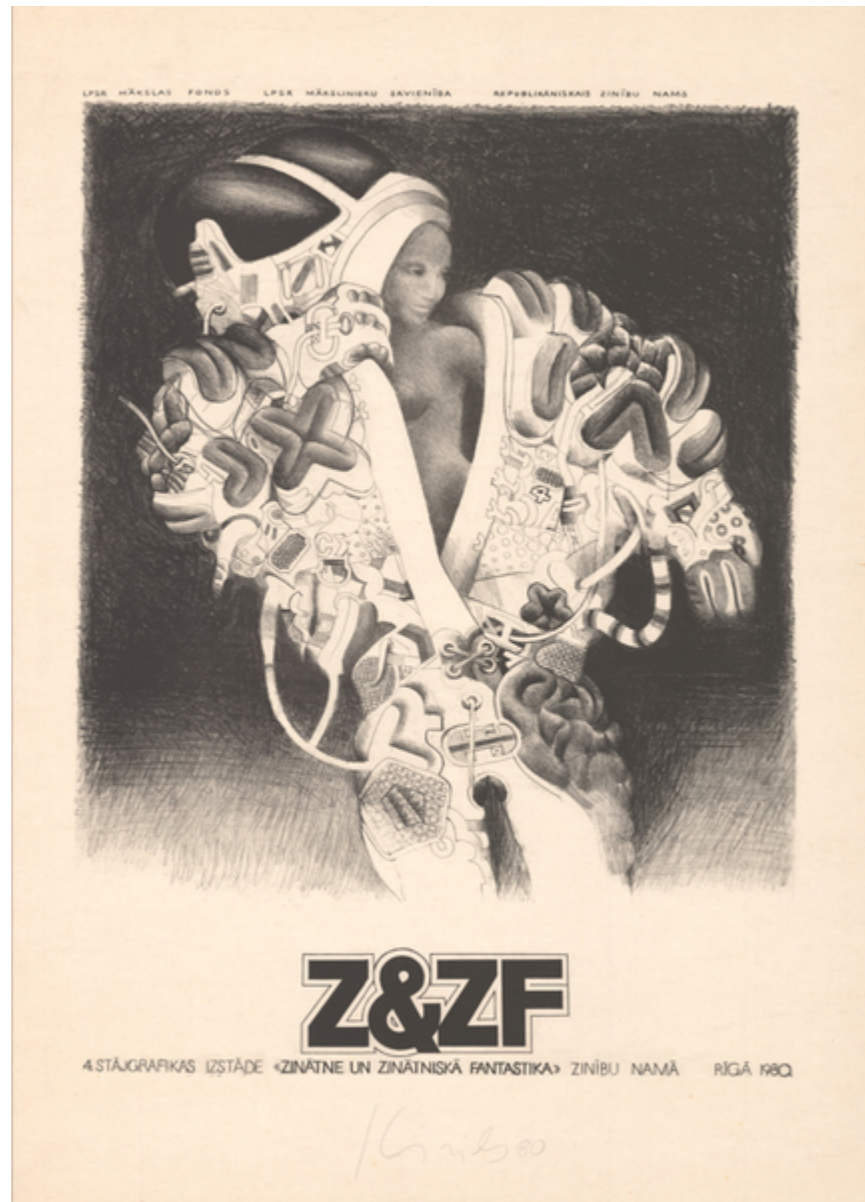


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Kirils Šmeļkovs, *Poster for the Fourth Graphic Art Exhibition Science and Science Fiction, 1980*, lithograph on paper, 35 5/8 x 25 3/8".

RĪGA

“Unexpected Encounters”

ARSENĀLS EXHIBITION HALL, LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART
 Jaņa Rozentāla laukums 1
 December 13, 2019–February 23, 2020

At least sixty tons of recyclable glass gravel cover the gallery floors of “Unexpected Encounters,” transforming the space into a veritable moonscape or postapocalyptic wasteland. Rarely exhibited graphic artworks by about a dozen Latvian artists from the 1970s and 1980s and a similar number of international contemporary pieces come in this uncanny tableau. Borrowing its name from a 1987 collection by the Soviet science-fiction writers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, the exhibition highlights local and historical contributions to this genre, while opening onto

broader themes of gender, sexuality, ecology, and mortality.

Zenta Logina’s abstract metal wall sculpture *Weeping Planet*, 1976, prefigures contemporary environmental concerns. Evoking a celestial body drooping with vines made from cloth dipped in plaster, it visually and thematically echoes Artūrs Virtmanis’s ominous *In the Dust of This Universe (Black Sun)*, 2019, a massive black vinyl orb precariously affixed to the wall with duct tape.

Kirils Šmeļkovs’s poster for the 1980 edition of “Science and Science Fiction,” a graphic art exhibition series held at Latvia’s House of Science from 1975 to 1982, depicts a female body removing a biomechanical suit. Anticipating the futuristic hybridity of Donna Haraway’s 1985 “Cyborg Manifesto,” the lithograph is installed near Nash Glynn’s *You Used Me (Lover Earth)*, 2018. The video, with its transfeminine green nude posing in a landscape dotted with oil derricks, disrupts binaries of masculine and feminine, nature and culture.

A recurrent historical touchstone is Russian Cosmism, a turn-of-the-century transhumanist movement that sought to colonize space and transcend death through science and technology. Anton Vidokle searches for Cosmist influences in everything from the steppes of Kazakhstan to museums in Moscow in his *Immortality for All: A film trilogy on Russian Cosmism*, 2014–17. Alberts Goltjakovs’s painting *Road into Space*, 1981, depicts Russian Cosmist and rocket scientist Kostantin Tsiolkovsky surrounded by cosmonauts and their predecessors Galileo Galilei, Nicolaus Copernicus, and Giordano Bruno. The layered temporalities in this work echo the transhistorical approach of “Unexpected Encounters” as a whole, striking up titular “unexpected encounters” between the past and the present.

— Alpesh Kantilal Patel

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