When you get to barren New York, you will share our opinion: We must afforest it! And it could go like this: A fast-growing birch on Times Square, oaks on the fanciest avenues, mountain ash, mountain ash in Greenwich Village, weeping willows in Harlem, pine and spruce on the waterfront, juniper around the slaughter houses, and every place where Latvians gather, ash, linden and maple alleys, suburbs and side-streets – let’s sow it all over with a mixed forest.*

EXHIBITION
Artists:
Daina Dagnija, Yonia Fain, Yevgeniy Fiks,
Hell’s Kitchen collective, Rolands Kaņeps, Boris
Lurie, Judy Blum Raddy, Karol Radziszewski,
Vladimir Svetlov & Aleksandr Zapol (Orbita
Group), Viktor Timofeev, Sigurds Vīdzirkste,
Artūrs Virtmanis
Curators:
Katherine Carl, Solvita Krese, Inga Lāce,
Andra Silapētere
Exhibitions Coordinator:
Whitney Evanson
Graphic design:
Kārlis Krecers

CATALOGUE
Editor:
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Design:
Kārlis Krecers
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Katherine Carl, Solvita Krese, Inga Lāce, Andra
Silapētere, Yevgeniy Fiks, Karol Radziszewski,
Ksenia Nouril, Viktor Timofeev, Vladimir Svetlov &
Aleksandr Zapol, Artūrs Virtmanis
Language editing and proofreading:
Will Pollard

Thanks to Chris Lowery, LanningSmith,
Christian Capelli, Ryan Brennan, LFC painting

Supported by:

PORTABLE LANDSCAPES:
Memories and Imaginaries of Refugee Modernism
19.11.2019—15.02.2020
James Gallery, The Graduate Center, CUNY
When you get to barren New York, you will share our opinion: We must afforest it!
And it could go like this: A fast-growing birch on Times Square, oaks on the fanciest avenues, mountain ash, mountain ash in Greenwich Village, weeping willows in Harlem, pine and spruce on the waterfront, juniper around the slaughter houses, and every place where Latvians gather, ash, linden and maple alleys, suburbs and side-streets – let’s sow it all over with a mixed forest.

This 1959 poem by Gunars Saliņš, a central figure in the exiled Latvian artists’ and writers’ collective Hell’s Kitchen, expresses his desire to bring the Latvian forest to his new home, the urban island of Manhattan, and reveals a longing for his lost homeland. Similar atmospheres dominated the literary and visual artworks made by his comrades, through which they raised questions of belonging and tried to deal with the traumatic experiences of Second World War.

The Hell’s Kitchen collective was active in New York from the 1950s through to the 1970s and combined visual art and text-based practices, bringing together – on an on-again, off-again basis – more than fifteen artists, writers, and literary scholars exiled from Latvia.
They associated themselves with the neighbourhood of Hell’s Kitchen on Manhattan’s West Side, where they would most often meet to organise poetry readings and performance events. For its “Heavenly Pagans,” as the group’s members called themselves, the collective served as a laboratory, stimulating their individual work, and as a platform for collaborations, but it also provided a context through which they were able to strengthen their positions in the local (New York) art scene and thus find ways to put their ideas forward in this new environment. Pushed to search for their own historical, social, and cultural contexts within a new country, they found the Latvian language and their sense of identity to be important tools in developing their collective history and establishing their own autonomous territory, one in which they could document and interpret their experiences.

Through telling the story of Hell’s Kitchen, this exhibition reveals a chapter in the history of Latvian art and culture – one produced as a result of the 1944 Soviet occupation, which drove many artists into exile. This exile situation has been little discussed, but it demands the recontextualization within the histories of migration and diasporic communities. Thus, taking the Hell’s Kitchen collective as a starting point, this exhibition looks at and highlights a number of different personalities and artistic phenomena connected to migration – whether freely chosen or forced. It concerns itself with movements of individuals and groups of artists that have played supporting roles in, but have also worked to diversify and challenge, overarching art historical narratives. In addition to pursuing these stories with the help of archival material, historical works of art and artefacts, the exhibition also gathers works by contemporary artists that address the theme of migration and its attendant questions.

