

# SYMPOSIUM

9:00-16:00  
ZUZEUM

THURSDAY

23

MAY

## WITCHES REVISITED: EXPLORATION OF OTHERNESS THROUGH FEMININE ARCHETYPES



LATVIAN CENTRE FOR PERFORMANCE ART

Image: Simona Orinska  
Photographed by: Wei Chao

# WITCHES REVISITED: EXPLORATION OF OTHERNESS THROUGH FEMININE ARCHETYPES

The project "WITCHES REVISITED: EXPLORATION OF OTHERNESS THROUGH FEMININE ARCHETYPES" is proposed as an interdisciplinary art and cultural project that seeks to examine the concept of "Otherness" through the lens of the witch archetype. This project aims to challenge stereotypes, foster empathy, and promote a deeper understanding of marginalized individuals and groups throughout history and in contemporary society.

Thought-provoking discussions and two workshops featuring artists and experts from cultural production, art history, folklore and mythology will allow to explore the archetype of the witch that is rich and multifaceted, and often embodies various contradictions and complexities.

Witches can be both outcasts and healers within their communities. They are often marginalized and feared, yet they may also play vital roles as midwives, or spiritual leaders. The witch archetype is closely tied to femininity and women's power, but it has also been used to justify the oppression and persecution of women. This contradiction reflects the historical struggle for gender equality and the fear of women's agency.

Witches can also be often associated with herbalism, nature, and healing, but they are also malefic magic. This dichotomy highlights the complex relationship between nature, spirituality and magic.

# PROGRAMME

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**9:00** Arrival, tea, coffee

**9:15 Laine Kristberga, Evarts Melnalksnis** Opening the symposium

**9:30 Toms Kencis** *Witches in Culture and Cultures of Witching*

**9:50 Sandis Laime** *A Typical Witch? Some Notes on the Most Popular Stereotypes*

**10:20 Camilla Graff Junior** *HEKS*

**10:40** Q&A + coffee break

**11:20 Performance Art Duo Kainulainen & Latva** *The Anasyrma Series – combining Finnish Folklore and Performance Art*

**11:40 Meri Hietala** *Seduced by the Stinging Nettle*

**12:00 Kira O'Reilly** *Witch Archetypes in my Artistic Practice*

**12:20** Q&A

**12:40** Lunch break

# PROGRAMME

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**13:40** **Katrīna Teivāne** *Escaping the Frame of Certainty: Few Interpretations of Female Images in the Latvian History of Photography*

**14:00** **Gustaf Broms** *Body as a Tool*

**14:20** Q&A + coffee break

**15:00** **Lauren Barri Holstein** *The Witch, The Whore, and The Wedding*

**15:20** **Katrīna Neiburga & Iveta Pole** *Malleus Malificarum and the Code of a Witch*

**15:40** Q&A

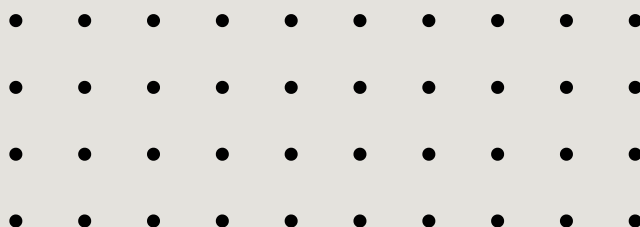
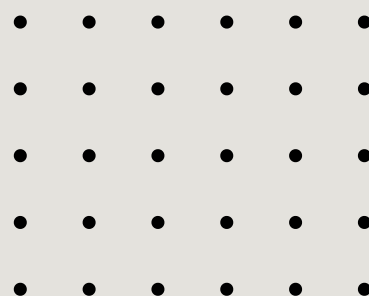
# TOMS KENCIS

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Toms Kencis, PhD, is the leading researcher at the University of Latvia Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art, and a policy advisor to the Republic of Latvia Minister of Culture, Agnese Logina. His academic interests include cultural nationalism, particularly its manifestations in Late Socialism, creative interpretations of folklore, as well as ecology, memory, and contemporary art. He also enjoys acting as a curator and art critic.

