

# PĀRKĀPT NO VIENA KUGA CITĀ

Ar Miervaldi POLI, Oļegu

TILLBERGU un Edgaru VĒRPI

sarunājas Solvita KRESE

## AS WE SWITCHED BOATS

Solvita KRESE talks with Miervaldis POLIS,

Oļegs TILLBERGS and Edgars VĒRPE

Saruna ar trim māksliniekiem, kuru radošās aktivitātes atstājušas paliekošu vērtību Latvijas laikmetīgās mākslā jau pirms deviņdesmitajiem gadiem, komentē dažādo laiku līdzības un atšķirības, skarot tādas tēmas kā postpadomju mākslas konteksts, institucionālās un mākslas valodas pārmaiņas, jaunais pieprasījums, atceroties hrestomātiskus mākslas notikumus un arī to neoficiālo vēsturi.

Similarities and differences are explored by interviewing three artists whose creative contribution to Latvian contemporary art extends to a time well before the 90ies; by recalling art events which have since become history and reviving the stories behind them. The various comments deal with themes like the context of post-Soviet art, changes in institutional and artistic language and emerging demand.

SOLVITA KRESE: - *Deviņdesmitie gadi ir pārmaiņu laiks politikā, ekonomikā, sabiedrībā, arī mākslā. Kādi bija deviņdesmitie jums katram?*

MIERVALDIS POLIS: - Desmitgadēm nav nozīmes. Laiks dalās citādi – bija Staļina laiks, Hruščova laiks, Brežņeva laiks, *Gorbija* laiks. Kamēr mēs bijām Padomju Savienībā, tikmēr bijām intereses objekts. Kad sākās neatkarība, bija uzbūvēta maza valstiņa, nekā īpaša vairs nebija. Protams, pasaule tad pavērās – ja kaut kur brauca, nevienam vairs nebija jāprasa atļauja.

Man tas laiks saistījās ar Latviju, ar mākslu – ar to, ar ko es nodarbojos visu laiku. Tāpēc man faktiski nekas nemainījās.

EDGARS VĒRPE: - Īstais pacēlums un pārmaiņas, manuprāt, bija pirms tam – no 1985. līdz 1991. gadam.

S. K.: - *Mākslas institucionālā un finansēšanas sistēma, darbības formāts un jaunais pieprasījums taču mainījās tieši deviņdesmitajos.*

OĻEGS TILLBERGS: - Toreiz bija Rietumu interese par mūsu mākslu, kas, protams, bija saistīta ar politisko situāciju. Bet tad arī mēs bijām spicē un splāvām uguni, cik varējām! „Rīga – latviešu avangards” 1988. gadā bija pirmā izstāde ārzemēs, kur varēja ieraudzīt kopainu, avangardu. Izstāde bija fantastiska, tad mēs dzīvojām mazliet eiforijā.

M. P.: - Paradoksāli, bet to izstādi organizēja *sarkanie*. Sākumā bija uzaicinājums no Berlīnes, kreisas organizācijas<sup>1</sup>, kas gan bija citādi komunisti. Rietumnieki arī pielika „Avangarda” nosaukumu, kas man rieb. Avangards ir armijas daļa, kas

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Izstāde *Rīga – Latviešu avangards* Kunsthallē Rietumberlīnē. 1988.  
Exhibition *Riga – Lettische Avantgarde* in Staatliche Kunsthalle in West Berlin. 1988.

SOLVITA KRESE: - *The nineties are a time of change in politics, economics, social life and also art. What did the 90ies mean to each of you?*

MIERVALDIS POLIS: - The decade itself is of no importance. Time is measured in a different way; we speak about the Stalin time, the Khrushchev time, the Brezhnev time, the *Gorby* time. We were of interest while we were part of the Soviet Union. As we gained independence, we became a small country; there was nothing special about us any more. Certainly, on the other hand, the whole world opened up: if a person wanted to travel, he did not have to ask anyone's permission to do it.

For me that time related to Latvia, to art: the things I had been doing always. Therefore, for me personally nothing had changed.

EDGARS VĒRPE: - I would say that true enthusiasm and change relates to a time before the 90ies – between 1985 and 1991.

S. K.: - *But the change in the institutional and financial system of art, the operational framework and the new demand relates specifically to the 90ies, doesn't it?*

OĻEGS TILLBERGS: - That was the time when the Western public showed an interest in our art which, certainly, was related with the political situation. And we too found ourselves on top of things, and we „spat fire” as much as we could! In 1988 *Riga – Lettische Avantgarde* was the first exhibition held abroad where you could see the whole picture, avant-garde. The exhibition was fantastic, we all felt euphoric about it.

M. P.: - It seems a paradox that the exhibition was organised by the *Red-wing*. It all started with an invitation from Berlin, a leftist organisation<sup>1</sup> which was basically communist, of a different kind though. It was the Western guys who labelled us

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izvirzīta pret ienaidnieku, un avangardisti bija divdesmito gadu komunisti un anarhisti, kuru lozungs bija noslaucīt iepriekšējo mākslu. Es neesmu avangardists un pat gribēdams neesmu varējis tāds būt. Es lepojos ar to, ka esmu arjergardists, jo man nepatīk, ka dekadenci sauc par mākslu. Grieķi to nesauca par mākslu, un renesansē to nesauca par mākslu, bet tagad mēs esam sistēmā, kas sākās ar modernisma spekulācijām.

O. T.: - Bet mums toreiz piedāvāja iespēju. Izstādei naudu deva Vācijas puse. Tikai pēc laika es sapratu, ka blakus visam citam vācu organizatori gribēja arī padarīt situāciju komerciāli izdevīgu. Pēc tam mēs, daži mākslinieki, to arī īstenojām – izstādījāmies jau privātās Berlīnes galerijās.

Tie cilvēki, kas te brauca, bija ļoti zinoši. Kad viņi te ieraudzīja izcilus māksliniekus, sākot ar Valteru un Purvīti, viņi saprata, ka kaut ko te arī prot. Protams, viņus galvenokārt interesēja jaunās tendences. Mēs par Rietumiem bijām tikai kaut ko dzirdējuši, kaut ko aptaustījuši poļu žurnālos, bet nekāda nopietna priekšstata jau nebija.

Vācijā man piedāvāja sadarboties divas galerijas. Viena darbojās jau kādus divdesmit gadus. Otra pārdeva Jozefa Boisa darbus. Es izlēmu par labu Boisam, jo toreiz nesapratu, ka to var pārdot katrs, ka istā lieta ir ieiet tirgū ar nezināmu vārdu. Bet tā galerija bankrotēja.

