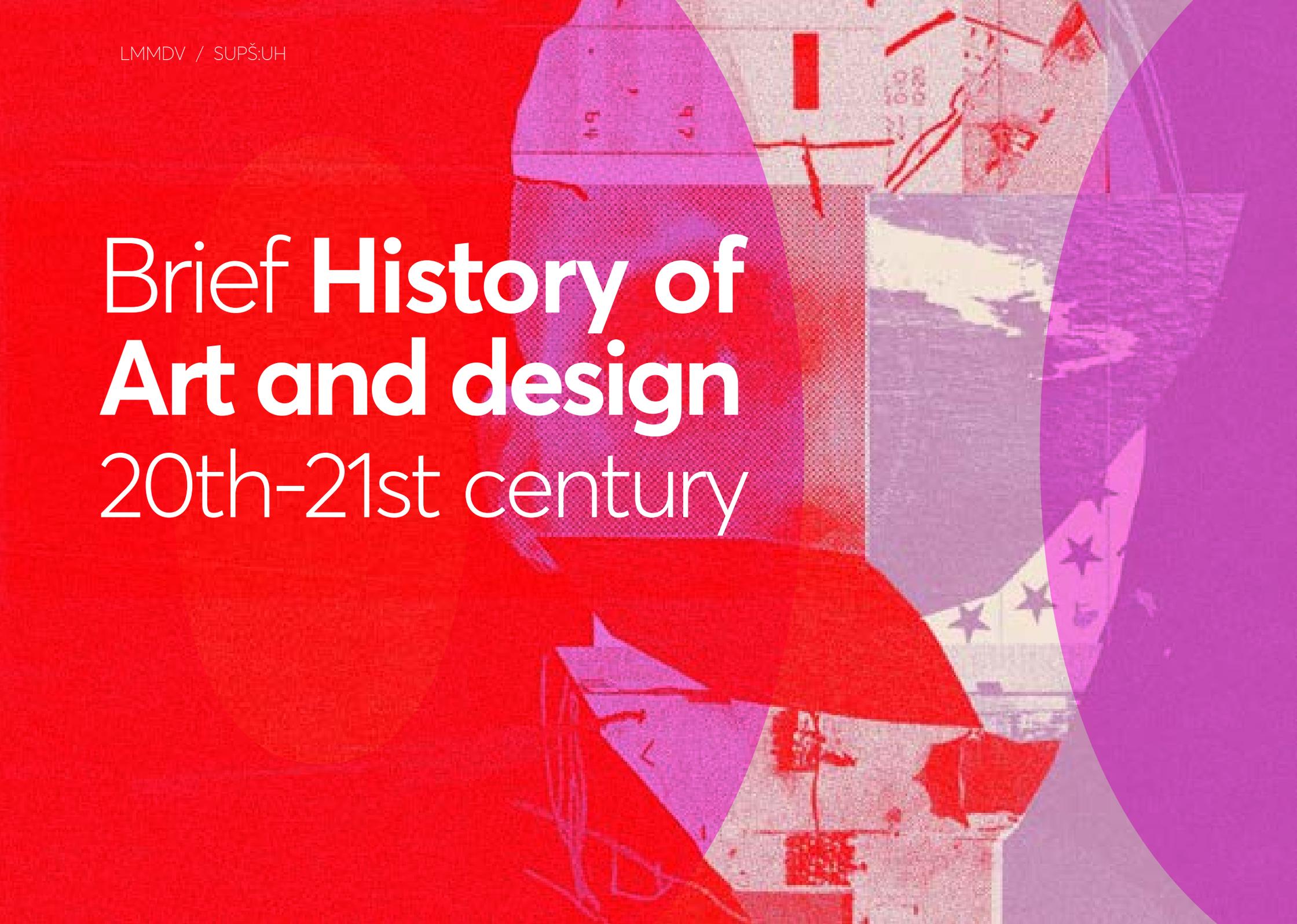


# Brief **History of** **Art and design** 20th-21st century

The background is a complex, layered collage. It features a solid red field on the left side. Overlaid on this and extending to the right are several semi-transparent, overlapping shapes in shades of purple and blue. These shapes contain various patterns and textures, including a halftone dot pattern, a grid of stars, and abstract line drawings. The overall composition is dynamic and modern, reflecting the themes of art and design in the 20th and 21st centuries.

- 01** Bauhaus Movement and International Modernism (1919–1960)
- 02** Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism (1930–1960)
- 03** Pop Art and Pop Design in the Space Age (1955–1970)
- 04** Minimalism and Brutalism (1950–1980)
- 05** Conceptual and Radical Design and Art (1965–1980)
- 06** Street Art, Graffiti, and Urban Design, Feminist Art Movement and Social Design (1970–1980)
- 07** Postmodernism in Art and Design (1980–2000)
- 08** Installation, Performance (1990–nowadays)
- 09** New Media Art (1990–nowadays)
- 10** Global Contemporary Art and Design (2000–nowadays)

# BRITISH HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN 20TH & 21ST

# Conceptual Art and Design

(1965-1980)

**"DESIGN IS THINKING MADE VISUAL."**

Bauhaus aimed to merge art with practical design.

# Conceptual Art and Design

(1965-1980)



Co-funded by  
the European Union



LIEPĀJAS MŪZIKAS,  
MĀKSLAS un DIZAINA  
VIDUSSKOLA



SUPŠ:UH



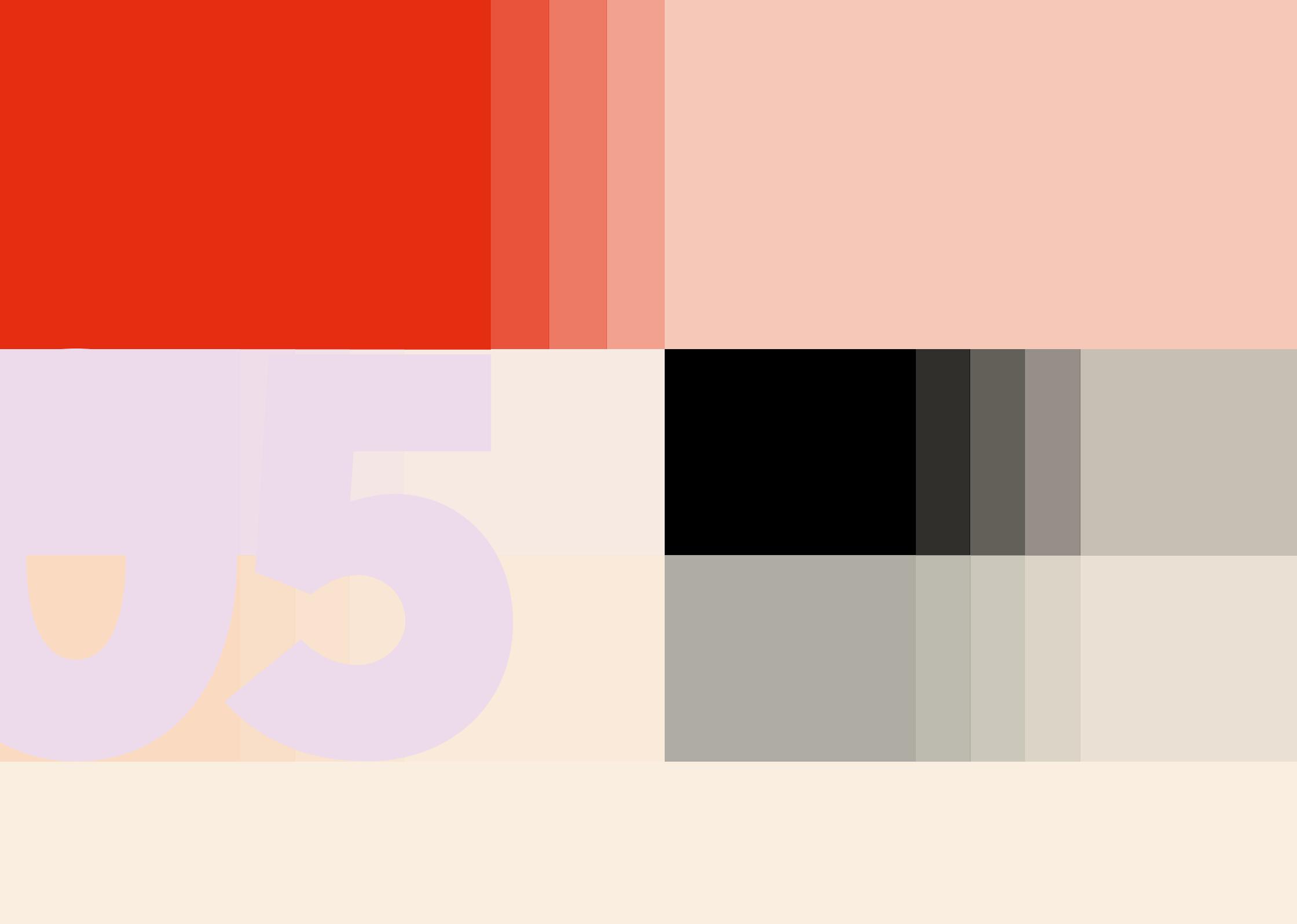
Materials created within Erasmus+ Small-scale partnership project "EmpowerED: Fostering Employability, Cultural Understanding, and Digital Resilience in VET Education" No 2023-2-LV01-KA210-VET-000178458 Implemented from 1.04.2024. till 31.03.2026. by coordinator MIKC "Liepājas Mūzikas, mākslas un dizaina vidusskola" (Latvia) and project partner Střední umělecko průmyslová škola Uherské Hradiště (Czech Republic), total project budget is 60 000 euro.

