

CURATING RIGA MA 1 PLEASE SHARE YOUR IDEAS HERE

Write a short note (250 words) on one of the following topics.

DEADLINE 31 October

A summary account of ONE example of the exhibition history of one exhibition

The “arcade” as a system of display

The relation between “curating” and “the curatorial”

The organisation and design of the *Survival Kit* exhibition 2025

Copy and paste your work here

please be careful to not write over a colleague’s work.

And keep a copy for yourself of the text you write

Olga

Spatial Organization and Exhibition Design of “Qalqan. Symbols of Crimean Tatars”

The exhibition “Qalqan. Symbols of Crimean Tatars” by Ukrainian artist Rustem Skibin is on view in the Cupola Hall of the Latvian National Museum of Art from 9 to 26 October 2025. The exhibition explores the visual and symbolic codes of Crimean Tatar culture, addressing questions of identity, memory, and historical displacement.

The attic architecture of the space with white brick walls, exposed wooden beams, and diffused daylight, becomes an integral part of the exhibition concept. The minimal display highlights the fragility and purity of the works, while light serves as the primary compositional element.

The exhibition consists of three groups of works: illuminated ceramic shields, vertical textile scrolls reproducing 16th-century tarkhan yarliks and a sculptural element resembling a standard. The ceramic shields are suspended in light boxes, each perceived as an autonomous symbol. The scrolls, hanging between the wooden beams, create a vertical rhythm visually echoing calligraphy. A light movement of the fabric caused by the air conditioning, likely unintentional, adds a sense of vitality and breath to the space.

One of the screens shows a video featuring the artist himself, who speaks about the cultural and political contexts of his work. This element introduces a personal and documentary dimension, connecting the visual and the verbal layers of the exhibition.

Overall the spatial design relies on repetition, pauses, and openness, transforming the gallery into a contemplative space where contemporary art engages in dialogue with cultural memory.



Olga Golovko

Anna

The spatial organization and display design of the exhibition *Neither give nor throw away* by Sophie Calle (Arles, 2024)

The exhibition took place in the vast Roman semi-subterranean galleries beneath the City Hall in Arles. Visitors had to descend into a dark space of incomprehensible shape and unknowable size dimly lit by natural light. Dripping water and the smell of stone and earth contributed to the burial atmosphere.



Visitors were guided by sparse spotlights along the external walls of the tunnels. “*The Blind*” project consisted of framed descriptions of beauty and photographs of the described objects, placed on the ground against the walls—like offerings on graves or at memorials. Some lay flat on the floor. Portraits of blind persons were hung on the stone columns in the center of the tunnels, facing the descriptions and photographs. As a result, visitors had to turn their backs on the portraits to view the representations of beauty, or vice versa—moving between the portraits and the “graves,” crossing dark zones where puddles had formed.

The echoing voice of the artist played in the space, recounting stories of various objects—though their significance remained unclear at first. This audio was part of the second series of the exhibition, located beyond a bend, where the artist’s personal items—wardrobe pieces—appeared. These items seemed to “levitate” between the columns, suspended in spotlights.

The third series of works consisted of large-format photographs placed on the ground and left to decay in the mud and humidity, occasionally marked by visitors’ footprints.

