

RIGA
PERFORMANCE
FESTIVAL
STARPTELPA

AESTHETICS OF PROTEST AND LEGAL MOBILIZATION

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

ART ACADEMY OF LATVIA - K2,
KALPAKA BULVĀRIS 13, RIGA
28-29 MAY, 2026



THURSDAY, 28 MAY 2026

09:00–09:30

Registration & Coffee

09:30–09:45

Opening Remarks Laine Kristberga and Michal Stambulski

PANEL 1: PERFORMATIVE GESTURES AND POLITICAL EXPRESSION

09:45–11:15

Laine Kristberga (Latvia)

The Power of Performative Gesture: From Mimesis to Political Action in the Baltic Context

Ingrida Ragelskienė (Lithuania)

Theatre as Anarchic Practice: Benas Šarka's Gliuknamis and the Aesthetics of Protest in Post-Soviet Lithuania

Leena Kela (Finland)

One Year Demonstration – Durational Performance Between Art, Life, and Activism

11:15–11:30

Coffee Break

PANEL 2: COURTS, LAW, AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE

11:30–13:00

Michał Stambulski (Netherlands/Poland)

Irony, Provocation, and Protest: Intersections of Political Aesthetics and Law

Marta Kolankiewicz (Sweden/Poland)

Court as an Arena and Trial as an Event for Protest

Natalia Cwicinskaja (Poland)

Protesting the Unaccountable: Aesthetic Resistance and Legal Imagination in Territories Governed by De Facto Authorities

13:00–14:00

Lunch Break (Art Academy of Latvia)



THURSDAY, 28 MAY 2026

PANEL 3: LAW, VISUALITY, AND PROTEST

14:00–15:30

Rebecca Munro (UK)

'Crips Not Cuts': Protest, Austerity, and Legal Mobilisation in the UK Disability Rights Movement

Viktorija Soņeca (Latvia)

Self-defending Democracy and the Limits of Protest

Oliver James Francis-Jones (UK)

Visual Protest on Trial: The Criminalisation of Expression in the United Kingdom

15:30–15:45

Coffee Break

PANEL 4: AFFECT, MEDIA, AND RESISTANCE

15:45–17:15

Nilou Yekta (Netherlands/Iran)

The Final Res(is)ting Place: Funeral Videos as Digital Protest in Iran

Luisa Voss (Sweden/Germany)

Raging as a Verb – Thinking Through Rage as Aesthetic Resistance

Clara Vale Corvello

Resisting Colonialism: Palestinian and Pro-Palestinian Artistic Expressions

17:15

End of Day 1 (transition to evening event)

18:00

Starpelpa programme of live performances at St Savior's Anglican Church



FRIDAY, 29 MAY 2026

10:00-10:15

Morning Coffee

PANEL 5: ART, INSTITUTIONS, AND PROTEST CULTURE

10:15-12:15

Mafalda Garcia (Portugal/Latvia)

Breaking Borders Through Art

Riina Oruaas (Estonia)

Balancing on a Thin Line: Cultural Institutions in Protest Culture

Małgorzata Sady (Poland)

Art as a Powerful Tool to Protect and Change the World

Mateusz Kolasiński (Poland), Matilda Senatore (Argentina),

Suzanne Pijp (Netherlands), Carlijn Katerberg (Netherlands),

Borja Sanchez de Prado (Mexico)

Students' War on Two Fronts: Protesting the Genocide of
Palestinians under University Surveillance

12:15-12:30

Coffee Break

PANEL 6: POLITICAL PERFORMATIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY ART

12:30-13:30

Evarts Melnalksnis, Elizabete Šiklova, Luīze Šnore,

Anna Lauska (Latvia)

Political and Its Performativity in Contemporary Latvian and
European Performing Arts: Perspectives from Practitioners

Emmanuelle Waeckerlé (UK)

What Can We Do Now That We Aren't the World

13:30-14:30

Lunch Break (Art Academy of Latvia)

FINAL SESSION: DISCUSSION & CLOSING

14:30-16:00

Roundtable Discussion: Aesthetics of Protest Today: Between
Art, Law, and Political Agency

16:00

Closing Remarks / End of Day 2 (transition to evening event)