M. P.: - Zini, ko nozīmē sindroms „iznācis no armijas”? Daudzi, brīvību pārēdušies, degradējās. Mēs visi bijām kā

„avant-garde”, a name which I personally detest. In a military sense „avant-garde” is the part of the army confronting the enemy, and avant-gardists were the communists and anarchists of the 20ies whose war-cry was to sweep away „old art”. I am definitely not an avant-gardist, and I could hardly have been one, even if I had wished to. I take pride in rearguard action, and I object to appreciating Decadence as art. The Greeks did not call it art and it was not called art during Renaissance either, while we now are in a framework which started with the speculations of modernism.

O. T.: - But it was a chance offered to us. The exhibition was funded by the German side. It was some time before I realised that among other things the German organisers wanted to turn the situation to some commercial benefit. Afterwards, some of us, artists, made use of it: we went on to exhibit our work in Berlin, but this time in private galleries.

The people who came down to Latvia were very knowledgeable. When seeing some of the great masters (from Valters and Purvītis onwards), they immediately understood that artists here had some ability. Certainly, they were mostly interested in the new trends. We, on the other hand, had just heard a few things about the West; we had been groping our way through some Polish magazines before, but we had no real understanding of things.

In Germany two galleries offered cooperation. One had been on the market for some twenty years. The other sold Joseph Beuys. I decided to go for the one which sold Beuys, because at that time I had but little understanding that it did not require much

cietumnieki – piedzimuši un uzauguši cietumā, trīsdesmit un četrdesmit gadu vecumā pirmo reizi tikām ārā uz brīdi – ko tur var saprast? Neko.

O. T.: - Pa kuru laiku lai saprastu, ja mums bija jātaisa māksla? Gleznotāji ārzemēs varēja staigāt apkārt un klausīties, viņiem uz izstādi jau bija sagatavoti darbi. Mēs, kas taisījām instalācijas, visu radījām uz vietas.

E. V.: - Man arī nekad nav bijis avangarda uzstādījuma

S. K.: - **Bet tava glezniecība nebija tradicionāla, tā bija konceptuāla.**

E. V.: - Man viss konceptuālisms beidzās ar „Maigajām svārstībām” 1990. gadā. Līdz tam man likās, ka ar glezniecību es varu paust savu attieksmi pret. Vēlāk vairs nebija, pret ko to attieksmi paust, un tam vairs nebija jēgas.

Glezniecība vienmēr ir saistīta ar komerciju, tāpēc mums lielāka interese bija par Ameriku nekā avangarda būšanām. Ap 1991. gadu man bija skaidrs, ka ar konjunktūru es nenodarbošos. Tad izrādījās, ka tas, ko dariju iepriekš, ir kādam tikpat vajadzīgs. Bet tas bija pārāk sarežģīti – braukt strādāt uz Ameriku. Un, lai saražotu galerijai vajadzīgo masu, būtu jāglezno kādas piecdesmit sešdesmit bildes gadā. Es nekad tik daudz neesmu uztaisījis. Kāpēc braukt tur un štancēt... ja tepat ir labi. Es uzskatīju, ka profesionāla mākslinieka darbs ir gleznot un no tā dzīvot.

ability to sell „a name” and that the real thing was to put out an unknown name on the market. But that gallery went bankrupt.

M. P.: - Have you heard about the syndrome of „leaving the army”? Many people who suddenly have too much freedom ruined themselves. We all have initially been prisoners – born and raised in prison; we were released for a while at the age of thirty and forty – what could we understand? Nothing at all.

O. T.: - We had no time to spend on getting an insight; we had to make art! The painters being abroad could look and listen around – they had their work ready for the exhibition. We, the ones who made installations, had to create everything on the spot.

E. V.: - I, too, have never held any avant-garde views.

S. K.: - **But your painting was not traditional, it was conceptual.**

E. V.: - All my conceptualism ended with *Gentle Fluctuations* exhibition in 1990. Until that time I believed that through painting I could say what I was „against”. Later there was no one to oppose any more, and I felt things had turned meaningless.

Painting has always been related to commerce; therefore, we were more interested in the USA than in the avant-garde things. Around 1991 I was already sure that I would not follow the leading trend. Then it turned out that the things I had been doing before were needed as much. But it was too complicated to move out to America for the sake of working there. And in order to produce the required numbers for the gallery I should have to paint some fifty to sixty canvasses per year. I had never



Līdz 1996. gadam to arī realizēju un, kad sāku just, ka esmu par vecu, lai no tām svārstībām būtu kāda jēga, sāku darīt kaut ko citu.

s. k.: - *Tavuprāt, mākslai ir jēga tikmēr, kamēr tajā ir kāds pretestības vektors?*

Ē. v.: - Tas ir dažādi, bet man tobrīd šķita, ka būtiskāk ir būt „pret”, nevis „par”. Atceros, ka domāju – cik jocīgi, ka padomju laikā mēs bijām pret un varējām taisīt visādas konceptuālas lietas, kas bija pašiem interesantas, bet pēc tam, kad bija visas iespējas... tas ir pazudis. Taisot mākslu pret, varēja iestāties pret konjunktūru. Pēc tam likās, ka tā būtu visu ideālu nodevība – taisīt konjunktūru tad, kad esi brīvs. Absurds.

Tāpēc arī es savā glezniecībā sāku to visu ignorēt – tur nav ne sižeta, nekā, varbūt ir tēls, bet ne vairāk.

s. k.: - *Skatoties izstāžu sarakstu – deviņdesmitajos daudzī Latvijas mākslinieki izstādījās vairāk ārzemēs nekā Latvijā. Rietumos bija liela interese par valstīm aiz bijušā dzelzs priekškara.*

o. t.: - Īpaši gleznotāji. Salīdzinot ar Rietumiem, limenis te bija augstāks par vidējo. Rietumnieki nevarēja saprast, kā viena akadēmija var radīt tik augstas klases māksliniekus.

m. p.: - Nevienu neinteresēja latviešu māksla, interesēja padomju māksla – milzīgs apgabals.