Taja

Geļfande

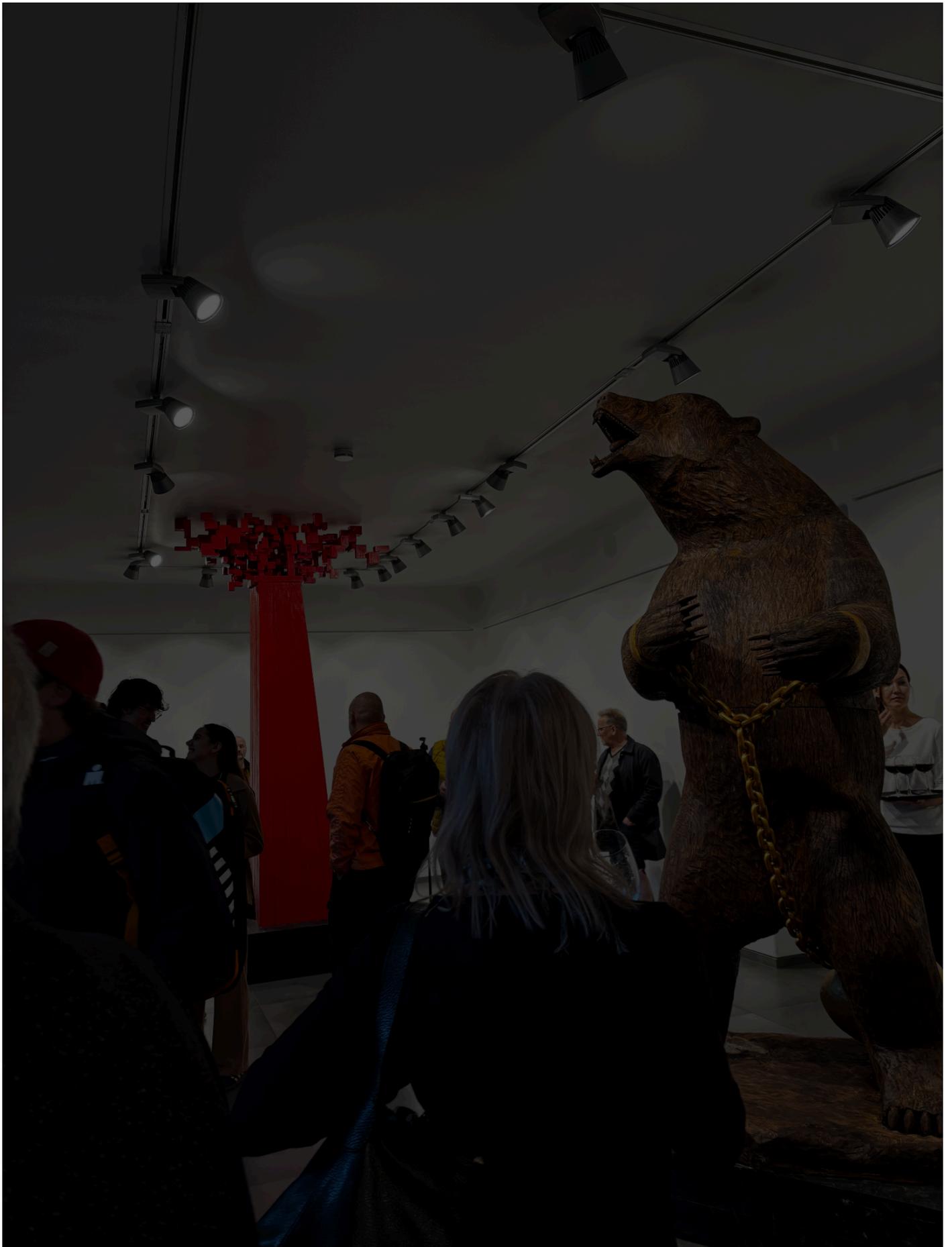
The spatial organization and display design of environmental art exhibition “Shifts” (Riga Contemporary Art Space, 2025)

The concept of the exhibition, according to the curators' description, is “a multi-layer dialogue on the concept of environmental art and its multiple interpretations”. When entering the exhibition, a visitor is presented with a wall of text describing the idea behind it and told that the exhibition can be navigated in any direction - up, down, forward, to the right, and more. The artwork is created by many students from the Department of Environmental Art of the AAL, so the exhibition text is vague enough and simple to communicate different areas of students' artistic interests.

The hall is divided by walls on which artwork is hung and by labels with descriptions hanging from the ceiling. Besides, the space is divided by columns, which is why one of the artworks, the thirteenth column, changes the space and its rhythm. Columns are also used to place artwork. For example, a trash can - an artwork exploring the multi-dimensional nature of a city, is hung on the column, creating a sort of cityscape inside the hall. Two levels of the hall are divided by stairs on which another installation is placed, involving the space in the artwork directly.