18:00

**Starptelpa programme of live performances at
St Savior's Anglican Church**



CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

DAY 1 – PANEL 1: PERFORMATIVE GESTURES AND POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Laine Kristberga (Latvia)

The Power of Performative Gesture: From Mimesis to Political Action in the Baltic Context

This paper examines the performative gesture as a meaningful and interpretable sign in artistic and political contexts. It begins with a theoretical reflection on gesture as one of the earliest forms of human communication, drawing on mimesis and pantomime as pre-verbal systems of embodied expression. Rather than merely representing meaning, gesture is examined as a semiotic and affective act that produces meaning through codification and collective recognition.

Building on this framework, the paper traces how gesture evolves beyond imitation into an autonomous expressive form. The first case study focuses on pantomime practices in Soviet Latvia and Lithuania, particularly the work of Modris Tenisons and Roberts Ligers, who developed a more abstract and symbolic gestural language under conditions of ideological constraint. The second part examines late Soviet civic actions, including the Baltic Way and the Environment Protection Club's Prayer by the Sea, where coordinated bodily gestures articulated political unity and resistance.

The analysis culminates in the example of Māris Ķirsons' protest in Madrid (1980), where the body itself became the medium of political address. The paper argues that performative gesture is a liminal practice between art and politics, whose efficacy lies in the enactment of presence and the transformation of public space.

Keywords: performative gesture, mimesis, pantomime, Baltic Way, political performance

Laine Kristberga is a researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia, and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education Sciences and Psychology. She is also curator of the Riga Performance Festival Starptelpa and director of the Latvian Centre for Performance Art.

Ingrida Ragelskienė (Lithuania)

Theatre as Anarchic Practice: Benas Šarka's Gliuknamis and the Aesthetics of Protest in Post-Soviet Lithuania

This paper explores the work of Lithuanian theatre artist Benas Šarka as a form of anarchic cultural practice emerging in the transitional conditions of the late Soviet and post-Soviet period. Focusing on the Klaipėda-based performance space Gliuknamis, the study examines how Šarka's work operates at the intersection of theatre, performance art, and ritual action.

Rather than engaging in explicit political critique, Gliuknamis was a self-organised environment that challenged institutional norms of authorship, production, and spectatorship. Through material experimentation, physical endurance, and the transformation of everyday spaces into temporary performative sites, Šarka's practice shifted theatre from representation to lived event.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives from anarchist anthropology and performance studies, the paper argues that Gliuknamis constitutes a form of aesthetic protest. It reconfigures the conditions of participation and collective presence, operating as a parainstitutional micro-society embedded within but not governed by formal structures. In this sense, the work can be understood as a laboratory for alternative modes of social organisation and cultural production.

Keywords: anarchic practice, theatre, post-Soviet culture, Benas Šarka, performance art

Ingrida Ragelskienė is a theatre scholar, dramaturg, and PhD candidate at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. Her research focuses on contemporary performance practices and theatre in post-Soviet contexts.

Leena Kela (Finland)

One Year Demonstration – Durational Performance Between Art, Life, and Activism

This paper examines the protest-based performance One Year Demonstration (2017–2018) as a form of durational artistic practice situated between art, activism, and everyday life. The work consists of a year-long series of daily protests performed by a single individual holding a blank sign, documented through photography and disseminated via social media.

The study explores how duration, repetition, and persistence reshape the language of protest. Rather than focusing on singular, spectacular acts, the performance frames protest as an ongoing process embedded in time and routine. It highlights how exhaustion, resilience, and uncertainty become integral elements of the aesthetic and political dimension of the work.

The paper also addresses the role of documentation and digital circulation in extending the performance's reach and transforming its relationship to audiences. Social media are both archive and site of engagement, blurring distinctions between representation and reception.

The analysis argues that durational performance offers an important framework for understanding contemporary protest practices, which increasingly operate as long-term, embodied processes rather than immediate interventions.

Keywords: durational performance, protest art, repetition, social media, activism

Leena Kela is a performance artist, curator and doctoral graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki. She is the artistic director of the New Performance Turku Biennale and director of the Saari Residence.