Fotoinscenējums izstādes *Maigās svārstības* avīzē. Priekšplānā Edgars Vērpe, no kreisās – Jānis Mitrēvics, Sandra Krastiņa, Ieva Iltnere, Ģirts Muižnieks, Aija Zariņa. 1990. Photostaging in the newspaper of exhibition *Gentle Fluctuations*. In the foreground Edgars Vērpe, from left – Jānis Mitrēvics, Sandra Krastiņa, Ieva Iltnere, Ģirts Muižnieks, Aija Zariņa. 1990.

been able to manage that many. Why should I go there for all that drudgery ... if there was a place for me here? I believe that a professional artist's job is to paint and to make a living from his paintings. I did so until 1996, and then I felt I was growing old for the fluctuations, and I took up something else.

s. k.: - *Would you say that art is meaningful only if it is „against” something?*

Ē. v.: - You might look at it in different ways, but back then I thought that it was more important to „be against” than „for” something. I recall thinking: how strange it was that during the Soviet time we were all „against” and we could create all

kinds of conceptual things that were of interest to us, but later, when everything became possible... it had all gone. Art with an emphasis on opposition was a way to stand up against „the advisable leading trend”. Later it seemed to me that „following the leading trend” in a situation of freedom was like betraying all your former beliefs. Absurd. Therefore, I started ignoring it all in my paintings: they have no subject in them, nothing at all, maybe an image, but hardly anything more.

s. k.: - *When I look at the list of exhibitions, I can see that there were many Latvian artists who displayed their works abroad more frequently than in Latvia. There was a lot of interest in the Western world about the countries behind the former iron curtain.*

s. k.: - *Mākslinieki apzinājās, ka tiek uztverti kā postsavienības cilvēki?*

M. P.: - Domāju, ka jā. Daži taisīja konjunktūru, un viņiem labi gāja. Bet uzreiz prognozēja krīzi pēc trīs gadiem. Ja jautā, vai pēc tam bija kāda vilšanās – lielākā daļa mākslinieku paši bija vainīgi. Par to vien sapņoja, kā tikt galerijā, kur beidzot varētu sākt saņemt naudu, nevis dzīvot no slavas kā students. Ja tas notiek augstā līmenī, tad ir labi. Piemēram, kad Boriss Bērziņš – vienīgais neanglis 1979. gadā saņēma otro prēmiju zīmējumu izstādē Anglijā, kur no vairāk nekā tūkstoš darbiem izvēlējās apmēram simts. Bija arī citi starptautiski panākumi izcilās izstādēs, bet kas to zina? Arī astoņdesmitajos un deviņdesmitajos bija projekti, ieceres, ceļš uz izcilām galerijām, bet tas viss nogrima. Vai tika nogriezts.

s. k.: - *Mēģinot saprast būtiskāko par to laiku...*

E. v.: - Manuprāt, līdz 1991. gadam varēja taisīt mākslu, kādu grib. Pēc tam... Es izvairījos taisīt jauno konjunktūru, jo likās, ka uzreiz sākt taisīt „pa jaunam” ir diezgan pret dabiski. Bet Oļegam noteikti tas bija pavisam savādāk, viņš varbūt tikai tad sāka kaut ko pa īstam darīt.

M. P.: - Tā jau arī bija konjunktūra, kad gleznotāji sāka gleznot abstrakti. Visu dzīvi viņi, izrādās, bijuši apspiesti. Ja gribēja, visus padomju laikus varēja gleznot abstrakti!

E. v.: - Pirms tam bija jārēķinās, ka ir lietas, ko neakceptēs, māksliniekiem bija sajūta, ka kaut ko žmiegs, kaut ko neļaus. Īstenībā tas bija minimāli, gleznot varēja, ko gribēja, bet izstādīties, iespējams, bija komplicētāk. Tagad varēja gleznot,



Edgars Vērpe. *Zivs* izstādē Valsts. 1994.  
Edgars Vērpe. *Fish* in the exhibition State. 1994.

o. t.: - It specifically refers to painters. In comparison to West, we were generally above the average. The Westerners could not conceive how a single academy could produce artists of that class.

M. P.: - Nobody was interested in Latvian art; they were interested in Soviet art – a huge area.

s. k.: - *Were artists aware that they were seen as post-Soviet people?*

M. P.: - I think so. Some followed the leading market trend and they were successful. But you could forecast a crisis for them in three years' time. If they later felt disappointed, it was mostly their own fault. All they dreamt of was to have their works sold in a gallery, so they would finally get some money instead of living like students on bare fame. There is nothing wrong about

it, should we be speaking of high-level events: for example, when Boriss Berzins was the only person from outside UK to get Second Award in the British Drawing Exhibition of 1979 which selected only about a hundred works from more than one thousand. But how many of us know about it? There were projects, ideas and opportunities for entering the prominent galleries also during the 80ies and the 90ies; but it all went under. Or funds were cut short.

s. k.: - *If we should attempt to understand the most relevant things about that time...*

E. v.: - I think that until 1991 one could make any kind of art. After that... I avoided „following the leading market trend”, because it seemed to me somewhat unnatural to „start looking at things in a new way”. But Oļegs definitely saw it all in a

ko gribēja, un arī izstādīt – ko gribēja. Bet tā pilnīgā brīvība radīja pieprasījumu pēc noteiktas sistēmas.

S. K.: - *Vai konjunktūru radīja tikai institūcijas? Vai tā nebija mākslinieku pašu interese?*

M. P.: - Tas notiek smalkāk. Piemēram, komisijā sēž tie, kas nerunā pretim, un tās ne ar ko neatšķirās no padomju laika ekspertu komisijām. Bet galvenā nozīme, kāpēc tāda ievirze izveidojās, bija naudai.

O. T.: - Ja gribētos formulēt to laiku – man bija eiforijas sajūta. Ka tūlīt būs... Es arī sapratu, ka tai eiforijas faktorā ir iekšā dzinulis, ka mēs varam iekarot un tajā mirklī „iziet” – kā to izdarīja krievu mākslinieki.

M. P.: - Krievu mākslinieki taisīja politisku konjunktūru, socārtu, par ko viņi paši ņirgājās. Visa nonkonformisma māksla bija konformisma, kompromisa māksla. Viņu vienīgais mērķis bija tikt „*бля, за рубежом*”...

S. K.: - *Kas bija būtiskākie notikumi 90. gados?*

E. V.: - Kas kuram bija svarīgākais. Es domāju, ka daļa iekļāvās jaunajā konjunktūrā un to attīstīja. Bet lielākoties tas, kas interesēja, bija nevis latviešu, bet postpadomju māksla.

S. K.: - *Pirms 90. gadiem taču arī bija noteikta konjunktūra – padomju laikā aizsāktās tradīcijas.*

E. V.: - Tad māksla bija šifrēta ar trīs šifriem, lai saprot tikai tie, kas grib saprast.

different light, and that may have finally been the time when he really started working.

M. P.: - As painters turned their attention to abstractionism, they were also following a market trend. Turns out they had been suppressed although their lives! If one wanted, one could paint in an abstractionist manner all through the Soviet time!

