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Latvian design
at the *Justus Lipsius* building
in Brussels

January–June 2015

The concept

During Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the *Justus Lipsius* building in Brussels will host a Latvian design exhibition.

This is composed of three main elements – Earth and Nature, presenting Latvia's landscape and cultural heritage in large-scale photographic works; an interactive Dance Path that brings to life the vitality of Latvian tradition; and a collection of furniture by Latvian designers which interprets the nature, traditions and skills of Latvia and its people by means of contemporary design language. Visitors can enjoy trying Latvian folk dance steps when crossing the building lobby, while the designs selected for the furniture collection are representative of the quality, originality, understated expression and singularity of Latvian handwork.

Exhibition authors

The *H2E* design office is one of the most influential design firms in Latvia. It was founded and is run by Ingūna Elere and Holgers Elers, who also teach at the Art Academy of Latvia's Design Department.

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h2e.lv

Exhibition

The building's entrance lobby carpet displays the steps of *Spriguleits* - the Latvian folk dance. This is a simple and attractive dance that is easy to learn just by following the pattern of the steps on the carpet. A visual introduction to Latvia then begins. The exhibition opens with the *Meet Me!* modular furniture system and large-scale photographic works, showing landscapes and outstanding cultural sites that act as 'windows' to Latvia. The rooms on level 50 of the building display furniture and light fixtures by Latvian designers. The *MINT* furniture group represents northern minimalism and design quality, and is a good example of industrial production, while the success of Latvian designers is illustrated by the *Bloom Stool* - which was awarded the prestigious Red Dot Design Award. The *Spriego pats* stools illustrate design's educational potential and the innovative approach of the new generation of Latvian designers. The *Mammalampa* interior light fixtures – floor lamps from *The Bride* and *The Wise One* collections – create a strong sense of home, complemented by the large-scale *Castle of Light* photograph.

Dance Path

Spriguleits

Try the Latvian folk dance *Spriguleits*, choreographed by Artis Puriņš, on an interactive mat!

The dance has two parts: *Pastaiga* (the walk) and *Sānsolis* (the sidestep).

Dancers stand in twos next to each other in the direction of the dance and hold hands.

***Pastaiga* (the walk):**

Dancers take four slow steps, then eight quick steps, letting their arms hang freely by their side at the end.

***Sānsolis* (the sidestep):**

Dancers take two running steps and one jumping step to the side, and by taking another two running steps and one jumping step they return to their places in the middle. The couples then join hands and turn, while taking four walking steps. All the walk's moves are then repeated.



Video tutorial
eu2015.lv/dancepath

Latvia is renowned for its intangible cultural heritage of folk songs (*dainas*), and its collective song and dance tradition. Since the first national awakening in the second half of the 19th century, these traditions have been given expression in the major Song and Dance Festival, which is five-yearly and has been on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List since 2008. **Latvia has over 800 folk dance groups, and approximately 15 000 dancers took part in the grand performance at the Dance Festival in 2013.**



Photographic works

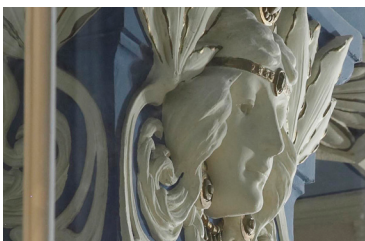
These large-scale photographs are windows to Latvia - its nature and cultural heritage.



Its almost 500 kilometres of coastline represent the most distinctive jewel of Latvia's natural landscape, being a powerful symbol in both the country's folklore and contemporary culture.



Rundāle Palace, the 18th-century summer residence of the Duke of Courland - Ernst Johann von Biron - is one of the most outstanding Baroque and Rococo pieces of architecture in Latvia. The palace was built based on the plans of and led by the famous Russian court architect, Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli.



Riga, Latvia's capital city, is noted for its Art Nouveau. The pre-World War I period saw around 800 buildings constructed in this style, and Riga still has the world's largest concentration of Art Nouveau. The historic centre of Riga is a UNESCO world heritage site.



Forests cover almost half of Latvia. Timber has been the most popular building material since the first Bronze Age settlements. The forests, meadows and water that cover 12% of the country have been designated specially protected *Natura 2000* areas due to their biodiversity and pristine condition.

The new **Latvian National Library building (the Castle of Light)** was designed by Gunars Birkerts, an architect of Latvian descent residing in the USA. The opening ceremony took place in 2014, and it is the main conference venue for the Latvian Presidency in Riga.



MINT furniture



Jānis Rauza

MINT is one of the best-known modern furniture brands in Latvia. Its general design principle is based on northern minimalism, functionalism and high-quality natural materials.

MINT furniture has received several Latvian design competition awards, and gained international acclaim after receiving the Blueprint Award at the 100% Design London Festival in 2010.

The brand's creator and lead designer is Jānis Rauza, a third-generation carpenter.

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mintfurniture.lv



Mammalampa



Ieva Kalēja

Mammalampa light fixtures are handmade, so each lamp is unique. The exhibition displays the brand's most popular and award-winning models – *The Bride* and *The Wise One* – which are special on account of their atypical interpretation of naturally-rugged materials.

The designer of the *Mammalampa* collection is Ieva Kalēja, who was educated at the Art Academy of Latvia and the Domus Academy in Milan. Ieva is interested in the properties of materials, and her work is characterised by the combination of unique artwork and design object refinement.

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mammalampa.com



Bloom Stool



Aldis Circenis

Bloom stool is an outstanding example of industrial design. It makes innovative use of plywood – a very popular material in Latvia. *Bloom* won the prestigious International Design Award (2011) and the Red Dot Design Award (2012).