One reason to look back at the history of exile and migration is to try to understand and analyse our current situation. In our current political discourse, and perhaps within society as a whole, there is a tendency to view the so-called “refugee crisis” in Europe and the recent waves of migration to the United States as exceptional and undesirable, and to associate them with negative phenomena such as unemployment, problems with poverty and segregation, “integration”, and even terrorism. But if we take a longer view of history, it is clear that the world has seen countless migrations as a result of war and political and economic change. Exile, diaspora and migration are characteristic elements of global culture, and their manifestations have not only shaped the world map, but have contributed to the development of various trends in art and culture, allowing for the blending and overlapping of cultures and the birth of new ideas and movements.

The lives and works of the exhibition’s protagonists invite us to contemplate the boundaries of collectivist cultures. We are led to ask: Is it possible to look at history as if it is something that exists beyond the borders of nation states and is shared between several places at the same time? An approach that acknowledges this might allow us to reflect differently upon current migrations and to realise that, if we were to take into account the viewpoints of migrant groups and of the countries from which they are fleeing, the contemporary situation would have been interpreted differently.

In the life of a migrant, a forced departure from one’s native land is a milestone that demands the acquisition of new strategies. These may include trying to fall in with a new community as quickly as possible in order to foster social and economic well-being, or, alternatively, trying to retain a sense of one’s distinct national character by attempting to associate them with negative phenomena such as unemployment, problems with poverty and segregation, “integration”, and even terrorism. But if we take a longer view of history, it is clear that the world has seen countless migrations as a result of war and political and economic change. Exile, diaspora and migration are characteristic elements of global culture, and their manifestations have not only shaped the world map but have contributed to the development of various trends in art and culture, allowing for the blending and overlapping of cultures and the birth of new ideas and movements.

The second wave of feminism and the gay liberation movements of the 1970s, while disrupting the structure of the history of twentieth-century modernism, began a discourse that not only touched upon issues of identity but also directed public attention to things outside of what had been presented as the norm. Re-evaluating the developments of this era, the Polish artist Karol Radziwicz retracts the 1977 visit of the Polish artist Natalie L. L. to New York in his film For a Thelma (2009), revisiting the narratives of both Western and Eastern art history, turning to questions of gender, feminist art and the LGBT rights movement. Feminist ideas are explored in the artistic practice of the painter Daina Dagnija – a late member of Hell’s Kitchen collective – who turned her attention to the position of women in society and reacted to various social and political
New York City is arguably one of the most diverse cities in the world. Its five boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and The Bronx are home to over 8.6 million people, who speak over 800 languages. It is a destination inextricable from the American Dream – where everyone can be on Broadway, even if not on stage. Whether by force or by choice, people have settled in New York City for centuries. These influxes have not always been warmly welcomed. This city is built on the land of the Lenape people, who originally inhabited areas of southern New York and eastern Pennsylvania as well as the entire state of New Jersey. Thus, one migration of people precipitated another migration of people, as Europeans colonised what is now known as the United States, divesting indigenous populations of their native land and resources.

The legacies of these past migrations forever mark the city and foreground the exhibition Portable Landscapes: Memories and Imaginaries of Refugee Modernism. Organised by a team comprising curators from the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art in Riga and the James Gallery in New York, this exhibition brings together work by over a dozen artists active in the postwar and contemporary periods. Its selection spans generations, from the legendary painters Sigurds Vīdzirkste (1928–1974), Rolands Kaņeps (1925–2011), and Daina Dagnija (b. 1937) to the emerging artists Artūrs Virtmanis (b. 1971) and Viktors Timofeev (b. 1984), who work avidly across mediums. While the majority of the artists in the exhibition have direct personal connections to Latvia – including Virtmanis and the Orbita Group (founded 1999), who address topics of migration related to the Latvian experience – others, like Yevgeniy Fiks (b. 1972), whose work is inspired by that of the late Yonia Fain (1913–2013), and Karol Radziszewski (b. 1980), represent the wider regional experience of movement. Timofeev even veers beyond lived experience, producing a multi-media installation that points to the failures of language and the inevitable untranslatability of both literal text and figurative meaning across cultures – whether Latvian and American, human or machine. While self-identification as an exile, immigrant, or refugee is critical to some – like the Hell’s Kitchen Group of Latvian artists, poets, and intellectuals who settled in New York after the Second World War and actively cultivated a rich diaspora – others, like Judy Blum (b. 1938) and Boris Lurie (1924–2008), focus on the effects of collective experiences, including the Holocaust, which precipitated waves of migration to the United States, among other countries. As a whole, the artists in this exhibition actively engage with the imaginaries and the realities of the migratory experience to – and in – New York during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
It is appropriate that this exhibition is held at the James Gallery, a crossroads for the academy, art, and life at The Graduate Center (GC) as well as the city as a whole. It is part of the larger City University of New York (CUNY) system of public higher education, which coalesced in 1961, merging four institutions established in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today, over 275,000 degree-seeking students are enrolled across its network of eleven senior colleges, seven community colleges, one undergraduate honors college, and seven post-graduate institutions in all five boroughs.1 It is an institution of and for the people, poised to react and respond to its needs. Exhibiting the New York portion of this multi-part long-term research project, which began in Riga in 2017 and was reconfigured for Berlin in summer 2019, here at the James Gallery, reconnects the city with its pivotal role in the history of exiled and émigré Latvian artists during the postwar period. It also expands upon that network through the inclusion of additional artists impacted by the broader effects of migration after the global turn.