E. V.: - In the years before you had to count with the possibility that some things would not be accepted; artists experienced a feeling that they would be put under pressure, that some things would be hardly allowed. In actual fact, this happened on a minimal scale; you could paint whatever you wanted, but it may have been more complicated to have the paintings displayed at exhibitions. Now people could both paint and display whatever they wished. But absolute freedom created a demand for a certain system.

S. K.: - *Was „the advisable leading trend” created only by institutions? Or was it also fostered by the artists themselves?*

M. P.: There is a finer mechanism which is at work. For example, the people on the commission never raise objections; and the commissions themselves were no different from the expert commissions of the Soviet time. But the main reason behind it was money.

O. T.: - If I should define the time – I was feeling euphoric. It seemed to me that things were going to happen...now... I also understood that the euphoria itself was a driving force; that we could go out and conquer and „make a debut” as did the Russian artists.

S. K.: - *Tad mākslinieka atzinību veidoja tie šifri un arī iepirkumi. Kad sabruka Padomju Savienība, iepriekšējā dinamika deformējās, sāka darboties cita sistēma.*

E. V.: - Esošā dinamika bija beigusies ar iekārtas maiņu, kad beidzās gan Mākslinieku savienības, gan Mākslas fonda iepirkumi. Tad man bija skaidrs, ka glezniecība ir nemoderns medijs un ar to var nodarboties, ja nav nekā cita, ko darīt. Tā es aizgāju būvēt Rozentālskolu. Bija sajūta, ka glezniecības laukā viss strauji iet uz leju, un es bez kādas nožēlas sapratu, ka radošs var būt arī savādāk, un visu enerģiju pārliku skolā, un man bija ļoti interesanti.

S. K.: - *Pēc astoņdesmito enerģijas un pretestības, kad nāca gaidītā neatkarība, eiforija, cerības būt slaveniem, svētki ar atklāšanām un tā tālāk, tas vienā brīdī beidzās un – iestājās krīze, „paģiras”?*

E. V.: - Līdz posmam, kad beidzās interese par postsoļjetismu, bija labi – visur bija izstādes, ej no vienas uz otru, nepārtraukti strādā un pelni naudu. Tas bija ļoti interesants laiks, bet mani tas interesēja daudz mazāk nekā līdz tam. Es droši vien labi pārkāpu no viena kuģa citā, tāpēc nemanīju ne „paģiras”, ne aizvainojumu par to, ka viss ir beidzies un ka neviens neko nepērk. Es pat necentos neko pārdot, man bija brīnums, ka pēc desmit gadiem kaut kas sāk atjaunoties. Bet, piemēram, Miervaldis to pārdzīvoja gleznojot.

M. P.: - The Russian artists did what was politically advisable: SotsArt which they themselves jeered at. All non-conformist art was conformist art based on compromise. Their only aim was to „get the hell out of the country”...

S. K.: - *Which were the most relevant events of the 90ies?*

E. V.: - It depends. I think that some worked to satisfy and develop the emerging „demand”. But what mostly interested the public was post-Soviet, rather than Latvian art.

S. K.: - *It was also before the 90ies that there was a certain „leading trend” – there was the Soviet time tradition.*

E. V.: - At that time messages were encrypted with a number of codes, so that only those who wished to understand could do so.

S. K.: - *At that time an artist was recognised through the code, the cipher, and also through what he could sell to the government. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the mechanism changed and a new system emerged.*

E. V.: - The mechanism came to a stop with the change of the system, when both the Artists' Union and the Art Fund ceased acquiring works from artists. It was clear to me that painting was „not in” any more and one could practice it at best as a pastime. So I went to build up Janis Rozentals Art School. There was a feeling around that painting was rapidly going downhill, and I experienced no pangs as I turned all my creative attention to the school, I was greatly interested.



S. K.: - *Kad un kā aktualizējās komercija? 90. gados Latvijā mākslas tirgus nebija, bet darbus pirka? Kā radās kontakti ar Rietumu galerijām?*

E. V.: - Amerikā kontakti sākās ar Nahamkina galeriju 1989. gadā. Pēc tam – ar citām. Ar Ameriku lielākā problēma bija darbu aizvešana muitas dēļ. Tāpēc piedāvāja braukt strādāt un dzīvot tur. Man bija ģimene, bērni, un es atteicos. Amerikā bija savādāk, tur tomēr viss bija balstīts uz komerciju. Ja gribēja tikt tirgū, vajadzēja tur arī dzīvot un pakļauties galerista nosacījumiem.

S. K.: - *Kāpēc neviens cits neaizbrauca uz Ameriku?*

E. V.: - Aizbrauca jau, piemēram, Aija Zariņa. Viņai arī bija piedāvājumi palikt, taisīt personalizstādes.

S. K.: - *Kāpēc tu, Miervaldi, neaizbrauci?*

M. P.: - Tā ir komercija, tukšs darbs.

E. V.: - Vai tad tu strādā, lai kļūtu slavens, nevis lai nopelnītu naudu ar to, ko gribi darīt?

S. K.: - *Kāpēc tu glezno? Vai tā ir nepieciešamība, bez kā tu nevarētu dzīvot?*

M. P.: - Var jautāt, kāpēc es domāju!



Aijas Zariņas personalizstāde *Princeses Gundegas melnā istaba* galerijā *Jāņa sēta*. 1991.  
Aija Zariņa's solo exhibition *Princess Gundega's Black Room* in the gallery *Jāņa sēta*. 1991.

S. K.: - *All the energy and opposition of the 80ies was followed by long-expected independence, hope of becoming famous, celebrations at exhibition openings, etc., and then at some point things stopped happening, and crisis set in, did it feel like „the hangover“?*

E. V.: - Things kept happening until the time when the interest in post-Soviet art ceased; there were exhibitions everywhere, you could go from one to the other – there was plenty of work and a way to earn money. It was a very interesting time, but for me it was much less exciting than the years before. I did it right to switch boats then; I did not feel like „the hangover“; nor did I feel hurt that everything had come to an end and nobody wanted to buy paintings any more. I did not even try to sell anything; it was a surprise for me when a decade later things started straightening out. But Miervaldis went through it with painting.

S. K.: - *When and where did the commercial angle become important? In the 90ies there was no market for art in Latvia, yet items were purchased? How did contacts with Western galleries develop?*

E. V.: - In the US the first contacts were with the Nahamkin Gallery in 1989. As time passed – also with other galleries. Concerning the USA, the biggest problem was to bring the paintings into the country because of customs. I was then invited to go and live there for the sake of working. But I had family, children; so I refused. The USA is different: it is all based on commerce. If you wanted to enter that market, you had to live there and do what the gallery told you to do.