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# INTRO

## Introduction

### Historical Background of Bauhaus and International Modernism

Conceptual art emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the USA and Europe as a reaction against traditional artistic forms and commercialized art markets. Its primary principle is that the concept or idea behind the artwork takes precedence over its aesthetic, technical, or material aspects.

### Principles of Conceptual Art

- / **Idea over Aesthetic:** The artwork's meaning or concept is more important than its visual appearance.
- / **Dematerialization of Art:** Emphasis on ephemeral or non-material forms such as text, instructions, or actions.
- / **Interrogation of Art and Institutions:** Challenges the role of museums, galleries, and the commodification of art.
- / **Use of Language:** Text often becomes a central medium, reflecting the artwork's ideas.
- / **Viewer's Role:** Engages the audience in interpreting or completing the work, making them part of the creative process.

### Tendencies in the USA

- / **Minimalist Influence:** Reduction of art to its conceptual essence, often through clean, abstract forms (e.g., Sol LeWitt).



Sol Le Witt, Arcs and Bands in Color

- / **Political and Social Critique:** Focus on issues such as war, race, and feminism (e.g., Adrian Piper).
- / **Art as Documentation:** Use of photography, video, and written instructions to document ephemeral works.

# Key Artists and Works

## Sol LeWitt

- / **Wall Drawings** – Detailed instructions for creating drawings, emphasizing process over product.

## Joseph Kosuth

- / **One and Three Chairs (1965)** – Combines a physical chair, its photograph, and its dictionary definition to question representation.

## Lawrence Weiner

- / ext-based works exemplify his belief in art's potential to exist as language alone.

# Tendencies in the Europe

- / **Theoretical Engagement:** Strong philosophical underpinnings, influenced by semiotics and poststructuralism.
- / **Conceptual Actions:** Performance and actions often aimed at deconstructing cultural and political systems.
- / **Critique of Commodification:** Opposition to the commercial art market, often using ephemeral materials.



Joseph Kosuth: *One and Three Chairs* (1965)



Lawrence Weiner " Things made to be seen forcefully obscured" ,1996

# Key Artists and Works

## Marcel Duchamp

/ A urinal signed „R. Mutt,“ challenging the definition of art.

## On Kawara

/ **Date Paintings** – Part of his „Today“ series, exploring time and existence.

## Hans Haacke

/ **Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings (1971)**  
Exposes corruption in New York’s real estate market.



Marcel Duchamp – „R. Mutt,“



On Kawara  
© 1967 Kawara, Japan  
© 2016, New York, NY  
JULY 4, 1967 1967  
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

On Kawara – Today series



Hans Haacke: Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings

## Yves Klein

/ **Leap into the Void (1960)** – A staged photograph representing an artist’s transcendence.



Yves Klein – Leap into the Void

## Comparison of Tendencies

- / **In the USA**, conceptual art often had a pragmatic, instructional tone and was heavily influenced by the emerging technology and media.
- / **In Europe**, it leaned more toward critical theory and social activism, especially within politically charged environments (e.g., post-war Germany and Eastern Europe).

## Why Conceptual Art is Important

Conceptual art shifted the focus of art-making from skill and craft to intellectual inquiry, broadening the definition of art itself. It remains foundational for movements such as performance art, installation art, and contemporary practices addressing global issues.

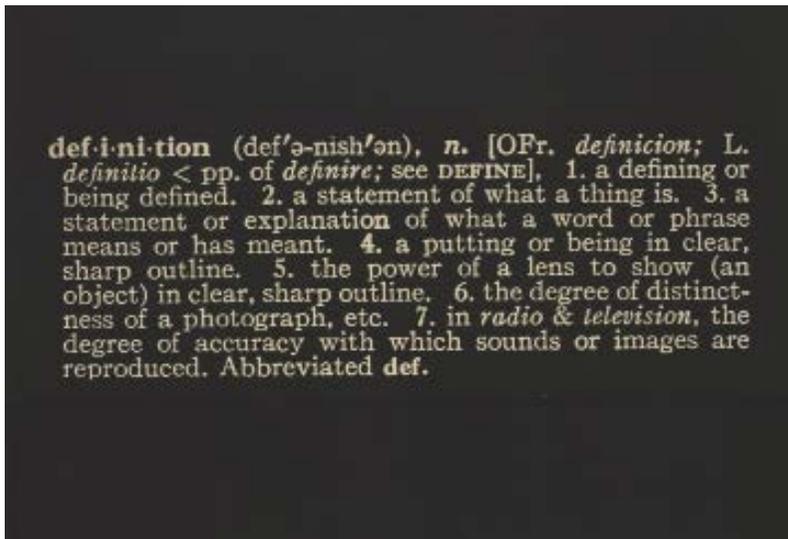
The intersection of conceptual art and science lies in the way both fields prioritize exploration, experimentation, and questioning established systems. Conceptual art, like science, often focuses on process and concept rather than material outcomes. Below are scientific dimensions of conceptual art

# Cognitive and Psychological Dimensions

- / **Role of Perception:** Conceptual art challenges how humans perceive and process information. Artists often use ambiguous or minimal forms to engage viewers' cognitive processes, encouraging interpretation and meaning-making.
- / **Semiotics and Language:** Drawing on theories of semiotics (study of signs and symbols), conceptual art explores how language and symbols create meaning, similar to linguistics in cognitive science.

## Example:

- / **Joseph Kosuth's Art as Idea as Idea** series investigates how words and objects interrelate.



Joseph Kosuth's Art as Idea as Idea ( The word definition)

# Systems Theory and Process Art

- / **Systematic Approaches:** Many conceptual artists use rules, algorithms, or systematic procedures, echoing methods in computer science or mathematics.

## Example:

- / **Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawings** are created based on specific written instructions, much like a computer following code.

# Feedback Loops

- / **Some works involve feedback** mechanisms, resembling systems theory principles in science.

## Example:

- / **Hans Haacke's kinetic sculptures** explore physical systems like condensation, air currents, and biological growth.



o

Hans Haacke, Blue Sail, 1965

## Interdisciplinary Art-Science Connections

- / **Physics and Materiality:** Conceptual art often experiments with the dematerialization of art, which parallels quantum physics' focus on the immaterial (e.g., energy, waves).

### Example:

- / **Yves Klein's Transfer of Zone of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility (1959)** involves the transfer of immaterial „artistic sensibility,“ challenging the tangibility of artistic objects.



Yves Klein's Transfer of Zone of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility (1959)

## Biology and Ecology

- / Conceptual artists explore living systems and natural cycles.

### Example:

- / **Agnes Denes' Wheatfield - A Confrontation (1982)** juxtaposes agriculture and urbanization, highlighting ecological concerns.



