

Culinary criticism: “The Amber Era” and Eriks Apaļais’s “Twigs”

Riga exhibition scene recalls sweet nostalgia Indrek Grigor suggests a tea cake and ice cream

“The Amber Era” 19. SEPTEMBER – 26. OCTOBER. 2014 Museum of Decorative Arts and Design: Great Hall If you think that a proper food to be served with an exhibition about amber is melted cheese¹, then you are on a wrong track. True, if this exhibition would have been produced by the Estonian, rather than by the Latvian Design Museum, Tõnis Vint’s emblem would have been in a prominent place. But there is another nostalgic product whose link with amber is even stronger – directly as well as metaphorically – namely, a tea cake. It remains a mystery, whether my grandmother had a strange understanding of sweets, or was it just a pedagogical means to keep grandchildren from overdoing them. One of those things on which that confusion rests is the tea cake. It must be noted that she served it also to her guests. For those who do not remember, the tea cake was, in itself, very simple. Two layers of white bread with buttercream in between. The bread, of course, dried out quickly, and the cream turned sour by the second day. So the best part of the cake was the crumbs strewn all over it. In different versions, it could contain nuts and/or caramel pieces. In some traditional bakeries this nostalgic product is still served.



Eriks Apaļais “Twigs” 10. OCTOBER – 2. NOVEMBER. 2014 The Arsenāls Exhibition Hall: Creative Studio The Riga school of painting, of which Apaļais is one of the noteworthy members, concentrates on monochrome dreamlike memory images. Apaļais’s approach is personified by a notorious snowman. Childhood memories is a very typical theme for the Riga style, but in this case it has developed into an overly abstract or even metaphysical character. Even though eating ice cream on a cold October day may not seem like the most appropriate idea, one cannot help thinking of balls of ice cream, with little sugar sticks strewn over it, in an aluminium bowl on a tall stem. Strangely enough, I never actually liked to go to a cafeteria – most of the times I agreed only to please my mother. Penguin ice cream, with its colourful balls, a choice of tastes and a waffle-based takeaway attitude, were much more appealing and brought some kind of relief.