## *Witches in Culture and Cultures of Witching*

The presentation will share insights into the transformations of the witch image and archetype over the last century, particularly during the era of late capitalism. What is the witch as an archetype and as an identity, what are the lifestyle, music, and beliefs of witches? Why are we witnessing changes in the image of the witch and its growing popularity? Additionally, a brief overview of some recent examples of witches from contemporary Latvia will be provided.





# SANDIS LAIME

Sandis Laime, PhD, is the leading researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art at the University of Latvia. In 2012, he obtained his doctoral degree for the research titled "The Ragana Tradition in Northeastern Latvia," which was dedicated to the historical typologisation of Latvian witchcraft belief system, including a detailed analysis of the oldest layer of Latvian witch beliefs (night witches). He has conducted field research in India on contemporary witch hunts.

## *A Typical Witch? Some Notes on the Most Popular Stereotypes*

The witch is perhaps one of the most popular concepts rooted in traditional culture, which continues to exist today both in popular culture and in professional art. The historical development of this character in Latvia can be traced through historical sources (16th–18th century witch trial records, demonological treatises, spiritual songs, sermons, chronicles, etc.), as well as 19th–20th century folklore sources. The concept of witch has undergone significant changes in its historical development and continues to evolve to this day. Starting with modern perceptions of "typical witches," I will outline the similarities and differences with Latvian traditional beliefs of witches from the 16th to the 20th century.

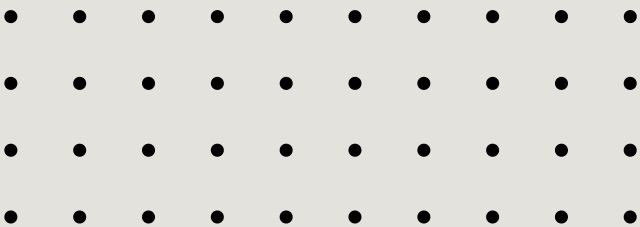
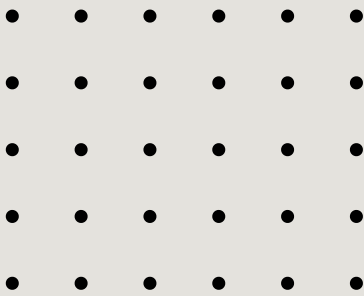


Image: Sandis Laime visiting the family of witches in India



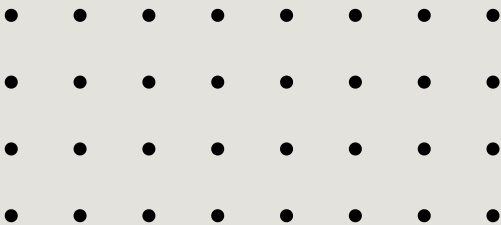
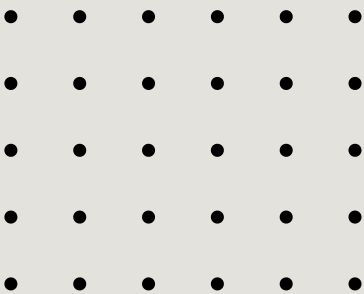
# CAMILLA GRAFF

# JUNIOR

Camilla Graff Junior is a Copenhagen-based performance artist, whose projects are situated in the intersections between visual art, creative writing, narrative, feminist theory, archive and affect. Over the past thirty years Camilla has conceived a number of solo and collaborative performances that have been performed in Europe, Africa, South America and the United States. She graduated in performance studies and holds a double Master's degree from Université la Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris and from the University of Copenhagen.

HEKS

In Denmark we have placed the witch hunts in an earlier stage of human civilization. But what new research brings out is that the events are a central part of the creation of our contemporary identity. In my presentation I revisit the "witches" from my upbringing and look at how my own view of the witch is shaped.



