectual and geographical centre of this year's exhibition cycle, Riga offers the YPP finalists a high-profile stage for their debut on the international art scene.



**Art Academy
of Latvia**

Pragiedruliai Creativity Centre

Panevėžys / LT

A space where heritage, community, and creativity converge

The Lithuanian edition of the exhibition is hosted by *Pragiedruliai*, a branch of the *Stasys Eidrigevičius Art Centre*, located in a restored cultural heritage farmstead in Panevėžys. More than a venue, *Pragiedruliai* is a space of community, dialogue, and artistic participation.

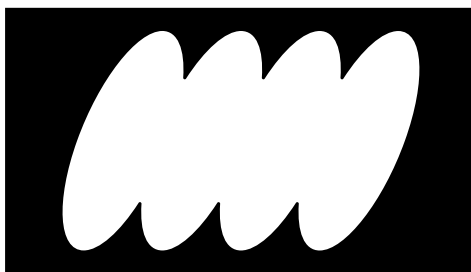
“Art begins where people and ideas meet, and creativity only comes alive when it becomes visible through the experience of the community.”

— Gita Laurinavičiūtė, Head of *Pragiedruliai Creativity Centre*

This philosophy guides the centre’s work, making it a natural home for the YPP. It invites local

communities not only to observe art but also to engage in conversation, reflection, and co-creation. Hosting the *Young Painter Prize* here brings contemporary painting beyond major urban centres and into the heart of regional life – connecting global themes with local audiences.

At *Pragiedruliai*, the exhibition also supports young artists by offering not only professional exposure but also a welcoming environment where artistic careers can take root. It reflects a wider mission to make art inclusive, human-centred, and actively present in everyday life.



Pragiedruliai
Panevėžys Creativity Centre

Tartu Art House (Kunstimaja)

Tartu / EE

A cultural anchor in Estonia's city of youth

The third and final exhibition opens at *Tartu Art House (Kunstimaja)* in Tartu, a city widely recognised as “the city of youth.” With over a quarter of its population made up of students, Tartu thrives as a centre of education, experimentation, and creative thinking. As the home of one of the oldest universities in Northern Europe, it fosters a uniquely open and intellectually driven cultural environment.

Tartu Art House stands at the heart of this landscape. Often referred to as “the heart of Tartu’s art scene,” *Kunstimaja* hosts over 30 exhibitions annually across its three gallery spaces and also houses artist studios and a salon for art supplies—supporting both the production and pres-

entation of contemporary art. It plays a central role in events such as Tartu Art Week and contributes actively to city-wide cultural initiatives, including the European Capital of Culture 2024 programme.

Kunstimaja offers young painters an ideal space for visibility and creative risk-taking. By hosting the YPP, it reinforces its commitment to fostering artistic exchange and connecting new generations of artists to the public. In Tartu—Estonia’s youthful cultural capital—the YPP finds not only an audience but also a shared vision for the future of contemporary art.

TARTU KUNSTIMAJA
TARTU ART HOUSE

The *Young Painter Prize* (YPP) is a **non-profit initiative committed to supporting and promoting emerging painters from the Baltic region and beyond**. Founded in 2009 by prominent Lithuanian painter **Vilmantas Marcinkevičius**, the YPP was created with a clear mission: to provide young artists with visibility, encouragement, and professional opportunities at a crucial early stage in their careers.

Since its establishment, the YPP has developed into a widely respected platform, **organising an annual competition, internationally juried exhibitions, and curating spaces for young talent** to be seen and celebrated. The organisation oversees all aspects of the project – from managing submissions and curating exhibitions to coordinating juries and building long-term partnerships that ensure the project's continued impact.

In 2024, the YPP was joined by organiser **Giedrė Miller**, whose involvement has brought renewed energy and strategic vision to the project's development. Working alongside the founding team, she introduced the idea of physically **expanding the initiative across all Baltic states** – a move that reflects the project's growing regional relevance. Her contri-

butions have helped to strengthen the YPP's organisational foundation and extend its reach, with a long-term goal of developing the YPP into a broader international platform where young artists are recognized, supported, and connected.

The YPP is the result of a sustained and evolving **collaboration between public and private partners**, guided by a dedicated core team responsible for its daily operations, communications, and curatorial vision. Yet at the very foundation of its success stands a **small circle of private patrons** whose early and enduring belief in the project made all the difference.

It is thanks to the unwavering commitment of these individuals – who recognised the potential of the YPP long before its impact was widely visible – that the project not only flourished, but **matured into a vital platform for contemporary artistic production, critical discourse, and international exchange**. Their support has gone far beyond funding: it has been an investment in ideas, in artists, and in the creation of a space where experimentation and cultural responsibility can thrive.

Since 2022, **Luminor Bank Lithuania** has been a proud partner of the YPP, offering not only financial support but also a

strong cultural vision – connecting art, youth, and community.

“Art enriches humanity by inspiring emotions and reflection. Supporting this creative journey is both an honour and a responsibility,”

says **Tadas Ratkevičius**, Head of *Luminor* Private Banking in Lithuania.

Rooted in its mission to build sustainable value across the Baltics, *Luminor’s* support highlights the importance of investing in young artists and recognising the broader social value of creativity.

To further this commitment, *Luminor* established the ***Luminor Prize for Youth Empowerment***. Each year, a selected YPP finalist’s work is showcased in the ***Luminor Auction*** for Private Banking clients across the Baltics, with all proceeds directed to community-focused initiatives.

This initiative creates a powerful cycle: young artists gain visibility, communities receive support, and clients acquire meaningful, socially impactful art.

“We support the growth of young talent and enable them to give back to society. It’s a shared journey of value creation—for today and future generations,” Ratkevičius adds.

Luminor’s partnership with YPP reflects a long-term commitment to culture, empowerment, and community well-being – demonstrating

how business can meaningfully contribute to the arts and social progress.

In 2025, the YPP reached a significant milestone through major support from the ***Lithuanian Council for Culture (Lietuvos kultūros taryba)***, which became the main financial contributor to this year’s edition. This recognition by a national cultural institution marks a new chapter in the project’s development. The Council’s backing has not only provided critical financial resources but also served as a clear affirmation of the YPP’s cultural value and national importance. With this support, the YPP has been able to expand its activities, elevate its production standards, and continue building a sustainable and artist-centred platform that reflects the evolving landscape of contemporary Baltic painting.

Together, with the support of its partners, patrons, and the wider art community, the YPP continues to reflect the **founding vision of Vilmantas Marcinkevičius: to empower a new generation of painters and ensure their voices are seen, heard, and supported.**

Each year, the *Young Painter Prize* offers not only recognition but also meaningful professional support to emerging artists, with a structure of awards that supports both visibility and development:

YPP Patron's Prize

The most prestigious distinction, awarded by an international jury. The recipient receives a **€5000 cash prize** plus an **art residency at the *Pragiedruliai Creativity Centre***, Panevėžys (Lithuania), enabling the creation of a cohesive body of work and culminating in a **solo exhibition in the prominent *Pamėnkalnio Gallery*** in Vilnius (Lithuania) – offering public exposure and critical recognition at a formative stage in their artistic journey.

Luminor Bank Prize

Valued at **€3000**, this prize is awarded through a **voting process involving *Luminor Bank* clients**. The winning work is **displayed in the *Luminor* VIP lobby for 12 months**, then auctioned, with **proceeds directed to social initiatives**. This prize links art, audience, and social purpose.

Public Prize *(introduced in 2024)*

Reflecting the YPP's growing emphasis on audience engagement and inclusive participation. Largely sponsored by the ***Lithuanian Council for Culture***, the Public Prize, **valued at €1000 each**, is decided by **public votes collected across all three exhibition venues in the Baltic states – with separate winners in each country**. It honours the artist whose work resonates most deeply with the viewing public. This prize affirms that art is shaped not only by experts but also by those who experience it directly, strengthening the bond between artists, audience, and community.

Recognition of the YPP Initiative

In 2018, the *Lithuanian Association of Artists and Creators* (LMKA) awarded its annual prize to **Vilmantas Marcinkevičius** for his creativity and initiative in founding the *Young Painter Prize* (YPP) project. Winning the YPP often marks the beginning of a successful professional career and a stepping stone toward international recognition.