Installations containing audio are spread out around the hall, so the sound doesn't overlap, although they still create one soundscape. Many of the installations include TV screens or LED lights of different kinds, which are also spaced out, helping with the perception of different mediums and preventing an overwhelming effect.

Lastly, the hall is dimly lit, there are no windows, and the walls are painted grey. That adds more depth to the space as well as shifts the focus to the artwork.



Zane



Ulmane

Department of Sculpture, MA1

On October 8, the sculptor Aigars Bikše's exhibition "*Historical Memories of the Present*" opened at Galerija Daugava. I attended the opening day; although there were many visitors, it was still possible to fully appreciate the arrangement of the works and understand the exhibition's overall flow.

The gallery consists of two spaces – the permanent collection and the exhibition hall. The exhibition hall covers about 150 square meters, with a ceiling height of three meters. It is an elongated room with five large windows, which provide excellent natural light. The windows also allow passers-by to look inside, creating a sense of openness and inviting them to enter and explore the artworks more closely.

Upon entering the room, Aigars Bikše's works are arranged beginning with a smaller piece placed in the right-hand corner. The sculpture "Restored Heart" (wood, 78 × 39 × 29.5 cm) immediately catches the eye, as it is located closest to the entrance. In the center of the room stands "Snakes Observing the Eternal Flame" (bronze, stainless steel, oak, 235 × 110 × 118 cm). Further along is "Taming the Beast with a Heart" (wood, 255 × 158 × 118 cm) – a large-scale work that captures the attention of every visitor. Its monumental size evokes reflections on human fragility when faced with the power of nature. Interestingly, within this work the artist has incorporated a miniature sculpture titled "The Origins of the Small Red Particles in the Beast" (wood, 7 × 6.2 × 4.5 cm). Next comes the large sculpture "Obelisk for the Red Particles and Its Encounter with the Unknown" (wood, 300 × 160 × 90 cm). At the far end of the hall stands "Squirrels with the Autumn Acorn" (bronze, wood, 49 × 41 × 22 cm).

At first glance, the works seem to be arranged from smaller to larger pieces, yet in reality, the smallest sculpture serves as a kind of destination point toward which the larger works lead.

According to the artist Aigars Bikše, the exhibition explores:

"The image of the animal as both structure and totem. In this exhibition, I examine archetypal images that are ancient and fundamental to human understanding. At the same time, I wish to confront these totemic archetypes with the modern human's perception of social experience, confusion, and uncertainty about the future. The exhibition is an attempt to view humanity both as an ancient programmed machine and as a being possessing an infinite inner spiritual space accessible to all."

Alise

ZĀLĪTE, MA1

The spatial organization and display design of an exhibition that you have seen directly

The most recent exhibition I visited in person was "Simbioze 2.0," a project by an organization Kefirs Studio held at the gallery "Raa" on Matīsa Street 8. The project began this summer at the Skujene parsonage manor where over 50 artists from Latvia and abroad took part in a contemporary art residency. The final exhibition in Riga offered a wider audience the chance to see these works which reflect on the relationship between humans and nature, sustainability — a creative collaboration.

In my opinion the exhibition layout was not entirely successful. The main room is fairly large and irregularly shaped (offering a lot of potential for experimentation) with a small stage and several structural columns. Most paintings were hung on the main walls leaving the center of the space rather empty and underused. Some works were suspended from the ceiling but were placed in corners or even in a separate passageway leading to the courtyard which unintentionally encouraged viewers to overlook or disregard them, separating them from the rest of the exhibition.