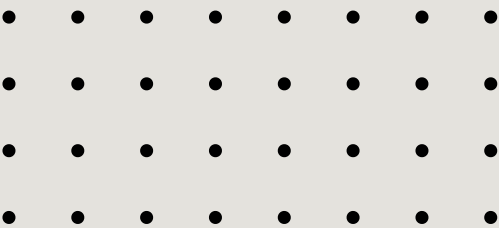
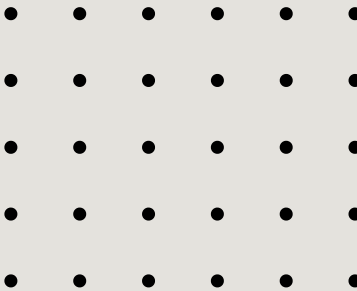
# PERFORMANCE ART DUO KAINULAINEN & LATVA

Performance Art Duo Kainulainen & Latva was founded when we met and fell in love. Our performances are live images that revolve around life with trauma, madness and love. We have performed together at art galleries, museums and performance art festivals around Europe for a decade.

*The Anasyrma Series – combining Finnish Folklore and Performance Art*

Anasyrma is a term, describing the gesture of lifting the skirt or kilt. It is used in connection with certain religious rituals and also widely in art, throughout the millennia. Our project is based on the idea that anasyrma occurs both in ancient Finnish rituals and performance art. We have created performances, where we use folkloristic magic in our artistic work.

Image: Performance Art Duo Kainulainen & Latva: "Anasyrma I"; Art Center Haihatus, Finland (2019)  
Camera: Benjamin Nozdrachev





# MERI HIETALA

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Meri Hietala is a multidisciplinary artist, working internationally on performance, sound and environmental art. They have performed i.e. in R.A.W. Myymälä2 Helsinki 2022, V.I.P.A.W. performance art festival in Venice 2017 and On the Cusp performance art festival in Bangarra Dance Theater Sydney 2015. Meri is an art educator and founded Energia Akatemia 2018, which focuses on international performance art workshops. Meri graduated from the Aalto University Helsinki with Master of Arts 2014. At the moment she lives and works in Hämeenlinna, Finland.

## *Seduced by the Stinging Nettle*

Herbal guidance, holy acoustics and ancient water routes as the seeds for my eco sensual journey and artistic practices.

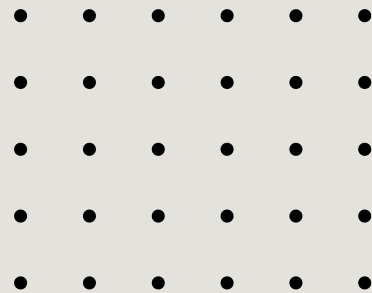
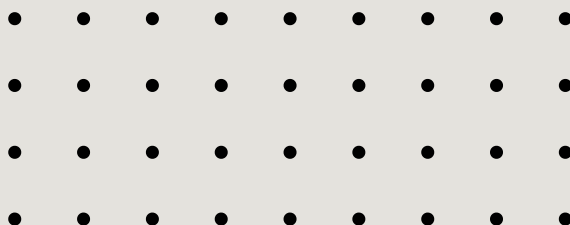


Image: New Moon Ceremony for the Wasp Queens, Meri Hietala, R.A.W. Relational Art Week, Myymälä2, Helsinki, 2022. Photo by Kamilla Śladowska



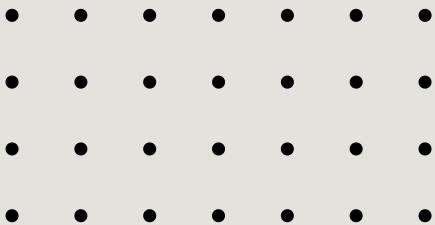
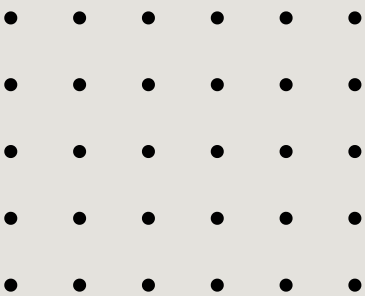
# KIRA O'REILLY

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Kira O'Reilly is an Irish artist currently based in Helsinki; her practice is wilfully interdisciplinary and celebrates an undisciplinarity, stems from a visual art background. It employs performance, sculpture, biotechnical practices, writing and experimental media with which to consider speculative reconfigurations of the Body in its most expanded sense, across multiple spaces, scales and temporalities, often but not always, working with site, duration and context as generative elements.

