

60 Years of  
**ANIMATION PUPPETS  
FROM LATVIA**

Film Studio ANIMĀCIJAS BRIGĀDE



An exhibition by MONSTRA and Museu da Marioneta

13 FEB >  
19 APR 2026

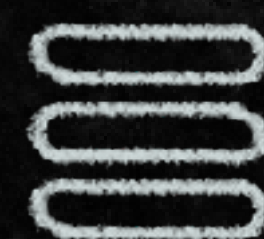


MUSEU DA  
MARIONETA



# ANIMĀCIJAS BRIGĀDE

## A STUDIO WITH SOUL



Puppets, manipulated in front of an audience or frame by frame, have always fascinated audiences of all ages. It is this fascination that has brought the MONSTRA Festival to the Museu da Marioneta for 19 years, in an encounter and dialogue between these two fascinating and unique worlds.

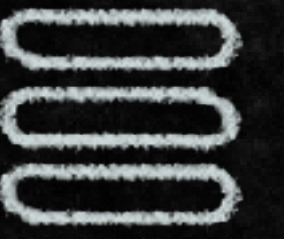
The exhibition we present is an example of the search for wonder that the *Animācijas Brigāde* studio has been bringing to life. A unique universe where imagination is materialised through matter, gesture and time. The selection of original puppets from the studio of Riga, Latvia, are a testimony to the creative process where each character is designed and built by hand by artists specialising in sculpture, armour, sewing and set construction, using know-how passed down and perfected over generations, combining technical precision, artistic sensitivity and a strong visual identity. These puppets are the body of original films that engage with literature, folklore and comics, assuming a universal language capable of transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Between tradition and innovation, the work of *Animācijas Brigāde* affirms the relevance of a manual, patient and contemporary art. We invite everyone to discover the invisible side of animated cinema, where each puppet is more than a character: it is a being with a soul.

Fernando Galrito

Artistic Director at MONSTRA | Lisbon Animation Festival and curator of the exhibition





For almost two decades, MONSTRA exhibitions have portrayed the history of animated cinema in the 20th century in various parts of the world and introduced thousands of people to the enchantment and communicative power of animated films.

This year, Latvia comes to the Museu da Marioneta with puppets, sets, and props from fourteen films made between 1966 and 2026. In Latvia, animated cinema has proven to be an act of resilience, overcoming the instability of different political contexts without ever losing the energy and sparkle of imagination with which it tells stories for a wide range of audiences. This phenomenon was reinforced by director Jānis Cimmermanis and artist and sculptor Māris Putniņš, who breathed new life into Latvian animated cinema with the *Animācijas Brigāde* studio, whose work has been recognized and rewarded with numerous awards.

It is therefore with great pleasure that the Museu da Marioneta welcomes the exhibition *60 Years of Animation Puppets from Latvia*. Sets, puppets, and props tell you chapters from six of Latvia's best animated films and reveal the meticulous production behind the making of an animated film.

Our thanks go to the entire MONSTRA team and its director Fernando Galrito, who over the past 19 years has helped us discover the many mysteries of animated cinema.

Welcome to the Museu da Marioneta and to *60 Years of Animation Puppets from Latvia*!

Ana Paula Rebelo Correia

Director of Museu da Marioneta





ABOUT THE  
EXHIBITION

ANIMĀCIJAS  
BRIGĀDE

ARNOLDS BUROVS

MĀRIS PUTNIŅŠ

JĀNIS CIMMERMANIS

COCK-A-DOODLE-  
-DOO!