S. K.: - *Why did no one else go to the USA?*

E. V.: Some did, for example, Aija Zariņa. She was also invited to stay; to have her solo exhibitions there.



S. K.: - *Tu gleznotu arī tad, ja neviens tavus darbus nepirktu? Arī deviņdesmitajos taču tavus darbus pirka?*

M. P.: - Nepirka! Latvijā joprojām nav mākslas tirgus. Ir tikai individuāli gadījumi. Dažs pērk un dažs pasūta darbus, bet tas nav tirgus.

O. T.: - Tas ir jautājums par mākslas politiku – kā mūsu ģenijus celt gaismā, jo viņi ir to vērti!

E. V.: - Viņi visur ir to vērti, bet vai tu, piemēram, daudz zini par Kipras māksliniekiem?

S. K.: - *Deviņdesmito sākumā sava loma bija arī apvērstajai ekonomikai. Aizbrauca ar izstādi uz Ameriku, nopirka vienu videomagnetofonu, atveda, pārdeva un nopirka māju.*

E. V.: - Par vienu gleznu. Māja vēl tagad ir.

S. K.: - *Tirgus sakarā – viena lieta bija Amerika, otra, pirms 1991. gada, – Maskava. Ivars Mailītis stāstīja, kad viņš strādājis Maskavā, no Rīgas uz turieni braucis ar taksi. Izklusējās, ka pirms tam māksliniekiem bija leiputrija...*

M. P.: - Tad viss politizējās.

O. T.: - Bet interesantākais no tā laika man liekas tas, kā mēs tikām pār robežām, tas, ka par mums radās interese un Rietumi atklāja, ka te dzīvo normāli cilvēki, nevis tādi, kas sēž kokā un ēd sēnes.

Man ir stāsts, kā es izglābu latviešu mākslu, kad braucām uz Berlīni. Visi vilciena tamburā sēž, dzied, plītē – mēs



Oļegs Tillbergs. Gaidot Berlīnes vilcienu izstādē Zoom faktors. 1994.

Oļegs Tillbergs. Waiting for the Berlin Train in the exhibition Zoom Factor. 1994.

S. K.: - *Miervaldi, why did you stay?*

M. P.: - It was all commerce, meaningless work.

E. V.: - Are you workin for fame rather than money by doing what you like best?

S. K.: - *Why do you keep painting? Is it some necessity you can't live without?*

M. P.: - You might as well ask me – „Why do you keep thinking!”

S. K.: - *Would you keep painting even if no one would buy your work? Your paintings did sell in the nineties, didn't they?*

M. P.: - Alas, they did not! There is as yet no market for art in Latvia. Individual cases, at best. A few people who buy and another few who commission work, but that is far from being a market.

O. T.: - It is an art politics issue: how to show our talent, because the artists deserve it!

E. V.: - They deserve it everywhere, but do you know a lot about painters in Cyprus, for example?

S. K.: - *The reversed economy of the 90ies had also a role to play. You went to the USA to take part in an exhibition, purchased a video-recorder, brought it back home and sold it... and you could buy a house with the money.*

E. V.: - For a single painting. And I still have the house.

S. K.: - *Speaking about the market: one thing was America, but there was also Moscow before 1991. Ivars Mailītis told me about how he used to take a taxi from Riga to Moscow, when he worked there. It seemed like it was the lotusland for artists...*

braucam iekarot pasauli. Bija šausmīgi piepīpēts, pilns ar cilvēkiem, un man ienāca prātā joks paraut stopkrānu, jo parasti braukšanas laikā durvis ir aizslēgtas. Bet, izrādās, pēkšņi durvis ir vaļā! Te vilciens griežas, visi krīt man virsū, un neviens neapjēdz, kas par lietu. Es tikai atceros, ka turu rokturi, kas slīd, un saprotu, ka tūlīt visus aizraus – atlaidīšu roku, un visi izbirs kā pupas. Bet citi tikai liksmo! Kamēr es domāju, ko darīt, ceļš izlīdzinājās. Es biju aukstiem sviedriem...

s. k.: - *Un neviens pat nepamanīja, ka tu izglābi latviešu mākslu...*

o. t.: - To jau pamana tikai viens. Varonis taču arī ir tikai viens...

Cits stāsts – 1994. gadā, kad bija „Ars Fennica” balvas izstāde Somijā, viesnīcā skatījās televīziju, kur bija sižets par Brazīliju – tur nacionālās sēras, visi asarās. Izrādās, nosities Formulas 1 pilots Serra. Man tieši bija jābrauc uz Sanpaulu biennāli, bet es vēl nezināju, ko taisīt. Aizbraucām uz Sanpaulu, un es sapratu, ka man vajag F1 mašīnu. Kopā ar Latvijas Goda konsulu satikāmies pat ar Sennas māsu, es prasīju, vai varu dabūt mašīnu. Esot tikai ķivere, bet apdrošināšana bija tāda, ka konsuls uzreiz atbildēja, ka tādas naudas nav. Tad es sapratu, ka varu to mašīnu uzbūvēt pats. No mucām. Uztaisīju pārsegu, un viss bija.

s. k.: - *1994. gadā tu saņēmī „Ars Fennica” balvu, kas bija ievērojams notikums gan mākslas pasaulē, gan konvertējama vērtība prēmijas ziņā. Tu pat nopirkī jaguāru!*

m. p.: - It all became mixed up with politics.

o. t.: - But what I feel was most interesting about the time was how we started going abroad, the interest we stirred and how the Westerners discovered us to be respectable people instead of somebody living up a tree and feeding on mushrooms.

I have a story about how I saved Latvian art, as we were going to Berlin. The far end of the carriage was full of people – sitting, singing and drinking –, and I had the crazy idea to pull the emergency brake for the fun of it. The door is usually locked when the train is moving, but this time it came open! The train was taking a turn, everyone was falling over me and nobody could grasp what the matter was. All I remember was grabbing the handle which was slipping away from me and thinking: if I let go, everybody is going to fall off the train like beans from a pod. But they went on having fun! While I had these thoughts, the road straightened out. But I was in cold sweat...

s. k.: - *And no one noticed that you had saved Latvian art...*

o. t.: - These things are noticed by one man only. There is single hero always...

