



EXPLORING THE COSMOS AND THE SEA: ČIURLIONIS' VISION REIMAGINED IN A MAJOR 2025 EXHIBITION

PRESS RELEASE

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150 Years of M. K. Čiurlionis: A Journey Through Time, Space, and the Sublime

In 2025, the global cultural community celebrates the 150th anniversary of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911), Lithuania's most celebrated artist and composer. Exhibition "**From Amber to the Stars. Together with M. K. Čiurlionis: Now and Then**" presents an exploration of Čiurlionis' work, reinterpreted for a contemporary audience.

This landmark exhibition brings together Čiurlionis' masterpieces with those of his contemporaries and modern artists, engaging with two central motifs in his work: the **sea** and the **cosmos**. These motifs, which Čiurlionis saw as intimately connected, remain profound symbols of human curiosity, exploration, and the search for meaning. The exhibition not only re-examines the context in which Čiurlionis worked but also explores his relevance to contemporary questions at the intersection of art, science, and philosophy.

Čiurlionis: A Visionary of Interconnected Worlds

Čiurlionis' (1875–1911) unique legacy lies in his synthesis of multiple disciplines. Emerging as a professional composer, he expanded his creative practice to include painting, developing a visual language that fused Symbolism, Neo-Romanticism, and early abstraction. His oeuvre — comprising over 400 musical compositions, more than 200 paintings, and an array of sketches, photographs, and graphic works — embodies the spirit of a polymath whose artistic pursuits were deeply intertwined with scientific inquiry, mythology, and theosophy.

Profoundly influenced by figures such as Camille Flammarion, Pierre-Simon Laplace, and Immanuel Kant, Čiurlionis engaged with the cosmological debates of his time, envisioning the universe as both a scientific phenomenon and a source of spiritual wonder. Simultaneously, his connection to Lithuanian folklore and mythology infused his works with a sense of rootedness, bridging the local and the universal, the terrestrial and the celestial.

Themes: The Sea and the Cosmos

"From Amber to the Stars" delves into the dual motifs of the sea and the cosmos, which Čiurlionis explored as metaphors for life's mysteries, humanity's origins, and the Sublime. In his time, the sea was seen as a pathway to uncharted territories, while the cosmos symbolized the divine infinite. Today, these roles have shifted: the sea is now regarded as the cradle of life, while the cosmos represents humanity's quest for survival and exploration of new worlds.

The exhibition situates Čiurlionis' works — such as *Creation of the World* (1905–1906), *Sonata of the Sea* (1908), and sketches for the opera *Jūratė* (1908) — within this thematic framework, presenting them alongside contemporary artworks that explore existential wonder, ecological fragility, and technological advancement. This dialogue not only reaffirms Čiurlionis' enduring relevance but also reveals how his visionary ideas anticipated many of the concerns shaping the 21st century.

Čiurlionis and the Interplay of Art, Science, and Philosophy

Čiurlionis' art reflects a holistic understanding of the universe, embracing interdisciplinary inquiry long before it became a hallmark of contemporary practice. By incorporating elements of astronomy, theology, and mythology into his creative process, he developed a body of work that transcends traditional categories and continues to inspire artists, scientists, and thinkers alike.

The exhibition contextualizes his achievements within the broader intellectual movements of his time, including the scientific revolution that sought to decode the cosmos, the rise of Romanticism, and the burgeoning interest in theosophy. At the same time, it draws attention to Čiurlionis' deeply personal vision, rooted in the Lithuanian cultural tradition, and his unique ability to transform the local into the universal.

Relevance for a Contemporary Audience

In an era defined by environmental uncertainty and the pursuit of interstellar exploration, **"From Amber to the Stars. Together with M. K. Čiurlionis: Now and Then,"** invites us to reconsider humanity's place within the cosmos and our responsibilities to the natural world. By juxtaposing Čiurlionis' timeless meditations on the sea and the stars with contemporary works that address similar themes, the exhibition fosters a space for reflection on how art continues to shape our understanding of the universe.

