



What to see in the Baltics

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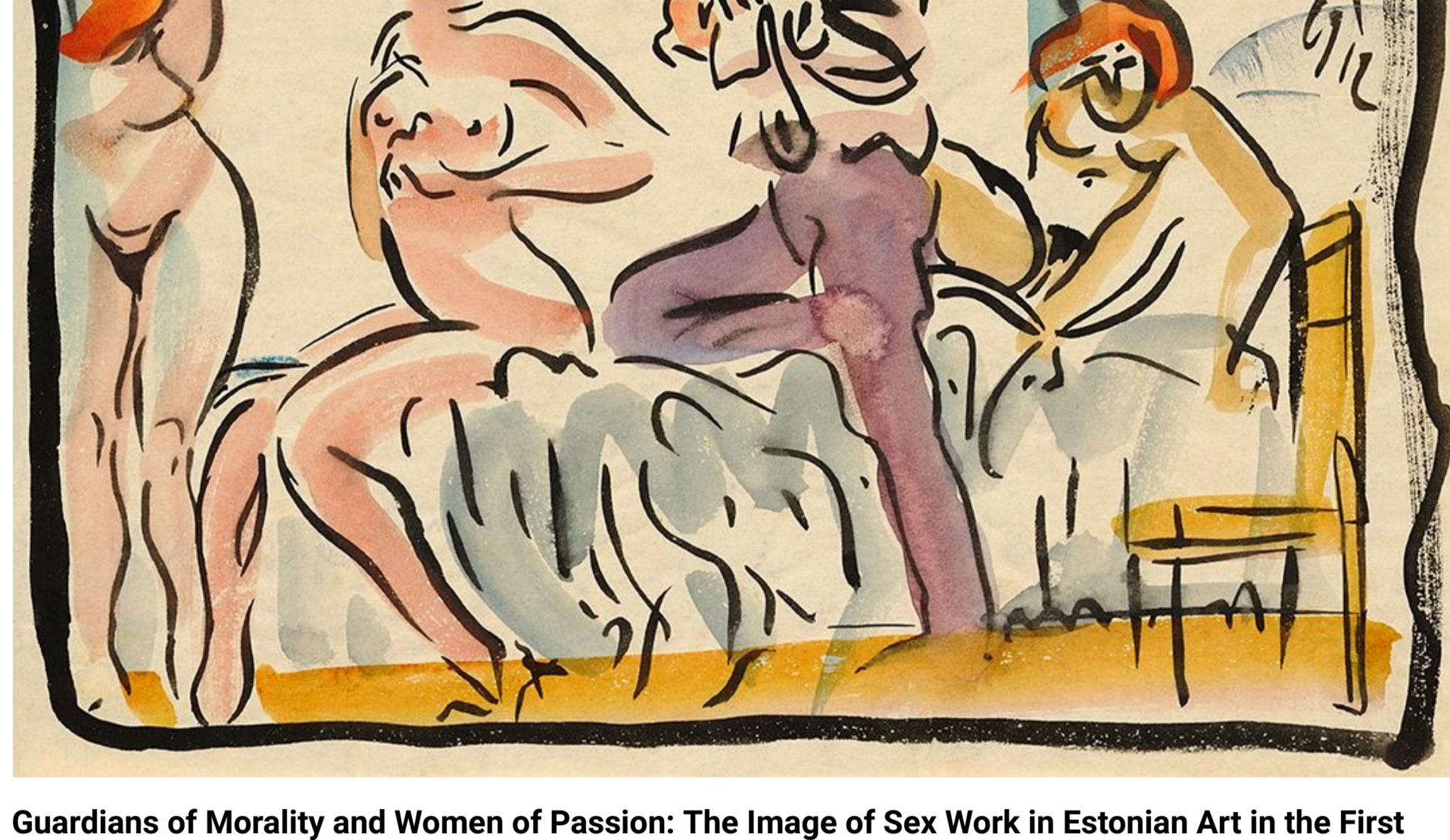
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Must-see art exhibitions in May-June, 2024