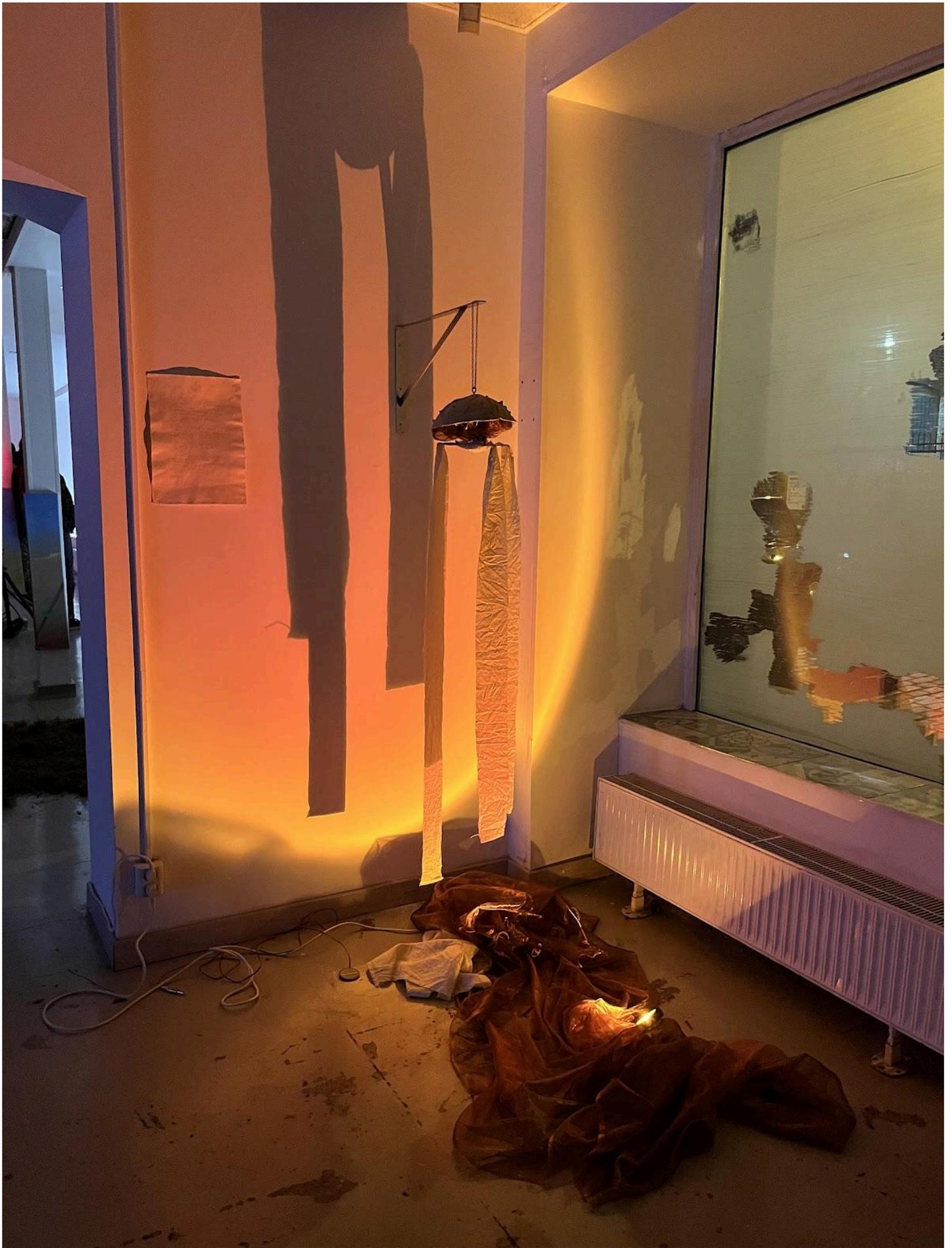
In an attempt to evoke the natural environment in which the artworks were created small patches of moss were placed on the floor. Yet this element felt unfinished and insufficiently developed. To be effective it would have needed to be present throughout the entire space to create a cohesive experience especially for viewers unfamiliar with the project's context.