TIGER MEOW-MEOW

PYGMALION

13

SI-SI-DRA

BIMINI

MY PARADISE

RESCUE TEAM

CRISPY

PEA CHILDREN

UPSIDE DOWN

HENRY THE GREAT

MUSHROOM'S LIFE

SPHINX ALBERTA'S  
SMILE

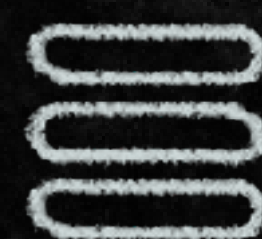
[credits](#)

[partners](#)

[contacts](#)



# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION



Latvian puppet animation began in 1966 with the release of 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' by director Arnolds Burovs at Riga Film Studio, where the puppet animation studio continues to operate today. For six decades, artistic generations and political contexts have changed, yet puppets have remained at the heart of this cinematic tradition. Burovs established a classical approach to storytelling, adapting literary works for both children and adult audiences. A major shift came in the late 1980s with the arrival of director Jānis Cimmermanis and artist and writer Māris Putniņš. After Latvia regained independence, the studio was renamed *Animācijas Brigāde* and entered a period of creative expansion. Through iconic series, international collaborations, and award-winning films, *Animācijas Brigāde* has reached audiences across generations and borders.

This exhibition offers a glimpse into sixty years of handcrafted imagination and the evolving art of stop-motion puppet animation.





# ANIMĀCIJAS BRIGĀDE





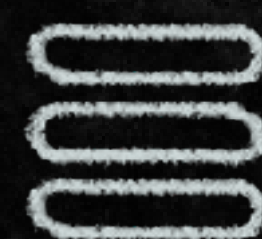
1966 is the beginning of the Latvian puppet animation film history as the first film 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' (dir. Arnolds Burovs) is released to the public. This puppet animation movie was made at Riga Film studio – where the puppet animation studio is still operating till this day. It has been sixty years, directors, animators and artists have changed, even the leadership of Latvia, but still the main actors – puppets – are in the spotlight.

The first Latvian Puppet animation studio leader was the director Arnolds Burovs (1915-2006). His style was classical as well as the stories he chose to tell. Stories from O. Henri, Victor Hugo, Aleksandrs Čaks, Vilis Lācis – came to life through puppets on big movie screens. Arnolds Burovs made movies for children and adults as well, sometimes balancing on a sombre note.

The late 1980s were a changing point in the evolution of Latvian Animation studio as a new director Jānis Cimmermanis (1950) and the artist and script writer Māris Putniņš (1950-2024) joined the team. In the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union and Latvia regaining its independence, Māris Putniņš became the producer of the newly renamed Film studio *Animācijas Brigāde*. This duo created the marvellous 'Rescue team' series with the three characters who dealt with major and sometimes minor problems around the world. New directors Nils Skapāns, Dace Rīdūze and Māris Brinkmanis, operator Ēvalds Lācis and animators joined. The studio was expanding its team by gathering different artists, craftsmen and professionals who mastered the art of stop-motion puppet animation.



# ANIMĀCIJAS BRIGĀDE



Puppet animation film studio *Animācijas Brigāde* has gained viewers through many generations and continents. Teaming up with film studio Zentropa the movie about a little knight was made as well as 'Prop and Berta'. A few years later 'The Three Musketeers' movie premiered in Centre Pompidou. Film Studio *Animācijas Brigāde* puppet animation films have gained recognition in international festivals, with the most important award coming from the Berlin Film Festival 1995 – the Crystal Bear for the film 'Let's fly' (dir. Nils Skapāns).

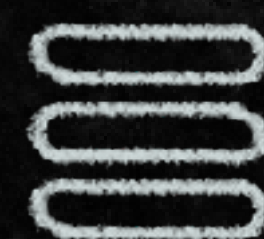
In these past 60 years, styles and creators have changed and still the Film studio *Animācijas Brigāde* is expanding its horizons and perfecting the art of stop-motion puppet animation. This exhibition is just a small bite of the colourful imagination of the creators.







# ARNOLDS BUROVS



Arnolds Burovs (1915–2006) was the founder of Latvian puppet animation and for many years its most prominent representative. Often referred to as "the master" by critics and peers, he led a close-knit creative team and established the artistic foundations of the genre in Latvia.