## *Witch Archetypes in my Artistic Practice*

The witch is enjoying a contemporary turn, a re-emergence, a re-turn, a re-newal of the re-cognition of witch lore and activity. I think it is fair to say, for many young girls, the witch was by far the more charismatic and alluring role model. That was certainly the case for me. The witch is the one who becomes only partially visible, who refuses explicit visibility and definition. We see witches all the time, they live in plain sight. She is the one who is inured to being ignored - indeed who wears the indifference of others as an invisibility cloak.



# KATRĪNA TEIVĀNE

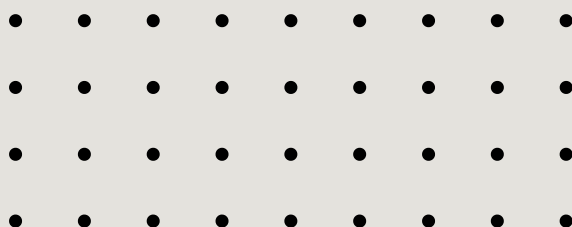
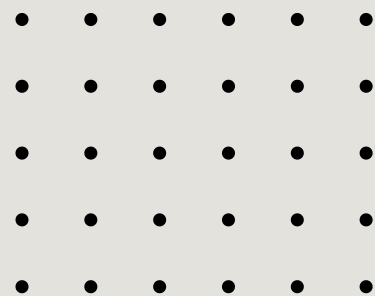
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Katrīna Teivāne, PhD, is an art historian specialising in photography. She is the Head of the Art and Music Centre of the National Library of Latvia. Katrīna is the chief editor of a book *Vilis Rīdzenieks* (2018) and author of *Laikmets un fotogrāfija. Roberts Johansons* (2022).

## *Escaping the Frame of Certainty: Few Interpretations of Female Images in the Latvian History of Photography*

As a classic art historian, I usually work with art photography collections created around *fin de siècle* and first part of the 20th century, and made by male photographers. Such materials give a clear sense of what was meant by a certain style in a certain era. They correspond and comply to general frame of art history. But there are photographs that do not fit this common structure. They evoke curiosity, touch personal experience and ask for more interpretations.

For this occasion I will turn to some images of women, with whom I have an ongoing dialogue. They tell their own story about crossing borders between submission and resistance through affective imagination of photography.



# GUSTAF BROMS

Gustaf Broms is a Swedish artist living and working in the Vendel forest, Sweden. He works in the borderlands between performance, video and installation. He is engaged with concepts of being and the nature of consciousness, in the gap where the biological processes of the body are contrasted against the intellect's ability to interpret experience. Through his practices, he investigates a language that transcends these cracks between the dualism body and mind, as well as between the self and the environment (<https://orgchaosmik.org/>).

## Body as a Tool

Being in a time and place, where identification with the thin membrane of skin, as a container of self slowly dissolves, as borders between beings evaporate, the environment disintegrates into a myriad of sentient beings.

Living in a retinal world where the word became authority, how can the image making process contribute to an integration of knowledge, that bypass the limits of word-based-language?