Michał Stambulski (Netherlands/Poland)

**Irony, Provocation, and Protest:
Intersections of Political Aesthetics and Law**

This paper examines the relationship between political aesthetics and law through three key strategies: irony, provocation, and protest. Grounded in the Polish context, it analyses how aesthetic practices engage with legal frameworks and become subject to juridical evaluation.

The study draws on three case studies. The Orange Alternative's happenings demonstrate irony as a form of resistance through ambiguity and ridicule. The trial of Dorota Nieznalska illustrates provocation as a deliberate crossing of moral and legal boundaries. The "Rainbow Madonna" case exemplifies protest as the reappropriation of cultural symbols for political mobilisation.

Together, these cases show how aesthetic conflict becomes institutionalised within law. Each strategy reveals different legal responses to artistic expression, highlighting how law translates aesthetic practices into formal categories and judgments.

The paper argues that political aesthetics not only challenges legal frameworks but also becomes shaped by them, exposing the dynamic interplay between art, protest, and juridical power.

Keywords: political aesthetics, law, protest, irony, provocation

Michał Stambulski is Assistant Professor in Legal Theory at Erasmus University Rotterdam. His research focuses on rule of law, constitutionalism, and legal mobilisation in Europe.

Marta Kolankiewicz (Sweden/Poland)

Court as an Arena and Trial as an Event for Protest

This presentation examines the role of legal arenas in shaping contemporary protest movements, focusing on the interaction between progressive and regressive mobilisations in Poland. Drawing on a broader comparative research project on legal mobilisation in Europe, the paper investigates how courts function not only as institutional sites of adjudication but also as performative spaces where political struggles unfold.

The analysis follows selected court cases related to abortion rights, LGBTQ+ issues, and migration, exploring how legal proceedings become focal points for public mobilisation. Trials are approached as events that generate narratives, attract attention, and enable the articulation of competing political claims. In this sense, juridification is understood as an ongoing process in which social movements increasingly engage with legal frameworks to advance their agendas.

Particular attention is given to the tensions between movements with opposing ideological positions, highlighting how both deploy legal tools, strategic litigation, and public campaigns. The paper argues that the courtroom is a contested arena where legal reasoning, symbolic action, and political protest intersect.

By situating trials within broader protest cultures, the study contributes to understanding how law becomes a medium through which social conflict is negotiated and made visible.

Keywords: legal mobilisation, courts, protest, Poland, juridification

Marta Kolankiewicz is Senior Lecturer and Director of Studies at the Division of Gender Studies, Lund University. Her research focuses on legal mobilisation, gender politics, and social movements in Europe.

Natalia Cwicinskaja (Poland)

Protesting the Unaccountable: Aesthetic Resistance and Legal Imagination in Territories Governed by De Facto Authorities

This paper investigates protest practices in territories governed by highly institutionalised but unrecognised political entities. In such contexts, residents are subject to state-like authority while lacking access to international legal mechanisms of accountability. This creates a structural paradox in which governance is present, but legal recourse is limited.

The study examines how protest practices take on functions traditionally associated with legal institutions. Through performative and visual strategies, such as public assemblies, slogans, and symbolic acts, protesters translate social grievances into juridical claims. These actions not only address local authorities but also target transnational audiences through digital circulation.

Drawing on case studies from regions such as Transnistria and Abkhazia, the paper argues that protest is a form of legal imagination. It produces alternative modes of articulating rights, documenting harm, and asserting accountability in contexts where formal legal structures are inaccessible or ineffective.

The analysis contributes to broader debates on law beyond the state, demonstrating how aesthetic resistance becomes a key mechanism for negotiating power and visibility.

Keywords: de facto states, protest, legal imagination, resistance, sovereignty

Natalia Cwicinskaja is an Associate Professor of International Law at the Faculty of Law and Administration, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where she is affiliated with the Department of International Law and International Organisations.

Rebecca Munro (UK)

**'Crips Not Cuts': Protest, Austerity, and Legal Mobilisation
in the UK Disability Rights Movement**

This paper explores the intersection of protest culture and legal mobilisation within the UK disability rights movement. Since 2008, austerity policies have significantly affected disabled people, prompting sustained protest actions by groups such as Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC).