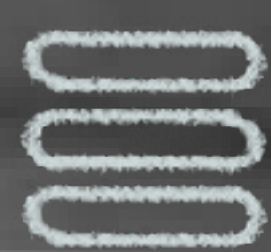
From his earliest films, Burovs's distinctive authorial style is evident: refined visual expression, clarity of thought, and a deeply humanistic worldview. Though his puppet characters possess immobile faces, they are strikingly expressive. The carefully constructed spaces they inhabit reflect both the spirit of their time and exceptional artistic precision, complemented by sensitive, harmonious music.

Born in Riga, Burovs was educated in art, music, and theatre. He spent the most part of the first two decades of his career at the State Puppet Theatre, where he created numerous acclaimed productions. In 1963, at the age of fifty, he made a decisive shift to Riga Film Studio, founding Latvia's first puppet animation film unit. His first film, 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' (1966), marked the beginning of a 24-year career in animation, during which he created 40 films.

Burovs received numerous honors, including the Latvian SSR State Prize, the Order of the Three Stars, and the The Great Kristaps Lifetime Achievement Award, securing his legacy as a central figure in Latvian cinema.

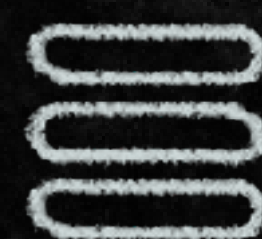


MĀRIS PUTNIŅŠ





# MĀRIS PUTNIŅŠ



Māris Putniņš (1950–2024) was a key figure of Latvian puppet animation, responsible for the production of nearly all puppet films since the Restoration of Independence in 1991. While widely known for his humorous, satirical short films over the course of his career, Putniņš has worked in numerous creative roles, including actor, visual artist, scriptwriter, director, composer, and producer.

Putniņš studied at the Art Academy of Latvia and later at the Puppet Theatre Actors' Studio.

From 1973 to 1985 he worked at Liepāja Theatre and appeared as an actor in several Latvian feature films of the 1970s. In the mid-1980s he began working in puppet animation, initially as a film artist. After the fall of the USSR, Putniņš took the role of lead producer, with the soon retirement of Arnolds Burovs.

Putniņš was a scriptwriter, artist and producer of several popular puppet films of the 1990s: 'Mischiefs' (four short films, since 1987) which was the first collaboration with Cimmermanis, 'Rescue Team' (thirty short films, since 1991), 'Munk and Lemmy' (ten short films, since 1993), 'Animals' (six short films, since 1996). He has also produced three full-length animated films, including the wild pie story 'Henry the Great' (2023), based on Māris Putniņš's own books.

Just like Burovs and Cimmermanis, Māris Putniņš received the Order of the Three Stars.

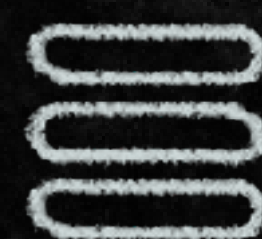


JĀNIS CIMMERMANIS





# JĀNIS CIMMERMANIS



Jānis Cimmermanis (b. 1950) is one of the most prolific puppet animation directors in Latvia and an influential figure in the country's animation history. His filmography is largely composed of short films and animated series episodes, while also encompassing three feature animated films and two feature live-action films.

Born in Riga, Cimmermanis developed an early interest in theatre. His professional education includes work at Latvian Television, studies at the Puppet Theatre Actors' Studio, and several years as an actor at the Puppet Theatre. He graduated in 1980 with a degree in puppet theatre directing and subsequently worked as a director at the Latvian Puppet Theatre.

A clear shift toward cinema occurred in 1984, when Arnolds Burovs invited Cimmermanis to join the puppet film unit of Riga Film Studio. Beginning as a puppet animator, he made his debut as a director with 'The Forester's grandson and...' (1985). This marked the beginning of a highly productive period that resulted in several dozen films. In collaboration with Māris Putniņš, he co-created the widely popular animated series 'Rescue Team' (1991). His later work includes international co-productions, and lastly, directed the first feature produced by *Animācijas Brigāde* 'Henry the Great' (2023). In recognition of his long-term investment in Latvian culture and cinema, Jānis Cimmermanis received the Order of the Three Stars.