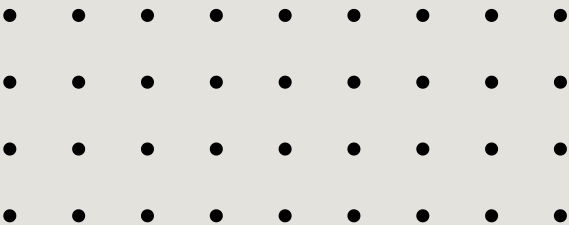
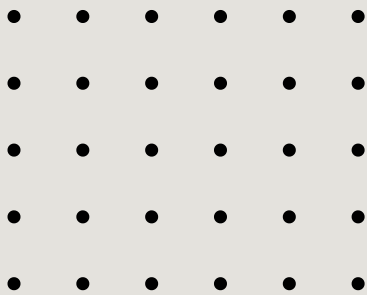


Image: Gustaf Broms  
Photo by Malou Bergman





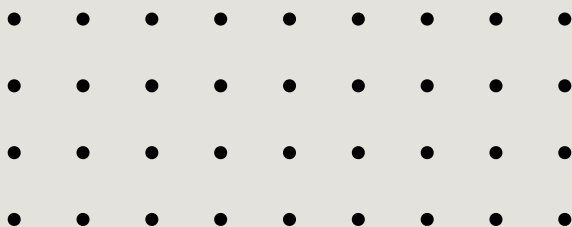
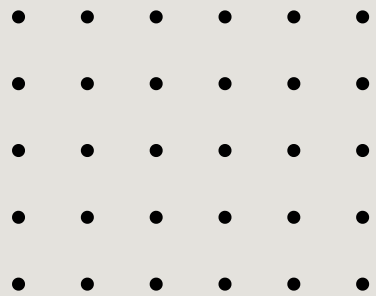
# LAUREN BARRI HOLSTEIN

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Lauren Barri Holstein, also known as “The Famous”, is a performance maker and scholar (Notorious, Splat!, Really Real Teenz!, How 2 Become 1, How to Become a Cupcake) whose work has appeared across the UK and Europe. Her work investigates contemporary feminisms, utilizing live art, dance, pop music, spectacle, mess, improvised text, and bodily functions. Lauren holds a PhD, lectures in various universities, and has published several academic articles and book chapters.

## *The Witch, The Whore, and The Wedding*

My practice thus far has situated itself on the mucky margins of pop. The subjectivities I inhabit, and the worlds I imagine, dip their toes into the overflowing dominion of pop-commodification, and yet, I argue, pose a threat to the stability of that system. From old hag, to infantilised sex object, to “independent woman”, I embody multiplicities in my work, attempting, failing, rejecting, or enjoying, the various modes of “womanhood” I exhaustively try on. And in the affective aftermath, I argue that my work resists post-feminist subjectivities and inhabits a feminist agency derived from the liminal body.





# KATRĪNA NEIBURGA & IVETA POLE

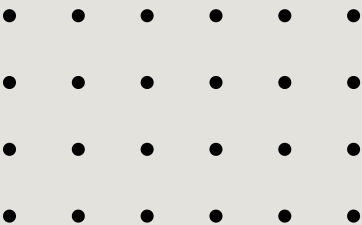
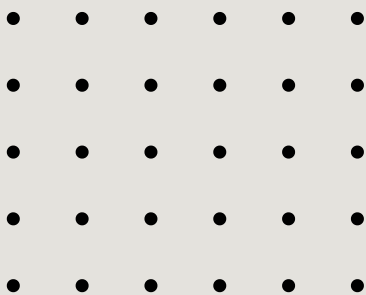
Katrīna Neiburga is one of the most prominent Latvian contemporary artists. She has received several awards, including the Purvītis Prize. She has also represented Latvia in the 56th Venice Biennale (“Armpit”, together with Andris Eglītis).

Iveta Pole is an actress, director and performance artist. Iveta has worked in the field of performing arts for 19 years. Her artistic ecriture is characterised by inter- and transdisciplinarity.