YPP Winners by Year

2009	Andrius Zakarauskas
2010	Jolanta Kyzikaitė
2011	Jonas Jurcikas
2012	Martynas Petreikis
2013	Zane Tuča
2014	Eglė Butkutė
2015	Andrius Ivanovas
2016	Rosanda Sorokaitė
2017	Alexei Gordin
2019	Sandra Strėle
2020	Elena Antanavičiūtė
2021	Dominykas Sidorovas
2022	Linas Kaziulionis
2023	Agata Orlovska
2024	Tadas (Truchill) Tručilauskas

Gail BUCKLAND

Gail Buckland is a museum curator, author, and former Distinguished Professor at *The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Art and Science* in New York City. She has also taught at *Columbia College Chicago*, the *Pratt Institute* in Brooklyn, and held the Noble Chair in Art and Cultural History at *Sarah Lawrence College*, New York.

Buckland has curated exhibitions at major institutions including the *Victoria and Albert Museum* (London), the *Brooklyn Museum*, the *Museum of Contemporary Art* (Chicago), the *New York Historical Society*, and the *Royal Photographic Society* (London), where she served as Curator of Photography.

She has written or collaborated on over fifteen books, with a particular focus on photography and cultural history. Buckland lives between Brooklyn, New York, and the Hudson Valley.

Kristi KONGI

Kristi Kongi is an Estonian artist whose practice explores the interplay of colour, light, and space through painting and immersive installations. Drawing on personal memory and emotion, she constructs vivid, abstract environments that transform architectural spaces.

Kongi currently serves as Head of the Painting Department and Associate Professor at the *Estonian Academy of Arts* in Tallinn. Her work has been widely exhibited in Estonia and internationally, making her one of the leading voices in contemporary Baltic painting.

Vilmantas MARCINKEVIČIUS

Vilmantas Marcinkevičius is a Lithuanian painter and the founder of the *Young Painter Prize*. His distinct style developed at the *Vilnius Academy of Arts* during the collapse of the Soviet Union and is marked by vivid, unexpected colour choices, figurative metaphors, and minimalist depictions of nature.

Though created spontaneously, each of his works carries a conceptual core – often challenging the viewer with socially or psychologically charged themes. Marcinkevičius has held over 30 solo exhibitions across Europe, including in Denmark, France, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands.

Bill McALISTER

Bill McAlister is a visionary cultural leader, community activist, and independent arts producer whose career spans decades of innovation in the arts, education, and social engagement.

He served as Director of *Battersea Arts Centre* and later of the *Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA)* in London, where he helped shape contemporary cultural discourse in the UK and beyond. He later became Cultural Policy Director at the *Soros Foundations* and has advised numerous international cultural organizations.

Honoured with the *Order of Chevalier des Arts et Lettres* and honorary citizenship of the *Commonwealth of Maryland*, McAlister continues to influence cultural life globally as a Senior Advisor at *Tonguesten* and as an independent film producer.

Andris VĪTOLIŅŠ

Andris Vītoliņš is a Latvian painter, professor, and Vice-Rector at the *Art Academy of Latvia*. He earned his master's degree in painting and a bachelor's in visual communication, and also studied at the Faculty of Design.

His artistic practice focuses on industrial and mechanical themes – machinery, vehicles, and the aesthetics of engineered systems – presented through a distinctly expressive visual language. Vītoliņš is a familiar figure in the Baltic art scene, known for his participation in *ArtVilnius* and for chairing its international jury.

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**TARTU KUNSTIMAJA
TARTU ART HOUSE**

PAMĒNKALNIO
GALERIJA



SEMARAH
HOTELS

W A L L E S S



2025 FINALISTS

Julia BLOCHTEIN
Kamilè ČETYSKOVSKA
Madara FREIDENFELDE
Gerda GRIGALIŪNAITĖ
Gerda HANSEN
August JOOST
Andris KAĻIŅINS
Ieva Kampe KRUMHOLCA
Sander KARJUS
Katrīna LEVĀNE
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Aurelija ZABURAITĖ

Between Survival and Surrender

136 × 200 cm / acrylic and oil on canvas / 2025

In *Between Survival and Surrender*, two boxers are locked in combat, one frozen midstrike in what could be the decisive blow. The figures are nearly identical, prompting the viewer to ask: are they two opponents, or two halves of the same self?

This ambiguity becomes the work's central tension, rendering it at once a depiction of sport and an allegory of the battles we carry within.

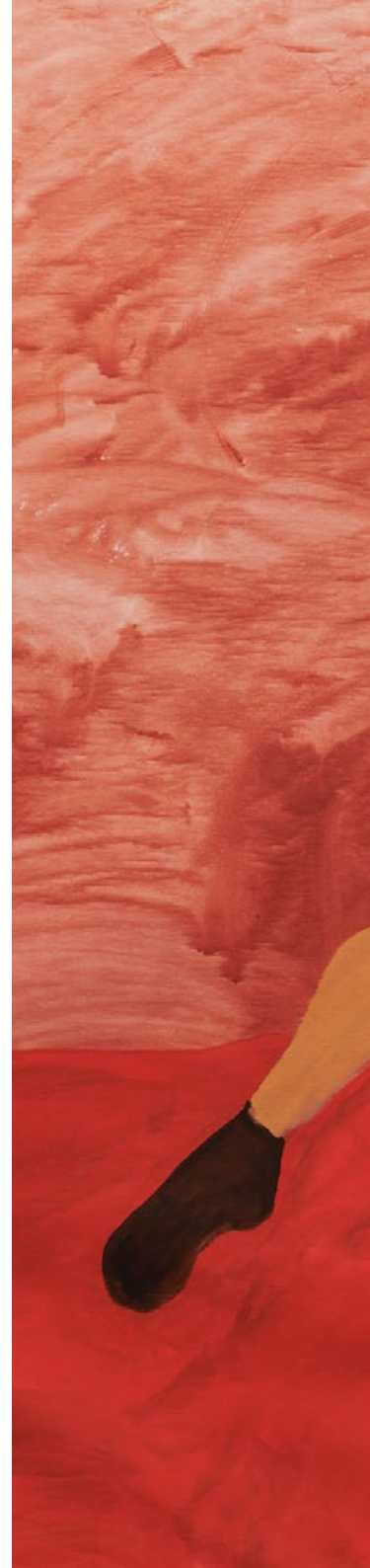
My own reflections are drawn to the confrontation between strength and fragility, survival and surrender. Yet the piece reaches beyond autobiography to suggest that conflict is not incidental but structural – a framework of life itself. Duality is a pillar of humanity, an endless clash of opposing forces, whether cosmic, ideological, or personal. Our world, after all, is shaped by collisions.

Art history gives us language for this dynamic: the Apollonian and the Dionysian, order and chaos, reason and instinct. In *Between Survival and Surrender*, the boxing ring becomes a stage for this perpetual contest, a site where standoff and impact generate something new. It is also an arena of spectacle, in the Debordian sense, where conflict is commodified, consumed, and replayed until we too are implicated as both spectators and participants.

Rather than allow us the distance of observation, the work calls us closer. It asks: do we side with the striker or with the struck? Where do we locate ourselves in the rhythm of our own conflicts – at their dawn, their breaking point, or the brink of resolution?

Perhaps, as Nietzsche reminds us in *The Birth of Tragedy*, life becomes bearable – and even beautiful – through this dance of opposition.

The question lingers: are we content to watch the tragedy unfold, or are we willing to step into the ring and inhabit it?

