



Eric Loton

Photo: Kristine Madjare

Break the expectations. Interview with photo exhibition curator Eric Loton

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Until September 28, the ISSP Gallery will host the exhibition "Strange Alley". It brings together six young European artists who, through photography, explore the boundaries of time and how the mundane becomes unique. The exhibition looks at the role of images in understanding the past and present, while highlighting how photography and video allow the everyday to be seen in a different, unfamiliar light. LSM.lv invited the curator of the exhibition Ēriks Lotons to the conversation.

The exhibition is part of the ["Parallel" photography platform program](#) . Can you tell us more about what Parallel is?

It is a Portuguese-based organization that works with various types of institutions that support photography - galleries, museums, magazines - and organizes exhibitions and shows directly for European audiences. About sixty percent of the artists come from Europe, but other countries and, for example, America are also represented. The artists present their projects, and the curators select and create exhibitions accordingly.

Speaking specifically about this exhibition, what were the criteria by which the artists were selected?

There did not seem to be such a comprehensive topic. I just wanted to work with something that wasn't easy to understand. Sometimes, when working with artists, it is more interesting to work with exactly what is actually difficult to understand. In a way, for me, these works seemed appealing and binding - also an aesthetic level, I like this exhibition *Content* . By the time I started working with these artists, looking at their work as a whole, the theme eventually came from themselves.

What is the biggest challenge in curating an exhibition of a group of six different artists?

It seems to me that curating group exhibitions is difficult at all, because you don't want to organize, for example, six separate solo shows, and most of the artists' work is much larger than these specific ones. Some, for example, have only one photograph in the exhibition, but in total there are about 15 to 20 works in the project. On the one hand, it is difficult for an artist to give control to someone else who makes up this set, but on the other hand, to select these works of artists is the most difficult.

How did you decide to refer to the concept of "alienation" by the Russian theorist Viktor Shklovsky in the exhibition?

When I read Freud, I discovered this person, Viktor Schklowski, who coined the term "ostracene" or "alienation." Translating this word into English means making it weird. You recognize something that is also unfamiliar. That's how I explain it to people - when you say the same word, repeating it over and over again, it loses its meaning and you feel the word become specific in itself.

“ When you look at these works in the exhibition, you see something based on your memory - you recognize it and you can understand it, but at the same time there is something strange in it. It refers to both intimacy and strangeness in it.

What fascinates you most in photography?

It has to do with expectations. Viewers have expectations of the world, and photography is a creative way to break them. You can present what people don't expect, and it allows you to change what the viewer understands. Everything is also based on visual literacy - what people experience in their mind and how it can change the way a person looks at the world. Our memory is thought through and processed into images. Photography is a very visual medium, and its specificity is to hit these memories.

Given that you work with many young artists from Europe, have you noticed any trends that are currently appearing in contemporary photography?

It seems to me that a lot of works are created temporarily, they are volatile quickly. In America, for example, there is a lot of identity-based photography, while in Europe there is more reflection on existential themes - life and death, on a much wider scale. Of course,

“ is now "Instagram" and so on, but the fact that we are crowded with these images does not mean that can not be created new and stronger.

It's high quality, and in fact, artists have more options today than ever before. There must be faith that good will pay off.

And what about the technical aspects? How important do you think they are right now?

Photography is becoming more and more democratic. Many artists work by combining and mixing it with other media. However, many still love the technical appeal of photography, such as film and grain. And people who love photography are still able to see the negatives of beauty. Photography is like alchemy - whether it's analog or not. But analog photography will never die. Many people are currently working with archives, and this *snapshot* (*snapshot*) aesthetic is popular . But there will always be people who will exist in both worlds.

Do you think this *snapshot* aesthetic will be popular for a long time to come?

If *snapshot* aesthetics are so popular now, it doesn't mean it will be like that in five years. Photography trends come and go. I'm not worried about that.



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