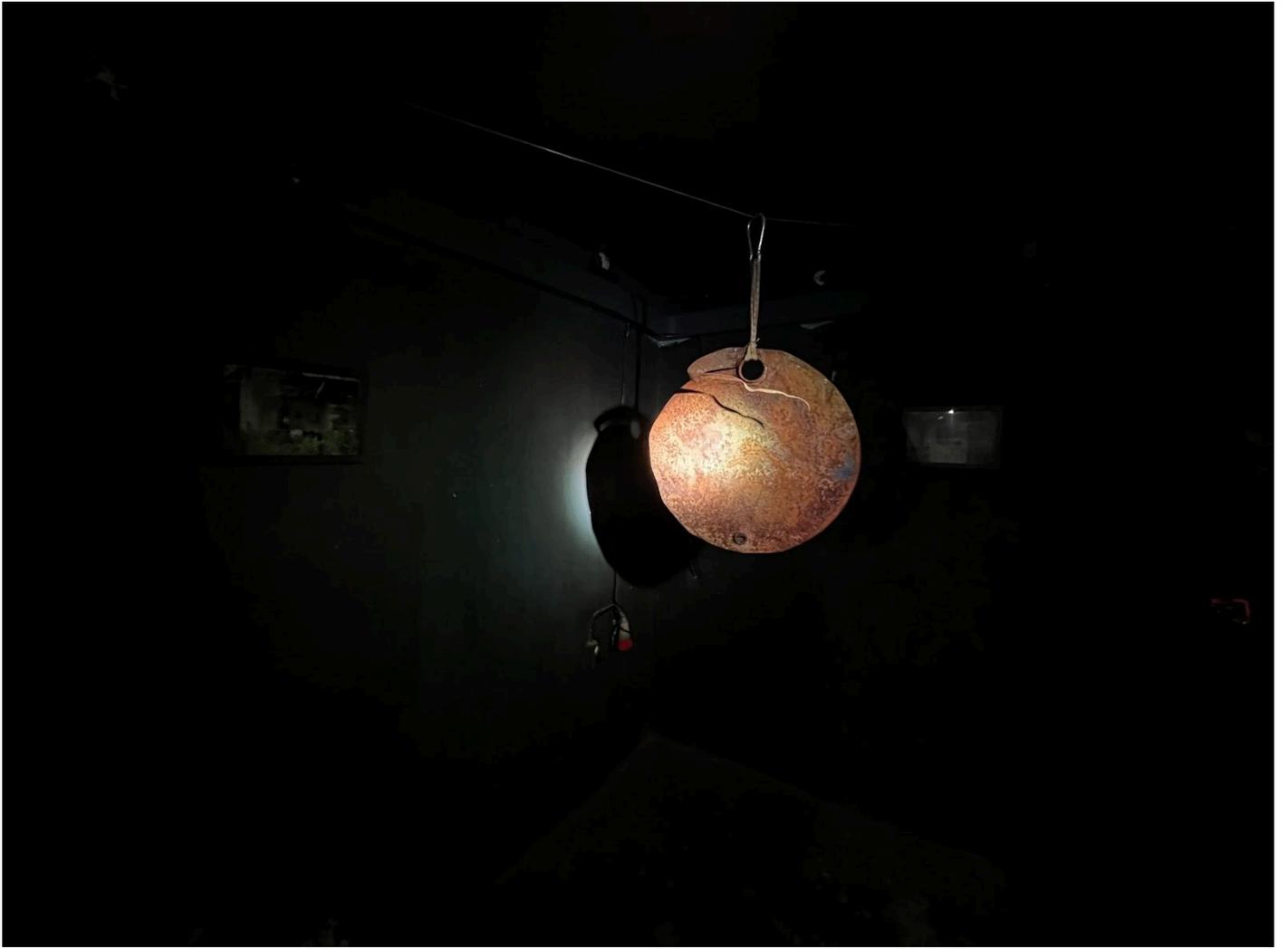
Part of the opening involved sound performances requiring audio equipment but the speakers and microphones were set up in the middle of the room making it difficult to approach some of the paintings. The biggest issue, however, was the lighting. The opening took place in the late afternoon and evening when it was already quite dark. Many of the