For all the artists in this exhibition, migration is a force of creativity. It requires what the French philosopher Michel de Certeau describes as “making do,” a tactic in which one combines disparate things to “create for himself [sic] a space in which he [sic] can find ways of using the constraining order.”2 This resourcefulness is necessary when faced with the challenges of the unexpected when making a new, even if temporary, home. De Certeau advises that, “Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he [who ‘makes do’] establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity.”3 Historically, this strategy was attractive to artists living under communist regimes in Eastern Europe in the twentieth century. For those who did not have the ability to change their physical location, it was a way for them to mentally relocate in order to preserve their sense of self. “Making do” is a practical tactic. It is a slapdash approach. It is a survival mechanism, initiated under duress. It enables one to claim one’s own space and adapt without necessarily compromising one’s own morals.

In meditating on the topic of migration today, it is difficult to avoid quoting the inimitable Edward Said, who aptly said, “Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions.”4 The diverse range of artists in Portable Landscapes: Memories and Imaginaries of Refugee Modernism mediate multiple dualities concurrently in a world that is increasingly post-essential and post-geographical yet still unabashedly biased and partitioned, both literally and figuratively. Their navigation of this landscape is far from seamless, accounting for blips and bumps along the way. This is because the concept of a homogenous identity is a fallacy, despite contemporary pressures of the all-encompassing global. The factors that create and promote disparities in social, political, and economic conditions persist, steering waves of movement from the gentrification of a single city block to the mass migration of an entire ethnic group. Albeit temporary, this exhibition serves as a commemoration of past migrations, a marking of present movements, and a forecast of the future as we march forward in space and time.

Ksenia Nouril is the Jensen Bryan Curator at The Print Center in Philadelphia. She holds a BA, MA, and PhD in Art History and is a co-editor of Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe: A Critical Anthology (The Museum of Modern Art, 2018).

3 Ibid., 30.


Illustration for the magazine “Kākels.” by Sījards Kalniņš. 1948. Private collection of Ojārs J. Rozītis
Hell’s Kitchen was an informal group of exiled Latvian writers and artists active in New York from the 1950s through to the 1970s. They associated themselves with the Hell’s Kitchen area of Manhattan’s West Side, where most of their gatherings took place. These included meetings at the 41st Street apartment of the poet Linārds Tauņs and the 42nd Street basement studio of the painter Fridrihs Milts.

Information about the formation of the Hell’s Kitchen collective is limited, leaving much room for speculation, but the origins of the collective are linked to Tübingen, a university town in southern Germany where, around 1946, a group of Latvians began their studies after becoming political refugees. Nevertheless, New York City was to become their gathering point. The nucleus of Hell’s Kitchen was formed by the publicist Mudīte Austriņa (1924–1991); the poets Gunārs Saliņš (1924–2010), Linārds Tauņs (1922–1963), Jānis Kretlis (b. 1924), Teodors Zeltiņš (b. 1925), and Baiba Bīcole (b. 1931); the artists Fridrihs Milts (1906–1993), Sigurds Vīdzirkste (1928–1974), Ronalds Kaņeps (1925–2011), Vilis Kruņiņš (1929–1959), Imārs Rumpēters (1929–2018), and Voldemārs Avens (b. 1924); the photographer Bruno Rozītis (1914–1986); the literary scholar Jautrīte Saliņa (1924–2011); the writer and para-psychologist Kārlis Osītis (1917–1997); and the critic Vitauts Kalve (1913–1989). The creativity of the group also served as a magnet for other exiled Latvian authors and artists, who participated in its gatherings when visiting New York City.