The study examines how protest practices, ranging from occupations and blockades to performative slogans, generate new forms of legal engagement. It argues that protest is a site of legal learning, where lived experiences of injustice are translated into legal claims and institutional strategies.

By tracing the relationship between street-level activism and formal legal processes, including judicial review and engagement with international human rights mechanisms, the paper demonstrates how aesthetic and performative dimensions of protest contribute to reshaping legal discourse.

The analysis highlights the capacity of protest cultures to expand the imaginative possibilities of law and citizenship, particularly under conditions of systemic crisis.

Keywords: disability activism, austerity, legal mobilisation, protest, human rights

Dr Rebecca Munro is Associate Professor at the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on law, social movements, and political participation.

Self-defending Democracy and the Limits of Protest

This paper examines the limits of protest within contemporary democratic frameworks through the concept of self-defending democracy. While protest movements are commonly understood as expressions of democratic pluralism protected under Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 12 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, democratic systems are not obliged to tolerate actions that threaten their constitutional foundations.

Focusing on restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly, the paper analyses key judgments of the European Court of Human Rights alongside case law of the Latvian Supreme Court. It demonstrates that the legality of restricting protest is assessed not only in relation to the declared aims of an assembly, but also through consideration of its symbolic dimensions, historical references, and potential societal impact. Thus, protest is approached not merely as a legal claim but as a performative act that can challenge democratic order.

The paper argues that the principle of self-defending democracy operates as a preventive mechanism, addressing forms of protest that exceed the boundaries of legitimate political participation. Latvia's experience, shaped by its post-occupation context, highlights how democratic systems negotiate the tension between pluralism and the need to safeguard constitutional values.

Keywords: self-defending democracy, protest, freedom of assembly, ECHR, Latvia

Viktorija Soņeca, PhD, is a Research Fellow at the University of Latvia and a Legal Adviser at the Supreme Court of Latvia. Her research focuses on constitutional law, human rights, and the legal regulation of protest.

Oliver James Francis-Jones (UK)

Visual Protest on Trial: The Criminalisation of Expression in the United Kingdom

This paper examines the increasing criminalisation of visual protest in the United Kingdom, focusing on how legal frameworks regulate political expression in public space. Drawing on Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the study analyses tensions between freedom of expression and expanding legal restrictions.

Two recent case studies from 2025 are examined. The first concerns a projection protest at Windsor Castle during a state visit, which resulted in arrests under the Malicious Communications Act. The second analyses graffiti attributed to Banksy at the Royal Courts of Justice, treated as criminal damage. Through these examples, the paper interrogates how existing legal instruments are applied to visual protest in ways that may extend beyond their original scope.

Situating these cases within broader legislative developments, including the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (2022) and the Public Order Act (2023), the paper argues that expanded policing powers risk curtailing expressive protest. It raises concerns about the implications for democratic participation and the future of protest aesthetics.

Keywords: visual protest, freedom of expression, UK law, criminalisation, public space

Oliver James Francis-Jones is an unregistered barrister in the United Kingdom. His work focuses on legal frameworks governing protest and freedom of expression.

Nilou Yekta (Netherlands/Iran)

The Final Res(is)ting Place: Funeral Videos as Digital Protest in Iran

This paper examines funeral videos as a form of digital protest in contemporary Iran, particularly in the aftermath of state violence during recent uprisings. These videos document mourning practices that simultaneously are acts of resistance, transforming grief into a performative and political expression.

Through visual and discourse analysis, the study explores how embodied gestures, such as dancing, clapping, and collective chanting, challenge dominant norms and assert alternative forms of public presence. Circulated via social media under conditions of censorship and restricted communication, these videos become crucial tools for transnational mobilisation and documentation.

The paper argues that funeral videos are dual agents: they provide evidence of violence while also enacting resistance through affective and performative means. In doing so, they reshape the boundaries between mourning, protest, and political communication.

Keywords: digital protest, Iran, mourning, performance, visual culture

Nilou Yekta is a PhD candidate at Utrecht University. Her research focuses on philosophy, visual culture, and protest practices in contemporary Iran.