Agnes Denes' Wheatfield

# Data and Information Theory

## Art as Data

- / **Conceptual art often parallels information theory**, which studies the transmission and encoding of data. Text-based works and instructions can be seen as artistic „data packets.“

### Example:

- / **Lawrence Weiner's** language-based works are open-ended, like variables in a mathematical function.

## Information Overload

- / **Artists critique how science and technology** have led to overwhelming amounts of data.

### Example:

- / **Jenny Holzer's LED works**, like Light Line mutate how mass communication technologies influence knowledge.



Joseph Kosuth's Art as Idea as Idea ( The word definition)

# Mathematics and Logic

## Logical Structures

- / **Conceptual artists** frequently use mathematical or logical systems to construct meaning.

### Example:

- / **Mel Bochner's Measurement Series** directly relates numerical systems to spatial dimensions, questioning the human tendency to quantify experience.



Mel Bochner's Measurement Series

## Paradoxes

- / Many works evoke philosophical paradoxes, akin to Gödel's incompleteness theorems or paradoxes in quantum mechanics.

### Example:

- / Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, Even explores absurd mechanical systems.



Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*

# Neuroscience and Human Interaction

## Viewer's Brain Activity

- / Conceptual art engages multiple cognitive functions like memory, pattern recognition, and imagination, offering fertile ground for neuroscience studies on art perception.
- / Research shows that abstract and conceptual works activate brain areas associated with problem-solving and meaning construction, unlike traditional art forms focusing more on aesthetic appreciation.

# Technology and Conceptual Art

## Digital Art and AI

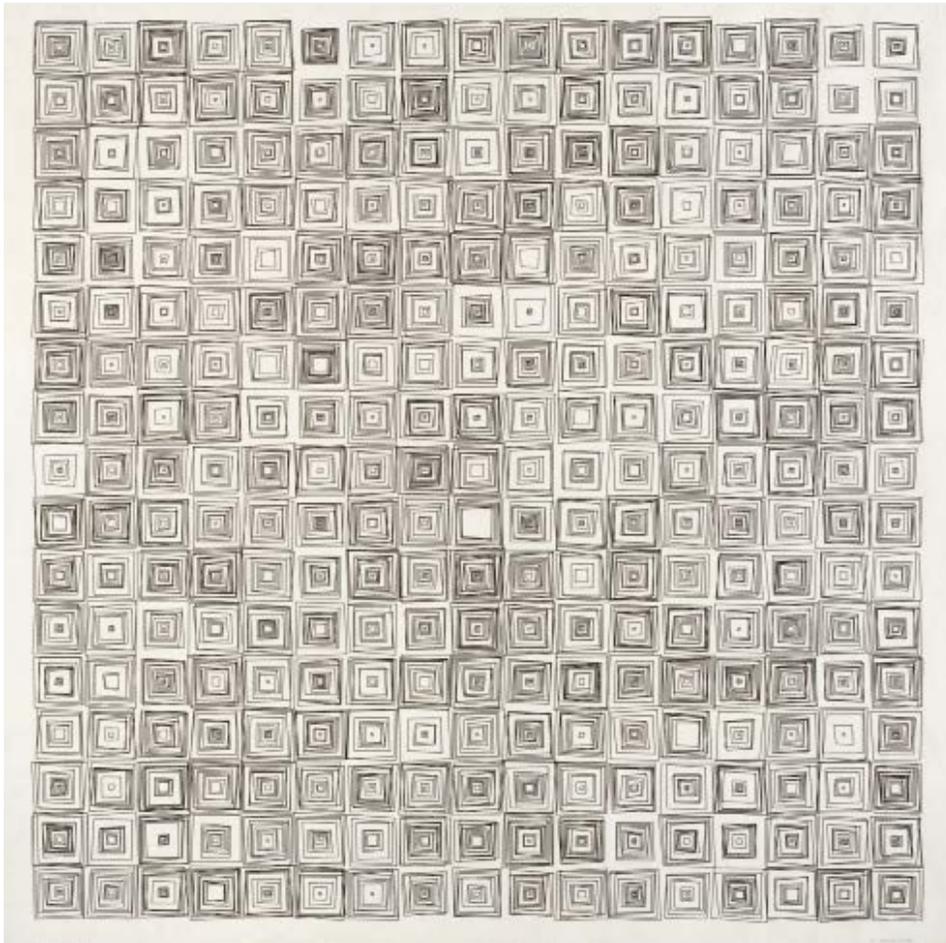
- / Advances in computing have expanded conceptual art into new domains like generative art and artificial intelligence. Code becomes the „concept,“ and the resulting visuals are the „execution.“

### Example:

- / Vera Molnár, a pioneer in computer-based art, used algorithms to create minimal, conceptual works.

# American conceptual artists and their key works

American conceptual artists played a pivotal role in defining and advancing the conceptual art movement during the **1960s and 1970s**. These artists often focused on language, instructions, systems, and ideas, producing works that prioritized intellectual engagement over traditional aesthetic values.



Vera Molnár, ALgorithmic works

## Virtual Spaces

- / Conceptual art increasingly interrogates virtual reality, augmented reality, and the concept of virtual worlds.

## Joseph Kosuth (1945)

### Art as Idea as Idea (1966-1968)

- / Kosuth's series focused on the nature of art itself. Works like One and Three Stools juxtapose a physical chair, a photograph of the chair, and its dictionary definition. This piece questions how we construct meaning through representation.
- / Kosuth's use of language and definition established conceptual art as a discipline of intellectual inquiry rather than material production.



## Sol LeWitt (1928–2007)

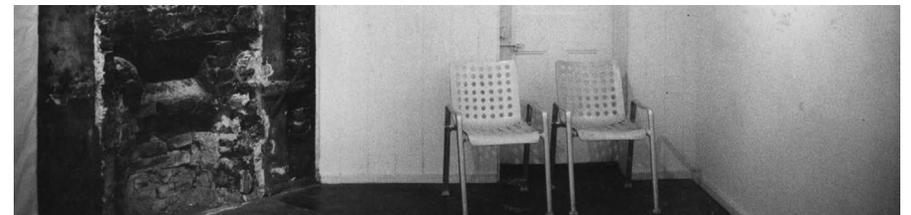
### Wall Drawings (1968–2007)

- / LeWitt's wall drawings consist of detailed written instructions that others can execute. For instance, Wall Drawing #1 (1968) involves basic geometric instructions, such as drawing lines in various directions.
- / LeWitt believed the idea (concept) behind the work was the art itself, with its physical execution being secondary.
- / Famous quote: „The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.“

## Lawrence Weiner (1942–2021)

### Removal to the Lathing or Support Wall of Plaster or Wallboard from a Wall (1970)

- / A seminal conceptual work where the removal of material from a wall is the art. The work could exist as a set of written instructions or as a physical intervention, showing the dematerialization of art.
- / Weiner often used simple, text-based statements to describe actions or concepts. His works invite viewers to imagine the artwork without needing to see it physically realized.



Removal to the Lathing or Support Wall of Plaster or Wallboard from a Wall (1970)

## Bruce Nauman (1941)

### The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (1967)

- / A **neon sculpture** that blends humor and philosophical inquiry into the role of the artist.



### Self-Portrait as a Fountain (1966-1967)

- / A **photographic work** where Nauman performs as a human **fountain**, challenging the definition of art and its relationship to the human body.
- / Nauman's works often explore the **absurdity of language**, physicality, and artistic conventions.

## Adrian Piper (1948)

### My Calling (Card) #1 and #2 (1986-1990)

- / Piper's **conceptual performance art** examines issues of **race**, identity, and social behavior. She distributed "calling cards" during interactions, confronting participants with their racial prejudices or assumptions.