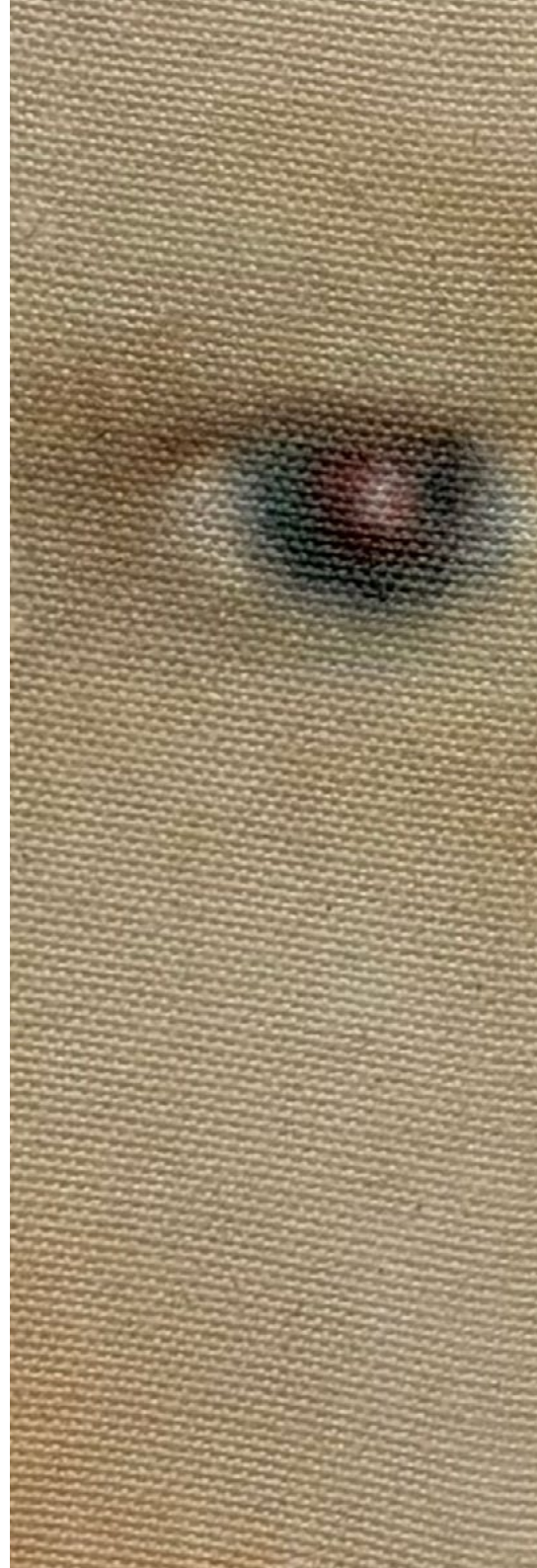




Untitled

13 × 19,5 cm / oil on canvas / 2025

The presented artwork features a fragment of my brother's face when he was a baby. Taken from a family album, then cropped into a desired fragment and being put into a different context, the image sort of loses its link to any relations or a specific person. Whether brother or not, family or a stranger, doesn't have much meaning anymore. The artwork starts to explore the boundaries of what is personal and private, leaving many parts of a person's identity hidden. However, the scratch on the nose suggests a humanly experience – when a baby begins to discover the world around it, many things can happen. His fleshy and plump cheeks speak about the innocence of infancy and childhood, as well as the (not always) small price we have to pay to be human. The presented work is painted in extremely thin and rather few layers – almost to the point of questioning whether any paint was used at all. Diluted with a lot of paint thinner, the image is rubbed into the canvas leaving no room for mistakes or erasure. Just like the photographs in our family albums, where (bitter)sweet moments are frozen for eternity, or as long as we remember them. By imitating the photographic surface, the image leaves viewers on their tippy toes, waiting for an answer whether the picture just began to develop or is already fading.





Wardrobe

20 × 20 cm (3) / knit, acrylic, oil / 2025

“Wardrobe” is an artwork that explores the intersection of textile, identity, and tradition through the lens of everyday clothing. Created during the artist’s time abroad in Portugal, the works were inspired by the practical realities of travel – specifically, the prominence of clothes in the luggage – and evolved into a deeper exploration of garments as carriers of memory and identity. The author integrates knitted fabrics into the canvases, highlighting patterns from sweaters, jumpers, and other everyday knits. These textiles serve both as medium and narrative, referencing the author’s cultural heritage and broader feminist discourses around craft and gender. Originally installed within vintage furniture at *Casa do Corim*, the paintings mimic the layered nature of the author’s personal wardrobe, both in content and presentation. “Wardrobe” explores how clothing – so close to our bodies and identities – can convey symbolic and historical narratives, transforming the familiar into a site of visual storytelling and playful reinterpretation.





Medusa

80 × 80 cm / acrylic on canvas / 2024

This painting is part of the *“Ancient Greek Myths Through Rose-Coloured Glasses”* series. It explores the myths of Ancient Greece and themes of cruel or unjust punishments. The paintings and textile works depict mythological figures enduring harsh or unfair consequences, with interpretations of these stories placed in modern settings.

The series encourages us to look back at humanity's past and raises questions about how our current social norms may one day be judged just as critically as ancient myths are today. It suggests that, in the future, our present-day beliefs, practices, and systems of justice may be seen as outdated – or even wrong – by those who come after us, just as we now criticise the harshness of mythological punishments.

In Greek mythology, there are several different depictions of Medusa's myth. In some, she is a monster from birth – an obstacle for heroes to overcome. In others, she was a maiden who served in Athena's

temple. This latter version is explored in the artwork. Medusa was assaulted by Poseidon on the steps of Athena's temple. Athena showed her no mercy or compassion and punished her by turning her into a monster. Some interpret this version of the myth not as a punishment, but as a gift of protection – one that was meant to defend her, but ultimately failed.

Medusa is portrayed as a doe, covered by a lavender robe – an animal symbolising innocence, surrounded by a colour associated with purity and cleansing. From the depths of the water emerges Poseidon: a catfish that gulps everything into its giant mouth. They are observed by Athena, portrayed as her namesake owl. The scene is set in the early evening, under a bridge in the heart of a city. These are the last moments of Medusa's life as a human. She is surrounded by the safety of familiarity, and the one to whom she dedicated her life is nearby. But none of that saved her from her fate.



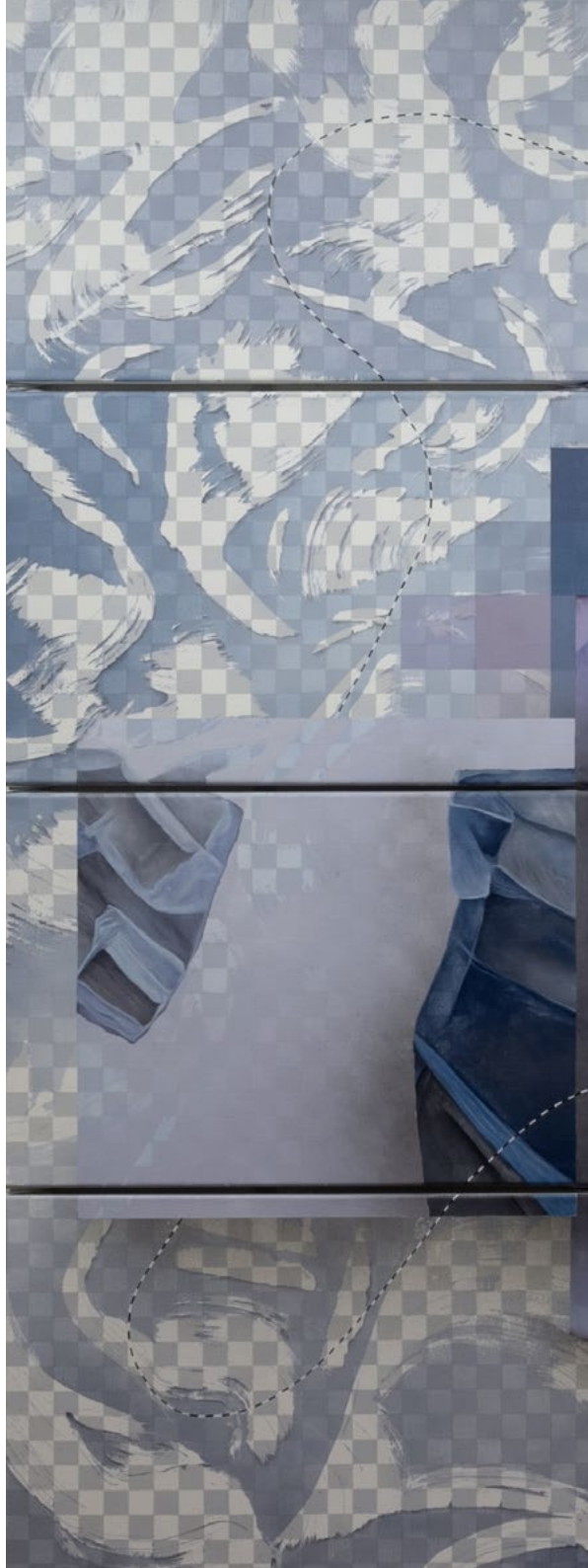
One Piece at a Time

160 × 240 cm / oil, acrylic and spray on canvas / 2025

Sixteen separate canvases form a fragmented, screen-like surface. Each canvas is a fragment of a larger whole. The composition is built from images generated by artificial intelligence, translated into physical form through painting.