Luisa Voss (Sweden/Germany)

Raging as a Verb – Thinking Through Rage as Aesthetic Resistance

This paper explores rage as an affective, aesthetic, and political force within contemporary feminist and queer mobilisations. Situated within the broader research project *Gender struggles in the new conjuncture*, the study examines how rage operates both as a lived emotional experience and as a performative and expressive strategy in protest contexts.

Drawing on feminist affect theory and the concept of affective injustice (Srinivasan, 2018), the paper analyses how certain social groups, particularly women, queer individuals, and people of colour, are structurally constrained in expressing anger. While rage may be an appropriate response to injustice, its expression often leads to social sanctions, including marginalisation, loss of credibility, or violence. Conversely, its suppression risks reinforcing the very conditions it seeks to contest.

Through theoretical reflection and preliminary ethnographic insights from the German context, the paper approaches rage as both a constraint and a resource. It considers how rage can be reclaimed as an emancipatory force and mobilised as an aesthetic device within protest movements. Drawing on Audre Lorde's notion of anger as a source of "information and energy," the study asks what the aesthetics of rage can reveal about contemporary political sentiments and social struggles.

The paper argues that analysing rage as a performative and affective practice offers a valuable framework for understanding how systemic inequalities shape collective emotional life and protest cultures.

Keywords: rage, affect theory, feminism, protest, resistance

Luisa Voss is a PhD researcher in Gender Studies at Lund University. Her work focuses on affect theory, feminist and queer politics, and contemporary protest movements in Europe.

Clara Vale Corvello (Netherlands/Brazil)

Resisting Colonialism: Palestinian and Pro-Palestinian Artistic Expressions

This paper examines the role of artistic and cultural expressions as forms of resistance within anti-colonial movements, with a particular focus on Palestinian and pro-Palestinian contexts. Drawing on historical and contemporary examples, the study situates artistic practices as both symbolic and material interventions that contribute to political mobilisation and collective identity formation.

The analysis explores how artists, ranging from writers and musicians to visual practitioners, use their platforms to expose structures of occupation, amplify narratives of resistance, and mobilise international solidarity. Particular attention is given to how these practices circulate transnationally, influencing public discourse and encouraging engagement with the Palestinian liberation movement.

In addition to the Palestinian context, the paper introduces comparative perspectives from other decolonial movements, including cultural production in Northern Ireland and Puerto Rico. These examples highlight how artistic strategies operate across different geopolitical settings while addressing shared histories of colonial domination.

The study also critically reflects on the ambivalent role of art, considering both its potential for resistance and its instrumentalisation within neoliberal cultural frameworks. Drawing on decolonial theory and Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL), the paper argues that artistic expression functions as a crucial site for negotiating power, visibility, and political agency in contemporary protest cultures.

Keywords: decolonial theory, Palestine, art and activism, resistance, visual culture

Clara Vale Corvello is a researcher working at the intersection of human rights, politics and artistic expression. Her work explores cultural resistance, anti-colonial movements, and the impact of technology on the exercise of human rights.

Mafalda Garcia (Portugal/Latvia)

Breaking Borders Through Art

This session explores the transformative power of arts-based interventions in contemporary society, focusing on Latgale, a border region of Latvia shaped by its proximity to Belarus and Russia. Characterised by rural conditions even within urban centres, Latgale faces complex social and geopolitical challenges that call for creative, community-based responses.

The session begins with *talka* – a participatory communal action rooted in Baltic tradition – introduced here as a form of collective social performance that activates shared responsibility and solidarity. Framed as both a symbolic and practical gesture, *talka* sets the conceptual ground for the presentation.

Drawing on seven years of experience as an artist and educator, including the development of the course Art for Community Engagement at the Art Academy of Latvia's Latgale branch (2025/26), the presentation examines how artistic practices can address social issues, foster dialogue, and stimulate civic engagement. Through selected case studies and methodological reflections, it demonstrates how art can reduce fear, improve living conditions, and create inclusive spaces for exchange.

The session argues that arts-based practices can support community resilience and social transformation, enabling a shift from conditions of precarity towards sustainable development. By linking artistic processes with local knowledge and participation, such interventions generate tangible cultural, economic, and environmental impact.