For the third time this year, we present an overview of what, in our opinion, deserves attention, providing you with a selection of exhibitions and art events in the three Baltic countries. May-June this year is a hot season for art lovers, even in terms of content – the MO Museum in Vilnius continues its extensive exhibition 'We Don't Do This. Intimacy, Norms, and Fantasies in Baltic Art,' which we announced [last time](#). A large exposition titled 'In the Name of Desire, investigation of sexuality and the phenomenon of desire' has just opened at the Latvian National Museum of Art. The Estonian KUMU is also keeping up in terms of 'temperature.' However, this is not the only 'nerve' of the current art scene. What else occupies the minds of curators, gallery owners, and, first and foremost, artists?

ESTONIA, Tallinn

Kumu Art Museum



Ado Vabbe. Composition with Four Figures. 1912. Indian ink and watercolour. Art museum of Estonia

Guardians of Morality and Women of Passion: The Image of Sex Work in Estonian Art in the First Half of the 20th Century

Until 25 August

Perceptions of sex work have always been closely linked to social and personal moral standards. This exhibition explores how Estonian artists have portrayed sex work, how their works reflect the attitudes of society, and whether these representations may have contributed to shaping these attitudes. The focus is on the art of the 1920s and 1930s: this period marked a peak in the popularity of this subject among Estonian artists not matched before or since. The curator Magdaleena Maasik about the exhibition: "In Estonian art, as elsewhere, the theme is mainly represented through female sex workers. They appear as menacing vampires, desirable femme fatales, grotesque figures reeking of disease and death and suffering victims. Alongside sex workers, different types of clients, pimps, brothel-keepers and "moral guardians" stand out in the artworks, embodying the often hypocritical attitude of the society of the time towards sex work and sex workers". The exhibition features over 50 works, mostly prints, drawings and watercolours. Works by over 20 artists are represented: Eduard Wiiralt, Gori, Natalie Mei, Ado Vabbe, Voldemar Kangro-Pool, Jenny Uttar, Aino Bach, Aleksander Promet, Erik Obermann, Oskar Kallis and others.

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Jevgeni Zolotko. 2024. Photo: Gabriela Jrm

Jevgeni Zolotko: The Secret of Adam

31 May – 5 January

Jevgeni Zolotko (b. 1983) is one of the most original Estonian contemporary artists. His solo exhibition "The Secret of Adam" showcases the artist's recent works, including some brand new works created specifically for the exhibition. Zolotko is an artist whose work centres on the relationship between the verbal and the material. In his site specific installations Zolotko highlights the universal traits of human nature, intergenerational sensitivity passed on through culture and religion and suppressed subconscious. The artist digs deep into the past preceding our collective consciousness.

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Fotografiska



From the series ME, 2020 © Rinko Kawauchi, Courtesy of Christophe Guye Galerie

Rinko Kawauchi. a faraway shining star, twinkling in hand

24 May – 1 September

Rinko Kawauchi is one of the most established artists in Japan and known worldwide for her dreamy, poetic and unique imagery. The new exhibition "a faraway shining star, twinkling in hand" features artist's two most recent series, M/E and An interlinking. These works include everything from photographs to video art, light boxes and photo sculptures.

The M/E series is a tribute to "Mother Earth", with photos of grand natural phenomena from Kawauchi's trip to Iceland in 2019. She planned to return to the country to finish the series but was forced to remain in Japan when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. This led to completing the second part of the series with photos from her everyday life and from winter in Hokkaido, Japan. In the ongoing An interlinking series, Kawauchi has depicted her everyday life for 20 years, often with her daughter as her subject.

