



AKADEMIA: PERFORMING LIFE

From Saturday, January 13 to Saturday, March 24, 2018

Opening on Saturday, January 13, 3 pm to 4 pm (press visit) - 4 pm to 9 pm (public opening)

With (-)auteur, Mercedes Azpilicueta (Pernod Ricard Fellow), Ieva Balode, Yair Barelli, Aia Bertrand, Raymond Duncan, Ieva Epnere, Barbara Gaile, Daiga Grantina, Myriam Lefkowitz, Mai-Thu Perret, Andrejs Strokis

Curators: **Solvita Krese & Inga Lāce**

Associate programming curator: Camille Chenais



Akademia: Performing Life

The exhibition *Akademia: Performing Life* will look at narratives and themes springing from Akademia, community and alternative school that offered courses in dance, art, and crafts, hosted an art gallery and a publishing house and staged theatre and dance pieces between the 1910s and 1970s in Paris. Established by **Raymond Duncan**, American dancer and artist, and since the 1920s co-run by **Aia Bertrand**, a dancer, writer and an expatriate from Latvia, the Akademia was a manifestation of their ideological syncretism blending socialist principles, the desire to revive ancient Greece and a "natural" Latvian way of life. The exhibition aims to explore the ideas and principles embodied by Akademia at its inception as potential alternatives to traditional models of education, creation and community life, while also questioning its more obscure aspects.

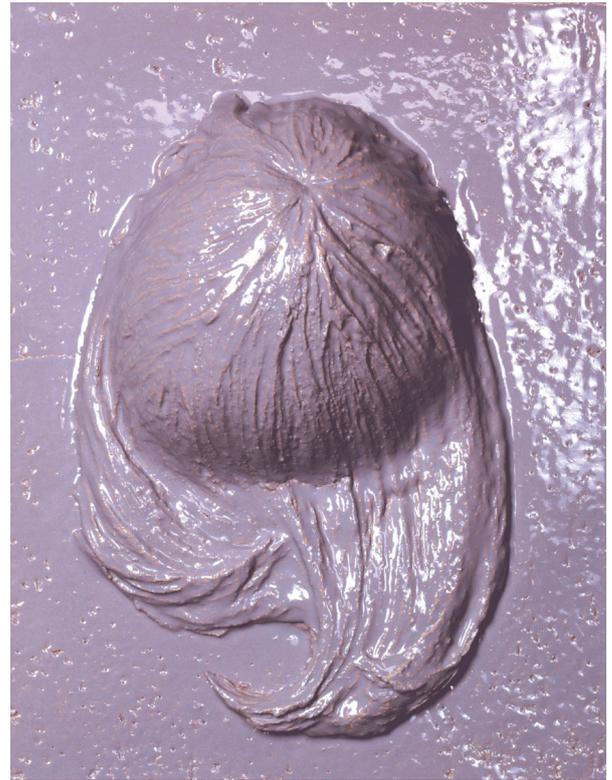
The history of Akademia comes about in the form of a puzzle reconstructed by intertwining the family collection of the Duncans in the United States, the stories of former members and people close to the community, the various books and pamphlets published on the press of the Akademia and the clippings preserved in the Parisian libraries reporting often the eccentricities of its founder. Like many collective utopias of the beginning of the 20th century, Akademia is neither a place for living nor a school in a classical sense, but rather a community of various, often changing people that gathered to dance, make music, walk, debate or paint around Raymond Duncan and his philosophy. Promoting a healthy, simple life, a return to nature, a diffusion of art in everyday life and a liberation from sexual and family norms, Raymond Duncan strongly opposed industrialization, capitalism and the bourgeois family and lifestyle, which according to him were the sources of the dehumanization of the modern life. The daily life of the community was also punctuated by regular craft work such as pottery, weaving, making of sandals and objects using methods and aesthetics inspired by Greek antiquity. With an approach based on self-governance, these productions were then sold in the Akademia shop thus allowing to finance the life and the artistic activities of its members. But, over the decades, the Akademia and its ideals slowly withered and stiffened: in the 1960s, its members and followers were mostly an aging public gathered around an increasingly narcissistic Raymond Duncan and his dedicated partner Aia Bertrand who continued to run the school after he passed away. Her role in the management and social and artistic activities was very important in the life of Akademia, but has not yet been fully recognized, illustrating the usual eclipse of female figures in history.