Keywords: community art, borders, social practice, Latvia, engagement

Mafalda Garcia is an artist, researcher, and educator working between Portugal and Latvia. Her practice focuses on socially engaged art, community-based methodologies, and cultural development in regional contexts.

Balancing on a Thin Line: Cultural Institutions in Protest Culture

This paper examines how cultural institutions in the Baltic region engage in protest practices under conditions of increasing political and economic pressure. Historically, culture has functioned as a domain of resistance in the Baltic states, with theatre playing a particularly significant symbolic role. In recent years, however, geopolitical developments, especially Russia's war in Ukraine, have intensified defence priorities and led to substantial reductions in cultural funding, prompting new forms of artistic activism.

Focusing on Estonia, the paper analyses strategies employed by art institutions to respond to these challenges. Examples include initiatives by the Estonian Artists' Association advocating for social security guarantees for freelance cultural workers, and campaigns by the Estonian Theatre Union opposing disproportionate funding cuts. Comparative reference is made to Lithuania, where protests in 2025 emerged in response to controversial political appointments within the cultural sector.

The analysis is structured around three interrelated dimensions: institutional organisation, public communication, and artistic strategy. It explores how protest messages are formulated and disseminated, and how performative and artistic elements are incorporated into protest actions and, conversely, how protest is integrated into artistic production.

The paper argues that cultural institutions operate within a complex space between art and politics, where symbolic expression does not always translate into direct political or legal outcomes. This "thin line" reveals both the limitations and the potential of artistic strategies within contemporary protest culture.

Keywords: cultural institutions, protest, Estonia, art activism, policy

Riina Oruaas is a theatre and performance scholar based in Estonia, affiliated with the University of Tartu. Her research focuses on contemporary performance and dramaturgy, and protest practices in the Baltic region.

Małgorzata Sady (Poland)

Art as a Powerful Tool to Protect and Change the World

This presentation offers a historical perspective on the political dimensions of contemporary art in Poland, drawing on nearly five decades of artistic and curatorial experience. It examines how art has functioned as a form of intervention, reflecting and shaping political realities across different historical periods.

Despite its position within the Soviet bloc, Poland maintained a relatively open cultural environment compared to other socialist countries. Following the Stalinist period, artists gained access to international developments, engaging with avant-garde practices from Western Europe and North America. While censorship remained in place, it often encouraged artists to develop coded and conceptually sophisticated modes of expression. As a result, Polish art of the 1970s became strongly infused with political and philosophical concerns, particularly within conceptual and performance-based practices.

The presentation highlights key examples, including Theatre of the Eighth Day, Akademia Ruchu, independent student theatre movements, and the works of artists such as Jerzy Bereś and Zbigniew Warpechowski. During the imposition of martial law in 1981, artistic activity shifted to underground and alternative spaces, including churches and private venues, reinforcing the role of art as a form of resistance.

The paper concludes by reflecting on developments after 1989, when the transition to a capitalist system reshaped artistic production. While market forces gained influence, independent and critical practices have persisted, continuing to engage with Poland's politically divided landscape.

Keywords: political art, Poland, history, resistance, conceptual art

Małgorzata Sady is a curator and artist with extensive experience in contemporary art. Her institutional affiliation is Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, Warsaw.

Mateusz Kolasiński (Poland), Matilda Senatore (Argentina), Suzanne Pijp (Netherlands), Carlijn Katerberg (Netherlands), Borja Sanchez de Prado (Mexico)

Students' War on Two Fronts: Protesting the Genocide of Palestinians under University Surveillance

This paper presents the results of a collaborative research project conducted by students of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, examining student protest under conditions of institutional surveillance. While academia is often framed as a space of free expression, the study interrogates how university environments may simultaneously produce mechanisms of control that shape protest practices.

Focusing on student mobilisations at the University of Amsterdam in response to the ongoing violence in Palestine, the research explores how surveillance, both digital and physical, affects modes of communication, visibility, and resistance. The study is structured around five key areas: forms of surveillance, the role of fear, protester responses, strategies of communication, and a grounded case study.