*“Arnolds Burovs has proven in his most outstanding films that puppet films are unlimited in time and space.” Maija Augskalna*

for the Master's 90th birthday (2005)







# COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!

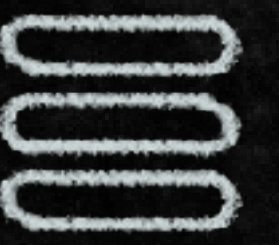
Arnolds Burovs • 1966



This is the first puppet film produced by Riga Puppet Film Studio. Based on Latvian folk tale, it tells the story of a rich man who steals a poor farmer's magic mill and the loyal dog and rooster who help him get it back. The film celebrates friendship and the triumph of good over evil.

Director / **Arnolds Burovs** • Script / **Arnolds Burovs** • Camera Operator / **Pēteris Trups** • Chief Animator / **Arnolds Burovs** • Music / **Valters Kaminskis** • Sound / **Andris Vulfs** • Sculptor / **Anna Nollendorfa** • Puppeteers / **Arvīds Noriņš, Brigita Krastiņa** • Executive director / **Valentīns Jakobsons**





# TIGER MEOW-MEOW

Arnolds Burovs • 1967



A little boy is used to being careless with his toys and is just as mean to his best friend, a ginger kitten. Inventing new ways to entertain himself, the boy ends up annoying a magician who turns the boy into a doll in anger. The kitten grows into a ferocious tiger in the eyes of his tormentor. It isn't easy to escape the beast and make everything fall into place again.

Director / **Arnolds Burovs** • Script / **Arnolds Burovs** • Camera Operator / **Pēteris Trups** • Chief Animator / **Gunārs Cīlītis** • Composer / **Igors Jakovļevs** • Sound / **Igors Jakovļevs** • Sculptor / **Anna Nollendorfa** • Puppeteers / **Brigita Krastina, Arvīds Noriņš** • Executive director / **Valentīns Jakobsons**





# PYGMALION

Arnolds Burovs • 1967



The story of how a sculptor created a statue that came to life. The film tells in a stylized way about the fate of an artist who, by creating his own ideal of the beauty of the human body, distances himself from the real world.

Director / **Arnolds Burovs** • Screenplay / **Arnolds Burovs** • Camera Operator / **Pēteris Trups**  
• Art / **Gunārs Cīlītis** • Composer / **Imants Kalniņš** • Sound director / **Igors Jakovļevs** • Sculptor/  
**Anna Nollendorfa** • Puppet animator / **Arvīds Noriņš, Brigita Krastiņa** • Executive director / **Valentīns Jakobsons**



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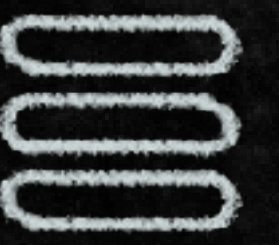
Arnolds Burovs • 1974



A satirical puppet animation film about superstition. The life of Otto, a cantor's employee, is dictated by fears and prejudices, which lead him to various disastrous situations. The text is read by actor Vaironis Jakāns.

Director / **Arnolds Burovs** • Screenplay / **E. Peters, Arnolds Burovs** • Camera Operator / **Miķelis Masaļskis** • Art / **Gunārs Cīlītis** • Composer / **Imants Kalniņš**





# SI-SI-DRA

Arnolds Burovs • 1977



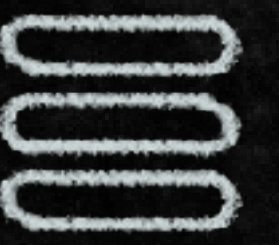
This humorous and dramatic film explores how children behave in everyday situations, particularly at mealtimes. It is intended for young audiences.

