



Arvīds Alksnis

born in 1971, lives and works in Riga/Latvia

Education

1993 - till now Latvian Academy of Arts, Riga

1988-92 Applied Arts College, Riga

Solo exhibitions

1996 'Milk', club & gallery 'Slepenais Eksperiments' (Secret Experiment), Riga

1995 'APM', club & gallery 'Slepenais Eksperiments', Riga

Selected group exhibitions and events

1998 6th French Baltic Nordic video and new media festival 'offline@online', Tallinn, Estonia; 7th Triennial of Young Baltic Art. 'Cool Places', Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania; Ars Electronica'98 Festival, Linz, Austria; 'Polar Circuit 2', Tornio, Finland; 2nd All-Latvian Art Show, Riga; 'ArtGenda '98', Stockholm, Sweden

1997 Ars Electronica'97 Festival, Linz, Austria; 'Opera' 5th annual exhibition of the Soros Centre of Contemporary Art, Riga

1996 'Geo-Geo' 4th annual exhibition of the Soros Centre of Contemporary Art, Sabile, Latvia

1995 Prague Quadrennial of Theater Design and Architecture, Prague, Czech Republic

The piece presented at N.E.W.S. was done in collaboration with:

Mārtiņš Ratniks

born in 1975, lives and works in Riga/Latvia

Education

1995 - till now Latvian Academy of Arts, Riga

1991-95 Applied Arts College, Riga

Selected group exhibitions and events

1999 'Fat', Riga; 'F5 DeLux', Liepāja, Latvia

1998 6th French Baltic Nordic video and new media festival 'offline@online', Tallinn, Estonia; 7th Triennial of Young Baltic Art. 'Cool Places', Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania; Ars Electronica'98 Festival, Linz, Austria; 'Polar Circuit 2', Tornio, Finland

1997 Festival 'ART + Communication 2', Riga; 'Opera' 5th annual annual exhibition of the Soros Centre of Contemporary Art, Riga; '12', LAU Gallery, Riga

Pēteris Ķimelis

born in 1977, lives and works in Riga

Education

1996-97 Brockwoodpark Educational Centre, England

Selected group exhibitions and events

1998 6th French Baltic Nordic video and new media festival 'offline@online', Tallinn, Estonia; 7th Triennial of Young Baltic Art. 'Cool Places', Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania; Ars Electronica'98 Festival, Linz, Austria; 'Polar Circuit 2', Tornio, Finland; 2nd All-Latvian Art Show, Riga; 'ArtGenda '98', Stockholm, Sweden

1997 Festival 'ART + Communication 2', Riga

1996 'ArtGenda '96', Copenhagen

Dzintars Līcis

born in 1977, lives and works in Riga

Education

1993 - till now Riga technical College

Selected group exhibitions and events

1998 7th Triennial of Young Baltic Art. 'Cool Places', Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania

1997 Festival 'ART. + Communication 2', Riga

The work *Very hopeful* <<http://very.re-lab.net>> by Arvīds Alksnis with Martiņš Ratniks, Pēteris Ķimelis and Dzintars Līcis have made for the N.E.W.S. exhibitions is also included in the exhibition 'After the Wall' at The Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm. The work was first shown at The Center for Contemporary Arts in Vilnius Lithuania for the exhibition 'Cool Places' in 1998. This work can be considered a high-tech project in all its postmodern aura: 4 Pentium II PC computers, Quick Time movie format animations, sound equipment and pictures projected onto the walls using 3 multi-media projectors and an on-line connection. It is possible to control the work from Riga. Using two VHS video cameras and a Web-cam program, images and sound can be broadcast live on the Internet with Real Audio sound technology. It is a technically 'made' simulation that offers a message intended for alien beings in space, if there are any. The source material for the work is the part of scientific project Voyager Interstellar Mission (VIM) carried out by the spacecraft Voyager 1 and coordinated by NASA. This material published on the Internet contains messages about life and cultural achievements on the Earth using well known sounds, and images that range from a sunset with birds by the sea to pictures of the planets of our Solar System. The project also includes greetings from Earth in 55 languages, tapes of classical, folk and rock music etc. It has been calculated that these signals sent through the magnetic fields of planets, waves of plasma, etc., will reach their extra-terrestrial addressee in about 40 000 years. We have 39 978 years left. Whilst we wait these info-messages are perhaps most interesting for us. Carl Sagan's old comment (old, according to earthly scales) that the project 'says something very hopeful about life on this planet' is reformulated by Alksnis & Co as a series of questions displayed on the project's title page in the Internet. 'Can we say something so hopeful about life/art/science etc., on this planet?'

Alksnis first one-man show APM (Searches for the point of departure) took place in Riga in 1995, at the nightclub 'Slepenais eksperiments' (Secret Experiment), did not offer much to look at. The owner of the club still remembers this show as the most unsuccessful project curated by writer of this essay. There was just no art, there was in fact nothing except little shelves made by some carpenters and industrially produced measuring instruments placed on them. It is possible to say that the work was made for nothing, because it fits neither the category of installation nor performance art. It was a conceptually grounded and visually bleak process partly animated by waiting and hoping, that is if the viewer had read the written material that accompanied the work. APM was meant to detect electric current in the walls of the club. From this perspective looking back on this work one can see a kind of objective point of departure that needs continuous proof of its existence in Alksnis' work. This proof coincides with the work itself; 'current exists!' 'Life on earth exists. Alksnis' art could be related to minimalism. 'Minimalism is so beautiful, isn't it?' he agrees smiling.

Already by 1990, Artificial Intelligence (AI) had become deeply involved into such disciplines as biology and information technology. Art at that time was not included but the development of projects that started and rapidly increased towards the mid-90's could be considered logical. Then artists began to propagate Internet options provided by computer technologies and create a special group of net artists whose aim seems not only technological innovation but also the social modification of art as a concept. This could be considered consistent, in that the development of AI is to be found in cybernetics. The term itself stems from the Greek word *kybernetes* and, translating directly, means 'helmsman', a person who manages a situation. Besides the important role of AI in the last twenty-five years in relation to society's intellectual potential and capacity to deal with computers and the web, the latest problems concerning media could also be called 'cybernetic' since they point not to the things themselves but instead to their use. Art has also reacted to these fluctuations. In the Ars Electronica festival in 1998, the Riga-based Electronic Art and Media Centre E-lab (participants: Rasa Šmite, Raitis Šmits, Jānis Garančs, Pēteris Ķimelis, Mārtiņš Ratniks and also Arvīds Alksnis) presented the project Xchange and received one of the awards in the category Prix Ars Electronica Award of Distinction net.

This project was not intended to show digital art, something that has become traditional for the Ars Electronica but rather to present 56 hours of broadcasting net radio, including about 25 participants from various countries - Radioqualia from Adelaide, Backspace from London, Zeramulix from Berlin/Graz/Ljubljana, Banffradio from Canada, etc.

Since 1997 Alksnis has actively participated in -E-lab <<http://re-lab.net>> directed by Rasa Šmite and Raitis Šmits. This year he received his MA degree from the Latvian Academy of Art for his paper on the history of net art in Latvia. Such a history is one of those aspects of media culture that can cause a cultural shock in the minds of traditional art historians. It is not just because of the seemingly antihistorical topic a period from 1996 to 1998, but also because of the technologically brief, web-like sentences which still terrify many authorities of the human sciences. Besides this he has used the method



Very hopeful, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania, 1998; photo: Juris Boiko