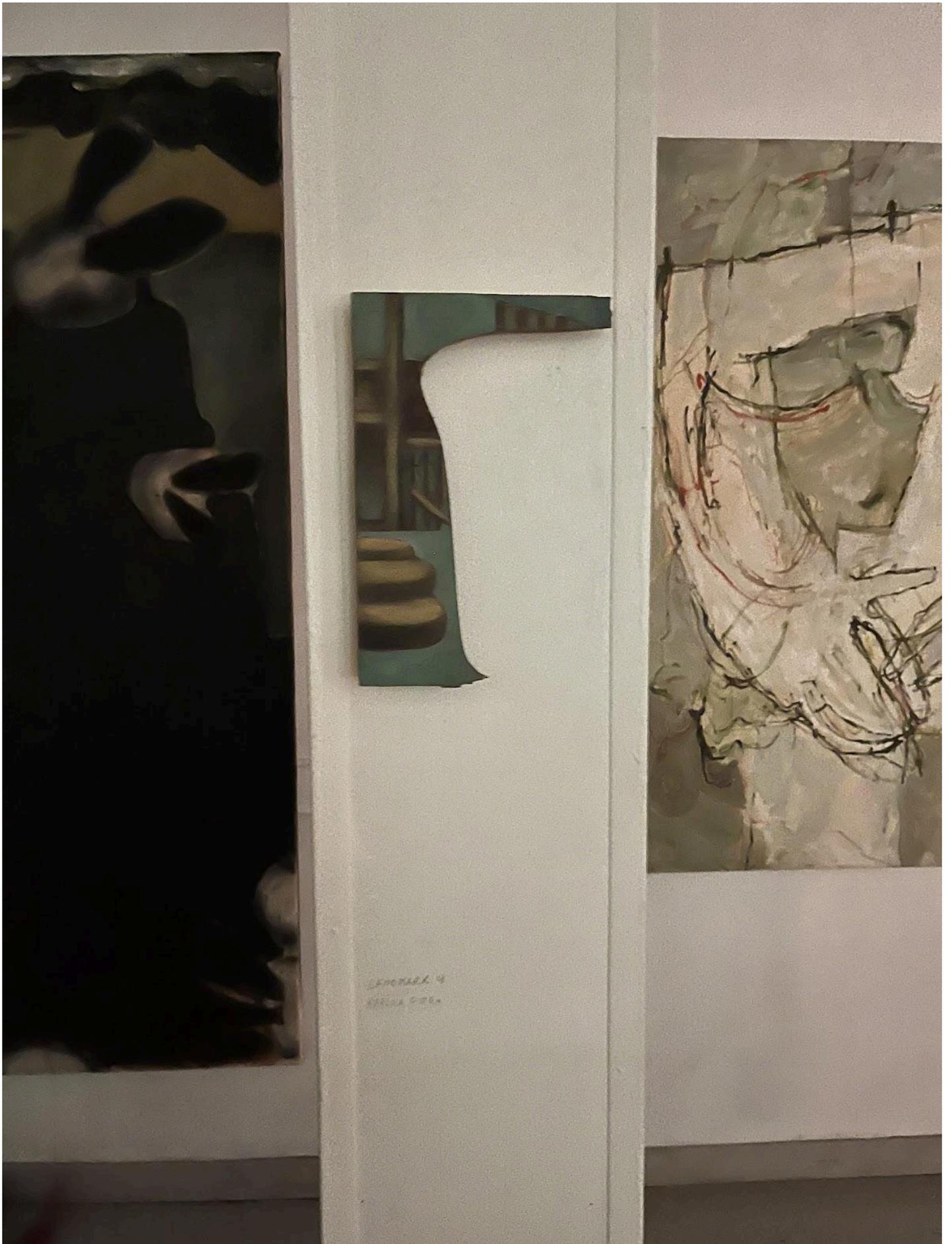
darker paintings were nearly impossible to see clearly, there were only a few lights illuminating the large room. Smaller works, as well as the artists' names and titles written in small pencil text on the white walls were barely visible. I later recognized some of the artworks only through the artist's social media posts where in proper lighting the works became understandable.

Overall, the concept of creating the artworks outdoors would have been communicated much more effectively in a genuinely open-air exhibition setting where natural light and atmosphere could support the intended experience more fully.