Director / **Arnolds Burovs** • Script / **Arnolds Burovs, Jānis Peters** • Camera Operator / **Pēteris Trups** • Chief Animator / **Gunārs Bērziņš** • Composer / **Ivars Vīgners** • Sound / **Igors Jakovļevs** • Editor / **Natālija Bastina** • Executive director / **Valentīns Jakobsons**









# BIMINI

Arnolds Burovs • 1981



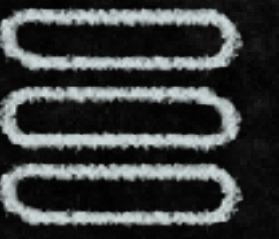
The puppet film 'Bimini' is based on the poem by H. Heine. The film's theme is the human being and their mental state, the desire for constant renewal, the struggle against the decline of creative energy, and the pursuit of excellence in various fields, especially in art.

Director / **A. Burovs** • Screenplay / **A. Burovs, J. Rokpelnis** • Set designer / **G. Kotello** • Camera Operator / **P. Trups** • Composer / **I. Kalniņš** • Sculptor / **I. Kiršteina** • Costume designer / **I. Sarkanbārde** • Puppeteers / **G. Treibergs, A. Noriņš** • Puppet makers / **I. Berga, I. Jurgensone, E. Kiršteins, V. Maksurovs** • Sound engineer / **I. Jakovļevs** • Camera assistant / **U. Martinsons** • Film editor / **I. Kairova** • Songs sung by the ensemble “**Menuets**” • Publisher / **H. Laucis** • Executive Director / **V. Jakobsons**









# MY PARADISE

Arnolds Burovs • 1989



The film is inspired by the poetry of A. Čaks. It is set against the backdrop of pre-war Riga. A. Čaks' poetry is characterised by its underlying themes of melancholy, kindness and gentle self-irony. The film's visual style celebrates the human spirit and soul. In contrast to the pragmatic side of life and spiritual dullness, there is also value in the sadness caused by things that are unfulfilled and realistically impossible.

Director / **Arnolds Burovs** • Based on the story of / **Aleksandrs Čaks** • Script / **Arnolds Burovs, Jānis Rokpelnis** • Camera Operator / **Pēteris Trups** • Chief Animator / **Gedimins Kotello** • Composer / **Pēteris Plakidis** • Sound / **Igors Jakovļevs** • Sculptor / **Ilze Kiršteina** • Music Editor / **Aleksandrs Grīva** • Editor / **Aija Vālodze** • Executive director / **Renāte Martini**



MY PARADISE



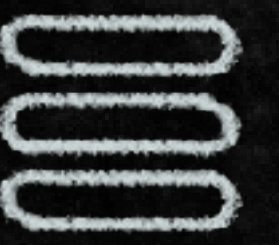


*"The standard of  
beauty and truth he  
[Burovs] has created  
belongs to the timeless  
values of world culture."*

*Agris Redovičs*

for the Master's 90th birthday (2005)





# RESCUE TEAM

Jānis Cimmermanis • 1991 - 2020



These comic puppet film series, based on original scripts by the Latvian artist and writer Māris Putniņš, was directed by Jānis Cimmermanis and Dace Rīdūze. The main characters are Bembelate, Seelink and Poterick – three young men who organize the Rescue team. They save everybody and everything that needs rescuing. Sometimes after their brave actions and activities there remains nothing to be rescued or saved.

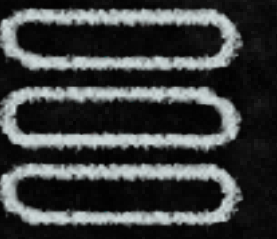
Director / Jānis Cimmermanis, Dace Rīdūze • Script / Māris Putniņš • Producer / Māris Putniņš



RESCUE TEAM







# CRISPY

Dace Rīdūze • 2014



In a snowy forest, dwarfs are busy as Christmas Eve is approaching! Dwarf girl bakes gingerbread cookies and makes up a small man – Crispy. The little gingerbread man becomes alive and is very curious. He will not only have fun adventures and danger, but also live through the wonders of the Season...