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Kai Art Centre



Tuomas A. Laitinen 'A Proposal for an Octopus #'5' (2019). Hand-blown glass. Photo: Hedi Jaansoo

Tuomas A. Laitinen & Kristina Õllek 'Cyanococeans'

Until 4 August

Tuomas A. Laitinen's work revolves around the exploration of symbiotic processes infused with mythological undertones, grounding itself in the concept of mutualism. Drawing inspiration from various biological theories as well as mythical stories, Laitinen's work transcends the mere study of biology to inquire about the intricate entanglements of structures and lives within our complex, pulsating ecosystem. On view at Kai will be his complete series of *Proposal for Octopus* glass sculptures which Laitinen started in 2016, including the newest additions to the series made in 2024. Premiering at Kai will be his new video work filmed at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology in December 2023 which highlights the changing skin color of sleeping octopuses. Laitinen's years-long research into cephalopods' unique behavior and the remarkable similarities between the nervous system and sleep patterns of octopuses and humans fuels his special interest in species adaptation and neuroplasticity in rapidly changing environmental conditions. With Kristina Õllek, the artists have created a synergetic installation supported by steam, and ultrasonic sound which gives the viewer a sense of being underwater. The focus of Õllek's work over the last six years has been the exploration of the intricate relationship between marine ecology and technology, using various geographical regions as case studies. For this Kai installation Õllek has concentrated on the Baltic Sea, creating a series of new works using grown seal salt, cyanobacteria, and green fluorescent pigment.

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EKKM



Bárbara Sánchez-Kane, Look 3, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and the Kurimanzutto gallery

Trigger

Until 2 June

EKKM (the Contemporary Art Museum of Estonia) opened the new season with the international group exhibition *Trigger*, which is the first joint project by museum curators Evelyn Raudsepp and Maria Helen Käänd. The idea of the exhibition was born as a reaction to the current times – to the situation where we are constantly witnessing the tense chaos of political crises – and subsequently from a need for emotional ventilation through metaphorical and poetic means. *Trigger* includes video works that have a deeply bodily presence, a site-specific sound installation charged with industrial energy, delicate, yet sharp kinetic sculptures, digital-synthetic paintings, and objects that break with the tradition of fashion and jewellery design. *Trigger* does not seek to offer relief for an already broken psyche in a dizzyingly fatal age, but invites to connect with the raw, intense and transformative. Participating artists: Adrian Kiss, Bárbara Sánchez-Kane, Ceydet Ere, Darja Popolitova, Hanna Antonsson, Jacobly Satterwhite, (LA)HORDE, Mihkel Maripuu and Oona Doherty.

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Temnikova & Kasela Gallery



Merike Estna. Prehistoric Origin. 2023

Merike Estna. Peradam

23 May – 18 August

The name of Merike Estna's exhibition "Peradam" comes from René Daumal's allegorical novel *Le Mont Analogue* (1952), where it depicts a special crystal stone. In the novel a bunch of adventurers decide to embark on an expedition to a mysterious mountain at the end of the world. For this, one must first obtain the crystal clear gemstone peradam, which can only be found by someone who is truly looking for it. In the exhibition, artist Merike Estna reflects on where human civilization is heading and how our prospects can sometimes seem as hopeless as reaching the mystical mountain in Daumal's novel. References to art history and literature can be recognized in the works exhibited, and the artist has also brought in personal memories and experiences. What is the role of

the art created over the centuries or the love experienced in our lifetime when the future looks bleak? It's a journey into and out of a cave inside a mountain to find what's most important. Merike Estna is a painter who, in addition to the canvas, often includes environments, objects and bodies with her brushstrokes. Similar to the paintings in the "Peradam" exhibition, in other recent works she has also borrowed references from history, literature and myths and connected them with contemporary themes and personal stories. She has become especially close to Mexican culture, where she has been living and working for many years. "Peradam" is a continuation of the exhibition "Analog Mountain", which took place at the Margot Samel Gallery in New York in March 2024. Merike Estna's last exhibitions in Estonia were "The soil does not hold our love" (2022, Kai art center) and "Hasan's lovers" with Jaime Alonso Lobato (2021, Temnikova & Kasela gallery).

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