Aldis Circenis is a graduate architect. With the Riga Chair Factory (which he founded), he has created and developed a number of well-known public building and corporate interior installations in Latvia.

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rigachair.com



Spriego pats



Ģirts Arājs

Spriego pats is an example of sustainable and socially responsible design thinking, being one of the most standout diploma works by Art Academy of Latvia graduates in 2014. The concept is based on an instruction manual/template created by a professional designer that can be downloaded for free. These instructions are very simple and clear, so anyone can manufacture furniture at home using second-hand materials.

Ģirts Arājs started his career as a professional designer only recently. His creative toolkit also includes a passion for video montage.

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facebook.com/spriegopats



Meet Me!



Ligita Breģe

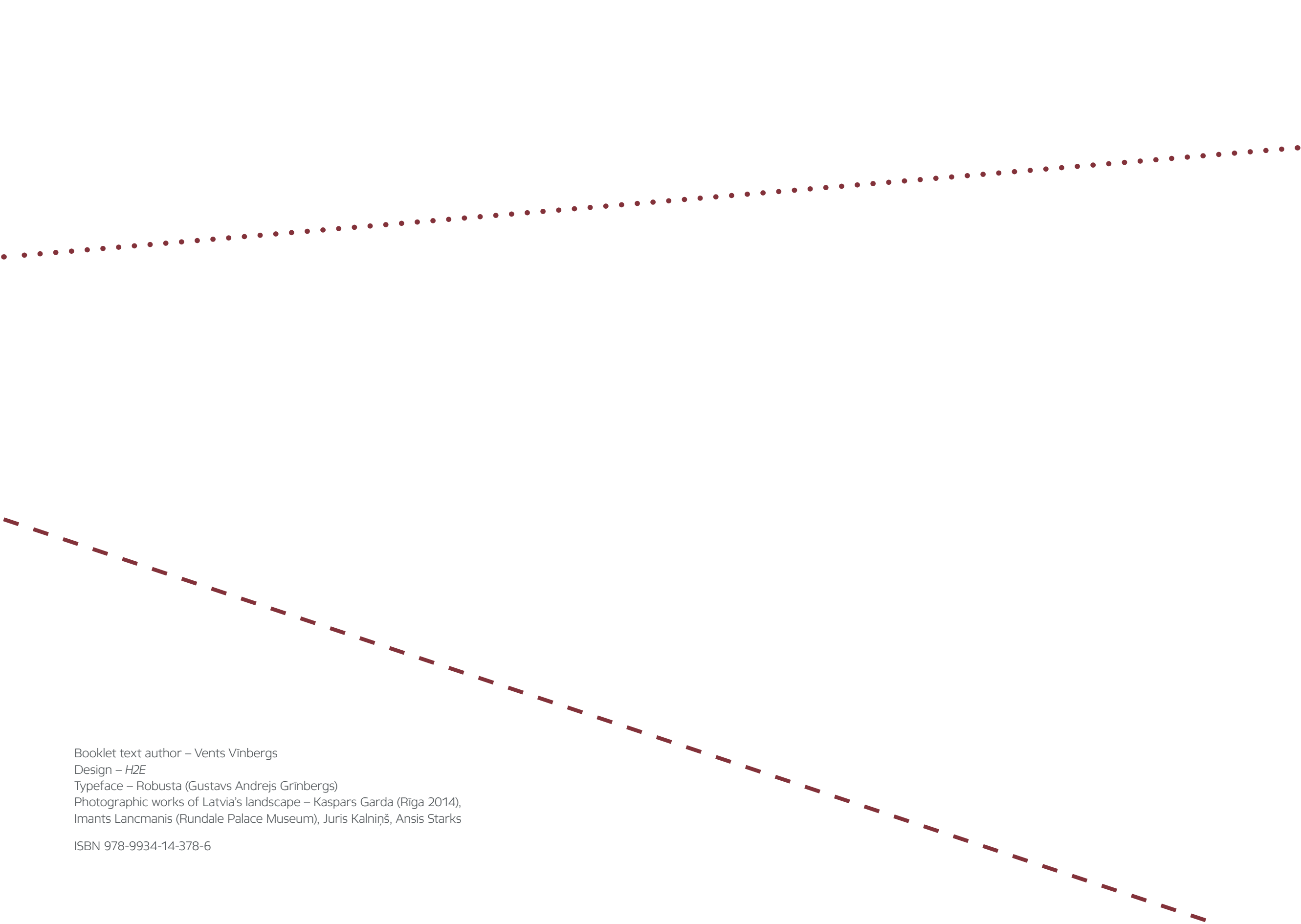
The *Meet Me!* modular outdoor furniture system is the diploma work of Ligita Breģe, who has a Master's Degree in Environmental Art from the Art Academy of Latvia. The system re-interprets traditional city park amenities in a concise, rational, and attractive manner by creating both a functional recreational/meeting venue and a singular style of playground for all ages. *Meet Me!* simultaneously displays the qualities of an art installation.

Designer Ligita Breģe has been developing and honing the theme of design's role in social interaction and the urban environment since she started her studies. Ligita first gained international recognition when she won an award at the *SaloneSatellite WorldWide Moscow 2012* competition with *Pagalms. Satikšanās. Rituāls* (Courtyard. Meeting. Ritual), the diploma work for her Bachelor's Degree.

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facebook.com/design.space.art



Furniture system *Meet Me!*



Booklet text author – Vents Vīnbergs
Design – H2E
Typeface – Robusta (Gustavs Andrejs Grīnbergs)
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