My Calling Card (1986-1990)

### The Mythic Being (1973)

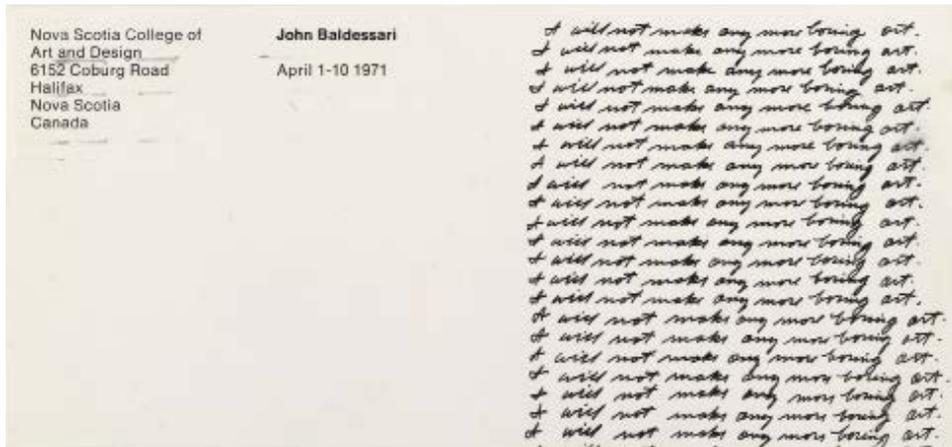
- / Piper adopted a **male alter ego**, complete with a mustache and Afro, to explore gender and identity.

Her work fuses **conceptual art with political activism**, making the personal deeply conceptual.

# John Baldessari (1931 – 2020)

## I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art (1971)

- / Created during a residency at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Baldessari asked students to repeatedly write this sentence, mimicking school punishment exercises.



I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art (1971)

## Tips for Artists Who Want to Sell (1966-1968)

- / A text-based work mocking art-market clichés by providing humorous, reductive advice for creating marketable art.

Baldessari's conceptual practice often combined text and images, challenging artistic norms with wit and irony.

# Vito Acconci (1940 – 2017)

## Seedbed (1972)

- / Acconci lay hidden beneath a gallery ramp, speaking through a microphone as he described fantasies involving the visitors walking above him. This provocative piece blurred boundaries between public and private, art and voyeurism.



Seedbed (1972)

## Following Piece (1969)

- / Acconci followed random individuals in public spaces, documenting his actions as a commentary on surveillance, personal boundaries, and human connection.

## Robert Morris (1931–2018)

### Box with the Sound of Its Own Making (1961)

- / **A wooden box containing a recording of its construction.**  
The work focuses on the process and time involved in creation rather than the object itself.

Morris contributed to conceptual art by emphasizing process over finished products, often exploring physical labor and materiality.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8-RyQEg7FU>

## Ruscha (1937)

### Every Building on the Sunset Strip (1966)

- / **A photographic book documenting every building along a stretch of Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles.** This work examines urban landscapes and questions traditional notions



Seedbed (1972)

## Martha Rosler (1943)

### Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975))

**A performance video where Rosler parodies cooking shows,** alphabetically naming kitchen utensils while performing aggressive gestures. The work critiques gender roles and domestic labor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuZympOIGC0>

Rosler's conceptual works blend text, image, and performance to address feminism, politics, and consumer culture.

# Common Themes in American Conceptual Art

1. **Dematerialization:** Artists often rejected traditional mediums, creating ephemeral, text-based, or instruction-based works.
2. **Critique of Institutions:** Many works interrogate the power structures of galleries, museums, and art markets.
3. **Focus on Language:** Text became a dominant medium, exploring how words create or obscure meaning.
4. **Political Engagement:** Several artists, particularly women and people of color, used conceptual art to address social issues like racism, sexism, and war.

American conceptual artists reshaped the global art world, prioritizing ideas and processes over physical objects and encouraging audiences to think critically about art's role in society.

The principles behind the artworks of American conceptual artists revolve around intellectual engagement, redefinition of art, and social critique. These principles prioritize the idea or concept of the artwork over its physical form or aesthetic value. Below are the key principles explored in their works:

## The Supremacy of the Concept

### Focus on Ideas, Not Objects

- / **The artwork's physical form is secondary;** what matters most is the idea or question it raises. This principle challenges traditional notions of art as visual or material.

### Example:

**Joseph Kosuth's One and Three Chairs** illustrates the idea of representation and the multiple ways to interpret an object (as a physical thing, a picture, or a word).

## Dematerialization of the Art Object

### Art as Process or Instruction

- / **Many works exist as instructions, texts,** or ideas rather than tangible objects. This reduces reliance on traditional craftsmanship or permanence.

### Example:

**Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawings** are sets of instructions for others to execute, emphasizing the process over the physical drawing.

### Ephemeral or Conceptual Forms

- / **Artworks may exist temporarily (performances, actions)** or as concepts that do not need to be physically realized.

### Example:

**Lawrence Weiner's A 36" x 36" Removal to the Lathing or Support Wall of Plaster or Wallboard from a Wall** exists as both an action and a text-based description.

# Language as a Medium

## Words Instead of Images

- / **Language often becomes the primary medium**, either as instructions, descriptions, or statements. Text is used to communicate ideas, often leaving interpretation to the viewer.

### Example:

Lawrence Weiner's text-based works such as **Bits and Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole** rely on the audience to imagine the artwork's realization.

## Semiotics and the Power of Words

- / Many artists explore how language constructs meaning, revealing ambiguities or contradictions.

### Example:

John Baldessari's **Tips for Artists Who Want to Sell** critiques the clichés of the art world using humor and simple language.

# Viewer Engagement and Interpretation

## Active Participation

- / **Viewers are often invited to engage intellectually, emotionally, or even physically with the work.** The art is incomplete without their interpretation.

### Example:

Lawrence Weiner's text-based works such as **Bits and Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole** rely on the audience to imagine the artwork's realization.

# Open-ended Meaning:

## Focus on Ideas, Not Objects

- / **Conceptual art resists fixed interpretations**, inviting multiple readings. It often presents ambiguous or minimal elements to encourage critical thinking.

### Example:

Bruce Nauman's **The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths** can be interpreted as both sincere and ironic.

# Critique of Art and Institutions

## What is Art?:

- / **Conceptual art questions traditional definitions of art**, exploring whether ideas, instructions, or ordinary objects can be considered art.

### Example:

Marcel Duchamp's **Fountain** (an early influence) asked whether a urinal, when signed and placed in a gallery, could become art.

## Institutional Critique

- / **Many conceptual works interrogate the role of museums, galleries, and art markets** in shaping what is considered valuable or legitimate.

### Example:

Hans Haacke's **Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings** exposes corruption in the art world and real estate industry.

# Systematic and Rule-Based Processes

## Use of Systems and Logic

- / **Conceptual artists often create works based on rules, systems, or logical frameworks.** This reflects an interest in order, structure, and mathematics.

### Example:

**Sol LeWitt's works** are executed according to systematic instructions, echoing programming or algorithmic logic.

## Repetition and Seriality

- / **Some artists use repetition or serial processes** to emphasize the systematic nature of art-making.

### Example:

**Ed Ruscha's Every Building on the Sunset Strip** systematically documents a specific urban environment, reducing it to a sequence of images.

# Social and Political Engagement

## Art as Activism

- / **Conceptual artists often use their work to critique social, political, or cultural systems.** They address issues such as race, gender, class, and war.

### Example

**Adrian Piper's Calling Cards** directly confronts viewers with their racial biases, turning conceptual art into a form of activism.

## Everyday Life as Art

- / **By using ordinary objects or actions,** artists blur the boundary between art and life, making art a tool for social awareness.

### Example:

**Martha Rosler's Semiotics of the Kitchen** critiques traditional gender roles through a parody of domestic labor. **Open-ended Meaning**  
Systematic and Rule-Based Processes

# Temporal and Spatial Dimensions

## Focus on Time and Space

- / **Many conceptual works emphasize time, space, or the interaction between the two,** often reducing these dimensions to abstract concepts.

### Example

**On Kawara's Date Paintings** document **specific days**, anchoring the ephemeral passage of time in physical form.

## Site-Specificity

- / **Some works are tied to specific locations or contexts,** emphasizing their relationship to the surrounding environment.

### Example:

**Walter De Maria's The Lightning Field (1977)** is a large-scale land art piece that engages with natural phenomena and geography.

# Humor, Irony, and Paradox

## Playful Provocation

- / **Conceptual art often employs humor or irony** to subvert expectations and challenge norms.

### Example:

**John Baldessari's I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art** uses a childlike exercise to poke fun at artistic conventions.

## Paradoxes and Contradictions

- / **Artists create works that resist logical resolution**, highlighting contradictions or absurdities..

### Example:

**Bruce Nauman's works**, such as *Self-Portrait as a Fountain*, are simultaneously humorous and provocative.

# Emphasis on Documentation

## Art as Records

- / **Since many conceptual works** are ephemeral or idea-based, artists rely on documentation (photos, texts, videos) to preserve and share their work.