The group adopted exile and displacement as their main focal points, both as a collective and in their work as individuals. Activating their historical and cultural knowledge, and in this way distancing themselves from their new environment and its art scene, they constructed new meanings and alternative forms of expression. A statement of their philosophy, their “Heavenly Pagan Cohabitation Manifesto” (1956) contains thirteen points that, written with a great deal of absurdity and humour, demonstrate the group’s creative approaches to the realities they were facing as young artists in exile, which included the complexity of getting their work published in the United States and the need for support from colleagues. In this context, their Latvian language and national identity were important points of reference in their creative production – despite their willingness to be integrated into the local art world and culture. Most of their writings and organized events were in Latvian, which could be interpreted as a rejection of their new context and an expression of obstinacy born from the need to prove their existence as a distinct community within the multicultural environment of New York City. But, in the context of their displacement, their decision to work in their native language could also be seen as part of a hybrid form of self-historicization – a way of engaging with the international art system of which they were part. The material archival evidence gathered for this exhibition allows us to follow individuals and their collaborations, registering their everyday lives, the atmosphere of their gatherings, and their creative approaches to the reality they faced as a result of forced immigration.
Daina Dagnija was born in 1937 in Riga (LV) and has lived and worked in New York (USA) since 1994. Her approach to art is figurative. She has been inspired by her mother’s stories of escaping occupying Soviet forces in 1944, as well as her father’s experiences emigrating to the United States. This experience has become an important point of departure for the artist, who reflects upon it in her paintings, transforming the personal into the symbolic and seeing parallels between her story and those of refugees from other parts of the world who have had to escape their homelands, whether because of war or for other reasons. In New York, Daina Dagnija attended the Art Students League. An important point of reference in her works are projections of emotions, struggles and hopes. Some of the strong motifs drawn from twentieth-century history that she explored in her earlier works, including the connections between the landscape, the city, human suffering, desperation, and uprising. In 1976 and 1977, Daina Dagnija painted Refugees from Vietnam, an important point of reference that became an important point of departure for the artist. The works trace the history of Fain’s escapes and migrations during the twentieth century, which took him from Ukraine to Poland, Lithuania, the Soviet Union, Japan, China, Mexico, and then finally the US. This work is an example of the artist’s approach is figurative. She has painted in 1980. In New York, Daina Dagnija attended the Art Students League. An important point of reference in her development as an artist was a trip to the Japanese island of Okinawa, where she spent a year (1961–1962). The landscape she saw and people she met changed her painting style from abstract to more figurative. In 1976 and 1977, Daina Dagnija painted Refugees from Vietnam, depicting the migration of people seeking refuge from the Vietnam War. She likened these events to those in her own past, saying, “That little girl in the cart could be me.”

Yevgeniy Fiks has produced many projects on the subject of the Post-Soviet dialogue in the West. Fiks’s work has been shown internationally, including in exhibitions in the United States at Winkleman and Postmasters galleries (both in New York), Mass MoCA, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Moscow Museum of Modern Art and Marat Guelman Gallery in Moscow; Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico City; and the Museo Colección Berardo in Lisbon. His work has also been included in the Biennale of Sydney (2008), the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2011), and the Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2015).

The Yonia Fain Map of Refugee Modernism

The Yonia Fain Map of Refugee Modernism is Fiks’s reflection on the legacy of the twentieth-century modernist painter and Yiddish poet Yonia Fain (1914–2013). The work traces the history of Fain’s escapes and migrations during the twentieth century, which took him from Ukraine to Poland, Lithuania, the Soviet Union, Japan, China, Mexico, and then finally the US. The Yonia Fain Map of Refugee Modernism contributes to the mapping of displacements and relocations within last century’s Eastern European Jewish history as well as the lost-and-found trajectories and geographies of twentieth-century artistic modernisms, which were often created by the refugees, the stateless, and artists on the run.


 Courtesy of the artist

The writer and painter Yonia Fain (1914–2013) was born in Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine. He left Ukraine in 1924 at the age of 10 when his father, a Menshevik, took the family first to Warsaw and then to Vilnius to escape war and political unrest. During the war, Fain sought refuge in Kobe, Japan and then in Shanghai, China for six years. There he painted and wrote poetry. His first volume, A tie unter di shtern (“A gallows under the stars”), came out shortly after he emigrated to Mexico in 1947. In Mexico he taught Yiddish literature and attracted the attention of the artist Diego Rivera, who arranged an exhibition of his paintings at the prestigious Palacio de Bellas Artes. Fain’s mural dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust still hangs in the Pantheon Israelita in Mexico City. In 1953, Fain moved to New York and became a professor of art at Hofstra University, where he stayed until his retirement in 1983.

