

Miegli

Activating Cultural Heritage Through Contemporary Experience: Art as an Agent of Change - *The Logic of the Bumblebee*

Imants Ziedonis' foundation "Viegli"

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Annotation

Art as an Agent of Change

- Memory institutions are mostly perceived as preservation and presentation-based organisations
- Imants Ziedonis' foundation "Viegli" is an artistic practice in the field of cultural heritage - it runs two museums ("Ziedonis museum" and "Purvitis museum")
- A shift from heritage as canon to heritage as path - every project invites participation, critical thinking and personal meaning - making
- A model of informal arts education, where the institution acts as an artistic agent in strengthening the resilience of society, rather than just a provider of education

Imants Ziedonis' foundation "Viegli"

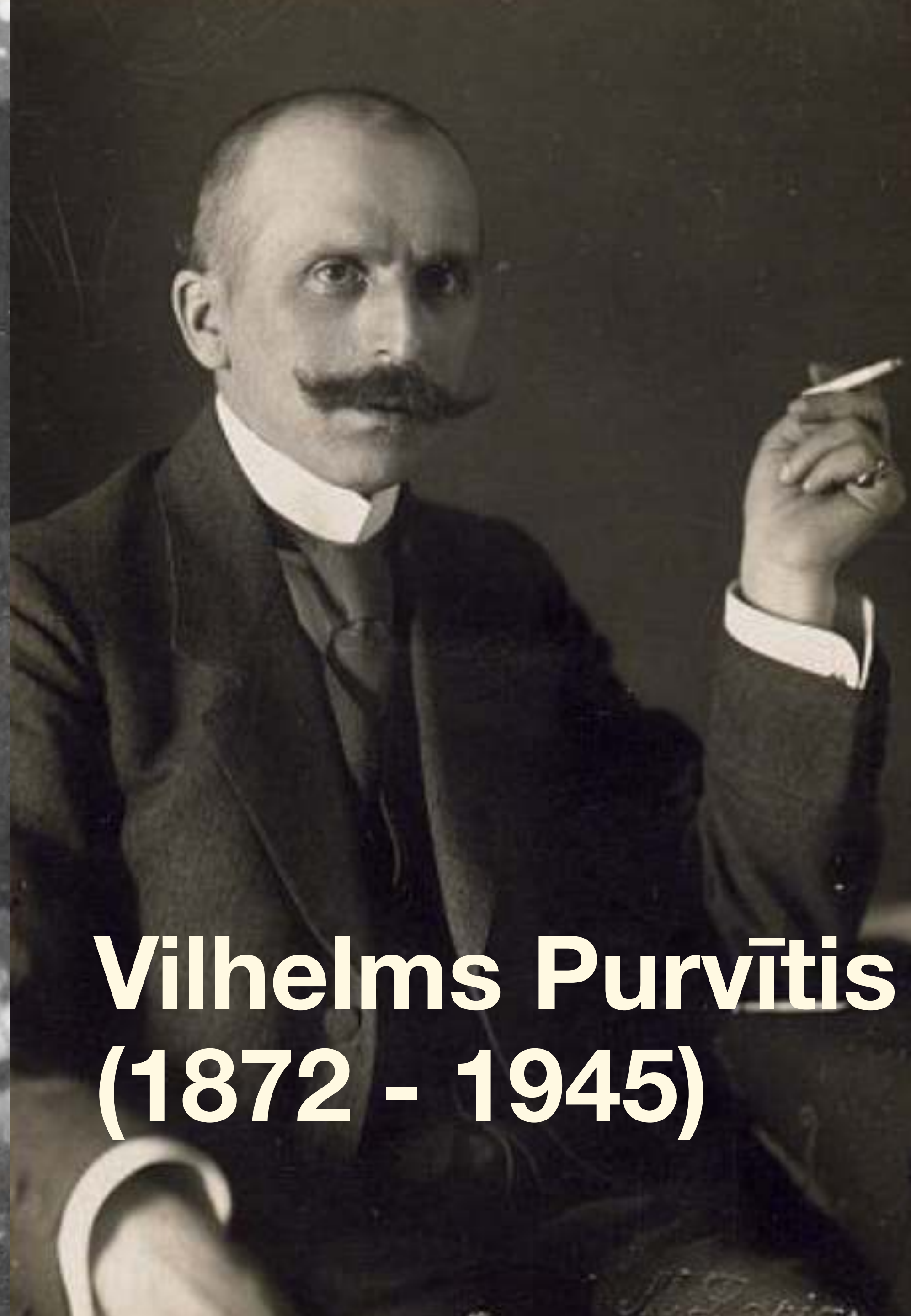
About

- Founded in 2010
- Planned together with poet Imants Ziedonis
- Runs two museums
- Is an active member of multilayered cultural experience - releases books, music, brand merch, does freelance activities
- Is a public benefit organisation