Based on a month-long fieldwork period, including interviews and survey data, the findings demonstrate that surveillance generates a pervasive atmosphere of fear that significantly influences protest tactics. This fear becomes embodied, shaping decisions about participation, anonymity, and expression. At the same time, the study highlights how students adapt to these conditions by developing alternative strategies, such as anonymising authorship, forming trust-based networks, and employing symbolic tools including stickers, clothing, and social media.

The paper argues that the relationship between surveillance and protest is not merely repressive but also generative, producing new forms of collective organisation and resistance within constrained environments.

Keywords: surveillance, student protest, activism, communication, resistance

Matilda Senatore, Suzanne Pijp, Carlijn Katerberg, Borja Sanchez de Prado and Mateusz Kolasiński are undergraduate students of Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University. They work with visual media on the themes of activism, protest and surveillance in The Netherlands.

Evarts Melnalksnis, Elizabete Šiklova, Luīze Šnore, Anna Lauska (Latvia)

Political and Its Performativity in Contemporary Latvian and European Performing Arts

This presentation examines the role of political performativity in contemporary Latvian performing arts, situating it within broader European theoretical frameworks. It engages with the legacy of Bertolt Brecht, particularly his *A Short Organum for the Theatre*, as a methodological point of departure for analysing contemporary and postdramatic performance practices. While Brecht's ideas have not been deeply institutionalised in Latvian theatre, they remain crucial for understanding the relationship between performance and political engagement, alongside later theoretical developments by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Florian Malzacher, and Hans-Thies Lehmann.

The study also addresses a noticeable shift in post-socialist Latvian discourse: the gradual erosion of political vocabulary in both public and artistic contexts. Concepts such as "class," "bourgeoisie," and "masses" have lost their analytical traction, while new frameworks are still emerging. This condition complicates the articulation of political critique, as highlighted in the work of Liene Ozoliņa on inequality and capitalism.

Drawing on insights from practitioners in the performing arts field, the presentation explores how political themes are currently negotiated on stage. Particular attention is given to emerging concerns such as climate crisis and the agency of non-human actors, informed by posthumanist theory. These developments expand the notion of the political subject and open new possibilities for performative engagement.

The paper argues that contemporary performing arts in Latvia function as a dynamic space for political reflection, experimentation, and collective imagination.

Keywords: political performativity, theatre, Latvia, contemporary art, Brecht

Evarts Melnalksnis is a dramaturg, curator, and researcher at the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Elizabete Šiklova is a fourth-year student in the Drama and Text programme at the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Luīze Šnore is a fourth-year student in Drama and Text studies at the Latvian Academy of Culture.

Anna Lauska is a 2025 graduate of the Latvian Academy of Culture in the programme Intercultural Relations Latvia–Germany/Netherlands.

Emmanuelle Waeckerlé (UK)

What Can We Do Now That We Aren't the World

This presentation introduces *What is left if we aren't the world*, a performative and sonic project culminating in a CD release (Edition Wandelweiser Records, 2026). Originally developed as a text score for large ensembles and first performed at the Amsterdam Wandelweiser Festival (Orgelpark, 2022), the work explores collective artistic responses to crisis, with particular reference to the affective and social conditions shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Positioned at the intersection of performance, sound, and relational practice, the project invites participants to engage in a shared exploration of what might be described as an aesthetic of pandemonium. Through collective vocal and sonic actions, the work reflects both the fragmentation and the fragile possibilities of togetherness in times marked by uncertainty, anxiety, and social disintegration. As noted in accompanying reflections, these sonic encounters reveal not only the conditions that inhibit collective being, such as fear, mistrust, hierarchy, but also fleeting moments of solidarity and connection.

The presentation considers how such practices extend beyond the stage, as forms of everyday performative resistance and sites for sustaining civic agency. It reflects on how collective artistic processes may foster resilience and enable new forms of social imagination in the aftermath of global crisis.

The Riga presentation will include a discussion of the project, its performative strategies, and its implications for protest aesthetics, as well as the launch of performance recordings produced across multiple European contexts.

Keywords: sound art, performance, solidarity, pandemic, collective practice

Emmanuelle Waeckerlé is a London-based artist, composer, and performer, and Reader in Fine Art and Relational Practices at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham. Her interdisciplinary practice spans conceptual writing, performance, experimental music, and curatorial work, focusing on collective artistic processes and socially engaged practices.