Yonia Fain

Yonia Fain was born in 1914, Kamianets-Podilskyi (UA); died in 2013, New York (USA).

Witness to History, a suite of 8 drawings circa 2000s

Pastel and markers on paper, each 2 x 3”

Courtesy of the artist

Portraits of art at Hofstra University, where he perfected his creative expression, studying the paintings of Duccio, Simoni Martini, Piero della Francesca, Sandro Botticelli and many others. He was also a devoted collector of antiques and artwork; it is said that Kaneps turned his small studio apartment on 76th Street into a sophisticated antique shop.

As of 1949, Rolands Kaneps lived in New York, where he emigrated to Mexico in 1947. In Mexico he taught Yiddish literature and attracted the attention of the artist Diego Rivera, who arranged an exhibition of his paintings at the prestigious Palacio de Bellas Artes. Fain’s mural dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust still hangs in the Pantheon Israelita in Mexico City. In 1953, Fain moved to New York and became a professor of art at Hofstra University, where he stayed until his retirement in 1983.

Rolands Kaneps

Rolands Kaneps was born in 1925, Riga (LV); died in 2011, New Rochelle (USA).

Kaneps’s figurative paintings – in which Biblical and mythical heroes were often depicted naked or half-naked, and highly eroticized – caused some raised eyebrows among the exile community of the time. Kaneps was gay, and this fact has allowed his works to be interpreted in a queer context. Such an interpretation was not possible during his lifetime, as there was no rush to embrace queer communities within the society of the time, and the community of Latvian exiles, where he was mostly known for his work, was rather conservative. It is interesting to note, however, that several of Kaneps’s closer friends in the Hell’s Kitchen group defended his mode of expression, inviting viewers to delve into his multi-layered compositions without prejudice.

Ilze Pētersone

Courtesy of the Latvia National Museum of Art and Ilze Pētersone
BORIS LURIE
Born in 1924, Leningrad (USSR);
died in 2008, New York (USA)

KAROL RADZISZEWSKI
Born in 1980, Bialystok (PL);
lives and works in Warsaw (PL)

VIKTOR TIMOFEIEV
Born in 1984, Riga (LV);
lives and works in New York (USA)

BORIS LURIE was born in Leningrad in 1924 and spent his childhood in Riga, Latvia. This period of his life was marked by tragedy. During the Nazi occupation of Latvia (1941–1944), all the Jews were put in ghettos; Lurie, along with his family, was deported to a concentration camp in Riga, before being moved to Salaspils and Stutthof and finally to Buchenwald-Magdeburg. His mother, sister and grandmother were all killed in Riga, but Boris and his father survived and were able to build their new lives in New York after moving there in 1946. In New York Boris started his artist career by first studying for a short time at the Art Students League, where he attended classes with Georg Grosz. During his lifetime he produced thousands of drawings, etchings, paintings, collages, assemblages, and objects – often with pornographic or Holocaust-related imagery. Lurie wrote a novel, House of Anita (first published in 2016), and a large memoir entitled In Riga (published for the first time in 2019) as well as scores of poems that were collected in the volume Geschriebigtes - Gedichtiges: NO!art in Buchenwald (2003).

Boris Lurie's artistic praxis is strongly linked with his founding of the NO!Art movement, which called for and manifested socially and politically involved art that would resist and combat the forces of the market. In 1970, Lurie took over the leadership of the March Gallery (95 East 10th Street, New York, NY) from Elaine de Kooning, and the gallery became a significant platform for their ideas.

Lurie’s early works already showed the necessity of depicting war time memories. They emphasise the dehumanization that took place during the Second World War, which was to become a central theme in his later career. Lurie started to draw his experiences just after the war in spite of the dominant opinion that this part of history should be forgotten and that he should concentrate on his new American identity. He depicted everything he saw in camps: administrative scenes, executions, moments of fear and episodes of sudden kindness. This exhibition proposes to unfold the importance of these memories and of remembering as a process of healing and a search for meaning.

Lurie's work has been presented in institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Jewish Museum, New York; the New Museum, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and gallery owners that Natalia LL had met with during her stay in the United States.