On the surface, one finds visual references to image editing software – a white-grey grid, smooth color gradients, soft shadows, pixels, and traces of erasure. These details hint at the digital origins of the work, yet they have been recreated through paint and the tactility of hand-rendered surfaces. While software allows for rapid and infinite edits, painting demands time and commitment. Every layer must be carefully planned, every mark is a decision not easily undone or revised.

The work explores the tension and contrast between digital tools and traditional painting, the virtual and the physical, control and chaos. It is a slow and quiet resistance to the speed of digital image-making.





The Solar Anus

290 × 140 cm, two panels / oil on canvas / 2024

The Solar Anus is an oil painting on two monumental panels of linen canvas, stretched on wood frames, 290 cm tall and 140 cm wide. A figure group defines the visual field of each of the panels. The dark background in the centre of the painting is bounded by an increasingly vibrant red towards the edges.

On the left, an intestinal form descends to become a pair of partial male bodies merged in a struggle, who nevertheless fail to separate themselves fully, as the slick, undulating texture of internal organs reasserts itself over the distorted musculatures. The intestine proceeds from the top left corner of the painting in successive tones of grey, green, blue and pink, which appear pastel over the dominant dark tones of the rest of the painting.

As it approaches the centre of the panel, lumps of smooth muscle begin to form into the shape of an inverted upper torso, reaching its right arm to meet the second figure below, his neck terminating at the second figure's thigh. We see the lower

figure from the back, as he hangs by the legs, curling up his upper body towards the higher figure, his arm and upper torso returning to an increasingly intestinal form as it fades into the background.

On the right panel, a mass resembling the inside of an abdomen fills the lower right quadrant. Unlike the group on the left panel, this one is rendered in muted, dark tones. Three partial figures on top of each other suggest themselves in the folds of the intestinal wall. The lowest one lies in the fetal position, with a knee and the top of a bald head pointed towards us. We see the middle figure from the back, pushed to the right of the composition by the weight above. The group is capped off by a female figure of whom we see the knees and the side of the torso.

On the left vertical third, slightly above the figure group, there is a yellow glint, suggestive of a star. The star pierces through the darkest part of the background, which is nearly black.

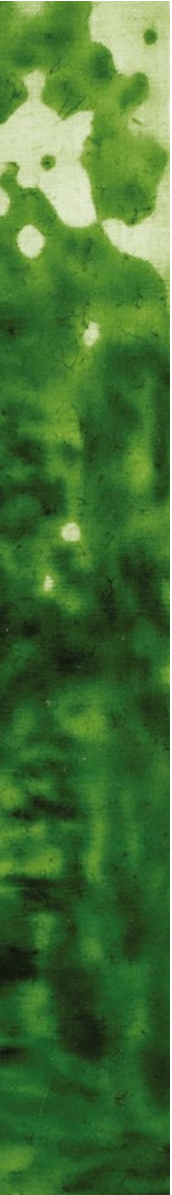


Andris KAĻIŅINS (b. 1994 / LV)

Prussian Green. Plate 5.

55 × 66 cm / oil on canvas / 2025





"Prussian Green. Plate 5" is one of a series of paintings in which the artist explores the paint *Prussian Green*. In this instance, the painting takes the form of a catalogue plate from an indeterminate image catalogue, perhaps it is a book on history. The painting compares two abstract units that are both described as *Prussian* – paint and territory – and explores how paint might be analogous in overtaking the canvas just as military power can take over territory.

The piece belongs to a broader series shaped by the low, persistent anxiety of living next to a neighbour that imagines territorial expansion. Paint manufacturers maintain a taxonomy of politically loaded pigment names; among them, *Prussian Green* can speak most comprehensively to the anxieties of the inhabitants of the Baltic states. The one-letter slip between "Prussia" and "Russia" is not an argument, only a phonetic echo that shadows history. Thinking about the present, the painter looks to the past for patterns that recur. The main protagonist, the paint *Prussian Green*, on this canvas, while mimicking a photograph taken in the 1920s, takes on a military camouflage pattern, thus warning us about the landscape's potential to be militarised. The word "Prussia" also recalls the Old Prussians, a Baltic people assimilated in the medieval period by German-speaking powers. The painting lightly touches on this link between phenomena across different centuries, connected by phonetic similarity in the name.

Approaching the painting not only as a mimetic depiction of a storyline, but primarily

as an object of high craft quality, the materials used are the classic tools of oil painting that were employed by the old masters: a self-stretched and prepared canvas, high-quality high-pigmentation oil paint, and linseed oil, which altogether ensures the painting's archival stability and its potential to remain in the future as a relic from 2025 in the Baltics.

Since the only and main character in the painting is *Prussian Green*, the artist cannot allow white pigments to enter the ground. Therefore the white background is achieved by using pre-bleached natural fabric and priming with a transparent ground. To secure a clean light field behind a single layer of colour, the canvas is lined with a second white fabric layer beneath the primary linen. Text on the surface is painted in the same *Prussian Green* oil paint and mimics printing ink.

The composition is built according to book graphic design principles, adopting proportional margin widths. Shown alongside other plates from the series, the work contributes to a strange catalogue. What kind of catalogue it is remains open: an art history catalogue, a contemporary photobook, or maybe even a future volume that looks back on Baltic painting in 2025.

In this object, contemporary unease meets a method of orienting by precedent. It is a calm perception exercise in which pigment carries the argument and the landscape becomes a field for thinking.

Ariadne's Clue – follow the light of your heart

120 × 100 cm / oil on canvas / 2025

To understand the message, you need to know the Greek myth about Ariadne. The Cretan king Minos had a labyrinth next to the palace of Knossos, where the monster Minotaur lived. Every 9 years, Athens had to sacrifice 7 young men and 7 virgins to this monster. Once among these young people was the brave Athenian prince Theseus, who was determined to kill the Minotaur and break this harsh tradition of sacrifices. He came to Crete to face his challenge. But he was met by Minos' daughter Ariadne and she fell in love with the brave man. No one had ever come out of the Minotaur's labyrinth alive – not so much because of the Minotaur, but because of the labyrinth – it was extremely complicated. To prevent this from happening to Ariadne's beloved Theseus, she gave him a ball of thread, and advised him to tie the beginning when entering the labyrinth. Theseus did so. He went into the labyrinth and with all his youthful strength and courage defeated the Minotaur, and with Ariadne's thread he emerged from the labyrinth as the absolute winner. Since Ariadne had betrayed her father by helping Theseus, she had to flee Crete with him. He promised to marry her, but on the way to Athens, they stopped at the island of Naxos, and during the night, while Ariadne was sleeping, Theseus left her. So Ariadne lay on the rocks, pulling out her

broken heart and grieving for Theseus' betrayal. This is how Dionysus – the god of wine, chaos and ecstasy – found her and fell in love with her in an instant. He married her and he gave her a crown of stars, so that her name would be forever inscribed in the sky as a constellation. Theseus, though the winner, didn't fare so well in the rest of the story, but we won't continue about him this time... What is this story about?

The labyrinth in which the Minotaur lived is each of our inner worlds, and the monster is our unconscious shadow side, which we must confront or sacrifice forever. However, the story of Theseus tells us that these are not battles that can be won only with strength, courage and ambition. The Minotaur can perhaps be defeated that way. But it is the feminine, intuitively sensitive side that will lead you out of the labyrinth of the inner world, which everyone must find within themselves. We need both sides. So please – do not be like Theseus, who after a grand victory gives up this intuitive power as something insignificant, unimportant; be like Dionysus, who loves it in all its shades. Be like Ariadne – a symbol of the inner light that will lead you through difficulties. Let the light in the painting and your inner intuitive wisdom be your guidance.