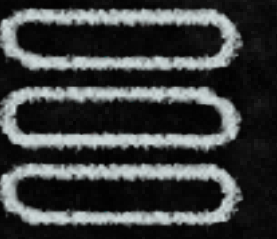
Director / **Dace Rīdūze** • Screenplay / **Dace Rīdūze** • Camera Operator / **Ēvalds Lācis** • Chief Animator / **Ilze Kiršteina** • Composer / **Uldis Marhilēvičs** • Sound / **Anrijs Krenbergs** • Editor / **Dace Rīdūze, Ēvalds Lācis** • Computer Graphics / **Andris Gailītis** • Producer / **Maris Putniņš**



CRISPY

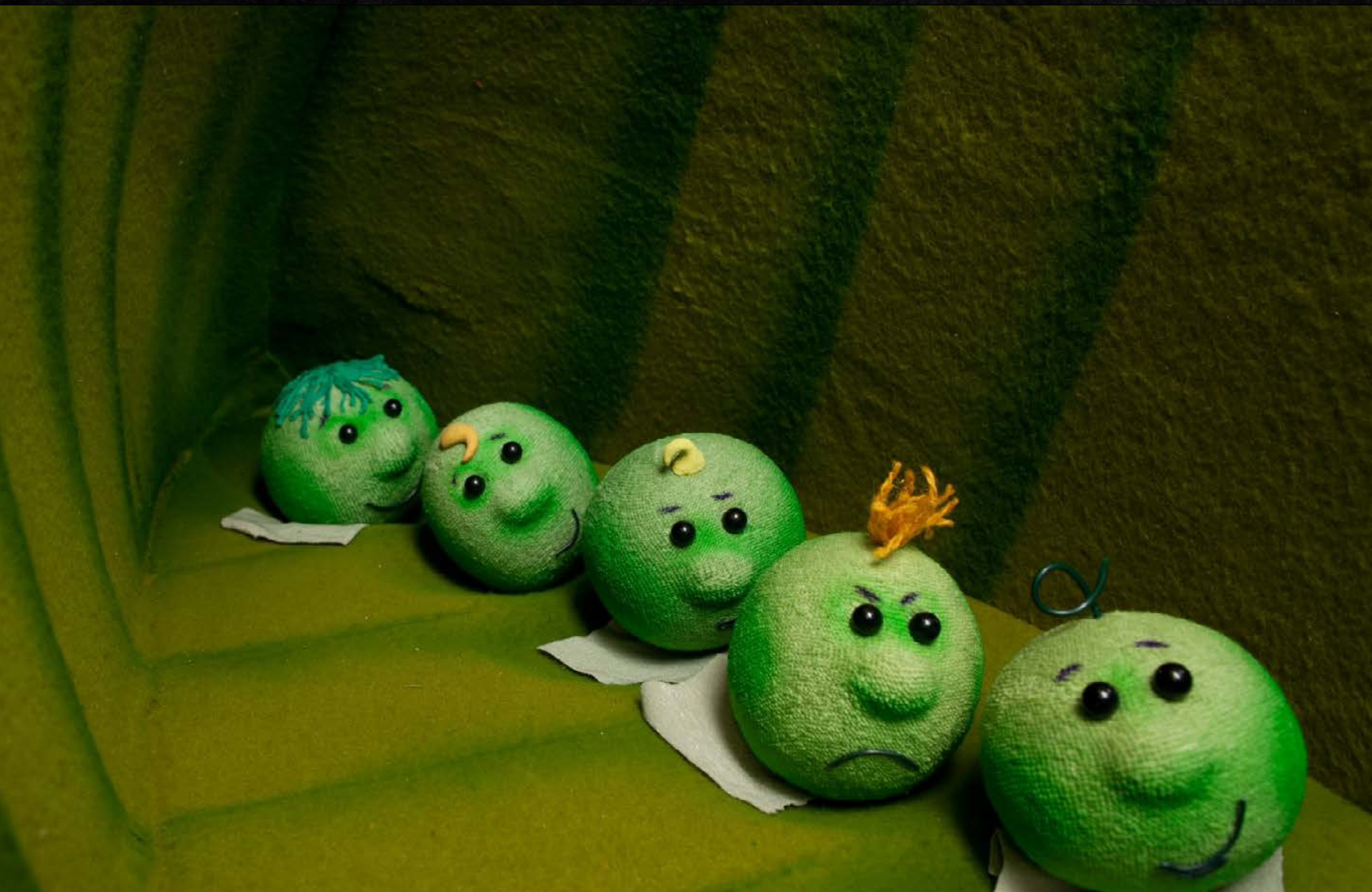






# PEA CHILDREN

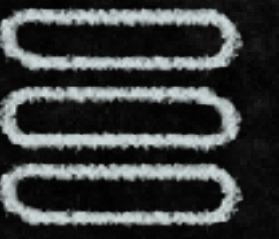
Dace Rīdūze • 2020



The film's main characters are eight pea children who live in their green pea pod; the story tells how they are interacting with the world and its other inhabitants in the context of natural cycles and laws. Characters are going through fun and musical adventures after they break out of their green pod house.

Director / **Dace Rīdūze** • Screenplay / **Dace Rīdūze** • Camera Operator / **Ēvalds Lācis** • Art / **Ilze Kiršteina** • Composer / **Uldis Marhilēvičs** • Sound / **Anrijs Krenbergs** • Producer / **Maris Putniņš**





# UPSIDE DOWN

Dace Rīdūze • 2023



Andulis, a curious bat, wakes up at the wrong time and discovers that he, unlike his fellow bats, loves being outside in the sunlight. After making friends with Little Mouse who looks almost like him, Andulis is surprised to find out that not everything is upside down in Little Mouse's house.