Another story refers to 1994, when during the *Ars Fennica* award exhibition in Finland I watched TV in my hotel room – it was a newsreel about Brazil. The country was in mourning, everyone was in tears. It turned out that the Formula 1 pilot Serra had been killed in an accident. I was at that time planning to go to the São Paulo Art Biennial, but I had not as yet made up my mind about what to display there. We

o. t.: - Tā bija svarīga izstāde. Viss bija jārada uz vietas. Taisīju bildes no ziepju masām, ar kailām rokām. Pēc tam plaukostas bija tā saņemtas, ka vēl ilgi vajadzēja ārstēt.

Izstādei bija nopietns eksperts Rūdijs Fukss, kurš teica interesantu lietu – ka latviešiem ir divi pasaules kalibra gleznotāji. Mēs uzreiz domājām – Boris Bērziņš? Viņš teica – nē, Boris Bērziņš ir pats par sevi, bet ne saistībā ar laiku, tāpēc viņu ir grūti novērtēt. Jānis Valters un Aija Zariņa.

s. k.: - *Pastāsti, Miervaldi, par savām deviņdesmito sākuma performancēm. Piemēram, par rotaļu tanka sadedzināšanu pie Ļeņina pieminekļa un „Bronzas cilvēka” tikšanos ar „Balto cilvēku”!*

m. p.: - Tanku es vilku saitē kā sunīti, rādot, kāds ir laiks un par ko ir uztaisīti mākslinieki... Kad taisīju performanci kopā ar „Balto cilvēku”, Roju Vāru,<sup>2</sup> ko organizēja Laima Slava no Multimediju centra, bija saaicināti akadēmijas studenti, jo, lūk, tika rādītas avangardiskās performanču tendences. Kad Vāra taisīja savu otru performanci, bija tikai dažādi garāmgājēji... Tādi bija 90. gadi.

s. k.: - *Un performances, ko tu taisīji kopā ar Vilni Zāberu, piemēram, izstādes atklāšana tukšā galerijā 1992. gadā? Fancūzīm Īvam Kleinam Parīzē 1958. gadā arī bija izstāde pilnīgi tukšā galerijā, kas tā arī saucās – „Tukšums”.*

2. Performance „Bronzas cilvēks” (Miervaldis Polis) tiek ar „Balto cilvēku” (Roju Vāru) Helsinkos 1990. gadā un Rīgā 1991. gadā.

went to São Paulo and I understood that I needed an F1 car. Accompanied by the Latvian Consul, I even met Serra's sister. I asked her if I could get a car. She said there was the helmet only, but the insurance premium was so high that the Consul replied at once that there isn't such money. Then I understood that I could build the car myself. Out of barrels. I made the casing, and that was it.

s. k.: - *In 1994 you were received the Ars Fennica award which was an important event from the point of view of both – art and convertible value. You even bought yourself a Jaguar!*

o. t.: - It was an important exhibition. Everything had to be accomplished on the spot. I made pictures from soap with my bare hands. My palms were so sore; it took me some time to cure them.

The exhibition had an outstanding expert Rudi Fuchs who made a curious statement about Latvian art: he thought Latvians had two painters of global significance. We thought he meant Boris Bērziņš. But no, he said – Boris Bērziņš is a personality, but he is difficult to assess against his time. Instead he mentioned Jānis Valters and Aija Zariņa.

s. k.: - *Miervaldis, will you tell about the performances you did in the 90ies? Like when you burned a toy military tank at the foot of Lenin's monument and when the Bronze Man met the White Man!*

m. p.: - I pulled the tank like a doggie behind me to show what the time was like and what artists had come to... When I did the

M. P.: - Nekad par tādu neesmu dzirdējis. Mani neinteresē Rietumu māksla. Parizē slavenā izstādē bija izstādīta mēslu čupa, bet kāpēc tas būtu jāatdarina? Toreiz es tikai gribēju pateikt, ka man apnicis iet uz izstāžu atklāšanām, kur izstādītie darbi galīgi neinteresē. Tā bija vienkārši spēle. Patiesībā tā bija Zābera un Poļa izstāde, nevis otrādi.

S. K.: - *Bet astoņdesmitajos un deviņdesmitajos tu eksperimentēji ar jaunu mākslas formātu.*

M. P.: - Es neeksperimentēju ar tradicionālo „Eksperimenti” ir mākslas zinātnieku tukšruna, kas neko nenozīmē. Tā ir izpausme, teātris. Toreiz bija hepeningi, akcijas, bodiārts. Es nemaz nezināju tādas “performances”.

S. K.: - *Bet kāpēc tev gribējās „iet ārā no rāmja”, nevis palikt pie gleznošanas, ko tu tik talantīgi dari? Bet tu sevi nokrāsoji zelta krāsā. Kā jūs ar Zāberu izdomājāt savas akcijas, piemēram, par saulespuķu sēkliņu tirgošanu?*

M. P.: - Lūk, Zābers bija performanču meistars, par viņu man ir vesels kinoscenārijs. Es pats netaisu performances, pareizāk – es taisu, bet to neviens nepamana. Mums bija daudzas idejas. Tai dienā, kad viņš aizgāja bojā, mēs vēl runājām par nākamo performanci.

Bet tagad man un vispār mūsu paaudzei jau ir iestājies apnikums. Es sen vairs neēju uz izstādēm, neko garlaicīgāku par to nevar izdomāt. Mani vairākas reizes aicināja strādāt



Miervalža Poļa *Memoriālā istaba* Rīgas galerijā. 1995.  
Miervaldis Polis' *Memorial Room* in Riga Gallery. 1995.

performance with the help of the *White Man* who was Roi Vaara<sup>2</sup> invited from the Multimedia Centre by Laima Slava, Academy students swarmed to see avant-garde performance trends. When Vaara did his second performance, all the spectators he had were some people who happened to pass by... That was what the 90ies were like.

S. K.: - *And the performances that you did together with Vilnis Zābers, such as opening an exhibition in an empty gallery in 1992? In 1958 Yves Klein in Paris also had an exhibition in a gallery which was completely empty; the very name of it was The Void.*

M. P.: - I have not heard about it. I am not interested in Western art. A dung-heap was displayed at a famous Paris exhibition – should it be imitated? All I wanted to say was that I was bored by

openings displaying works which did not in the least interested me. It was no more than a game. In reality it was an exhibition of Zābers and Polis and not *vice versa*.

S. K.: - *But throughout the 80ies and the 90ies you did experiment with a new form of art, didn't you?*

M. P.: - I did not experiment with what was traditional. „Experiment” is a meaningless label invented by art critics. We should sooner speak about expression, show. That was a time of happenings, action-shows and body-art. I did not know then about „performances”.

