It all started with an exhibition in Riga 2011. Gerd Aurell and Helena Wikström were invited to exhibit their Delta-project at the Riga Art Festival "Survival Kit 3". The idea of an artistic survival kit discussing the big questions of global survival but also taking the more practical stand of trying to survive on a local and personal basis, struck them as immensely inspiring. "Delta Dreams", the artwork itself, connected two geographically separated deltas, and turned out to be a prelude to the artistic exchanges that were coming up.

In their Delta-project, Gerd Aurell and Helena Wikström artistically investigate a landscape through the people who spend their spare time there. The Ume River Delta, just downstream the city of Umeå, is a Natura 2000-reservation best known for its abundance of migrating birds. In 2006-2010 a new high-speed railway was built straight through the area and in compensation for this, new forests and wetlands for birds were created. In four books, the artists photograph and interview local people who hike, ski, ice-fish and bird-watch in this area, but also the people with power in the county and town administration, to find out their thoughts and dreams for the future.

Gerd Aurell and Helena Wikström’s artwork for Survival Kit 3 was called "Delta Dreams" and consisted of a reading bench, two books and a number of photographs on placards. The reading-bench was a copy of a wooden landing in the Ume delta. The public was invited to join the artists for a one-day picnic in the Daugava Delta, 15 km downstream of Riga. In the community of Bolderaja the group was joined by the "Bolderaja Grupa", a group of artists working through artistic action to preserve the Daugava Delta. The placards with images from the Ume Delta were carried along on the excursion and placed on the shore by the picnic blanket. One delta visits another and if people can feel kinship and affinity maybe places can too?
Based on true stories / Ivars Drulle

27.04 - 25.05 2012 / Verkligheten

In his work the Latvian artist Ivars Drulle often focuses on site-specific installations that contain figures in different situations. He discusses controversial subjects that more often take the role of a kitchen talk than something we speak about in the public. There are often elements of sound or music in his installations.

The exhibition consists of six stories. Most of them I have read, seen or heard and visualized to my understanding.

In my artwork I have been imagining the other sides of ourselves, what characters stand behind urban myths, anonymous callers to radio or internet commentaries. With my stories I strive to reconstruct the possible realities in which humans live along with humanized creatures and things or where one listens to all the craziest football matches of the world simultaneously.

I wonder what story may tell the old man I am passing by in the supermarket or the person I just saw the other day with an empty liquor bottle next to him repeating to himself like a struck, old vinyl, “Everything is fine. In my life. Everything is fine. In my life. Everything is fine. In my life. Everything is fine. In my life.”

The show consists of colorful plastic figurines and drawings set into various environments. Characters sit, listen or fall asleep to the sounds coming from their transistor radios. They observe our lives passing by - Ivars Drulle
**Timeline Hotel /**

**6.09-16.09/2012**

**Sigulda**

“Timeline Hotel is a place for time-travel to the past, the future and parallel realities. It merges memories and dreams, imaginary lives and factual experience. Located in heterotopia, the space between reality and imagination, the hotel guarantees its visitors a sensory experience of the highest quality.”

By September 2012, the first joint workshop between Umeå and Riga was arranged in Latvia as a part of Rigas fourth Survival Kit. Gathered around the title “Time Line Hotel”, 14 artists from Västerbotten and Latvia met in the city of Sigulda.

The artists worked for twelve days in an area containing abandoned buildings and castle ruins to compile a joint art exhibition.


Curated by Eva Vēvere and Laura Prikule.
The Gate
Johanna Hästö/
Survival Kit 4
05-15.09/2013
Riga

The “Survival Kit 4” International Contemporary Arts Festival, organized by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) took place the 5th to the 15th September, 2013.

The theme of the festival was DOWN-SHIFTING. Johanna Hästö travelled wearing only her extra skin from her home in Umeå to the festival in Riga.

THE GATE

We left my flat in Umeå early in the morning the 4th of September 2012. The taxi driver kept his stone face all the way to the airport. Did he think I looked weird? Did he even care to have a look who was in the backseat? I dont know. My assistant Sebastian, who would secretly follow me to make photos during the journey left the car a few minutes before me to make sure no one would notice that we were in company. With only my passport and the booking referens written on a piece of paper I left the cab and headed to the airport entrance.

Despite the early hour there were a handful of people in the waiting hall. Most of them looked rather shaken when they noticed me and it seemed as many tried to avoid to look at me. I went to the passport control. The lady by the counter kept very professional while checking my passport and handing over the boarding card. For a moment I was amazed she did not ask me to show my face. But just as I was about to leave she took a deep breath and while holding her breath she said: “And yes, I think you will have to pull down the zipper”. I was about to ask her; which one, but I did pull up the big zipper dividing the face just enough for my mouth, nose and eyes to be seen. Then she said I was welcome.

After this I turned and walked to the security check. This has always been very frightening to me, even when I am wearing normal clothes. I had imagined what could happen and I presumed I would be questioned. That the guards would ask me why I was dressed like this, that I would be denied access or have to take the suit off for instance. It is legal to wear clothes with zippers but I was not sure if something else about my appearance could be disturbing or against the rules. Although I was very calm. I walked slowly towards the metal detector and it felt like everyone around was holding their breath, waiting for what ever would happen. I knew zippers are made from a mixture of metal that doesn’t cause a reaction in the detector. But all these hundreders of zippers, who could be sure? I walked through the detector and just as I thought I had passed there was this tiny little biip! The three guys guarding the gate stopped me and told me to step back to be strip-searched by a female staff. She did this very briefly but asked me if I was sure I didn’t bring anything else: like a mobile phone? I said: “No, but it might have been one of the zippers that biped.” She looked very seriously at me and said: “Yes, it looks like its only zippers.” True! Then she let me pass and I sat down at the gate to wait. Some people made photos, but it felt like most of them tried to ignore me. When it was time to board the plane I went out into the beautiful morning light and while I was walking to the plane I could glimpse the flight attendant standing in the door to welcome the passengers. I wondered what this person was thinking.
However, I was welcome onboard! I found my seat in the very back of the plane next to a rockabilly stylish woman. It had not been possible to check in online so I and Sebastians could not choose seats close to each other, but he solved this by walking up to me and asked if it was alright that he made a photo. At this point I started to have a relaxed meditative feeling. I was relieved to finally be on the plane and actually happy my prejudices of what would happen at the security check was gravelled.