**Imants Ziedonis
(1933 - 2013)**



**Vilhelms Purvītis
(1872 - 1945)**

Art as a way, not an object

"Viegli" approach

- "Viegli" acts as an agent of change in its activities, working with cultural heritage not as an object to be preserved, but as a living, contemporary process
- Cultural heritage becomes effective only when it is activated in creativity and in a person's personal experience
- The focus is not on what art means, but on what it does - what movement, question, or internal process it initiates
- A person trains the ability to create meaning for themselves, reflect, and take an active position in the cultural process, which is the basis of cultural literacy and societal resilience



A source of Geniuses and timeliness

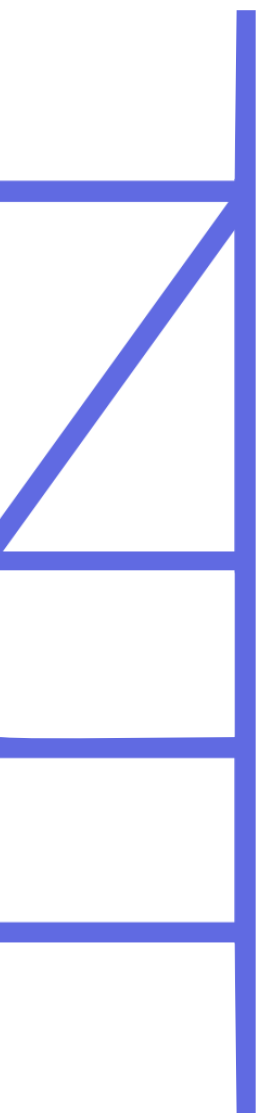
Imants Ziedonis and Vilhelms Purvitis

- “Viegli” is based on a unique experience - the opportunity to work with Imants Ziedonis at a time when he himself was still actively formulating his vision of what museums should be like (2015)
- Based on experience with "Ziedonis museum", "Viegli" begins a path of making the "Purvitis museum" (2022). Both museums are State accredited
- Both museums are a living center of creativity, where heritage is an experience, not an object of observation
- Relatively recently similar ideas as Ziedonis had, have been enshrined in ICOM's new definition of a museum, which is currently being implemented in Latvia

The core of the problem

Where are we now

- Cultural heritage is often presented as a canon - as a ready-made system of meanings that one must approach correctly, quietly, and with distance
- When cultural heritage is limited to accumulation and display, the museum becomes a showcase - a place to look but not to act; to perceive but not to experience
- Culture is perceived as something external, ready-made and closed, not as a living process in which it is possible to enter, make mistakes, think and create one's own meaning



We didn't know how to do it

The beginning

- When "Viegli" started working on the "Ziedonis Museum", the team had no classical museological education
- This allowed "Viegli" to realise what is often not dared in the traditional system - a museum as a living centre of creativity, rather than a showcase, where heritage becomes an experience, not just an object of observation
- Reducing institutional distance transformed the museum from an authoritative repository of knowledge into a space where people can practice cultural literacy

Ziedonis museum



Purvitis museum

Art is the quality of doing and of what is done

John Dewey (1934)

- Art is the way in which the action and its results are experienced. Art is not just an object, but a process and an experience
- "Viegli" does not work with heritage as a fixed object, but as a material from which structures of experience are created
- Art does not manifest itself as a separate work, but as a process in which the viewer becomes the co-author, creating personal meaning and relationships with culture
- The question here is not whether this practice fits into traditional categories of art institutions, but whether it functions within the logic of art-creating experience, form, and meaning

A person doesn't change from information

A person changes from experience

- Information can expand knowledge, but it rarely changes attitudes, actions, or inner stance
- Art in this approach is not used as a medium of information, but as a space of experience in which the person finds himself in motion
- Experience activates not only understanding, but also personal involvement - a person becomes a participant, and it is this transition that creates a long-term change in attitude and behaviour



Art as an agent of change

- If we accept that change occurs through experience, then the role of art also changes significantly
- The structure and approach determines whether art remains an observable object or becomes a process that provokes thought and inner movement
- Attention is focused not on what art represents, but on what kind of experience it allows us to have and what kind of changes this experience can initiate
- A deliberately designed structure transforms art from passive content into an active field of activity, where a person practices reflection, choice, and co-responsibility - skills that are the foundation of cultural literacy and social resilience

Examples



Foundation "Viegli"