A little shadow which owes its very existence to the light

150 × 150 cm / charcoal on paper / 2025

There is nothing hidden behind these faces and gestures, no domain to which I have no access, merely a little shadow which owes its very existence to the light.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*

The artwork is a part of my graduation work at the *Estonian Academy of Arts* (EKA) and shares its title with other works of the same series. The series in question contains large format charcoal paintings (more on that later), drawn from the imagination and realised in what I hope to be a productive tension between the figurative and non-figurative. The artwork explores unresolved emotions and the uncertainty of whether it is better to stay close to the light or the shade. The ambivalence of the images reflects an inability to understand oneself, as well as a hesitant attitude towards one's urges and desires. The paintings were presented at TASE 25 in a black box exhibition space, lit by spotlights and

attached to the wall by a row of small nails at the top and two at the bottom. I am open to other installation solutions as I'm keen to see the work in different lighting conditions. As to the (possible) inclusion of what are ostensibly charcoal drawings in a competition dedicated to painting I would ask the jury to reflect on the ever murkier distinctions between traditional hierarchies in art. For my part I should explain that my thinking revolves around painting and the history of the painted image, therefore I see my work belonging to that same lineage of image making. This series in particular owes a debt to baroque painting and post-war abstraction. The DNA of the work is I believe painterly and seeks dialogue with painting and not drawing. In this respect I understand Robert Longo when he says that he "wants to compete with painting." I hope you will afford me this possibility.



Katrīna LEVĀNE (b. 2001 / LV)

forest floor

7 canvases 160 × 210 cm (full size 160 × 1470 cm) / oil on canvas / 2025

"I have always yearned to return to nature. If only I could stay there, take root in the forest floor from autumn through winter, perhaps death would not seem so terrifying."

The artwork addresses the fear of death through oral folklore and the ecological aspects of death. I aim to create a space where death is recognised as a normal, albeit unpleasant, part of life.

This interdisciplinary composition serves as a meditation on the fear of death. The mythological forest depicted in the painting establishes a sense of a location suspended between life and death, in space and time. Accompanying scents and sounds enhance the atmosphere, evoking associations with nature that feel slightly off, resulting in an uncanny mood. Viewers are invited to immerse



themselves in this environment and explore their feelings regarding mortality.

Questioning a person's relationship with death and grief was prompted by my own experience – the inability to emotionally process what happened and a complete disconnection from reality. This freezing of myself in time created an inexplicable confusion and pain that I could not articulate. Talking about death is not normal – this was taught to me from an early age by the environment around me. Coming from a very superstitious family, there was an unspoken rule that simply talking about death could somehow invoke it.

The topic of death did not interest me; it scared me. The fear was so pronounced that I could not imagine death without feeling the need to knock

on wood 3 times or spit over my shoulder. During my studies, I have begun to address topics of interest to me through folklore, creating my own personal mythology, which mixes aspects of folklore, superstition, and natural rhythms.

My goal with this artwork was to create a comforting space to deal with uncomfortable feelings. Everything that I choose to include in the space is meticulously made to serve a purpose of slight discomfort, but with a willingness to participate in it. The storytelling nature of these paintings is ambiguous, not quite telling the viewer what they should be feeling, but being a place onto which feelings can be projected.



Mater Rupta

11 × 36 cm / oil paints, texture paste, 24k gold leaf on antique wood
(17th-century panel) / 2024

This icon of the Mother of God is painted on a 17th-century antique wooden board, whose aged and fractured surface becomes part of the work itself. The cracks and irregularities of the panel are not concealed, but revealed – each imperfection transformed by gilded light into a silent testament of time. Painted in oil and adorned with 24k gold leaf, the icon unites sacred tradition with contemporary sensibility.

The wooden panel originates from a 17th-century church built entirely of timber, without the use of nails. Within that church, all the saints were painted directly onto its walls – a living sanctuary of sacred images. This origin infuses *Mater Rupta* with an even greater spiritual resonance, carrying within it the silent

strength of centuries of devotion and prayer.

Here, sanctity does not arise from smoothness or symmetry, but from the visible endurance of matter – from the holiness of what survives. The Virgin Mary and Child appear not as untouchable ideals, but as a luminous presence within brokenness: vulnerable, human, and profoundly real.

Infused with devotion, *Mater Rupta* is more than an object of reverence; it is a meditation on fragility and resilience, on how divine beauty radiates through imperfection. This work invites reflection, prayer, and encounter – offering both a sacred image and a symbol of hope.



Human Nest

200 × 200 × 200 cm / oil, wood,
canvas / 2025

“Human Nest” is an unfiltered documentation of my teenage room. By repainting the rebellious self-expressions that once filled my quiet chamber, the work tells a story about the significance of personal space, the act of creating art, and the inherent chaos of the learning process. Communicating coziness, loneliness, and a sense of presence with oneself, the painting installation becomes a symbolic glimmer of light in the dark – showcasing how these transformation-filled years lead to emotional growth and maturity.

This processed space of identity and biographical representation reflects the turbulence of these transitional years both through cultural practices and the materiality of the space itself. In a time when everything feels unstable and in flux, the personal room becomes a projection of the soul, where transformations unfold for both the space and the individual. These subconscious releases reveal the individual’s passions and escapism, often in the form of mess and disorder. In this way, the space constantly shifts and evolves alongside its inhabitant. By inviting the viewer into this reconstructed space of thought, the artist explores human vulnerability and allows the threshold of personal territory to be crossed.





No Title

160 × 200 cm / oil painting, coloured pencils, nylon stockings and sewing / 2025

The work is part of my series *Elada 2025*, which served as the theme for my master's in painting. The series explores a reinterpretation of my hometown's historical fascination with bodybuilding culture.

My interest in this niche stems from a complex relationship with my father, who has been both an inspiration and a point of tension in my life. Beyond personal connections, I am drawn to the culture itself – the dedication to pushing the body to its limits, often in underground, even illegal, spaces. During Soviet times, bodybuilding was prohibited, giving rise to a hidden subculture that fascinates me deeply.

The human body has always played a central role in art, yet finding new ways to depict it can seem daunting. I approach this challenge by merging my parents' memories with my own experiences, seeking an authentic perspective that recontextualizes the body and sparks new discussions.

In this series, I have moved beyond oil painting alone. The theme felt too expansive for a single medium, and I wanted to explore ways of engaging painting with contemporary art forms, such as installation. Because the body is inherently textured, I incorporated materials that echo the tactile quality of bodybuilders' sculpted forms. One un-

expected choice was women's stockings. Their texture evokes the appearance of taut, polished skin while introducing layers of cultural and historical significance. Stockings have long been a symbol of femininity, often fetishized, sexualized, or even associated with aggression – ripped stockings as masks in robberies, for example. These associations add depth and tension to the works, contrasting ultra-masculinity with feminine delicacy, force with beauty, rage with softness.

The spaces depicted in my work are equally important. They are not imagined – they are the legendary gym *Elada* in Šiauliai, which sadly closed this year. Established in 1970, it was the last gym preserving the authentic atmosphere of that era. I aim to reimagine these spaces through memories my father shared and glimpses I caught in childhood: the smell, the energy, the uncanny intensity of the environment. These gyms were often run-down, tense, and uncomfortable, yet also familiar and compelling.

I present a work that brings together these elements, inviting the viewer to experience the unique atmosphere of entering the underground gym – its texture, tension, and charged history.



Lukas PAVILONIS (b. 2000 / LT)

Again and praising all the hues of spring

various dimensions / oil on wooden tiles and panels, wooden boxes / 2025

The work "Again and praising all the hues of spring."¹ is inspired by a deeply human, romantic longing for nature's awakening. I am particularly fascinated by the period (around mid-April this year) when the landscape transitions from a completely grey, muddy-brown beginning of spring into a naively green, pre-summer phase. This intermediate period, in my subjective opinion, has an incredibly rich and constantly changing spectrum of colours (at least here in Lithuania). As A. Tarkovsky said: "A painter always works with colour and colour relationships." Therefore, noticing and emphasising subtle natural colours is our (painters') task. With this action, I aim not to depict the infinity of colours (which is simply impossible), but to awaken human perception during spring.