We landed at Riga Airport and here people were a bit more pushy than in Umeå. Two older men stood behind my back obviously talking about me and I didn't understand a word. They were laughing in a bad way and started to pull the zippers behind my back. But there was also lovely people there waiting. One of them was Jovita Cirule, the Survival Kit - volunteer who brought us to Maija Kurševas and Edgars Jurjans house where we were supposed to stay. The host was asleep when we arrived but a whole bunch of visitors from London who were also staying at the house were awake welcoming us. I became aware what a good thing it can be to arrive in a suit made of zippers if you want to make new friends.

In the White Night, (kulturnatta) a few days later, I made a presentation at the Survival Kit-festival showing the photos Sebastian had made. When I traveled home after the festival, now wearing normal clothes, one of the flight attendants started to talk to me. He said he recognized the injury on my thumb. He remembered I had a plaster on when flying in the zipper suit. He told me the staff had been thrilled, wondering what was going on and the captain was so excited he started to google what this could be and found out I was supposed to do something during the White Night in Riga.

I think I was interested in trying out the zipper suit in real life, outside the art space. I also think I wanted to see what could happen if you need to leave your comfort zone to try to get to a new spot by passing a border where you will be checked/controlled. I think I wanted an experience of doing this while differing from the norm in a way that could be quite exposed. But I am not sure these causes was the actual point of this trip. Sometimes its important to do things just because it feels necessary. It might not even be called art. But still, at this specific journey my experience was that people recieved what I was doing as art or something similar as the women who sat next to me on the plane expressed it when we met at the counter at a supermarket some months later.

Johanna Hästö
It is no secret that there is not enough money and too much unpaid work in the cultural field. Kaspars Lielgalvis, the head of Totaldobže Art Center, Riga, introduces dobžiks as a solution. Dobžiks is a culture currency which can be earned by working in the culture field and used as payment for cultural goods created by others. Introducing a culture currency will make culture more accessible for cultural workers themselves. It may lead to increasing the price of cultural goods thus heating up the cultural economy. In order to fix the errors of one system, a new system is created – a system that instead of being based on mathematics, is based on intuition.

During the exhibition period Kaspars collected alarm clocks that he later on made into a sound installation at Supermarket Art Fair in Stockholm. All the donators received 20 Dobžiks!

Kaspars Lielgalvis, born 1972, is a latvian visual artist, photographer and artistic leader of Totaldobže Art Center in Riga – one of Verkligheten’s collaborators for 2014.

www.kasparslielgalvis.com
www.totaldobze.com
Survival Kit/Workshop
19.09-29.09/2013 Tärnamo

You might think that you now almost everything about the region you live in. But if you take a small minibus and fill it up with curious people from different countries, together with your new friends you will discover and learn so much more.

Six artists from Latvia and three artists from Västerbotten spent eight days together in the small Swedish mountain village Tärnamo. They met many people that told them about their everyday life, the history of the place and different environmental issues, for instance about the mining prospect in Rönnbäcken. During the workshop the artists also worked with their own artistic research connected to the Survival Kit theme. They worked with different media as photography, sound and installations and dealt with subjects as endangered species, our nature and survival skills on a basic level as to find your own food and prepare and store it.

The results were presented both in Tärnamo in a Show and Tell and back in Umeå at an exhibition at Verkligheten.

Participating artists:
Iveta Laure, Kent Gustafsson, Mikael Gudrunsson, Oskars Briedis, Tina Remiz, Ulla Thögersen, Zanda Puce, Eva Veverve and Laura Prikule

The “Survival Kit 5” International Contemporary Arts Festival, organized by the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art (LCCA) took place the 5th to the 15th September, 2013.

“Survival Kit 5” focused on slow revolution, which emphasizes the importance of margins, overturning positions of power and questions the dominance of the centre. It is a non-hierarchical moment which has evolved from the needs of individuals and develops direct democratic traditions. The slow revolution invites not to be afraid of reaching out for what you really desire. As part of the ongoing cooperation between Umeå and Riga the artist Sebastian Mügge was invited to create a site-specific installation.

The piece consists of 100 sheets of copy paper. Each paper comprises closely spaced handwritten text fragments in English, German, French and Swedish and is carried out with ordinary office ball pens.

The work was an attempt to assume the role of a rational Stasi officer, referring to the movie The Lives of Others (original title – Das Leben der Anderen). Mügge systematically collected traces that various people leave in the WWW, mainly on Facebook- the community which plays a key role in modern revolutions.

This document of time functions as a mirror of different societies, deals with delicate topics like surveillance and the lack of freedom, enlightens the absurd contrast between the digital revolution and manual traditions, investigates the power of the written word and explores the subversive and revolutionary potential that internet offers to both powerful and powerless people worldwide.

The spectator gets the chance to be a kind of voyeur, following both complex and contradictory thoughts through the eyes of an amount of carefully selected individuals. The four chosen languages reflect artists own family background, but also represent the contemporary globalized melting pot where cultural borders are more undefined than ever before.