

Mars is one of the most contested bodies in the solar system. Its role in the popular and scientific imagination has far surpassed other terrestrial planets. In different cultures and at different times, it has been known by many names, but in the Western Hemisphere it is almost exclusively named after the Roman god of war. The spectrum of fantasies that Mars has evoked is broad and contradictory: humans have never stopped wondering whether it hosts life, and have both seen utopian societies living on the red planet, and prepared it as home to more advanced alien societies, and prepared ourselves for an invasion of blood-thirsty Martians (although in more recent times we've been investigating the possibility of living there ourselves). I have even experienced the scent of Mars, created by an artist. Meanwhile, astrologically speaking, the return of Mars implies the processes of returning, purging, increasing complexity and bringing resolution to past experiences. Thus, in cultural astronomy and popular imagination we are facing a very rich landscape, by far exceeding the actual surface of Mars (as we know it).

Architecture is another contentious area. The Mykolas Zilinskas Art Gallery was originally developed to house a Lithuanian art collector who lived in West Berlin after the end of the second world war. The gallery was designed during the collapse of the Soviet Union and was completed in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1989—the same year the Berlin Wall crumbled, symbolically marking the end of the Cold War. Over the ensuing 31 years, the venue has witnessed many things and in 2020 was closed for reconstruction. When it reopens temporarily for *Mars Returns* it will find itself in a very different world. The Cold War has been replaced by an escalating actual war in Ukraine, arguably a continuation of unresolved 20th century political conflicts amplified by imperialist and colonialist drives. Currently, these unlearned lessons are returning us to the 20th (or even 19th) century, and bring us closer to another nuclear tragedy.

A few months ago, an international group of artists were invited to explore and inhabit the Mykolas Zilinskas Art Gallery through sound, performance, film, and poetry. Traces of the gallery's history, all types of relics, its current state of transit, and possible futures were brought into the conversation. The architecture of the Eugenijus Milūnas-designed building was amplified through sound and the return of artworks from Zilinskas' collection. The feeling evoked was one of communal, restfulness and careful observation of bodies—celestial, artistic, earthly. Healing was attempted through communal gathering, listening, and grieving. The building of the gallery will turn into a large-scale listening and playing device operated by Tarek Atoui and Pan Dajing when the sun goes down. We don't know what names Mars will be given by future generations, but new constellations of the current moment may sparkle over the course of two nights.

More welcoming to humans than the planet Mars, Mykolas Zilinskas Art Gallery will be open 5–11 pm on 26 August, and 1:30–11 pm on 27 August, with audio solo sets by Atoui (26 August) and Dajing's (27 August) each of those nights at 7 pm.

Mars Returns

TWO DAYS FOR OBSERVING BODIES—ARTISTIC,
CELESTIAL, EARTHLY
26–27/08/2022
Mykolas Zilinskas Art Gallery
Kaunas

Valžyna Mort, Jill Mulleady, Marija Olšauskaitė,
curated by Raimundas Malašauskas

Leonardo Carlo Coccorante, Pan Dajing, Jason Dodge,
Ariana Reines, Francesco Rustici, Seiko and Casio,
Sofja Veiverytė, John Menick, Tarek Atoui, Ragemore w/ Gediminas Žygas, Artūras Ralša, Leonardo Carlo Coccorante, Pan Dajing, Jason Dodge, Ariana Reines, Francesco Rustici, Seiko and Casio, Sofja Veiverytė, John Menick, Valžyna Mort, Jill Mulleady, Marija Olšauskaitė, curated by Raimundas Malašauskas

11/22

A bullet's like a planet
Orbiting the brain
No heart will go unpunished
Tho it never enter in

For tho it didn't enter
Yet it did & does & shall
For tho we only saw it
It is moving thru us still

MISTRAL

Haven't you traveled enough?
Don't you understand by now

That dust can fall on anything
In any country, on any day of the year?

That wherever you go there will be
Diseased ground your feet

Will have to stand on? Don't you see
That between the people who want

To be machines and the machines
That want to be people women

Are still, still at this late date
Running?

TENTH BODY

I was a double of this world
And though I shrank from your gaze

Stiffening, I know, visibly
When you aimed your thing at me

Let the record show
I caused my flesh to thicken to protect

What you and your connivances
And everything they presumed about who

I was and what I wanted to buy and why
Would otherwise have dispersed, translated

Moreover into money for you
And not for me, though money

Gold as it is was the least
Of what I sought. I might as well give

You the lion's share of the grain
From the land I now plow like an old

Serf. But I am no different
From anybody else. What we till

Now is spiritual, is cultural, immaterial
Partaking nevertheless of pain

Like what shimmers at my base
An obscure future even now

Exceeding all predictions
As I write you

Ariana Reines

MEDEA

[...]

I have to say our ancestors
showed very little sense
when they invented melodies
for revels, festivals, and feasts,
the sweetest sounds in life,
but made no songs or harmonies
to soothe the bitter grief
that leads to death and devastation
and brings whole houses down.

[...]

Euripides

ATTEMPT AT GENEALOGY

[...]

Put your bones into braids of graves, woods.
Put your bones into braids of graves, ravines.
Put your bones into braids of graves, fields.
Put your bones into braids of graves, swamps.

Put your graves into braids of bones, mother.
Put your graves into braids of bones, moth.
Put your graves into braids of bones, ghost.
Put your graves into braids of bones, guest.

Braid your bones neatly.
Braid your bones bravely.
Finger-comb your bones
into neat braids
in our woods, ravines, fields, swamps.

[...]

Valzhyna Mort