### Example:

**Vito Acconci's performance works**, like *Seedbed*, are primarily experienced today through photographic or written records.

## Art as Instruction:

- / **Many works are presented as instructions or descriptions**, making the documentation itself the artwork.

### Example:

**Sol LeWitt's instructions for wall drawings** are often displayed alongside the realized pieces.

By prioritizing thought, interaction, and critique over material production, American conceptual artists revolutionized how we understand and experience art, pushing it into intellectual and socially relevant realms.

# Joseph Kosuth (1945)

## Life and Career:

- / Born: January 31, 1945, Toledo, Ohio, USA.
- / Kosuth studied fine arts at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and attended lectures at the New School for Social Research, where he became interested in philosophy, especially the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein, which significantly influenced his art.
- / He became a leading proponent of conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on the relationship between language, meaning, and representation.

## Artistic Philosophy:

- / Kosuth argued that the role of the artist was to question the nature of art itself. His work often critiques traditional definitions of art and explores the boundaries between objects, language, and ideas.
- / He believed that art should not rely on aesthetic experience but on intellectual engagement.

## Key Artworks:

### One and Three Chairs (1965)

- / One of Kosuth's most famous works. It features a real chair, a photograph of the chair, and a dictionary definition of „chair.“ This piece questions the nature of representation and the ways we perceive and categorize objects.

- / It highlights the difference between the physical object, its image, and its linguistic description, emphasizing their relationship to the surrounding environment.

### Art as Idea as Idea (1966-1968)

- / A series of works that present dictionary definitions of words like "art," "meaning," and "idea" as large text panels. This series interrogates the conceptual underpinnings of art and language.

### The Second Investigation (1968-1974)

- / Kosuth created text-based installations in multiple languages, expanding the scope of conceptual art globally.

## Legacy:

Kosuth argued that the role of the artist was to question the nature of art itself. His work often critiques traditional definitions of art and explores the boundaries between objects, language, and ideas.

# Robert Morris (1931–2018)

## Life and Career:

- / February 9, 1931, Kansas City, Missouri, USA.
- / Morris studied at the University of Kansas City and later attended Reed College and Hunter College. Initially a painter, he transitioned to sculpture and conceptual art during the 1960s.
- / A key figure in minimalism and conceptual art, Morris was also a theorist, writing influential essays about art and perception.

## Artistic Philosophy:

- / Morris explored the relationship between objects, space, and viewer perception. He believed art should engage the viewer physically and intellectually.
- / His works often examine process, materiality, and the dematerialization of the art object.

## Key Artworks:

### Box with the Sound of Its Own Making (1961):

- / A small wooden box containing an audio recording of the sounds made during its construction. This work focuses on the process of creation rather than the final object.

### Untitled (L-Beams) (1965):

- / Three large, identical L-shaped sculptures placed in different orientations. The work explores how spatial positioning affects perception, emphasizing the viewer's role in experiencing the art.

### Process Art Works (1968-1970):

- / Morris used materials like felt, thread, and molten lead in his process art pieces, emphasizing the act of making and the inherent properties of materials.

## Example:

Untitled (Felt Pieces), where strips of felt are draped and folded, allowing gravity and chance to determine their final form..

### Observational Works:

- / Morris created mirrors and installations that play with viewer perception and spatial dynamics.

## Legacy:

Morris was a pioneer in minimalism, process art, and conceptual art. His theoretical writings and large-scale installations have had a profound impact on contemporary art.

# Sol LeWitt (1928–2007)

## Life and Career:

- / Born: September 9, 1928, Hartford, Connecticut, USA.
- / LeWitt studied at Syracuse University and served in the U.S. Army before moving to New York City in the 1950s, where he worked as a graphic designer for the architect I.M. Pei.
- / He became a leading figure in minimalism and conceptual art during the 1960s.

## Artistic Philosophy:

- / LeWitt emphasized the supremacy of ideas in art, stating that the execution of the artwork could be carried out by anyone following a set of instructions.
- / He famously said: "The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."
- / He worked with systematic, rule-based processes, often employing geometric shapes and mathematical logic.

## Key Artworks:

### Wall Drawings (1968–2007)

- / These works consist of written instructions for large-scale drawings executed directly on walls. For example:
- / Wall Drawing #1: „A simple straight line drawn from the bottom left corner to the top right corner.

- / The instructions allow the works to be recreated anywhere, making the concept rather than the object the essence of the artwork.

### Process Art Works (1968-1970)

- / Morris used materials like felt, thread, and molten lead in his process art pieces, emphasizing the act of making and the inherent properties of materials.

## Example:

Untitled (Felt Pieces), where strips of felt are draped and folded, allowing gravity and chance to determine their final form.

### Modular Structures (1965–1976):

- / LeWitt created sculptures using grids and cubes, exploring repetition, symmetry, and mathematical principles.

## Example:

Open Cube series, where he systematically removed parts of the cube to create variations.

### Incomplete Open Cubes (1974)

- / A series of sculptures based on all possible variations of incomplete cubes. This work combines logic and visual minimalism.

### Bands of Color

- / In later years, LeWitt's Wall Drawings became increasingly colorful and intricate, often using vibrant geometric patterns.

## Legacy:

LeWitt redefined the role of the artist as a creator of ideas rather than objects. His emphasis on process, collaboration, and the reproducibility of art has influenced generations of artists.

## Comparative Themes in Their Work

- / **Kosuth:** Focused on language, philosophy, and the definition of art itself. His works are highly intellectual and text-driven.
- / **Morris:** Explored materiality, process, and viewer perception. His works often engage with physical space and bodily awareness.
- / **LeWitt:** Developed systematic and rule-based art, emphasizing the reproducibility of ideas and the conceptual over the physical.

These three artists represent distinct but overlapping approaches to conceptual art, collectively redefining the boundaries of what art could be.

## Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968)

**Country:** France (later lived in the U.S.)

**Role:** A precursor to conceptual art, Duchamp's „readymades“ challenged the definition of art itself.

### Principles:

- / Art is an idea, not a craft or skill.
- / Everyday objects can become art if placed in a new context and given meaning by the artist.
- / Art should provoke intellectual engagement and question traditional norms.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Fountain (1917)

- / A urinal signed „R. Mutt,“ it redefined art by turning an ordinary object into a work displayed in a gallery.

#### L.H.O.O.Q. (1919)

- / A postcard of the Mona Lisa with a mustache and goatee drawn on, critiquing art's reverence.

#### The Large Glass (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even) (1915–1923)

- / A complex, symbolic work involving industrial materials, exploring themes of desire and failure.

## Joseph Beuys (1921–1986)

**Country:** Germany

**Role:** A leading figure in European conceptual art, Beuys emphasized the role of art in social transformation.

### Principles:

- / Art as a social and political tool.
- / Everyone has creative potential („social sculpture“).
- / His works often incorporate autobiographical elements and mythological symbols.

### Famous Artworks:

#### How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare (1965)

- / Beuys performed while holding a dead hare, exploring the mysticism and incomprehensibility of art.

#### 7000 Oaks (1982–1987)

- / A large-scale environmental project planting trees in Kassel, Germany, blending ecological activism with art.

#### I Like America and America Likes Me (1974)

- / A performance where Beuys lived in a room with a coyote, symbolizing healing between nature and culture.

## Marina Abramović (1946)

**Country:** Born in Yugoslavia (Serbia)

**Role:** Abramović is a performance artist whose work emphasizes endurance, vulnerability, and human connection.

### Principles:

- / Art as a test of physical and emotional limits.
- / The body as both a medium and a subject.
- / Audience participation and confrontation.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Rhythm 0 (1974)

- / Abramović allowed the audience to use 72 objects on her body, including a gun, exploring trust and aggression.

#### The Artist Is Present (2010)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlf68X2qEpM>

- / A performance at MoMA where Abramović silently sat across from visitors, creating an intimate connection.

#### Rest Energy (1980)

- / A collaboration with Ulay where the pair balanced a bow and arrow aimed at Abramović, symbolizing trust and tension.