*Malleus Malificarum and the Code of a Witch*

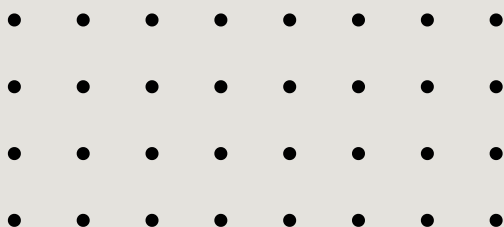
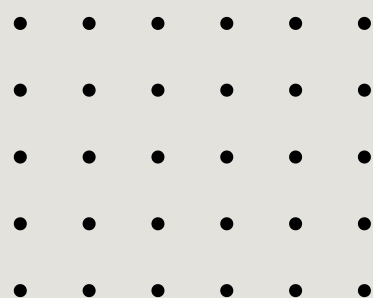
The presentation will be focused on the hybrid theatre performance *Malleus Malificarum. The New Contract* as a collective research of ecofeminism with a post-apocalyptic ambition. In this piece, we were eager to question the identity of a woman when the male gaze does not exist. We wanted to find out what the female gaze is about and what the women's world would be like after the fall of patriarchy.

Image: Malleus Malificarum  
Photo by Sandis Lazda



# EVARTS MELNALKSNIS

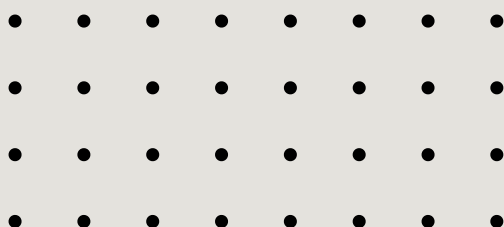
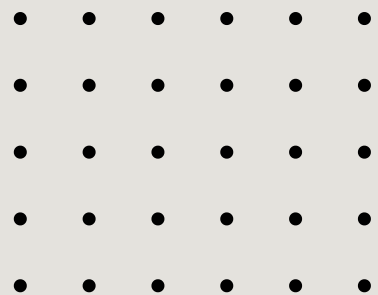
Evarts Melnalksnis will moderate the symposium. He is a music theatre dramaturge and curator. Studied at Hamburg University of Music and Theatre, was awarded DAAD and the "Musiktheater heute" scholarship for young music theatre professionals. As dramaturge he worked on the production of the world premiere of "The Night of the Sea Urchins" at the Hamburg State Opera, where he also participated as a singer. Founder of the Latvian theatre troupe KVADRIFRONS and dramaturge of several music theatre productions ("Spring", "The Beasts are Restless", "Demon", "I Played, I Danced" at the Latvian National Opera a.o.) as well as a curator of interdisciplinary and discursive events. Initiator, curator and editor of the Anthology of Performing Arts Translations in collaboration with the Latvian Academy of Culture. Board member of the curators' collective NGO "Art Bureau Riga". Finished his studies at the Salzburg University post-study programme "Curation at the Performing Arts" in 2023 with distinction.



# LAINÉ KRISTBERGA

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Laine Kristberga is the project leader. She is an art historian and curator from Riga, Latvia. She holds a PhD from the Art Academy of Latvia. Laine is the Head of the Arts Department at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia. Her scholarly interests cover art, culture, and politics during the Cold War period. She is particularly interested in the genealogy and historical development of performance art in the region. As a curator, Laine has been directing, producing and curating the international Riga Performance Art Festival STARPTELPA. To promote performance art as a sovereign form of art, Laine runs a non-governmental organisation “Latvian Centre for Performance Art”, which offers an abundant educational and cultural programme and is involved in multiple international networking projects.



# WITCHES REVISITED: EXPLORATION OF OTHERNESS THROUGH FEMININE ARCHETYPES

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The symposium *Witches Revisited: Exploration of Otherness Through Feminine Archetypes* is organised as a satellite event of the Riga Performance Art Festival STARPTELPA (2024).

The festival is organised annually by the Latvian Centre for Performance Art. It is an important international cultural event that gathers artists from all over the world every year at the heart of Riga, Latvia. The Festival offers an abundant programme of live performances, workshops, guest lectures, a curators' assembly and two symposia. The Festival's 2024 theme is "Rebels of Tomorrow".

The symposium *Witches Revisited: Exploration of Otherness Through Feminine Archetypes* also includes two workshops led by Lauren Barri Holstein (UK) and Simona Orinska (Latvia).

The project is financially supported by Nordic Culture Point and ZUZEUM.

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# RIGA PERFORMANCE ART FESTIVAL STARPTELPA

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