S. K.: - *But why did you want to step „out of the frame” rather than stick to painting where you have true talent? Why did you paint yourself with gold colour instead? How did you and Zābers invent your performance-shows, for example, the one about selling sun-flower seeds?*

2. Performance *Bronze Man* (Miervaldis Polis) meets *White Man* (Roi Vaara) in Helsinki, 1990 and in Riga, 1991.



uz akadēmiju, es atteicu, ka nevienam tas nav vajadzīgs. Es parasti sēdēju „M6”, kur studentu pilns, bet tikai reizi divi studenti pienāca runāties. Gribot lūgt, vai es nevaru viņus mācīt... Ko tieši? Gleznot? IZRādās – zoliti spēlēt. Tā arī bija visa studentu interese.

**S. K.:** - *Toreiz mākslinieki bija sabiedrības uzmanības centrā. Ja agrāk pie smalkā galda aicināja ģenerāļus, tagad – māksliniekus, viņi parādījās gan avižu smalkajās aprindās, gan vēstniecību rautos.*

**M. P.:** - Tā bija vesela kultūras epopeja, kad Rīgā vērās vajā ārzemju vēstniecības. Māksla ir kā eļļa starp zobratiem, un zobrats, no vienas puses, bija Krievija, no otras – kultūras zemes Francija, Vācija, Itālija. Francijas vēstniecības pieņemšanās uzaicināja māksliniekus, rakstniekus, dzejniekus, žurnālistus un – dažus politiķus. Itālijas vēstniecība uzaicināja tikai māksliniekus un literātus. Pirms Sorosa fonda tie bija greznākie galdi, kas redzēti... Reiz aizgāju ātrāk no pieņemšanas, un atašejs bija meklējis mani pa visiem kanāliem, lai nāku pēc oficiālās daļas ar māksliniekiem uzdzīvot. Es ar' būtu saaicinājis ordu ar meitenēm un puisiem, visu, kas nu vajadzīgs, bet sēdēju krogā.

**S. K.:** - *Deviņdesmitajos radās un arī beidzās tādas vietas kā kafejnīca „M6”, kas bija tāda mākslas platforma! Kāpēc tik daudzi mākslinieki tur sēdēja?*

**M. P.:** - Mākslinieks strādā individuāli, tāpēc viņam ir dabiski iziet sabiedrībā, kur var dalīties ar savām domām. Jaunajiem tas ir pavisam svarīgi. Kur citur satiksies?

**M. P.:** - Zabers had a great talent for performances, you see; I have a whole screenplay about him. I do not do performances myself; to be more exact, I do them, but nobody ever notices. We had a lot of ideas. On the day when he was killed in the accident, we were talking of our next performance.

But now they leave me indifferent and my generation feel the same. It is a long time since I stopped going to exhibitions – nothing can be more tiresome. I have had several invitations to work at the academy, but I have replied by stating my doubts about anyone really needing it. I used to pass my time at M6 where there are a lot of students around, and it was only once that two of them came up to me. They said they wanted me to teach them... What exactly? How to paint? No, they were actually interested in a card game.

**S. K.:** - *Years ago artists were in the focus of public attention. If previously there were generals invited to the „high” end of society, now these were artists, they made the media headlines and were invited to embassy banquets.*

**M. P.:** - We witnessed a whole series of cultural events as the embassies in Riga were opening one by one. Art worked like a lubricant between gears – Russia being on one side and the great cultures of France, Germany and Italy on the other. Artists, writers, poets, journalists and only a few politicians were invited to the receptions given at the French embassy. The Italian embassy invited only artists and writers. They had the best food ever seen before the Soros Foundation came... Once I left the reception early and the attaché was trying hard to find me for the artists' party after the formal reception was over. I was sitting

**S. K.:** - *Tu uz „M6” gāji kā uz darbu!*

**M. P.:** - Kā uz viesistabu. „M6” bija mūžīgā jautrība un mūžīgā aprīte – kur jaunieši, tur jauniešes, kur jauniešes, tur veči, kur veči, tur nauda. Bet, kur nauda – tur jaunieši. Tad tur sāka nākt politiķi un žurnālisti. Māris Gailis nospēlēja zolitē un maksāja monētās apmēram desmit dažādās valūtās.



Miervaldis Polis, Vilnis Zābers. Performance *Bronzas cilvēka pārkrāsošana*. 1991.  
Miervaldis Polis, Vilnis Zābers. Performance *Recoloring of the Bronze Man*. 1991.

in the pub, otherwise I might have taken a bunch of girls and boys down there for the fun.

**S. K.:** - *The 90ies both started and ended in coffee-bar like M6; they were like a platform for art! Why did so many artists spend their time there?*

**M. P.:** - An artist works all by himself, so it is only natural for him to go out to a place and share ideas. For the young artists it is extremely relevant. Where else should they meet?



o. t.: - Tur bija arī ļoti labas izstādes, ko rīkoja Helēna Demakova un Inga Šteimane.

s. k.: - *Izstāžu atklāšanās visas meitenes ieradās sapucējušās. Uz Oļega personalizādi bija cirka orķestris, meitenes baltās kleitās. Tagad atklāšanas vairs nav nekāds īpašs notikums. Kad Oļegs dabūja „Ars Fennica” balvu, bija tik smalki ēdieni, visi bija uzcirtušies, dejas līdz rītam. Kāpēc toreiz māksla bija svētki, bet tagad nav?*

o. t.: - Toreiz mūs atklāja Rietumi.

m. p.: - Labāk vajag taisīt anekdošu grāmatu par mākslas notikumiem un ceļojumiem, kas atklātu laiku. Pārējais ir tukši un garlaicīgi.

o. t.: - Piemēram, bija skaists brauciens uz izstādi „Pieci no Rīgas” Stokholmā 1991. gadā. Braucām atpakaļ ar kuģi – kuģis jau atiet, skatāmies – Aija [Zariņa] paliek krastā. Sēžam un domājam, ko darīt. Pēc divām stundām Aija bija uz kuģa! Mēs nesaprašanā – kā tas iespējams! Izrādās, ka arī kuģi var apstādināt.

Vai, piemēram, kā mēs braucām no Berlīnes! Mēs taču ne tikai ar mākslu braucām, daudzi veda arī mantas, ko pēc tam notirgoja melnajā tirgū. Berlīnē aizbrauca uz Taivānas ražojumu noliktavu un sapirka aparatūru. Visu salādēja vilcienā, es kupejā skatos – visa kā tik daudz, ka būs no kaut kā jāatsakās, lai uz robežas visu nekonfiscētu. Aizgāju uzpīpēt ar vajadzīgajiem cilvēkiem un visus jautājumus atrisināju.