## Yves Klein (1928–1962)

**Country:** France

**Role:** Known for his monochromatic paintings and experimental concepts.

### Principles:

- / Exploration of immateriality and pure experience.
- / Art as a spiritual act, removing emphasis on material form.
- / The artist's vision is central, even if the physical execution is minimal.

### Famous Artworks:

#### IKB (International Klein Blue) (1957)

- / A series of monochromatic paintings in a signature ultramarine blue color.

#### Anthropometries (1960)

- / Performances where nude models painted themselves with blue pigment and imprinted their bodies on canvases.

#### Leap into the Void (1960)

- / A staged photograph showing Klein "leaping" into empty space, symbolizing freedom and immateriality.

## On Kawara (1933–2014)

**Country:** Japan-born but active globally, including in Europe.

**Role:** Kawara's work is minimalist and deeply tied to time and existence.

### Principles:

- / Art as a record of existence.
- / Focus on time, repetition, and daily rituals.
- / Minimalism as a means to universal communication.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Date Paintings (Today Series) (1966–2014)

- / Paintings of the date in white text on monochromatic backgrounds, representing the passage of time.

#### I Got Up (1968–1979)

- / Postcards sent daily to friends, marking the time he woke up.

#### I Am Still Alive (1969–)

- / Telegrams sent with the simple statement "I am still alive," highlighting existence.

# Hans Haacke (1936)

**Country:** Germany

**Role:** A pioneer of institutional critique, Haacke's work focuses on politics, economics, and systems.

## Principles:

- / Art as a critique of power structures.
- / Investigating the relationship between art institutions, money, and politics.
- / Using systems (natural or social) as metaphors.

## Famous Artworks:

### Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings (1971)

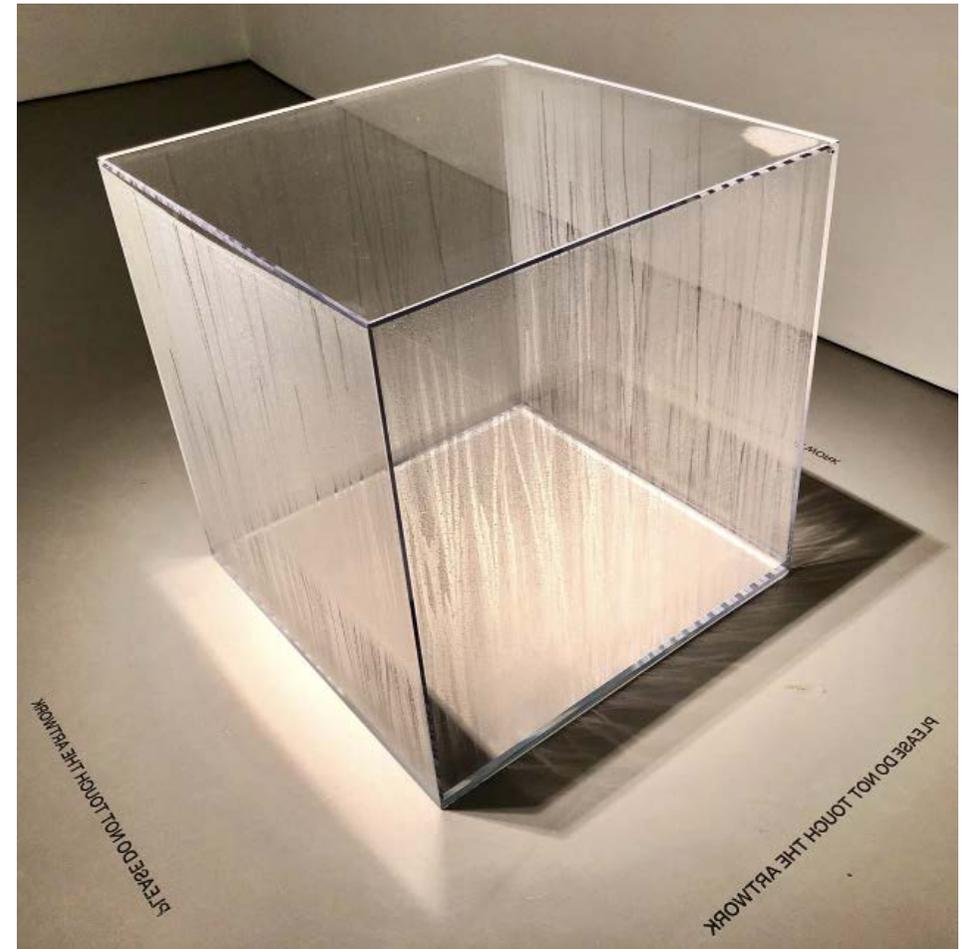
- / A detailed exposé of unethical real estate practices by a prominent family, critiquing wealth and inequality.

### Condensation Cube (1963–1965)

- / A transparent cube with water droplets forming inside, symbolizing natural systems and processes.

### Gift Horse (2015)

- / A skeletal horse with a stock ticker ribbon, installed in Trafalgar Square, critiquing capitalism and wealth.



Condensation Cube (1963–1965)

# Victor Burgin (1941)

Role: Burgin is known for integrating photography, text, and critical theory into conceptual art.

## Principles:

- / Art as a critique of media and culture.
- / Language and image as tools for questioning power and identity.
- / Artworks as essays or arguments.

## Famous Artworks:

### Photopath (1967)

- / A conceptual floor installation with printed photographic imagery.

### What Does Possession Mean to You? (1976)

- / A text and image work critiquing consumer culture and advertising.

### UK76 (1976)

- / A series addressing class, gender, and politics in Britain.



Photopath (1967)

# Conceptual Art in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic)

## Jiří Kolář (1914–2002)

### Role:

A poet, visual artist, and key figure in Czech conceptual art.

### Life:

- / Born: September 24, 1914, in Protivín, Czechoslovakia.
- / Originally a poet, Kolář turned to visual art in the 1950s after being censored by the communist regime.
- / He developed new artistic techniques like chiasmage and collage, blending text and images.
- / After the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, Kolář emigrated to Paris, where he continued his artistic practice.

### Principles:

- / Emphasized the relationship between text and image, blending literature and visual art.
- / Critiqued totalitarianism and explored themes of fragmentation and reconstruction.

- / His work often appropriated existing materials to create new meanings.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Chiasmage Series

- / Collages made by rearranging and fragmenting text and images, symbolizing the chaos of modern life.

#### Diary 1968

- / A visual diary combining newspaper clippings and personal reflections, capturing the turmoil of the Prague Spring.

#### Hanging Poems

- / Installations where poems were suspended in space, challenging the boundaries of literary and visual art.



Photopath (1967)

## Karel Miler (1940–2016)

**Role:** A performance and conceptual artist known for his minimalist and ephemeral works.

### Life:

- / Born: December 3, 1940, in Prague, Czechoslovakia.
- / Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague.
- / Active during the 1970s and 1980s, Miler's work was shaped by the repressive political climate, focusing on simplicity and introspection.

### Principles:

- / Minimalist and existential approach, using simple actions and objects to convey profound meanings.
- / Focused on temporality, presence, and the artist's role as a mediator between ideas and reality.
- / Often avoided materiality, creating transient performances and gestures.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Actions

- / A series of performances involving simple, symbolic acts, such as standing still or moving objects, reflecting on existence and time.

#### Lines and Space

- / Used physical lines and spaces to explore boundaries and perception.

#### Untitled Performances

- / Gestures like sweeping or marking spaces, emphasizing process over result.

## Milan Knížák (1940)

**Role:** A multimedia artist, performer, and theorist, one of the leaders of the Fluxus movement in Eastern Europe.

### Life:

- / Born: April 19, 1940, in Plzeň, Czechoslovakia.
- / Knížák became a prominent figure in the Prague art scene during the 1960s.
- / His activities were suppressed by the communist regime, but he remained influential internationally, especially in the Fluxus movement.
- / Later served as the director of the National Gallery in Prague.

### Principles:

- / Challenged traditional art forms, emphasizing interactivity, unpredictability, and anti-commercialism.
- / Explored the absurdity of existence and the limits of human perception.
- / Worked across media, from performance and music to objects and installations.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Broken Music (1963–1965)

- / Altered vinyl records to create new sounds and meanings, a key contribution to Fluxus.

#### Demonstrations

- / Public performances that blurred art and life, such as walking in strange ways or making unexpected noises in public spaces.