With only a few black-and-white photographs and some names scribbled in a small notebook, Radziszewski began his artistic investigation. He talked with the artists Marina Abramovic, VitoAcconci, AA Bronson and Carolee Schneemann; the gallery Antonio Homem; the critic Douglas Crimp; and one of the stars of Andy Warhol’s movies, Mario Montez. The protagonists of the film recall the atmosphere of New York in the 1970s, providing a picture of what Natalia LL would have been confronted with at that time. They also analyse what America was “ready for.”

Radziszewski revisits Natalia LL’s memories, confronting both Polish and Western narratives of art history and raising a series of questions on issues such as gender, feminist art, conceptual art and queer art as well as East-West relations and their impact on the art world in the context of the period of the Iron Curtain. The film is both a search for parallels between the artistic experiences of Natalia LL and Karol Radziszewski, as well as an attempt to examine the rules governing the positioning of artists in the art world, both in the 1970s and today.

Karol Radziszewski works with film, photography and installations and creates interdisciplinary projects. His archive-based methodology draws on multiple cultural, historical, religious, social and gender references. Since 2005, he has been the publisher and editor-in-chief of D/K Magazine. He was the founder of the Queer Archives Institute. His work has been presented in institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art and Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; TOP Museum, Tokyo; Whitechapel Gallery, London; the New Museum, New York; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; VideoBrasil, Sao Paulo; Coba Museum, Amsterdam; and Museum of Modern Art, Lodz. He has participated in PERFORMA 13, New York; the 7th Göteborg Biennial; and the 4th Prague Biennial.

The participation of Karol Radziszewski is supported by Polish Culture Institute in New York.

The inspiration and starting point for this film was the Polish artist Natalia LL’s stay in New York in 1977. Thirty-four years later, Karol Radziszewski decided to embark on a journey to America to meet with the artists and gallery owners that Natalia LL had met with during her stay in the United States.

The two-channel generative video scrambles the standard Latin alphabet and uses the resulting characters to display a short text. This text and the new alphabet in which it is written are displayed on separate walls, inviting the audience to walk back and forth between the screens in order to decrypt the writing. However, the pace at which the alphabet degenerates is faster than that of the human capacity to engage in the text’s decryption, rendering the process futile. The alphabet is scrambled by dissecting each of its letters into four quadrants that are then systematically rotated and flipped as well as swapped out for quadrants from other letters at random. The whole installation is flanked by a large pastel wall mural along with a few chairs, evoking a waiting room in an unspecified bureaucratic setting.

Viktor Timofeev works across generative video, games, painting, installation and sound, frequently combining the mediums to recreate semi-fictional environments. He received his MFA at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam and his BFA at Hunter College in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include God Room at Alyssa Davis Gallery, New York (2018); Stairway to Melan at Kim? Contemporary Art Center, Riga (2017); and S.T.A.T.E. at Drawing Room, London (2016). Recent group exhibitions include Cosmic Existence at Den Frie Center For Contemporary Art, Copenhagen (2019); Digital Gothic at Synagogue de Delme, Delme (2019); A Beige Figure in Art at Fondation Ricard, Paris (2018); and Somewhere In Between at Bozar, Brussels (2018).
JUDY BLUM REDDY
Born in 1943, New York (USA); lives and works in New York (USA)

Revisiting The... 2019
Mixed media on canvas
71 × 78”

Courtesy of the artist

The video documents a projective guided tour to the Hell's Kitchen area of New York, home to the group of artists and poets known as Elles ķēķis (“Hell’s Kitchen”). The building in which the poet Linards Tauns lived; Central Park, where Gunars Salīns used to take walks; bars where the members of Hell’s Kitchen used to gather; a drugstore; and the hospital emergency room that Tauns visited on his last day of life: all of these places become material for the visit, which takes place in the reconstructed imagination of the protagonist. In dreams and in texts their thoughts return to the lost paradises of Torņakalns, Aņgenskalns and the Moscow Vorstadt.

Judy Blum Reddy was born to parents who escaped the holocaust by emigrating from Riga, Warsaw and Vienna and changed significantly the social fabric of many countries, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe. Next to the video, a series of letters is displayed showing correspondence between the American side of the family and those who were present at the events that were recorded and the process of remembering carried out by the people who were present at the events that were recorded and serve to link historical traumas across generations.