If we zoom out to my artistic practice, we will see that I explore human interaction with time. I am interested in the differences between the time we feel and the time we actually encounter. So, this work together with its title, represents a seasonal sense of time connected to nature's cycles. For this work I used a calendar of the three spring months, but as I mentioned, spring's miracle (awakening) happened in mid-April this year. However, this is not constant – it may shift a week earlier or later from year to year, and this natural timing is particularly fascinating to me.

I observed and selected colours in spring 2024 by painting panoramas through my studio window overlooking Bernardinai Garden Park. Creating live studies was necessary because I sincerely believe that an exact colour can only be found in relation to other colours. Later in spring 2025, I supplemented the colour palette by painting fresh leaves, flowers, and grasses gathered during walks around the academy's surroundings. I titled this work after a line from Kristijonas Donelaitis's poem *The Seasons*: "Again and praising all the hues of spring." It alludes to the poetic initiation of this observation.

By presenting my work in an interactive way, I invite the viewer to touch, turn, and explore colour tiles and studies from life, hoping that their perception will mirror the very process of creating the work – guided by curiosity. While engaging with the piece, the viewer encounters the palette I recorded to reflect the colours of calendar spring.

This project is ongoing – I am currently painting summer and autumn landscapes and collecting material so that in the future I can prepare a comprehensive palette characteristic of Lithuania's four seasons.

¹Kristijonas Donelaitis, *The Seasons*, translated by Peter Tempest, *Spring Joys*, line 403. Vilnius: Vaga, 1985. Lithuanian original: "Uostysim ir garbinsim pavasarį margą". My translation: ("We will inhale and honour the colourful spring").





Crepuscular garden

200 × 220 cm / oil on canvas / 2023

«Crepuscular Garden» is a landmark work for me, one I spent a long time making. During that period I was living in a village with my partner: every day we walked for hours through forests, fields, and overgrown gardens. My life felt stagnant – nothing was happening – and I had more time to read, think, and paint. The starting point was the books of Carl Gustav Jung: I immersed myself in his writings on the unconscious and dreams, began to practice active imagination, and kept a dream journal. I became interested in “looking to the other side” – to the place where images arise on their own and lead the way.

I was captivated by the inexplicable, elusive “magic” of images – not the cinematic kind, but something real and inward: dreams and archetypes, their universality and ubiquity. I deliberately wanted the painting to look “magical” and slightly psychedelic. It is a layering of motifs from dreams, active imagination, and saved photographs that troubled me and quite literally haunted me. I wanted to pour it out – wildly, chaotically – and then gather it into a single space where fluid forms, distorted perspective, and shifting light blur the boundaries between the real and the mythical, between the conscious and the subconscious.

The image of the crepuscular garden still moves me today. Everything that happens there, I propose to read not literally but symbolically. And if the meanings of the symbols sometimes contradict one another – that is how life is, when you waver between extremes

and search for balance. A red thread running through the work is passion (not necessarily sexual). The nude, intertwined bodies are not a sign of lust but a symbol of acceptance and union into something new. In alchemical iconography such a union signifies purification and the mixing of elements. Psychic energy is wild by nature, which is why figures in animal masks appear: ancient impulses that still live within us and take part in our lives – in our garden.

The severed head of the dragon is an image of taming and bringing this force – libido – under control; at the same time it is a personal transformation – the Rider. A personal story from my past is encoded in the work, one I am not comfortable speaking about directly, which is why I chose the language of symbols. I also mark my fears: in the lower right corner the cemetery and the house foundation represent, for me, the fear of death and the fear of being left alone – of incompleteness, the emptiness of an unfinished base.

Why painting? Because it is easier for me to express personal experiences through image, color, and the rhythm of the brushstroke; it matters to me that something lived stands behind the image. Words often fail. In *Crepuscular Garden* I showed passion, the memory of a bitter mistake, the work of self-transformation, and my fears – and I consider this work successful because I managed to achieve precisely the effect I see in my mind.



Rights

200 × 140 cm / mixed media on canvas / 2025

This work explores the intersection of inner psychological states and the physical body – a point where the body becomes a battlefield. The figure depicted is not a specific person; rather, she embodies a shared, yet deeply personal conflict between the desire to simply exist and the necessity to defend oneself, between the longing for freedom and the pressure of external limitation.

The title “Rights” raises questions that are still often silenced or seen as uncomfortable: What rights do we have to our own bodies? To our emotions? To our presence without explanation or justification? Are our rights real, or merely symbolic? And do we still have to fight for them?

This is a portrait of a woman, but not a portrait in the traditional sense. It is a critique of the male gaze – a historical and cultural lens that has reduced the female body to something passive, soft, sensual, and accessible. The figure here resists that gaze. She is uninviting, strong, physically active – painted from within, not to be looked at, but to exist for herself. Her body is not offered up to the viewer’s pleasure or projection – it becomes a tool, a territory, even a weapon.

The painting is executed expressively and intuitively, using sharp contrasts between red, pur-

ple, flesh tones, and shadow. The colours are not realistic – they amplify the emotional atmosphere and heighten the sense of tension. Lines break off, run wild, as if they cannot be contained – like emotions. This spontaneity allows the painting to breathe, to move, rather than freeze into form.

The gestures are exaggerated, expressive, almost theatrical – as if trying to burst out of the frame. The positioning of the hands serves not just as a compositional element but as an emotional code: rejection, protection, resistance. The face is partially obscured, creating space for the viewer’s own projections. One might see in it personal fears, unresolved questions, or fragments of memory.

The pose balances between strength and vulnerability, aggression and defence. This duality is central to the work – it reflects the reality in which women’s rights may appear to be won, yet in truth remain fragile, conditional, easily revoked.

This work does not simply invite the viewer to look – it asks them to confront. To confront discomfort, the self, and the question: do I recognise another’s right to be unapologetic, uncomfortable, unsoftened?



Kristiāna POCE (b. 2000 / LV)

Left hand doesn't know what the right is doing

75 × 25 cm (10) / acrylic, oil on canvas / 2024

"I sit in the workshop and pick at my nails. I sit in class and pick at my nails. I sit on the bus and pick at my nails. I work at the computer, take a break, and pick at my nails. I have to think of my next painting, the exhibition is coming up soon. I don't know if I'll have enough money for a canvas, I don't want to ask my parents for money, I should be more independent at my

age. I pick at my nails. Every idea is shit, nothing comes to mind. I pick at my nails. I just walked past someone I know, damn, I didn't even say "Hi." I pick at my nails. Maybe I should just stop painting and find a better job? I pick at my nails. I know there's a good idea inside, in fingertips reach, I just need to grab it, but I still keep picking at my nails."



The phrase "Left hand doesn't know what the right is doing" has two meanings. In the Bible, Matthew 6:3, the phrase "...do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," refers to a charitable disposition, where one does not expect praise for performing acts of mercy or charity. The second meaning comes from a more modern day adaption, where the phrase alludes to two groups in a project not communicating effectively, leading to a disjointed or negative conclusion.

The artwork "Left hand doesn't know what the right is doing" is both a mixture between the two phrases, an ironic nod and a literal statement. The artwork is a reflection of an incongruous

relationship between the three key human elements – the mind, the body and the soul. A rift in this sacred relationship can be caused by many things and can present itself in a plethora of negative outcomes. In this case, it is presented as obsessively and intuitively picking at one's hangnails. It is a symptom of a much deeper rift, that cosmetically is often viewed as repulsive or something to be ashamed of. The paintings serve as a way to rid oneself of the stigma and bodily result of anxiety and obsessive compulsions, simultaneously bringing awareness to a surprisingly common affliction.



The Wedding Guests

120 × 150cm / oil and oilstick on canvas / 2025

The artwork *"The Wedding Guests"* began with a fascination for the family photographs tucked away in my parents' home – fragile images that carry the weight of many generations. Human beings have always been at the heart of my creative practice. I am drawn to understanding not only the individual but also the broader weave of society and collective memory. While my earlier work explored the human being as a biological organism, I now look at us as cultural artefacts.