#### Sleeping Bags

- / Installations using personal objects to evoke intimacy and human vulnerability.

## Jiří Kovanda (1953)

**Role:** A minimalist and performance artist whose work often involves subtle, almost imperceptible actions.

### Life:

- / Born: March 1, 1953, in Prague, Czechoslovakia.
- / Active since the 1970s, Kovanda's work reflects the constraints of living under a repressive regime, using simplicity to evade censorship.
- / Became internationally recognized in the 2000s for his poetic and understated approach to art.

### Principles:

- / Focused on small, everyday gestures that invite viewers to reconsider their environment and interactions.
- / Art as a way to create fleeting connections between people and their surroundings.
- / Avoided grandiose statements, favoring subtlety and introspection.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Contact (1977)

- / Kovanda stood in a public square, making fleeting eye contact with strangers, exploring intimacy and alienation.

#### Untitled Actions:

- / Performed minor interventions, such as arranging objects slightly differently, emphasizing the power of small changes.

#### Placing Objects:

- / Arranged mundane objects in public spaces, prompting viewers to reconsider the ordinary.

## Magdalena Jetelová (1946)

**Role:** A sculptor and conceptual artist exploring themes of space, memory, and history.

### Life:

- / Born: June 9, 1946, in Semily, Czechoslovakia.
- / Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and later worked abroad due to political restrictions.
- / Known for large-scale installations and site-specific works.

### Principles:

- / Explores the relationship between individuals and their environments.
- / Themes of displacement, power, and memory, often referencing historical and political contexts.
- / Uses natural and industrial materials, combining physical presence with conceptual depth.

### Famous Artworks:

#### Crossing the Border:

- / Large-scale installations that simulate geographical barriers, addressing migration and identity.

#### Domestication of the Pyramid (1992)

- / A laser projection of historical maps onto natural landscapes, questioning the idea of borders and ownership.

#### Atlantic Wall:

- / Sculptural interventions in World War II bunkers, transforming symbols of war into reflections on history and human resilience.



Magdalena Jetelová, Domestication of the Pyramid (1992)

## Themes in Czech Conceptual Art

- / **Political Resistance:** Many Czech artists used conceptual art to subtly critique authoritarianism and censorship.
- / **Everyday Life:** Inspired by the mundane and ephemeral, Czech conceptual artists often drew attention to overlooked aspects of life.
- / **Interdisciplinary Practice:** Combining performance, sculpture, text, and sound to explore philosophical and social questions.
- / **Czech conceptual art** remains a vital contribution to the global art movement, blending local cultural traditions with universal themes.
- / **Used lasers to project maps** and texts onto natural landscapes, questioning the artificiality of borders and historical narratives.

# Conceptual Art and Design in Latvia

Refers to the conceptual and radical design and art movements in Latvia, particularly from the late 20th century to the present. These movements have evolved through periods of political and social change, including the Soviet era, the independence movement in the 1990s, and the continued development of Latvia's identity in the post-Soviet space.

## Conceptual Art and Design

Conceptual art focuses on the idea or concept behind the artwork rather than its aesthetic or traditional craftsmanship. In Latvia, this was influenced by the broader European and American movements in the 1960s and 1970s, but also took on local, social, and political significance due to the country's Soviet occupation.

## Radical Art and Design

Radical design and art in Latvia often emerged from the need to break away from traditional forms and to critique the status quo, particularly under Soviet rule. Radical artists would question the role of the state, the boundaries of art, and the role of the artist in society.

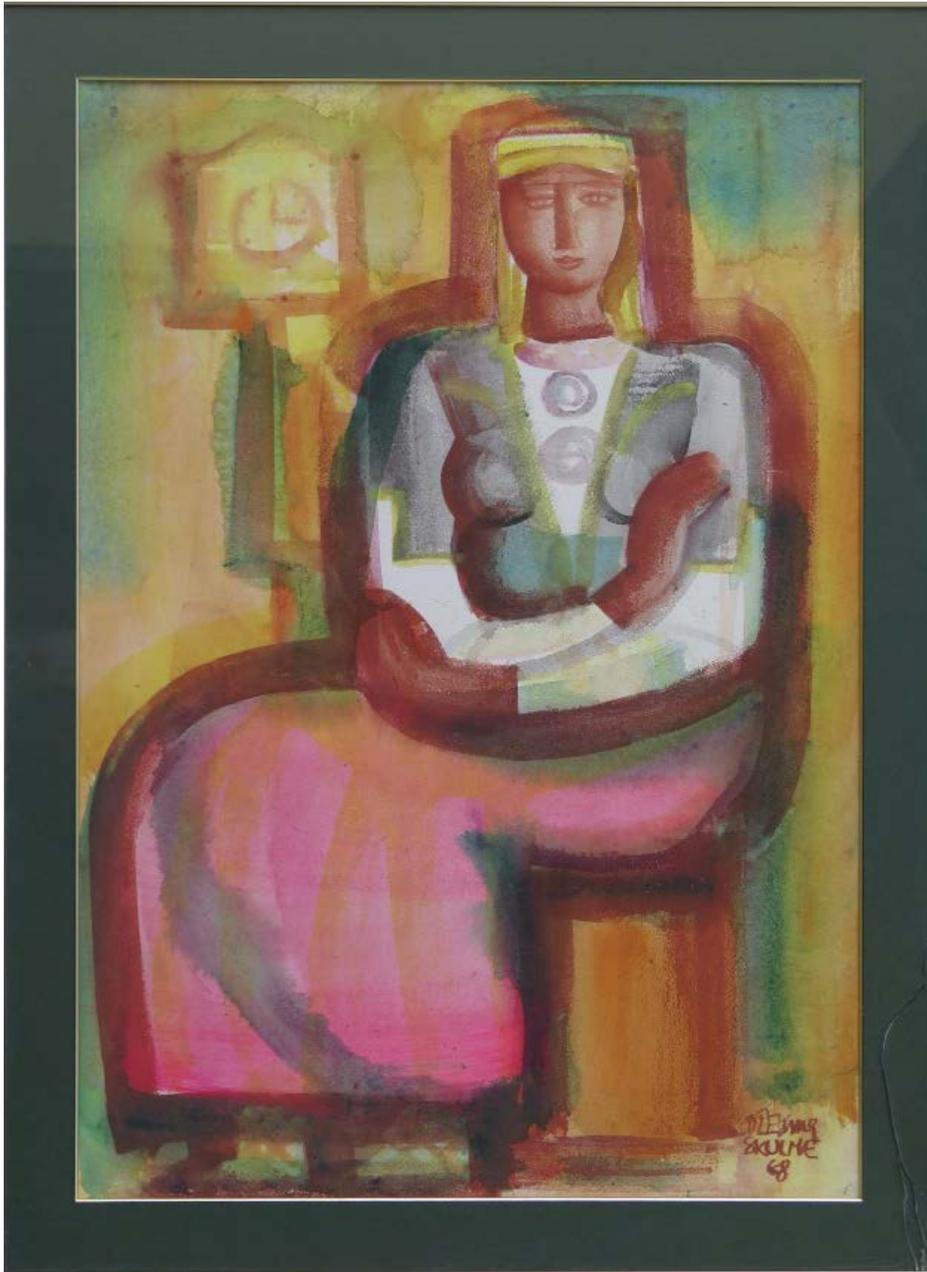
# Conceptual and radical artists and designers in Latvia

## Džemma Skulme (1925–2019)

- / A leading figure in Latvian modernist painting, Skulme incorporated abstraction and symbolism into her work, often blending traditional Latvian themes with contemporary techniques.
- / One of the most powerful motifs in her art is the image of a woman, which has transformed in various ways over different periods, yet always conveys a sense of Latvian strength and groundedness.

### Example:

- / Her abstract works in the 1970s explored themes of identity and resistance through layered textures and symbolic forms.