The holocaust eliminated diversity from cities like Paris, the city where she used to live with her husband, the renowned Indian print-maker, sculptor and teacher Krishna Reddy. As an Indian artist, he faced much harsher immigration procedures in France than Blum Reddy, who was an American citizen. It was a similar experience when they moved to New York in 1974. This visual account, involving fragments from visa application questionnaires and other similar documentation, reflects an experience lived by whole communities of the diaspora. These communities often faced intimidating official procedures, which were “justified” with notions like “order” and “safety”. The work also emphasizes the still pertinent issues of migration and privilege, and the hierarchies within which different passports exist.

JUDY BLUM REDDY
Born in 1943, New York (USA); lives and works in New York (USA)

Vladimir Svetlov
ALEXANDER ZAPOL

Hell’s Kitchen: Excursion in Paradise
2018
Video, 12’

Courtesy of the artists

The Holocaust resulted in the death of millions, eliminating diversity from cities like Paris, the city where she used to live with her husband, the renowned Indian print-maker, sculptor and teacher Krishna Reddy. As an Indian artist, he faced much harsher immigration procedures in France than Blum Reddy, who was an American citizen. It was a similar experience when they moved to New York in 1974. This visual account, involving fragments from visa application questionnaires and other similar documentation, reflects an experience lived by whole communities of the diaspora. These communities often faced intimidating official procedures, which were “justified” with notions like “order” and “safety”. The work also emphasizes the still pertinent issues of migration and privilege, and the hierarchies within which different passports exist.

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The video documents a projective guided tour to the Hell's Kitchen area of New York, home to the group of artists and poets known as Elles ķēķis (“Hell's Kitchen”). The building in which the poet Linards Tauns lived; Central Park, where Gunars Salīns used to take walks; bars where the members of Hell’s Kitchen used to gather; a drugstore; and the hospital emergency room that Tauns visited on his last day of life: all of these places become material for the visit, which takes place in the reconstructed imagination of the protagonist. In dreams and in texts their thoughts return to the lost paradises of Torņakalns, Aņgenskalns and the Moscow Vorstadt.

Judy Blum Reddy was born to parents who escaped the holocaust by emigrating from Vienna to New York. The artist has always made lists – lists of daily actions and artistic actions, and innately amusing lists that spill out patriarchy and forms of discrimination. She has recently shown at the contemporary art festival Survival Kit 10, organized by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga (2019); The Armory Show, NY (2019); The Showroom, London (2018); Villa Vassilieff, Paris (2017); and the Dak’Art Biennale (2016). She has also taken part in many exhibitions, including the seminal WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution at P.S.1/MOMA and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007), among others.

Vladimir Svetlov is a poet and a photographer. In his projects, including those created in collaboration with the poets collective Orbita (Arthur Punte, Serge Timofejev, Alexander Zapol), he works with the environment and the object, exploring the boundaries and perspectives of (poetic) utterance, perception and organization. His poetry has been translated into many European languages. As a photographer, Vladimir is engaged in both staged and documentary photography. Recent projects include: Rīgas šīks, photography installation at the Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (RIBOCA I) (Riga) (2018); The Room with a View, a poetic object as part of Orbita’s exhibition "Where do the poems come from", NOASS Floating Art Gallery, Riga (2018); Actual Spacecore, an installation in collaboration with Orbita at the Cēsis Art Festival (2016); Two somnets from Laguna, a poetic installation in collaboration with Orbita at Ornamental: Purvisi Prize. Latvian Contemporary Art, 56th Venice Biennale (2015); The Twinkling Crystal Of Revelation, installation in collaboration with Orbita at Art Station Dubulti (2015); and Phantoms of Revelations, a documentary musical video at the contemporary art festival Survival K(n)it, Riga (2015).
**On the Bridges of No Return**

2019

Installation: paper, charcoal, wood, cardboard, plexiglass, found objects, photographic prints, steel pins, rubber powder

106” × 72”

Courtesy of the artist

This installation is an attempt to dwell in the work of the Latvian exile poet Gunars Salins, a search light trying to illuminate the conditions of a poet in exile in a different language. It is also a meditation on memory, the irreversibility of time, the mission of the artist (in the context of the existential conditions that arise from geopolitical realities), and the inner forms of resistance available to an individual.

A poetic scale model – literally, a portable landscape – this work consists of excerpts from Salins’s texts, written in charcoal which together forms a “river” and a replica of the bridge over the river Daugava in Riga, Latvia, that was destroyed during the Second World War.