How does the environment into which a human animal is born shape their development and identity?

As an adult, the impulse to revisit and reflect on family memories becomes a way to reach deeper into one's own nature. The beautiful – and at times traumatic – life experiences of parents and grandparents, the cultural and social landscapes that surrounded them, and the time periods they lived through, all continue to shape who we are today, whether we realise it or not.

Clifford Geertz once described a person as being like Chartres Cathedral: made of stone and glass, yet more than just the sum of its materials. It was built in a specific time, by specific hands, within a particular worldview. To truly understand such a structure, one must know more than just what defines all cathedrals – one must grasp the ideas of the society that created it: its understanding of God, of humanity, of architecture. The building becomes a mirror of its time, a vessel of meaning.

"The Wedding Guests" is composed of layered imagery, each layer inspired from differ-

ent photographs. In addition to the memories my mother and father had gathered throughout their lives, the attic boxes held those of my late grandparents – faint traces of lives once lived. Some memories stretch so far back that the faces in the photos are no longer known to us. And yet, I am bound to them by blood. I see my own jawline in the face of a stranger, or my mother's cheekbone in the fading contours of a portrait. Just as memories shift and change over time, they also transform within my paintings – merging, distorting, fading, or taking on entirely new meanings. This transformation happens through the layering of images, the quiet omission of details, or the slow addition of new ones painted in by hand.

I have long been drawn to the deeper layers of human experience – to history, to ritual, to the invisible threads that run from past to present. In regions shaped by centuries of occupation, silence, and resilience, these threads are often subtle but persistent. Family traditions, gestures, or phrases passed down through generations carry with them echoes of older belief systems, social orders, and survival mechanisms. I am particularly fascinated by how historical events and cultural practices – weddings, funerals, harvests, exiles – have left their mark not only on our collective memory but on the very fabric of who we are today. Through my work, I seek to trace these quiet inheritances, to sense how history breathes through the body, and how the rituals of those who came before us still live on – transformed, perhaps, but never entirely lost.



Subway in Kharkiv

160 × 210 cm / canvas, acrylic / 2024

I'm a visual artist from Ukraine. I was born in 1996 in Ukraine, Dnipro, and am now working and living in Kyiv, where I received a master's degree at the Academy of Arts. In my childhood, I was surrounded by factories, the railway, the unfinished subway and other industrial objects, which I tried to find and depict in Kyiv. Before the war started, my project in progress was a series of Kyiv subways, which was huge for me after stations in Dnipro. For now I continue this series, giving it a different meaning. For now it's a place where people can find shelter, a safe zone from rockets and explosions; very often we could see how people live right on the floor of a subway station or spend at least every night there. Since the first day of the war I also spent a lot of time on the floor. Underground places are ideal for this, some stations are very deep. When I enter subways I think about the underworld, ground, death.

I'm showing how this experience changed my themes in art. Before the war, I painted the subway as a mysterious place, a means of transport for people in big cities and urban locations of the criminal world. For example, tunnels, they lead somewhere, with many intersections and technical zones, thinking about what they are made for. However, they all have a certain rea-

son for their existence, their function, their purpose. The viewer stands in the center, not yet deciding which path to choose. Each of the paths leads to a new perspective, a depth of space that we do not see in advance. It is very difficult to know which path will be more or less successful, the same, or to stay in place at all. In many places, space and form are deformed. Sometimes there is only one corridor, with light at the end of this tunnel, or vice versa, with darkness. Our reality now only pushes us to think more about the underworld and the continuation of existence underground. These thoughts are difficult to ignore. These are thoughts in parallel about both death and the end, and about life, but in a different reality and conditions. A person tries to adapt to new challenges and new choices in this perspective, the conditions for which are constantly changing.

It is very important for Ukrainians to continue working, to find motivation and energy for life, this life continues even underground, in the subway and bomb shelters. For me, it is very important to show this personal experience in my works, not to ignore it, but to transform, to explore the emotions that I feel every day. I plan to continue the series with shelters and a more gloomy series about the path (corridor).





Michael

60 × 52 cm / acrylic on cardboard / 2025

“Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought, but prevailed not, neither was their place found in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan.”

– Revelations of John (12. 7–9)

In the Revelations of John, Michael acts as the main commander in the war against the dragon-devil. From the lips of the archangel comes the announcement of the Second Coming, the Last Judgment and the End of the World.

The picture was painted by dint of anger, grief and defeat. Having reached a certain point of despair, suddenly comes the frisky energy of anger and you start creating, because there is no more salvation.

The image of angel Michael came into my head by accident. At first I intuitively chose the colours, smeared them on one of my primed cardboards for exercises – I didn't think that something worthwhile

could come out in such a state. Anyway, I thought I would throw it away. But continuing to draw, I realised that this is Michael, the angel who will destroy the Earth with his sword.

Sometimes you wait for it.

So I left the painting and finished it later.

Regarding the image of the angel that I saw appearing in my painting, which may raise some questions, I would like to recall one beautiful story:

«Moses saw that the bush was on fire and was not burnt, and he thought, “I'll go and see this great miracle – why the bush is not burnt.” When the Lord saw that

Moses had come to see, He called to him from the bush:

– Moses! Moses!

Moses answered:

– Here I am.»



Waiting II

160 × 200 cm / oil on canvas / 2023

Waiting II is part of the series Niguliste 21. It is a series that reflects on the memory of a home, an apartment where my grandmother lived for thirty years and which I visited as a child. After the political changes of the early 1990s, the property was reclaimed by its pre-Soviet owners and my family was unable to repurchase it. This loss left my grandmother in deep grief, and even in my early years I retained vivid memories of its rooms.

By revisiting her archive and playing with collages of different people, occasions, moods, and moments, I reflect the atmosphere of a fading memory, where fragments begin to merge and blur together, and where absence can carry as much weight as presence.

The works carry a longing for a space to which I no longer have access. I am interested in the boundary between abstraction and protecting identity. The absence of the human figure allows the form to take shape and a new narrative to emerge from memory.





Nova Hata (new room)

190 × 215 cm / oil on canvas / 2025

Memory performs two essential roles in our lives – it constructs our sense of identity and enables the processes of reflection and learning.

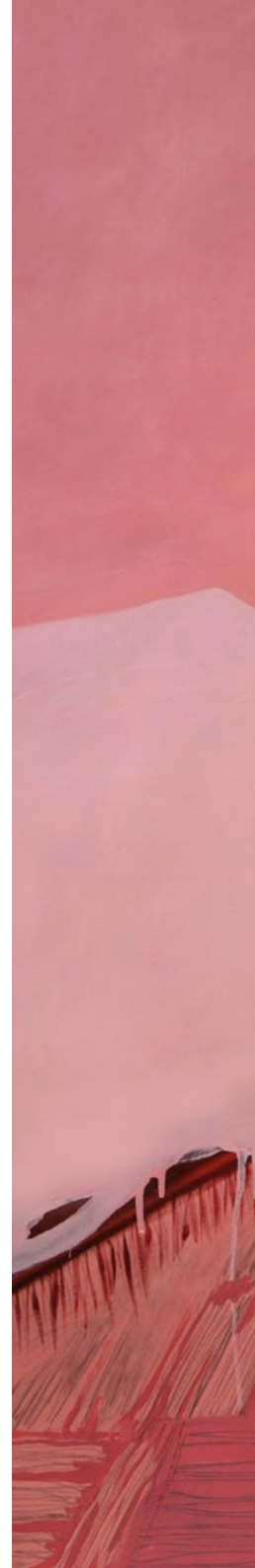
“Nova Hata” (new room) is a part of the project “When It Is Our Turn to Be Adults” which examines the intricate tension between a child’s idealised vision of adulthood and the complex, often disenchanting reality that adulthood ultimately reveals. It explores the inevitable encounter with loss, disappointment, and the fragility of meaning – experiences that challenge inherited narratives of maturity. Within this confrontation emerges the possibility of reassembling the self, not in spite of these ruptures, but through them – as a response to the shifting emotional and existential landscapes that define the transition into adulthood.