Within the exhibition, archival documents, objects, books and fabrics produced by members of Akademia interact with works by contemporary artists invited to work on philosophy (**Ieva Balode**) and aesthetics (**Barbara Gaile**, **Daiga Grantina**, **Andrejs Strokina**) developed by this community, the life of Aia Bertrand (**Myriam Lefkowitz**), as well as the themes of alternative education (**Ieva Epnere**) and collective utopias (**Mai-Thu Perret**). **Mercedes Azpilicueta** (Pernod Ricard Fellow), **Yair Barelli** and **(-)auteur** are invited to activate Villa Vassilieff's space by living, working and offering collective experiences open to all.

VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Daiga Grantina, *Pipe-in dog and sun*, (2017)
Exhibition view of *Biotopia* at Kunsthalle Mainz in
2017. Courtesy Galerie Joseph Tang



Mai-Thu Perret, *It's Crooked Like The Pine. It's
Mottled Like The Stone* (2008)
Glazed ceramic, 47 x 36 x 14 cm
Courtesy of the artist and VNH Gallery



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *Molecular Love*, 2017
basis for live art FLAM 2017, Amsterdam
Courtesy of the artist and RijksakademieOPEN,
Amsterdam.
Image: Thomas Lenden



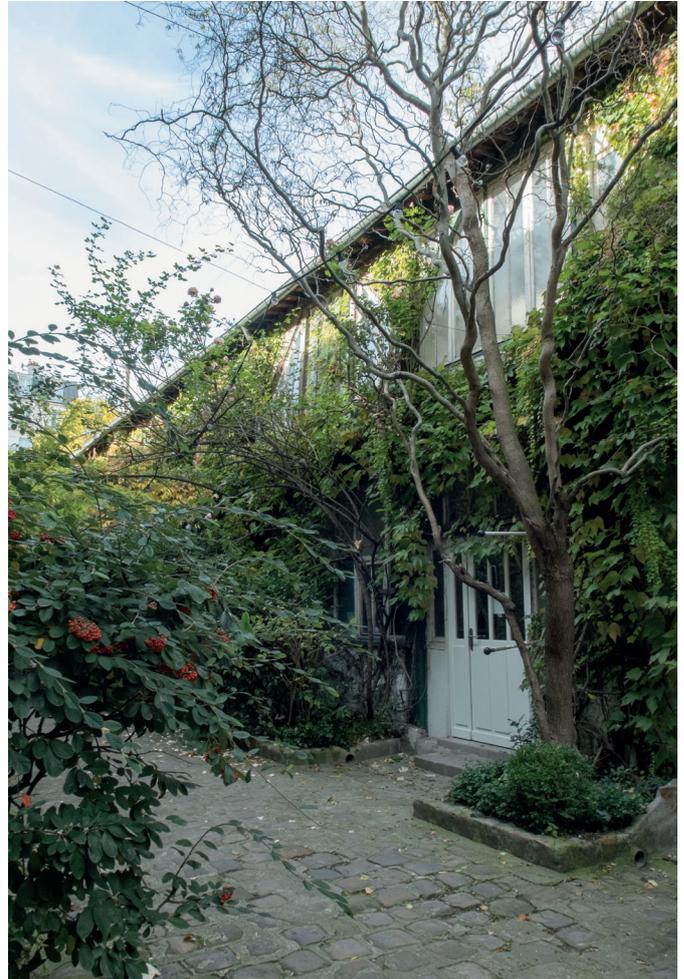
Ieva Epnere, *Green school*, 2017, HD video. Courtesy of the
artist.

VILLA VASSILIEFF - PERNOD RICARD FELLOWSHIP & BÉTONSALON - CENTER FOR ART AND RESEARCH

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research offers a space of collective reflection that combines both artistic and academic practices, and questions the production and dissemination of knowledge. We develop our activities in a process-based, collaborative, and discursive manner, following different time spans, in cooperation with various local, national, and international organizations. Exhibitions are enriched by different associated events (workshops, conferences, performances, round table discussions...). We organize seminars and workshops in collaboration with faculty members from the Paris Diderot University. We lead off-site research projects in partnership with other institutions, and offer residency programs for researchers, artists, and curators.