The core

- Heritage provides the foundation, creativity keeps it moving, education creates understanding, but identity is where these processes settle into human experience
- It is this space of connections that creates the field of practice in which art can act as an agent of change
- By connecting heritage, creativity, and education into one field of experience, a person is not left only at the information level, but gains the opportunity to build a personal, lasting relationship with culture



"Ziedonis museum"

Museum is a path

- A conscious choice was made - to create the museum not as an exhibition, but as an experience
- The focus is not on objects or chronology, but on movement. Walking becomes a form of thought, not only physical movement. Language here is an impulse - it asks questions, not answers
- The museum becomes a space where people do not consume culture but encounter themselves in thought
- A person not only perceives culture, but also trains presence, responsibility, and self-reflection, which creates a deep, internally sustainable relationship with heritage



"Ziedonis' classroom"

To fall in love with Ziedonis

- Detective games, break-out rooms, lectures in schools and in the museum
- The games are created under the guidance of artists, thinking about form, rhythm, language and perception
- In this process, the game becomes an artistic tool that invites you to take an active position in the text. The person is no longer a passive reader - they become a participants who notice details, make connections, and think for themselves
- It is also important that this work consciously accepts that not all forms resonate immediately. Lower engagement is not seen as failure, but as part of a living, experimental process



"Purvitis museum"

Nature - work - art

- People were invited to notice again what often goes unnoticed - fragments of landscapes, places and memories. The search process itself becomes an exercise in cultural literacy: people no longer receive a ready-made story, but participate in its creation
- Work with the local community continue in heritage projects, in which people are invited to explore their places and family stories. In the project "Zaube is the beginning" a conceptual appeal turned into a process of community self-discovery
- In wellness sessions, where people draw each other as landscapes, the outcome is not measured. Yet in these processes, very real change often occurs - self-awareness is restored, empathy is created, people are seen in each other



Zoom-in The Spring



PAVASARIS (*SPRING*)

Young Artists Award at "Purvitis museum"

- "Purvitis museum" is located in the Purvitis' family house in Vecjauži (Zaube, Latvia). This is not symbolic, nor reconstructed location, but a real landscape that shaped Vilhelms Purvitis' personality and approach to composing his paintings
- There are elements of landscape that are still present since the times when Purvitis lived there - apple trees he planted together with his grandfather, a family house, aged oaks and lindens
- As noted by art scholar Eduarda Šmite, Vecjauži could be considered the cradle of landscape painting, as exactly here Vilhelms Purvitis developed as a viewer, personality and future artist until the age of fourteen

PAVASARIS (*SPRING*)

Young Artists Award at "Purvitis museum"

- “Purvitis museum” bases its activities on the belief that the task of a cultural heritage institution today is not only to preserve and protect the past, but to create conditions in which heritage continues to live and have an impact in the present
- The museum consciously works with heritage as a process, not as a closed set of values. It involves risk, dialogue, and continuous questioning of why this heritage is relevant today and how it can shape the future
- PAVASARIS was not intended as another competition or formal award. It was created as a platform for experience, where young artists can encounter the landscape not theoretically, but in presence - in place, process and collective work

PAVASARIS (*SPRING*)

Young Artists Award at "Purvitis museum"

- The goal of the project from the beginning was not to create the “right” works, but to create conditions in which thinking, searching and development can take place
- The first two years of the project were implemented in collaboration with the Janis Rozentals Art School and the Cesis city Art School. Last year, PAVASARIS reached the next stage of development, uniting all Latvian professional art secondary schools for the first time
- The students are selected by the educational institutions themselves, delegating their most talented students

PAVASARIS (*SPRING*)

Young Artists Award at "Purvitis museum"

- After a week long plein-air, all of the works are exhibited in an open-air gallery in the territory of "Purvitis museum" where visitors all season long can vote for their favourite
- Meanwhile a competent jury of professional artists and museum representatives, selects the Grand Prix winner
- The Award is 1000 euro with a notification that it has to be spent on education - visiting European art galleries, museums or masterclasses to broaden one's horizons



The logic of the Bumblebee

- The more we work with cultural heritage, the clearer it becomes that heritage can only survive if it is alive
- Perhaps this means becoming a kind of avant-garde in the field of heritage - accepting that heritage is not only in repositories, archives or research institutes, but also in songs, games, talks, conversations and everyday life
- This also means playing against the rules sometimes - following them, but at the same time creating new ones: in museum practice, in education, in tourist routes, in songs and in participation
- It's like a bumblebee that shouldn't be able to fly, looking from perspective of aerodynamics. But yet it does

THANK YOU

Miguel

**Activating Cultural Heritage Through Contemporary
Experience: Art as an Agent of Change - *The Logic of the
Bumblebee***