Džemma Skulme. „Tautumeita“ 1968, Paper, watercolor, 74x52 cm

## Oļegs Tilbergs (1956)

Oļegs Tilbergs is one of the most significant artists of the 1980s and 1990s, whose installations radically redefined the possibilities of space, time, and materiality in art and were a key stimulus in the development of contemporary art in Latvia. Tilbergs' most active period coincided with a time of intense geopolitical changes, when the Soviet socialist system rapidly disintegrated and a new society slowly matured, while artistic freedom was equated with state sovereignty. Emotionally charged and existentially saturated messages charted the mental landscape of the late 20th century, using metaphors of the collision between nature and technology, life and death. Tilbergs' art evolved through these spatiotemporal changes and embodied the confusion of postsocialism through the assemblages of various objects, materials, and processes, which significantly expanded the previously defined boundaries of art and expressed a sensitivity to the surrounding world grounded in decolonial aesthetics. Exhibited at major international art events, Tilbergs' works in the 1990s fulfilled a symbolically important mission, affirming Latvian art's belonging to the Western cultural space and its ability to integrate into its contemporary discourse. In the 1990s, Oļegs Tilbergs was one of the most prominent members of the so-called "Installator" generation of Latvian contemporary artists. His installations are notable for their monumentality and associative multilayering.



Oļegs Tilbergs  
Installation (reconstruction 2017). Bucket set, fabric, wire, fasteners. Size adjustable. 1994.

In the early 1990s, in his installation "Floods" (1994), Tillbergs collected hundreds of rusty buckets in his suburban Riga garden, transforming them into images of human fates, i.e. symbols of heavy, brutal work. Tillbergs' buckets were once young and shiny, like the men and women who carried water, milk, potatoes, rubbish and much else besides in them. The rusted, worn-out buckets have been transformed into symbols of collective historical experience, but new ones will replace them, since while there are people, there will be work.

The international practical scientific seminar "Naftas termināli Austrumbaltijā – vides problēmas" (Oil Terminals in the Eastern Baltic – Environmental Problems) was held in Jūrmala in 1997. At that time, Tillbergs created the installation "White Wings" devoted to the ecological crisis at the seashore. White sheets soaked in oil fluttered over barrels of oil, reminiscent of birds unable to lift their wings and fly away.



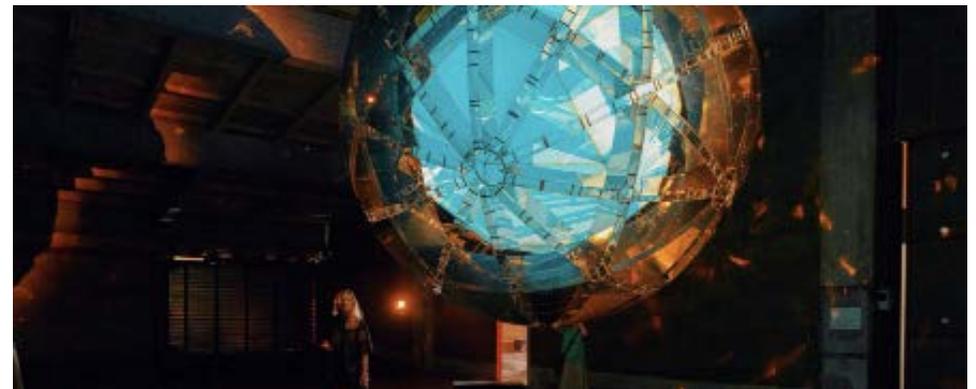
Oļegs Tillbergs, 1997. Installation. Six 200 l barrels, wooden frame, fabric. Size adjustable.

## Valdis Celms (1943)

His works transcend traditional design boundaries, inviting the viewer to reflect on societal norms and values.

Valdis Celms is a pioneering figure of Latvian kinetic art, a movement based on form, motion, and the organisation of space. His works, many of which exist only as studies, evoke constructivist imagery and represent a quest for a total art that touches all aspects of life. Celms' list of achievements covers a highly diverse range of creative activities, including multifaceted design solutions, poster graphics, photographic manipulations and collages, visual designs for Song Festivals and impressive theoretical studies of sign culture.

In 1972, the Latvian Artists' Union held a large exhibition titled "Svētki" (Festival) at the former Riga Bourse building on Doma square in Old Riga. This was the debut for the first designers and interior artists to graduate from the Art Academy of Latvia, who presented kinetic art, op-art and outdoor objects.



Valdis Celms Positron. 1976-2020.  
Kinetic sculpture, fiberglass, stainless steel, motor

<https://www.makslaskolekcija.lv/en/authors/olegs-tillbergs-eng>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xosUQeaKETU&t=1s>

## Artūrs Riņķis (1942)

Artūrs Riņķis is one of the pioneers of kinetic art in Latvia since the early 1970s and continues his creative work in this field. He is the author of the kinetic art piece „Sakta” on the facade of the „Latvia” hotel.



Artūrs Riņķis. Kinetic object „Sakta”. Facade of the „Latvia” hotel. 1979 and 2007.

The author of the outdoor art garden „In the Middle of Nowhere,” for which he was nominated for the Purvītis Prize in 2015. The art garden „In the Middle of Nowhere,” located near Sabile, is his created alternative universe, whose main function, according to Artūrs Riņķis, is healing and inner transformation.



Artūrs Riņķis. Outdoor art garden „In the Middle of Nowhere”

In Latvia, kinetic objects appeared in the 1970s under the 'pseudonym' design and later developed as part of environmental art. Therefore, this art direction can rightfully be considered one of the most advanced new art movements in Latvia during the 1970s and 1980s, reaching the next stage of development. Specifically, the functionality and attractiveness of kinetic objects allowed their creators to implement a series of ideas in the intended environment. Among them were Jānis Krievs' electrokinetic light wall (42m<sup>2</sup>) in the Daugavpils Builders' Club hall in 1978, Artūrs Riņķis' kinetic object „Sakta” on the facade of the „Latvia” hotel in 1979, Valdis Celms' multi-program electrokinetic light device „Dziesma” (15m<sup>2</sup>) in the „Latvia” hotel bar in 1980, Imants Eglītis' kinetic light object in the „Jūras pērle” restaurant in 1981, and others.

At that time, the new activity in art echoed the patterns found in folk art, as well as the reworking of ideas from early Russian constructivists, which allowed many kinetic ideas to gain official recognition as art. The sphere of design's political service (such as the official decoration of political celebrations) further facilitated the expression of its creative freedoms.

In the second half of the 1970s, an organic group called „Dinamika” formed among the artists working in kinetic art, which included artists Valdis Celms, Artūrs Riņķis, and Andulis Krūmiņš. At the end of 1978, an exhibition of this group's works titled „Form. Color. Dynamics” took place at the Riga Architecture and Construction Museum (Peter's Church). It was the first time that serious discussions about the necessity of this 'non-functional design' arose.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yb914mpO1ro>



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# Students' Tasks

## Task 1: Concept vs. Aesthetics

- / Choose one conceptual artwork from the document (e.g., Joseph Kosuth's One and Three Chairs or Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawings).
- / Analyze how the concept is more important than the visual appearance.
- / Create your own conceptual piece where the idea is the main focus (this can be a written description, instruction-based work, or text art).

## Task 2: Institutional Critique

- / Research an artist from the document who challenged the role of galleries, museums, or the commodification of art (e.g., Hans Haacke, Adrian Piper).
- / Create a visual or written response that critiques how art is exhibited and sold today.
- / Present your findings in a short presentation or digital collage.

## Task 3: Minimalist Influence and Systems Art

- / Study Sol LeWitt's approach to rule-based art.
- / Write a set of instructions for a simple artwork that others must execute.
- / Exchange instructions with a classmate and compare interpretations.

## Task 4: Performance and Conceptual Actions

- / Examine Marina Abramović or Vito Acconci's performance-based conceptual works.
- / Design and document a simple action-based conceptual piece (e.g., a daily ritual, a public interaction, or a minimalist gesture).
- / Present documentation (photos, notes, or videos) explaining the thought process behind your action.

## Task 5: Art and Language

- / Explore Lawrence Weiner's and John Baldessari's text-based conceptual pieces.
- / Create a short text-based artwork using only words.
- / Consider how meaning is shaped by context and audience interpretation.

## Task 6: Art and Science Intersection

- / Investigate how conceptual artists use mathematical, scientific, or systematic methods in their works (e.g., On Kawara's Date Paintings, Hans Haacke's environmental art).
- / Create an artwork using a scientific principle (e.g., temperature, time, data collection) as the main idea.
- / Document the process and explain how it connects to conceptual art principles.