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research is a non-profit organization established in Paris in 2003. Since 2007, Bétonsalon has been located on the campus of the Paris Diderot University. In 2016, we launched the Académie Vivante (Living Academy) program, an experimental research laboratory within the Epigenetics and Cell Fate unit (CNRS / Université Paris Diderot) that invites artists in residency. This same year, we launched Villa Vassillieff, our second site of activities, in the former studio of artist Marie Vassilieff, located in the heart of the Montparnasse neighborhood. Until 2013, this location was the Museum of Montparnasse. Villa Vassilieff is a cultural establishment of the City of Paris.

Villa Vassilieff intends to reconnect with the history of its location by inviting artists and researchers to take a contemporary look at the heritage of Montparnasse. Our



exhibitions and public programs focus on exploring lesser-known resources and aim at re-writing and diversifying historical art narratives. Among many grant and residency opportunities, we joined forces with our leading sponsor Pernod Ricard to create the Pernod Ricard Fellowship, a residency program inviting four international artists, curators, or researchers every year in the Villa's studio. We collaborate closely with museums and curators to design tailor-made research projects and bring innovative perspectives, as illustrated by the ongoing Marc Vaux program jointly led by Villa Vassilieff and Centre Pompidou's Kandinsky Library.

PARTNERS

Akadémia: Performing Life is realized in collaboration with the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga as part of the contemporary art and research project *Portable Landscapes* which examines the stories of exiled and emigré Latvian artists in Paris, New York, Sweden and Berlin, locating them within the broader context of 20th-century art history, and wider processes of migration and globalization. The exhibition will have its next iteration at the Latvian National Museum of Art in April-June, 2018.

Exhibition partners

Akadémia: Performing Life unfolds over two chapters at Villa Vassilief, Paris and Latvian National Museum of Art; the exhibition is coproduced by the [Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art](#) and Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research.



LATVIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART



Myriam Lefkowitz's project is supported by [La Galerie, Center for Contemporary Art, Noisy-le-Sec](#) and the DRAC Île-de-France-Ministry of Culture for choreographic residencies.

Solvita Krese is a curator and director of the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts (LCCA) since 2000. She has been curator of number of large scale international exhibitions, most recent ones are *Identity: Behind the Curtain of Uncertainty*, National Gallery of Ukraine, Kiev (2016), *Re: visited, Riga Art Space* (2014), *Alternativa*, Gdansk (2013). She was commissioner of the Latvian Pavilion in Venice Biennale (2015). In 2009 she initiated the annual Contemporary Art Festival Survival Kit which she has been curating since then.

Inga Lāce is a curator at the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) and a curatorial fellow at de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam (2015-2016), where her examination of the intertwined relationships between nature and culture, and (art) institutions and ecology has led to the production of a symposium and a publication (forthcoming in 2017). She has recently curated the exhibitions *Resilience. Secret Life of Plants, Animals and Other Species* at Bükü (the Büro für kulturelle Übersetzungen) in Leipzig (2016), and *Lost in the Archive*, with Andra Silapetere, in Riga (2016), which took the LCCA's archive of contemporary art as its starting point. She also curated the exhibition *(Re)construction of Friendship* (2014), which was held in the former KGB house in Riga. Lāce co-edited the book *Revisiting Footnotes. Footprints of the Recent Past in the Post-Socialist Region* with Ieva Astahovska (2015), and she was a curator, with Solvita Krese of the 7th and 8th editions of the contemporary art festival Survival Kit (2015-2016).

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research is supported by the City of Paris, the Paris Diderot University - Paris 7, the Île-de-France Regional Board of Cultural Affairs - Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Île-de-France Region and Leroy Merlin - Quai d'Ivry.

The Académie vivante is supported by the Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso.

Bétonsalon - Center for Art and Research is a member of Tram, réseau art contemporain Paris / Île-de-France and of d.c.a / association française de développement des centres d'art.

Villa Vassilief receives support from public and private partners first and foremost from the City of Paris, the Île-de-France Region and Pernod Ricard, its lead sponsor. Villa Vassilief also develops partnerships with the Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, the Société des Auteurs dans les Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, the Collège d'études mondiales of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme, and the Goethe Institut.

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