Director / **Dace Rīdūze** • Screenplay / **Dace Rīdūze** • Camera Operator / **Ēvalds Lācis, Deniss Skrobins** • Art / **Ilze Dambe-Dzelme** • Composer / **Jēkabs Nīmanis** • Sound editor / **Anrijs Krenbergs** • Producer / **Maris Putniņš**



UPSIDE DOWN





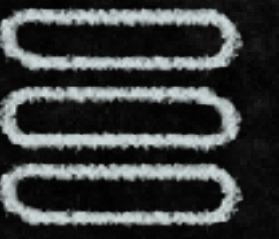


*“For the creative collective of the Riga Film Studio’s puppet films, art is not about touching on the phenomena of life. It is about reaching, exploring.” Dainis Īvāns*

*“The Sense of Movement” in Kino (1978)*







# HENRY THE GREAT

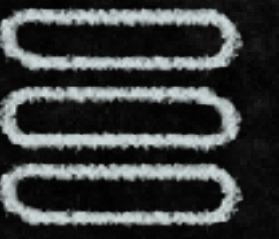
Jānis Cimmermanis • 2023



After returning to his homeland, Baltaine's bacon pie Henry The Great reveals that his homeland has been taken over by Oriental pies under the terrible leadership of Tsar Aivens, and there is nothing left but to start fight for the liberation of the homeland.

Director / **Jānis Cimmermanis** • Script / **Māris Putniņš** • Camera Operator / **Ēvalds Lācis** •  
Music / **Karlis Auzans** • Sound / **Anrijs Krenbergs** • Editor / **Jānis Cimmermanis, Ēvalds Lācis, Māris Putniņš** • Producer / **Māris Putniņš**





# MUSHROOM'S LIFE

Ēvalds Lācis • 2024



‘Mushroom's Life’ is a simple but sweet story about a family of mushroom flies who try to keep their mushroom from ending up in a hunter's basket by using techniques such as repainting it, covering it with moss, and other techniques.