Pictures by Alise Zölīte

Elīza

Lāce

The relation between “curating” and “the curatorial”

The distinction between *curating* and *the curatorial* has become central to contemporary curatorial studies, reflecting a shift from understanding exhibitions as logistical undertakings to viewing them as sites of critical knowledge production. According to the lexicon offered by The Curatorial project, in traditional context, *curating* mainly refers to the practical work involved in organizing exhibitions or cultural programs: selecting artworks or materials, arranging displays, coordinating with institutions and artists, and mediating content for audiences, shaping the visitor experience. In other words, curating involves a combination of physical and intellectual labor that focuses on making cultural and artistic material public, be it in an institutional framework or independently.

In contrast, *the curatorial* denotes a broader and more conceptual field. It is described as an expanded framework that enables curating to move beyond conventional exhibition-making and to function as a mode of knowledge production, social and political engagement, and critical inquiry. In this sense, the curatorial highlights the relationships and tensions among people, objects, histories, and ideas. Its purpose is not limited to presenting artworks but extends to provoking reflection and generating new forms of meaning.

This distinction has become central in contemporary discourse because many curatorial programs, conferences, and theorists use “the curatorial” to frame their work as more than the organization of displays. Instead, it is understood as a conceptual practice that includes research, collaboration, and critical intervention. Recognizing this distinction shows how curatorial practice has evolved: exhibition-making is no longer only about assembling objects in space, but about creating contexts, relationships, and questions that invite deeper engagement.

The main reference for this text was the Curatorial Lexicon on The Curatorial website:

<https://www.thecuratorial.net/index/lexicon/curating-swbk8>

Aleksejs

Beļeckis

The spatial organization and display design of the exhibition Skin in the Game, curated by Clementine Deliss, KW, Berlin, 2023

The first look after entering the exhibition space is a backside of the textile work, transparent enough to get an impression of words and letters appearing backwards. This simple yet effective gesture provides the first impression that one enters the space from "backdoors" and changes the perspective on how the exhibition would be experienced further. The work itself leads you to the left side of it to enter the space further. The first glance that hooks the attention are the bright contrasting colors of walls, pink and black, with bright yellow columns. With closer look one can notice that the walls are the leftovers from the previous exhibition as much as all the vitrines and tables here which can be noticed by proportions of works placed inside and traces of history of these walls and furniture that were obviously in use before. The chairs here are the only ones that look fresh, which are the objects of the exhibition rather than furniture. The exhibition itself speaks of skin in the game - it implies that those who seek to benefit from an activity should also be exposed to the same potential losses. In this exhibition both the space and the visitor were dependent on each other, without engagement both would lose. In turn if visitors decide to engage, the exhibition provides endless possibilities. The curator here decided to hook and politicise the exhibition scenography. Rather than creating an expensive set up, money was allocated to artwork budgets and opened an opportunity to explore exhibition space as an active player in the show - everything became important, this exhibition did not erase the environment like white cubes does, it said that those who inhabited the space before are as important as those who inhabit it now. The set up of the exhibition proposes the way of movement leaving the freedom to choose where and how to explore it, creating the gentle choreography of the space and choreography of movement within the space. The exhibition proposes the joint exhibiting method where artworks are not separated by artists rather they create a joint story, a joint archive or collection of works and moodboards of the artists, relating to the discussion of post colonial discourse around public and private collections. The curator's board of thoughts and visual research displayed among artworks, creating a clear and bold curatorial statement. The Metabolic chairs mentioned before are probably one of the main objects to understand the concept. Anyone can inhabit those for as long as they wish provided by the comprehensive amount of texts, literature, even videos, with freedom not to use any of those as those can be used as a possibility to rest (it's 4th floor). Such chairs means more than it can look, here Deliss references the very core of the history of exhibition making when museums appeared simultaneously with the department stores and still both museums and exhibitions keep the same consumerism principle of keeping continuous flow after entering those. By putting these chairs she opposes this practice and makes a political gesture by saying stop to the flow and claiming the right of knowledge to the exhibition or museum visitor rather than empty watching. A seated patron, after all, is not likely to be a consuming patron, as Deliss writes, consumer culture requires bodies on the move, not bodies in repose.

