

**JURGA BARILAITĖ**

ABRACADABRA

8 January – 7 February 2015

Opening on Thursday, 8 January at 6 pm

Galerija VARTAI invites you to the opening on 8 January 2015 of an exhibition by Jurga Barilaitė, one of the most prominent interdisciplinary artists, in which she will present her newest audiovisual installation *Abracadabra*. In Hebrew this word means 'I create as I speak', and characterizes one of the most important elements of the exhibition (as well as Barilaitė's work as a whole) – improvisation as primeval creation. After all, creative work often begins innocently, like a children's game, and the word comes before the artistic act.

The installation comprises four video stories which interconnect to weave a multilayered narrative. In the video work *Abracadabra Counting Rhyme*, which marks the beginning, the protagonist (the artist herself) insistently recites the words of a children's counting rhyme while pointing her finger alternately at herself and at the viewer. The mesmerizing tone and the artist's glance turns the meaningless words of the rhyme into something similar to a spell. In the other part, *Near – Far*, the image of a hypnotic spiral replaces that of the artist's hand growing distant. In the *Up* episode, the artist's figure makes obscure signals while standing on the roof of the House of Soviets in Kaliningrad. Meanwhile, in the *Down* video, she descends into the catacombs of the Stein Fort accompanied by the soundtrack of a drum march. These stories resemble episodes of a mythological saga which contain numerous symbols and references.

Incomprehensible, seemingly purposeless actions and circumstances, conveyed with the help of elements of optical illusion and animation, create an intriguing, magical atmosphere of the world of fairy tales and enchantment, which also has some elements in common with the aesthetics of video games. However, the artist's actions not only intentionally reflect the theme of the relationship of games, creativity and language, but also allude to such familiar Western myths and imagery as heaven and hell, the Tower of Babel, the Apocalypse, or the omnipotent hand of God the Creator. A more insightful viewer will also discover some references to present-day political issues, the experience of war and its threats. The central question that emerges in the narrative/game – namely, 'Who is the mastermind behind it?' – remains unanswered.

Jurga Barilaitė (b. 1972) is one of the best-known Lithuanian artists of the middle generation. In 1996 she completed her painting studies at the Vilnius Academy of Arts, but from that moment started working on interdisciplinary projects that successfully combine painting, video art, video performance and installation. The artist has had five solo exhibitions and been actively participating in group shows in Lithuania and abroad since 1995.

**Patron** Vilnius City Municipality**Supporters of the gallery:** Lietuvos rytas daily, Ekskomisarų biuras security, Infoterminalas, Namas ir Aš monthly, Echo Gone Wrong

We are grateful to Romas Kinka