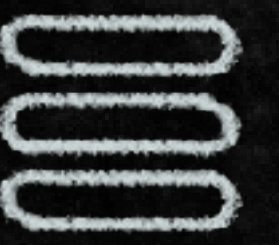
Director / **Ēvalds Lācis** • Screenplay / **Ēvalds Lācis** • Camera Operator / **Ēvalds Lācis** • Art / **Jānis Karklins** • Composer / **Jēkabs Nimanis** • Sound editor / **Anrijs Krenbergs** • Producer / **Dace Rīdūze**



MUSHROOM'S LIFE







# SPHINX ALBERTA'S SMILE

Dace Rīdūze • 2026

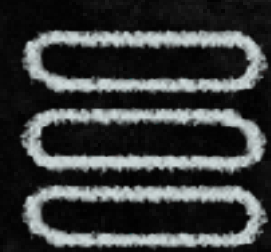


The film is based on the book of the same name by Māra Cielēna and Anita Paegle. This unusual and engaging story is about the residents of one of the most beautiful streets in Riga - Alberta Street. Here the mosaics and sculptures created in the décor of Art Nouveau come alive to search for the missing sculpture 'Sphinx Alberta's Smile'. This investigation requires ingenuity, patience, collaboration and love among friends if they want to succeed!

Director / **Dace Rīdūze** • Screenplay / **Dace Rīdūze** • Camera Operator / **Ēvalds Lācis** • Producer / **Emīlija Lenkēviča**



SPHINX ALBERTA'S SMILE







60 YEARS OF ANIMATION PUPPETS FROM LATVIA

An exhibition by MONSTRA and Museu da Marioneta

CO PRODUCTION

MONSTRA | Festival de Animação de Lisboa  
EGEAC - Lisboa Cultura | Museu da Marioneta

ORGANISED BY

Taumotrópio  
Monstruosa  
Animācijas Brigāde

CURATED BY

Dace Rožlapa (Animācijas Brigāde)  
Katriona Rožlapa (Animācijas Brigāde)  
Fernando Galrito (MONSTRA)

COORDINATION

Fernando Galrito (MONSTRA)  
Miguel Pires de Matos (MONSTRA)  
Ana Paula Correia (Museu da Marioneta)  
Maria Carrelhas (Museu da Marioneta)

PRODUCTION

Susana Realista (MONSTRA)  
Inês Barroso (MONSTRA)  
Tiago Galrito (MONSTRA)  
Isabel Brito (Estágio MONSTRA)  
Emīlija Lenkeviča (Animācijas Brigāde)

TECHNICAL COORDINATOR AND LIGHTING

Rui Seabra (Museu da Marioneta)

DESIGN AND BRANDING

Vasco Casula (MONSTRA)  
Carlota Tinoco (MONSTRA)  
Sara Gaspar (MONSTRA)

COMMUNICATION AND PRESS

João Alves (MONSTRA)  
Danielle Silva (MONSTRA)  
Rita Bonifácio (MONSTRA)  
Cristiana Ameixinha (Museu da Marioneta)

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Rita Luís (Museu da Marioneta)

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Filipa Camacho (Museu da Marioneta)  
Joana Braz (Museu da Marioneta)  
Pedro Valente (Museu da Marioneta)  
Rafael Alexandre (Museu da Marioneta)  
Susana Matos (Museu da Marioneta)

SECRETARIAT

Andreia Santos (Museu da Marioneta)

SHOP AND TICKET OFFICE

Diogo Ferreira (Museu da Marioneta)  
Isabel Clímaco (Museu da Marioneta)  
Margarida Fontes (Museu da Marioneta)



# CREDITS



## ANIMĀCIJAS BRIGĀDE TEAM

COLLECTION CURATOR

Dace Rožlapa

PROJECT MANAGER

Emīlija Lenkeviča

CONCEPT DESIGN

Katriona Rožlapa

ARTIST

Ilze Dambe

TEXTS

Liene Helēna Nagumanova

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

Gints Grasis

PUPPET RESTORERS

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