Artūrs Virtmanis works as an installation artist, set designer and art director and has an educational background in sculpture, graphic arts and design. His artworks – visually and metaphorically dense provisional drawing environments that combine relics of sentimental imagery from past eras with cryptic texts, small-scale models and found objects – have been exhibited at The Drawing Center (NY), the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY), the Venice Biennale of Architecture (Venice, Italy), Exit Art (NY), PS122 (NY), the Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum (San Antonio, Texas), the Xin Dong Center for Contemporary Art (Beijing, China), the Morris Museum (NJ), the Jersey City Museum (NJ), the State Museum of Art (Riga, Latvia), Museum Arsenals (Riga, Latvia), Riga Art Space (Riga, Latvia), and Den Frie Center for Contemporary Art (Copenhagen, Denmark), among others.

**Sigurds Vīdzirkste**

Born in 1928, Daugavpils (LV);
died in 1974, New York (USA)

**Untitled**, 1960s

Mixed media on canvas, 30 × 30”

**Untitled**, 1960s

Mixed media on canvas, 20 × 20”

**Untitled**, 1970s

mixed media on canvas, 76 × 66”

Saliņš family collection

In 1950, Sigurds Vīdzirkste emigrated with his family to the United States, and a few years later he started studying at the Art Students’ League. Soon after finishing his studies, he served in the US Navy on an aircraft carrier, ending up in Mallorca, which became an important source of inspiration for his early art. Originally, Vīdzirkste was interested in Abstract Expressionism, but eventually his search for his own unique style led him to practice what he called “cybernetic painting,” combining his knowledge of chemistry, mathematics, music and philosophy. He first exhibited his work in 1964, in a solo show in his studio at 148 Liberty Street, where, next to abstract compositions of circles and stripes, he displayed canvases with dot-like reliefs and metallic powder compressions organized according to different rhythms. This show was followed in 1968 by a solo show entitled *Cybernetic Canvases*, which was held at the Kips Bay Gallery at 613 Second Avenue. This was the first time Vīdzirkste publicly used the term “cybernetics” in relation to his work. All of the exhibited canvases were composed of relief dots on monochromatic, ochre or grey backgrounds, and they were untitled and unsigned; only a number was assigned to each work. Vīdzirkste experimented with various pigments and substances on a grand scale, and such experiments were most likely stimulated by his chemistry studies at the Riga State Secondary School before his emigration in 1944. Vīdzirkste’s cybernetic painting refers to cybernetics as a science that examines machines and living organisms in order to find out how they receive and preserve certain kinds of information before transmitting it and transforming it into signals that make them act in particular way. Unfortunately, it is hard to discern a definite theory behind his dot paintings as he did not expand on his ideas in writing. Nevertheless, each work can be interpreted as an information system similar to that of the punch cards used in early digital computers. With each new painting, he organized dots in different rhythms and sizes and, as Voldemārs Avens, another member of the Hell’s Kitchen group, remembers, he used precise calculations to create each system.
The Amie and Tony James Gallery’s mission is to bring artists and scholars into public dialogue on topics of mutual concern through exhibitions as a form of advanced research. As a window into the research work of The Graduate Center and a hub of international discussion, The James Gallery is central to The Graduate Center’s and the City University of New York’s contribution to the cultural life of New York City. Located in midtown Manhattan at the nexus of the academy, contemporary art, and the city, the gallery creates and presents artwork to the public in a variety of formats. While some exhibitions remain on view for extended contemplation, other activities such as performances, workshops, reading groups, roundtable discussions, salons, and screenings have a short duration. The gallery works with scholars, students, artists and the public to explore working methods that may lie outside usual disciplinary boundaries. All exhibitions and programming are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.

www.centerforthehumanities.org/james-gallery

The Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) is the largest institution for contemporary art in Latvia, curating and producing contemporary art events on a national and international scale. Since 1993, it has researched and curated contemporary art processes both in Latvia and abroad, aiming to provoke critical reflection on issues relevant to contemporary society. The LCCA is widely recognized for its annual international contemporary art festival “SURVIVAL KIT” and its regular exhibitions at the Latvian National Museum of Art, as well as for representing Latvia at the Venice Biennale, Manifesta, São Paulo Art Biennial, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Rauma Biennale of Contemporary Art, and others.

www.lcca.lv