Mākslinieki Kristaps Ģelzis, Aija Zariņa, Sarmīte Māliņa, Oļegs Tilbergs, Ojārs Pētersons un Miervaldis Polis kādā no ārzemju izstādes brauciena laikā.  
Artists Kristaps Ģelzis, Aija Zariņa, Sarmīte Māliņa, Oļegs Tilbergs, Ojārs Pētersons and Miervaldis Polis during the trip to some exhibition abroad.

s. k.: - *You went to M6 like to your workplace!*

m. p.: - I saw it more like a parlour. There was a lot of fun and a lot of people at M6: where there are guys, there are girls, where there are girls, there are men, and the men have the money to spend. And the money brings more guys in. Later it became a popular haunt for politicians and journalists. Māris Gailis played cards and paid his losses in coins of ten different currencies.

o. t.: - They had also some very good exhibitions organised by Helēna Demakova and Inga Šteimane.

s. k.: - *The girls at the openings looked very smart. And when Olegs had his solo exhibition, he had an orchestra from the circus and girls dressed in white. Now openings are no more seen as very special events. When Oļegs received his Ars Fennica award,*

*he threw a grand banquet, everyone was dressed to the nines and dancing and partying went on until the early hours of the morning. Why was there so much celebration in art during that time, and why have things changed now?*

o. t.: - At that time we had just been discovered by the West.

m. p.: - It would be more fun to reflect on the time through a compendium of anecdotes about the art events that happened and the places we visited. That would be more meaningful and less dull.

o. t.: - Say, in 1991 we had a wonderful trip to the Stockholm exhibition *Five from Riga*. As we were taking off on board the vessel, we noticed Aija [Zariņa] still ashore. We were at a loss. Two hours later Aija was on board. How come? It turned out that even a vessel can be stopped.

E. V.: - Par maitu man arī bija labs stāsts. Man bija personalizstāde Viļņā. Kad vedu uz turieni darbus, muitas robežas starp Lietuvu un Latviju vēl nebija, pēc pāris mēnešiem, kad vedu tos atpakaļ, maita jau bija. Vedu pilnu mašīnas piekabi ar gleznām bez kādiem dokumentiem. Uz robežas muitnieks ar šauteni uz pleca prasa, ko es vedu. Atbildu, ka gleznas. Viņš truli skatās un prasa – kādas pleznas? Es vēlreiz saku: „Gleznas! Bilde,” bet viņam jau laikam galvā rosās domas, ka man pilna piekabe ar pleznām, un varbūt viņš kaut ko var dabūt. „Ā, bildes... Tad brauc.” Tā man bija pirmā saskare ar Latvijas maitu.

M. P.: - Skandāls bija, kad Oļegs veda savu motoru uz Malmes izstādi 1990. gadā! Samaksāja muitniekam un pārveda ar laivu kā zviedru laikos. Kad bija jāizkrauj, tas bija vesels teātris – visa osta un visa pilsēta tam sekoja. Bija sakritība, ka nesen tur bija nokritis krievu iznīcinātājs, un tagad Tillbergs iedabūjis otru iznīcinātāju – pāri jūrai ar laivu.

O. T.: - Svarīgākais ir leģenda. Es varu desmitiem interesantu gadījumu izstāstīt. Piemēram, kā Aija Zariņa aptur kuģi. Kā Andris Breže uztaisa no koka kloķvārpstu. Brežes busiņam ceļā uz izstādi Vācijā pēkšņi saplīsa kloķvārpsta, bet miestā, līdz kuram viņš tika, saka – detaļu varēs dabūt pēc nedēļas. Izstādes atklāšana pēc pāris dienām, mašīna pilna ar mākslu, līgums parakstīts. Kā tu domā, ko viņš izdara? Viņš taču ir kottēlnieks! Aiziet dārzā, sameklē koku un izgrebj detaļu viens pret vienu. Ieliek mašīnā un nobrauc vēl divus gadus.

Or, say, when we were returning from Berlin. Our luggage contained not only our own artworks; many of us were carrying goods to be sold on the „black market”. In Berlin you would go to a warehouse where they sold *Made in Taiwan* and buy all sorts of equipment. When we loaded it all on the train, the compartment was so full that I understood we would have to give up some of the goods to get over the border. I shared cigarettes with the right people and the issues were resolved.

E. V.: - I too have a good story about customs. I had a solo exhibition in Vilnius. When I took my works to the exhibition, there was as yet no customs border between Latvia and Lithuania, but a couple of months later, as I was taking them back, it had appeared. I had a full trailer of paintings without any papers to show for them. On the border I was stopped by a customs officer carrying a gun: he wanted to know what was there in the trailer. „Paintings” – I tell him. He gave me a dumb look and asked again – „What fencing?” „Paintings! Pictures” – I repeated once again, but his mind was already occupied by the idea that I was carrying a trailer full of fencing and maybe he would get something out of me. „Oh, paintings...” he finally said. „Then, you can go”. That was my first encounter with Latvian customs.

M. P.: - There was a hue and a cry over the engine Oļegs was taking to the Malmö exhibition in 1990. He paid the customs officer and took it over on board a boat, as in the 17th century. The unloading turned into a real show – everyone in the port and in the town came to watch. It had so happened that a short time ago a Russian fighter plane had crashed in that part of the country, and now Tillbergs was getting a second fighter in – by boat over the sea.

E. V.: - Man liekas, ka tā bija kaut kāda cita detaļa... Bet tā jau ir, katram ir savas atmiņas, versijas. Māksliniekam ir tikai „es” un citu nemaz nav...

O. T.: - Tāpēc ir nosacījums – nedrīkst stāstīt par sevi, tikai par citiem. Bet tās leģendas ir interesantas – kā tas apaug. Tur ir tas skaistums.

O. T.: - What matters is the legend. I have many stories to tell. Like – Aija Zariņa stopping the vessel. Or – how Andris Breže made a crankshaft out of wood. When Breže was driving down to an exhibition in Germany, he broke a crankshaft and at the village where he pulled in they could promise the part only within a week’s time. The exhibition opening was only a couple of days away and the van was full of items, and the contract had been signed. What do you think he did? You may know – he is a sculptor. Works in timber. So he went out into the garden, found a piece of wood and carved the car part one to one. Fitted it on the van and did not change it within two years.

E. V.: - I think it was not exactly a crankshaft... But so it goes. Everyone has his own memories, versions... An artist has only his „ego” and others do not exist...

O. T.: - Therefore stories should be told on condition that they are about other people and not yourself. But the legends are exciting – the way they grow. That is the beauty of it all...