

Dear Visitor,

Welcome to the house of patina, dust, and sound. The traces and residue of thirty years' worth of visitors (their footsteps, their gazes, their touch) have been accumulating here since 1989. The previous two years of an ongoing renovation remain in view, too, not to forget the looming horizons of the future.

The expanded field of return(s)—in history, in life, in (human) relationships, is a key theme here. Things emerge in transit, conjunction, and closure, seen and unseen, followed by angst, grief, and will for reconstruction.

There are numerous characters (images, objects, situations, debris) in the building. The location of these characters is not always fixed—and this is why there is no definitive exhibition map. Instead, it is just a list of characters as their position changes, and roles are not entirely determined (I would suggest going online for the living artists' bios if required, ask myself or others around.)

As you will wander around this marvellous construction of Lithuanian Postmodernism, built by Eugenijus Miliūnas, Saulius Juškys, and Kęstutis Kisielius, you will find those characters, and they will find you. The building is open for two nights only—whenever you enter it again in the future, it will be another world: the post-renovation-one and, hopefully, post-war too.

The legendary 'Žmogus' sculpture by Petras Mazūras in front of the building is an amalgam of contradictory stories. Some say it was supposed to be an alien, 'a boy from the stars', some, a veiled allusion to the Christian cross. Others remember its late arrival to the building, landing like a UFO in the final stages of the building's construction. It remains one of the most controversial pieces of public sculpture in Lithuania.

The story of Francesco Rustici's (Siena 1592–1626) painting in the collection of the Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery displays a similar genealogy of twists in terms of its authorship and provenance:

The Concert, *circa 1625*
Oil, canvas, 140 × 200

Purchased from Jadvyga Hutten-Čapskienė's (1866–1943) collection at Beržėnų mansion.

In the beginning, it was considered to be the work of an unknown artist. Around 1976, Russian art

historian Irene Linnik suggested the name of the artist was Tommaso Salini (1575–1625), while the current attribution of the painting was suggested by Viktorija Markova.

Who knows what this painting may become in another 50 years? Who knows who will be its author then? And who knows what kind of music will be playing in the room by then?

Music and sound are at the core here. Almost every room has a sound system, turning the building into a large-scale instrument for listening and playing. Tarek Atoui, Pan Daijing, Ragemore w/ Gediminas Žygyus activate the space at different times (see the line-up). When Pan Daijing came for a site visit to the Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery last Spring, she compared it to *Blade Runner*, the movie. Landing in Kaunas two months later, Tarek Atoui found himself closer to the *Mission Impossible* scenario. Meanwhile, enamoured with Gregg Araki's 90s, Ragemore wondered what Courtney Love sounds like without a guitar. No doubt, these perceptions will manifest in their sets: composite, performative, spilling through and around.

(Ragemore w/ Gediminas Žygyus' performance will be preceded by the listening session where a chosen soundtrack will be listened to carefully and discussed.)

In another room, Jill Mulleady is making a series of paintings. It is a series of eyes being dissected—they face a collection of frames dissected from the paintings. The eyes on the wall will remain visible for a few days only, raw and naked. 'Mira,' says Jill in Spanish, 'it is about looking at things, about a miracle and mirage.' When two weeks later, she will open a big solo show of paintings in New York, her eyes may still be eyeing the stacks of frames in Kaunas, yet stay unseen.

'It is extremely raw' – Ariana Reines, one of the most recognised international poets, acknowledges in the tonality of her two recordings (temporarily untitled) made for 'Mars Returns'. In her poetic drifts across mythology, personal life, her first visit to Lithuania to attend a poetry summit and visit her Jewish great-grandfather's land, astrology, etc., she speaks about Mars conducting feminine energy. She speaks about Medea, the iron in women's bodies, planetary and menstrual cycles, and the naked will. 'The will to trust, to feel, to go on.'

Three other long-unseen paintings from the collection of Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery follow Ariana's voice as she walks through a parking lot in Los Angeles:

Leonardo Carlo Coccorante (Naples 1680–1750)
Stormy Sea Coast
Oil on canvas

Ernst Karl Eugen Koerner
(*Stibé, West Prussia 1846–1927 Berlin*)
The Large Abu Simbel shrine in Nubia
Oil on canvas, 1901

Sofija Veiverytė (Kaunas 1926–2009 Vilnius)
The portrait of violinist Raimundas Katilius
Oil on canvas, 1984

The selection of these paintings was made in a conversation with Seiko and Casio together with the very generous and caring team of the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum in Kaunas.

New stained glass pieces by Marija Olšauskaitė were still cooling down as this introduction was being written. Their glow is reddish, too, lit by Eugenijus Sabaliauskas and refracting the multiplicity of times we encounter when we enter a museum. They could have been here already in 1989 or 1997, and they may be here in 2049, projecting different effects each time.

‘I am thinking about how to express the world, with the world. Separating time to work feels like not being in the world. But I don’t think I could do that before recently; working has to be weed-like, growing between bricks and cracks,’ sculptor Jason Dodge once said. Today is wondering in an environment that sounds like his concept in reverse, shuffling his traces. ‘I only need fragmentary moments of revelation, as opposed to duration.’

I sense that ‘Mars Returns’ plays both ways—as revelation and duration (and vanishing)—in alternating patterns as if inspired by each character in the building and each conversation leading to it—one of them is with Seiko and Casio:

Seiko and Casio
(*Gintaras Didžiapetris and Elena Narbutaitė*)
bypskupsnschjarrbagalugabum-
bumgingingnglrbinglebel2022

A Landscape for a Warrior But It Needs
No Warrior, 2022
Paper, 300 × 297 cm

Alix Eynaudi specialises in (deep) choreographic hanging-out sessions. In ‘Mars Returns’, she opens the pages of a new publication designed by Goda Budvytytė and navigates the building with a bracelet received from her grandmother Charlotte. In Alix’s own words:

‘Bead threader Charlotte Eynaudi lived on the Côte d’Azur in Nice for most of her life. She would go from palace to palace at dawn in order to fabricate fake jewellery that the rich, mostly Russians, tourists would exhibit at galas while keeping the original pieces in their safe, back at the hotel. Years later, after having carried her name across many dances, I inherited her watch. My mother decided to melt some more gold (probably some teeth), get rid of the watch, and complete the gold chain, forging a form that registers the presence of what has dissolved, a form that also imprints the loss and the silence surrounding this disappearance in its very presence.’

Such forms in melting, moulding, and disappearing are sensible throughout the entire building. In one of the rooms, Valzhyna Mort, a poet born in Belarus (lives in the US), scrolls through language and memory, lit by the night sky; in another dark room, Artūras Raila meticulously reconstructs what he had seen in the night sky in 1980. His work is called *The Primitive Sky*. Together with John Menick, for whom ‘Mars Returns’ also serves as a return (he did a show at Tulips & Roses gallery in Vilnius more than a decade ago), Artūras touches the sky very palpably and very differently, in an alternating pattern. In Menick’s words:

‘Albedo Features (The Mars Project) draws on thousands of images of Mars taken over fifteen years by a single NASA orbiter. Shown in rapid succession, the black-and-white images appear scaleless and nonrepresentational, reducing the planet to a flickering inkblot in the sky.’

Follow the flickering inkblot across these rooms, enjoy the drift, make wishes for the future of this gallery, make friends too, and return whenever the time is ready.

Raimundas Malašauskas