The foundation of this work lies in personal archival photographs, which I reinterpret through painting. At the core of my inquiry is the fragmentary nature of memo-

ry – particularly the phenomenon of vividly recalling details of clothing while the broader narrative of events remains blurred or partially lost. In this context, clothing emerges as a key marker of both bodily and emotional memory.

Unfinished objects, a faded colour palette, and vanishing textures evoke the quality of recollection. The use of pink – a colour often associated with naivety – introduces a sense of anxious ambiguity, like a premonition of impending change.

This work does not depict a singular moment of coming of age, but rather traces it as an unfolding process. Adulthood here is not merely a life stage, but a space of loss, reinterpretation, and the search for a renewed identity. Within this project, art becomes a means of reassembling the self – through the material remnants of the past, through images and emotions that surface at the threshold between memory and present experience.





Holiday Worry

150 × 120 cm / canvas, oil / 2025

A homage to the engraving by Albrecht Dürer "The Knight of Death and the Devil." The painting is about how life in Ukraine changes the idea of holidays in times of war. For me, this painting is a semantic and visual inversion of Albrecht Dürer's engraving "The Knight of Death and the Devil," where the protagonist does not

oppose death at all and goes against it. In this variation, the woman seems to be running away from it because she wants to live without embarking on the path of war. This reveals the mood of ordinary people in Ukraine who just want to live and celebrate the holidays as usual.



gl(azure) sky

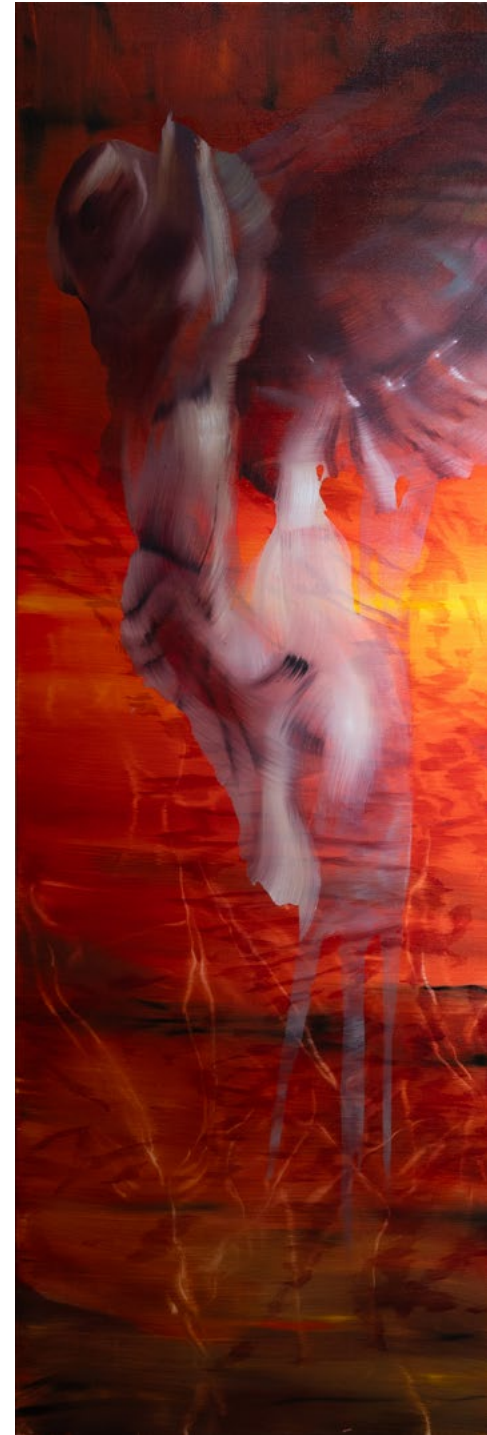
210 × 150 (diptych) / oil on canvas / 2025

The technological and information revolution has activated hybrid transformations of spirituality. In his book *Techgnosis*, Erik Davis writes of an “electric fire,” a primordial light that permeates matter and animates it. This light is not merely an optical event but a fluid, spiritual substance hidden within the core of technology itself – a substance that binds spirit and matter.

To think and paint light is inseparable from the tradition of painting itself. As the anniversary of Lithuanian classic M.K. Čiurlionis passes, I reflect on his visions of cosmic light and landscapes as thresholds between material and spiritual dimensions. Against this background, another echo emerges from contemporary culture: the 2008 video game *The Void* (Ice-Pick Lodge), where color is not simply pigment but life force. In that monochrome world, color appears as a membrane, a lymph-like substance flowing through bodies and environments. To lose color is to lose vitality; without it, one simply dies.

The diptych unfolds in this atmosphere – like sunset and inferno at once – embodying a mood of apocalyptic anxiety. The surface is saturated with crimson tones and layered contexts: a spectral angel-flower remade from the enigmatic Voynich manuscript. This mysterious pre-Renaissance codex, discovered in 1912 by the Polish-Lithuanian antiquarian Wilfrid Voynich, is filled with illustrations of unearthly plants. Alongside it appears the fragile wire fence borrowed from the aforementioned video game *The Void*, and the faint apparition of an AI-generated wolf, flickering between vision and machine dream.

This layering recalls the process of transillumination used in painting restoration, where ultraviolet light reveals what lies hidden beneath the surface – dead layers glowing in fluorescent reds, greens, and blues. Here, too, light acts as revelation, exposing the strata of images, histories, and half-forgotten myths embedded in the painted field.





Colony of Workers

150 × 200 cm / oil on canvas / 2024

I order a wooden frame from a craftsman. When I receive it, I assemble four individual sticks together, until they tighten under the influence of each other – the structure resembles a detail of the frame of a house under construction. Later, I tightly stretch the frame with canvas. The threads of the fabric running along it evenly surround the perimeter defined by the wood. In that way I make a new object again, and it will become part of the pile of completed works, a new dash in the ever-growing pile of wood grooves.

A wood groove is a layer of wood visible in the cross-section of a tree trunk that shows its growth over the years. I pay attention to them every time I receive my wooden frame. This particular rhythm of parallel lines is repeated in the fields plowed by farm gadgets, and in the landscape, where the lines of the horizon, water level, the beginning of a field, and the road horizontals line up on top of each other. Separate pages lie together lengthwise on the sides of books. A neat musical stave, a barcode contains a code, information. At first glance, a flat surface remains just a flat surface, but within it contains the possibility of decoding, just a sight is needed. A barcode can be scanned, books can be read, wood grooves can be counted. While painting grooves, I mixed different paints, drew lines one after the other from top to bottom, arranged stroke after stroke, until they formed a flat area. New work will become a part of a pile of works from wood-

en frames leaning against the wall, growing over the years and will be filled with fresh strips of canvas sides again and again. Sometimes I want to compress such an accumulated collection of works, arrange them neatly, see how side of it looks and whether it can provide aesthetic value. In such arrangement, separate codings as different works will be hidden.

A "Colony of Workers" has settled on cotton and a thick wooden frame. The entire territory of the painting is surrounded by wooden figures, little figurines, gathered in the center and surrounding the perimeter of the canvas on the sides – they are builders, creators, loggers, but also manufacturers, recreating their environment, turning trees into a structure. Having taken over the functions of a mechanical body, they perform work that has its own order, time, and composite elements. The desire to line up neatly can become a way to communicate, to understand – in this way, the complex becomes harmonious and understandable. Certain planned and unitedly decided things can be relied on as a scheme. After completing the work according to this order, others who understand the template will have no doubts. Stretching the canvas, preparing it with gelatin and primer, paintings of quadrilateral shapes on a wooden base – these are ingrained, conventional and constantly reviving rituals of mutual work.



The 2025 edition of the *Young Painter Prize* reflects a deepening commitment to artistic excellence, cross-border collaboration, and cultural resilience. By presenting exhibitions in **Riga, Panevėžys, and Tartu**, the project unites three unique cultural spaces into a shared platform that empowers young painters to tell their stories, explore bold ideas, and engage new audiences.

As the YPP grows in scale and ambition, it remains rooted in a simple belief:

Art has the power to connect, to resist, and to transform.



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