

At the beginning of my art studies I found abstract painting as something pointless, a way for amateurs to express their "emotions". I have come a long way since then, from hating abstract art to finding it as the pure essence of painting – color, line, shape and composition. The image can be created without many unnecessary details.

I have never thought of myself as a conceptual artist. Until the point where I understood that I'm using abstract forms as symbols, and every painting had a conceptual background, but it did not refer to the themes usually used by conceptual artists – as global political events, social problems ect. These themes were more of a poetical kind, like death, loneliness, fragile relationships. I was influenced by the "lyrical conceptualists" of the 1970ties, in particular Bas Jan Ader.

The technique which I prefer is watercolor on canvas, sometimes mixing it with oil or acrylic. It lets me to create transparent layers of paint, light yet colorful.

The competitive artwork is called "Styx", as the river of death from Ancient Greek mythology. It is painted with black, overlapping layers of watercolor on neutral white background. It symbolizes death – something universal to all mankind yet very personal. The black, pulsing "line" indicates the fragile borderline between life and death, a unique mystical experience which cannot be ignored or denied. The personal dimension of this painting is that the idea of the black river Styx has been on my mind for many years, until this year the idea found it's form. Some years ago I was working at a realistic panoramic landscape with a river. Several elements came together simultaneously – the river, the music which influenced me (Arvo Part's "The Deum" and Giya Kancheli's "Styx") and my grandfather's death. I had to paint Styx, the river of death, but in a different form.

Another painting, one of the paintings closely connected with "Styx" is the "Riverbed". It has the same composition, only it consists of texture deliberately made while priming the canvas and a transparent layer of black watercolor over it. It symbolizes the belief that death is a way that leads us somewhere as a sort of a riverbed.

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## Laima Steika

( b.1986, Latvia )

### Education (in connection with art)

2005 – 2009 The University of Latvia, bachelor degree in art education and culture history

2009 – 2013 The Art Academy of Latvia, bachelor degree in painting

2013 – current time, The Art Academy of Latvia, Master's studies in painting

## Creative activities

2010 september – participated in group exhibition “Selfportrait”, Galerija L, Riga, Latvia

2010 october – participated in group exhibition/competition “14.saraksts”, Galerija L

2012 March 5 – March 9; mini solo exhibition “Kaimiņi”(Neighbours), Art Academy of Latvia, during a cycle of student exhibition project “My Space”

2012 April 3 – April 30; participated in group exhibition “Rīga – Ventspils”, theatre house “Jūras vārti”, Ventspils, Latvia

2014 September 10 – September 30; participated in group exhibition/competition Brederlo- von Sengbusch mākslas prēmija”, Art Academy of Latvia

2014 November 13 – December 3; participated in group exhibition/competition SEB stipendija glezniecībā, Art Academy of Latvia