Čiurlionis' work, which seamlessly weaves together art, music, and science, reminds us of the importance of interdisciplinary thinking in addressing the complexities of modern life. Through this reimagining of his legacy, the exhibition positions him not only as a figure of historical importance but also as a beacon for the creative possibilities of the future.

Curators:

Kathleen Soriano (United Kingdom) | Greta Katkevičienė (Lithuania) | Vaiva Laukaitienė (Lithuania)

Artists:

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (Lithuania) | Clara Arnheim (Germany) | Ira Jean Belmont (USA) | John Brett (United Kingdom) | Vija Celmins (Latvia-USA) | Kodo Chijiwa (Japan) | Cecile Samain De Coene (Belgium) | Andreas Dirks (Germany) | Adomas Galdikas (Lithuania) | Wenzel Hablik (Germany) | Ichiryusai Hiroshige (Japan) | Vytautas Ignas (Lithuania) | Gusen Yamanouchi (Japan) | Leopold von Kalckreuth (Germany) | Petras Kalpokas (Lithuania) | Anselm Kiefer (Germany) | Jirí Kolár (Czechia) | Tania Kovats (United Kingdom) | Šarūnas Leonavičius (Lithuania) | Natalija Luščinaitė-Krinickienė (Lithuania) | Balys Macutkevičius (Lithuania) | Konrad Mägi (Estonia) | George Melies (France) | Matas Menčinskas (Lithuania) | Otto Müller (Germany) | Mariele Neudecker (Germany) | Kristina Ōllek (Estonia) | Katie Paterson (Scotland) | Rūdolfs Pērle (Latvia) | Vaclovas Ratas-Rataiskis (Lithuania) | Kristjan Raud (Estonia) | Albert Reich (Germany) | Miguel Rothschild (Germany / Argentina) | Ferdynand Ruszczyc (Lithuania / Poland) | Semiconductor (Ruth Jarman, Joe Gerhardt) (United Kingdom) | Kajetonas Sklėrius (Lithuania) | Léon Spilliaert (Belgium) | Kazimieras Stabrauskas (Lithuania / Poland) | August Strindberg (Sweden) | Kazys Šimonis (Lithuania) | Emilija Škarnulytė (Lithuania) | Keith Tyson (United Kingdom) | Leonas Urbonas (Lithuania / Australia) | Monika Žaltauskaitė Grašienė-Žaltė (Lithuania) | Antanas Žmuidzinavičius (Lithuania) | Leon Wyczółkowski (Poland)

Institutions:

Tate | Musée d'Orsay | Centre Pompidou | Eesti Kunstimuuseum KUMU | Latvijas Nacionālais mākslas muzejs | Wenzel Hablik Museum | National Museum in Kraków | Jagiellonian University Museum | M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art | Lithuanian National Museum of Art | Lithuanian Sea Museum | Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology | Museum of Vilnius University | Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania | Atelier Anselm Kiefer | Katie Paterson Studio | Hauser & Wirth | Thomas Rehbein Gallery | Bendana-Pinel Art Contemporain | Kuckei + Kuckei | Lithuanian Art Centre TARTLE | Dr. Jaunius Gumbis Lithuanian Art Collection

Under the patronage of

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
GITANAS NAUSĖDA

Exhibition Details

Dates: 21 03 2025 – 12 10 2025

Location: M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art, V. Putvinskio g. 55, Kaunas, Lithuania

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150^e anniversaire de la
naissance de M. K. Čiurlionis
(2025), célébré en
association avec l'UNESCO

M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art

Established in 1921, the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art is one of Lithuania's most significant cultural institutions, dedicated to preserving and promoting the nation's artistic heritage. Located in Kaunas, the museum houses an extensive collection spanning Lithuanian and international art history, from antiquity to contemporary practice. At its heart lies the world's most comprehensive collection of works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, encompassing his paintings, musical compositions, graphic works, and personal archives. Beyond Čiurlionis, the museum is a dynamic space for artistic dialogue, fostering connections between Lithuania's cultural past and the global art scene through exhibitions, research, and educational programs. By safeguarding and interpreting both national and international cultural legacies, the museum serves as a vital hub for scholarly research, artistic exploration, and public engagement, reaffirming its role as a leading institution in the Baltic region and beyond.