Visual Culture of the Baltic Exile Communities (Riga, 11 Sep 26)

Riga, Art Museum RIGA BOURSE (Mākslas muzejs Rīgas Birža), Doma laukums 6, Sep 11, 2026
Registration deadline: Aug 31, 2026

Ulrike Nürnberger, Böckler-Mare-Balticum-Stiftung

Visual Culture of the Baltic Exile Communities in the Aftermath of World War II.

The study of the Baltic exile communities following the Second World War has often concentrated on the seemingly inextinguishable energy that these communities displayed in combining their carefully defined political, social and cultural ambitions with their commitment to self-preservation. This dual mission required resounding resilience. The importance of their visual cultures in this process, however, has not received the interest it deserves. The aim of the 2026 "Homburger Gespräch" shall be to delve deeper into how visuality in the Baltic exile communities after the Second World War helped them shape their understanding of reality.
This shall be done by assembling conversational partners from various backgrounds and fields to Riga for a day-long colloquy. The focus shall not primarily be on formal aesthetics, text and speech, but rather on how cultural meaning, codes and identity were formed through visual cues. The notion of seeing shall be ever-present in these discussions. What did its members choose to see and what not to see and how did new ways of seeing evolve in the new environments? How did geography and history leave its mark on this seeing? How were space, color, materiality negotiated?

Attention shall be focused on the time period between 1944 and 1991. This does not, however, mean that the communities did not draw on visual perceptions prior to this period and did not reconfigure this visuality retrospectively once the exile experience in the formal sense of the word came to an end in 1991. By incorporating the most varying impulses from periods “prior and post”; and by, at times, engaging their new environments, at others, secluding themselves from them, an enhanced multifariousness and manifoldness evolved.

A collaborative colloquy (Homburger Gespräch 2026) under the auspices of the Böckler--Mare-Balticum-Foundation (Bad Homburg) in collaboration with the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe – Institute of the Leibniz-Association (Marburg) and the Latvian National Museum of Art (Riga)
Concept: Agnese Bergholde-Wolf, Jānis Krēsliņš, Ulrike Nürnberger, Dietmar Popp

Please register for the conference: geschaeftsstelle@boeckler-mare-balticum-stiftung.de

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Programme:

Arrival at 9.00 AM

9.15–9.30 AM Welcome: Daiga Upeniece (Art Museum RIGA BOURSE), Ulrike Nürnberger (Böckler-Mare-Balticum-Foundation), Dietmar Popp (Herder Institute)

Revisiting the Notion of Exile and Visual Culture in Exile
9.30–9.45 AM Jānis Krēsliņš jr. (SE)

09:45–10.00 AM Reflection and Discussion

What do we know about Baltic Visual Culture in Exile?
10.00–10.15 AM Kadi Polli: Estonia
10.15–10.30 AM Elita Ansone: Latvia
10.30–10.45 AM Ilona Mažeikienė / Birutė Pankūnaitė: Lithuania

10.45–11.00 AM Reflection and Discussion

11.00–11.15 AM Coffee Break

Visual Culture in the very early Stages of Exile
11.15–11.25 AM Inese Gātere (LV): The Thematic, Stylistic, and Social Narrative of Artifacts Depicting the Lives of Interned Latvian Legionnaires in Allied Captivity from 1945 to 1946

11.25–11.45 AM Reflection and Discussion

11.45–11.55 AM Agnija Lesničenoka (LV): Collections of Latvian Exile Artists in the National Archives of Latvia: The Example of the Art Academy of Latvia Student Fraternity “Dzintarzeme”

11.55 AM–12.15 PM Reflection and Discussion

12.15–12.25 PM Triin Metsla (EE): Understanding the Possible Narratives of Refugee Art – from Self-Dermination to Modern Art

12.25–12.45 PM Reflection and Discussion

Exile and the Variety of its Visual Platforms
12.45–12.55 PM: Elke Bauer / Agnese Bergholde-Wolf (DE): “I Have Never Left Latvia” (Jānis Krēsliņš sen.) and “The Annual Harvest of a Poor Lithuanian Collector in Exile” (Povilas Reklaitis) – Exile Collections at the Herder Institute

12.55–1.15 PM Reflection and Discussion

1.15–2.15 PM LUNCH

The Visible and the Invisible — Physical Footprints vs. That which evades the Gaze
2.15–2.25 PM Isabell Schierenbeck (SE): From Berlin to Tel Aviv: Traces of German Culture in the Cityscape

2.25–2.45 PM Reflection and Discussion

2.45–2.55 PM Maarja Merivoo-Parro (EE): What in Exile evades the Gaze?

2.55–3.15 PM Reflection and Discussion

Memory vs. Forgetting?
3.15–3.25 PM Indrė Urbelytė (LT): We had to forget... National Art Histories and the Experience of Exile (Jonas Mekas, Kazys Varnelis, NYC)

3.25–3.45 PM Reflection and Discussion

3.45–3.55 PM Liisa Kaljula (EE): Childhood Memories and Utopian Thinking. The Case of Estonian-Swedish Artist Enno Hallek

3.55–4.15 PM Reflection and Discussion

4.15–4.30 PM Coffee Break

Reconfiguring Home vs. Creating a new Home?
4.30–4.40 PM Martin Nõmm (EE): Home or Away – the Dilemma of Exile Art

4.40–5.00 PM Reflection and Discussion

5.00–5.10 PM Ilona Mažeikienė / Birutė Pankūnaitė (LT): The Activities of the Art School École des Arts et Métiers (1946–1950): Art Education in New Settings, Freiburg im Breisgau

5.10–5.30 PM Reflection and Discussion

Preservation vs. Unbridled Creativity
5.30–5.40 PM Marianna Auliciema (LV): No one wants your Art: Musings on Visual Culture in the Collection of the Latvians Abroad - Museum and Research Centre and beyond

5.40–6.00 PM Reflection and Discussion

6.00–6.10 PM Andra Silapētere (LV): A Wish to turn Lived Exile into narratable History

6.10–6.30 PM The day’s final reflections

Reference:
CONF: Visual Culture of the Baltic Exile Communities (Riga, 11 Sep 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 18, 2026 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/53501>.