

Sheltering in the Shadow of the “Golden Age”...

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Concept of the Art Competition Exhibition

Context and Problematics of the Exhibition

In European culture, the so-called “Golden Age” is one of the most enduring mythological, literary, and also political narratives — a chapter in the biography of humanity itself. Throughout history, societies have often been dissatisfied with the present, afraid of it, or unable to cope with its unrelenting stream of events, crises, and catastrophes. And so, in search of relief, they have turned away from the complex, exhausting present, conjuring the idea of a Golden Age — a time that once was or is yet to come, that exists somewhere, or will one day return.

This persistent topos of the Golden Age shaped much of 20th-century cultural space — a century in which we witnessed horrifying catastrophes, many of which began with grand declarations of a new golden era. Wars, violence against nature, against ourselves and each other, bloodshed — all this Ovid already fled from in his poetry, as did the virgin Astraea, symbol of peace and harmony, who left Earth when the Golden Age was no more. In his *Bucolics* (Fourth Eclogue), Virgil promised the trauma-stricken Romans a new Golden Age, heralded by the return of the virgin — a promise, a fantasy, a literary cry of despair.

The 21st century, too, promised a new Golden Age through digital immortality, where global communication would create and preserve vast new pixelated worlds, filled with limitless possibilities for entertainment and knowledge. Yet this new golden realm carries its own shadows: deception, digital surveillance, citizen control, and data theft.

Our time is filled with challenges on a global scale: environmental disasters, multilayered social crises, identity conflicts — all generating

cultural, political, and societal tensions, mass insecurity, and deep fatigue. Many long to escape such a present — but where to, when the interconnected web of events and networks leaves no island undiscovered? All the fairy-tale forests of hermits seeking refuge have been clear-cut; the deserts of prophets mapped, built upon, and most likely sold.

Do spaces still exist — or could they emerge — where the Golden Age lives on? As faith in a better society, where hatred and violence are (still? no longer?) unknown? Or is this just another illusion — a “deep fake,” a profound deception, a mirage of our own making? Perhaps it is not something to wait for, but something to create? Are we capable of that? Do we even want it?

Exhibition Objective

We invite artists to engage in a creative discussion about visions of the future — both in Latvia and globally — by exploring how Latvian artists reflect upon, imagine, or critique the concept:

The Golden Age: Promise or Future Forgery?

This theme is multifaceted and may be explored through various questions:

- How was the Golden Age imagined or constructed in cultural and artistic history?
- What defines the present moment, and how — or why — might we escape it?
- Where would we flee? What does a “golden refuge” look like?
- The allure and destruction of golden forgeries — why do we need illusions?
- Probing the Golden Age — cultural fatigue and future perspectives.

We invite professional artists to submit original works for a collective competition exhibition — whether previously shown or created specifically for this event — that address the core question of the exhibition.