

NEW WORKS
OF LATVIAN LITERATURE
PUBLISHED IN **2020**

We have compiled a list of ten books of Latvian literature that brought us special joy last year. Prose, short stories, poetry, children's literature – there is something for everyone in all these genres!





Short Stories

Jana Egle

—
Dzimšanas diena
Birthday

—
published by
Latvijas Mediji

The book is composed of eight stories about longing, loss, yearning, loneliness, fear of death, and, of course, love. The main protagonists in all of the stories are women. Women who live right next to us. The six-year-old girl Dace is facing womanhood and society's perception of beauty. Aleksandra spends her days in a wheelchair. Dita, a mother of many children, weary of carrying the weight of everyday life, is expecting her sixth child. A schizophrenic woman and a pensioner are finding it harder and harder to draw a line between memory and reality. And other women who all mostly yearn for one and the same thing – not to be deprived of love. This is Egle's third book of stories. Her debut collection *Gaismā* (*Into the Light*, 2016) earned her the Annual Latvian Literature Award as Best Work of Prose.



Poetry

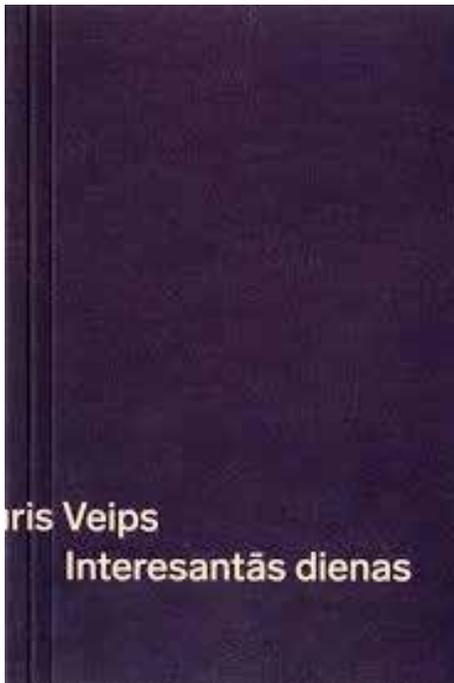
Katrīna Rudzīte

—
Ērti pārnēsājami spārni
Comfy Portable Wings

—
published by
Neputns

The author herself claims: "With the poems included in this collection I have tried to combine an intuitive approach to language with conscious efforts to explore subjects that I find important and at the same time difficult to capture. For example, various states of mind and one's relationship to one's own body, as well as to language and writing."

"Rudzīte writes not to affirm the world and the experience it offers, but rather to adapt it to and, at times, reconcile it with the peculiarities of her own consciousness inextricably linked with both physical and mental attributes of perception," literary critic Raimonds Ķirķis elaborates. Her debut collection *Saulesizplūdums* (*Sunflare*) received the Annual Latvian Literature Award 2015 in the Best Debut category.



Poetry

Lauris Veips

—
Interesantās dienas
The Interesting Days

—
published by
Orbita

Veips' poetry is characterized by a great sense of humour, a unique selection of characters and clarity of phrasing. Veips allows colloquial language into his poetry as a means to oppose pretentious intellectualism. On the level of poetics, Veips' poetry is refined, whereas his descriptions of his lived experience are utterly sincere and can even be slightly awkward. This is precisely why his poems offer an experience both beautiful and touching. The reader will encounter a young and confused person who is trying to make sense of his past (namely childhood events and failed relationships), as well as his current state of heavy-heartedness. This is Lauris Veips' first collection of poems.



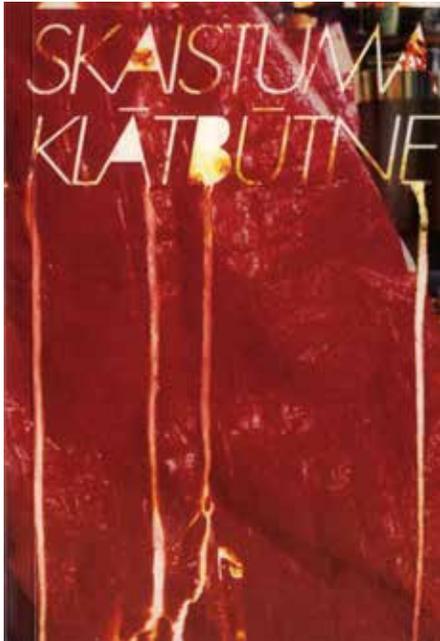
Short Stories

Jānis Joņevs

—
Tīgeris
Tiger

—
published by
Dienas Grāmata

The collection consists of fourteen stories with a unifying motif – the protagonists all have a dream, a strong wish that seems unfulfillable yet somehow comes true. Then again, it always comes true in a way that is surprising to the hero, which begs the question: what is it that we really want and do we have a say in it? The uncontrollable dreams that end up being more powerful than us are the tiger of the title of the book. The tiger is what we yearn to be while being merely domesticated cats, as the book cover suggests. The stories are set in different spaces – be it the offices and apartments of Riga, the jungles of Brazil, the cemeteries of Bordeaux, a German establishment building, or the middle of an ocean – no place is free of dreams. The heroes of the stories shop, save the world, love, and investigate crimes, or do nothing at all as the world around them, right next to them, reveals itself to be a little different than perceived at first and insists to be reevaluated. This is Jānis Joņevs' third book. His debut *Jelgava 94 (Doom 94)* has been awarded the 2014 European Union Prize for Literature and other prestigious awards.



Poetry

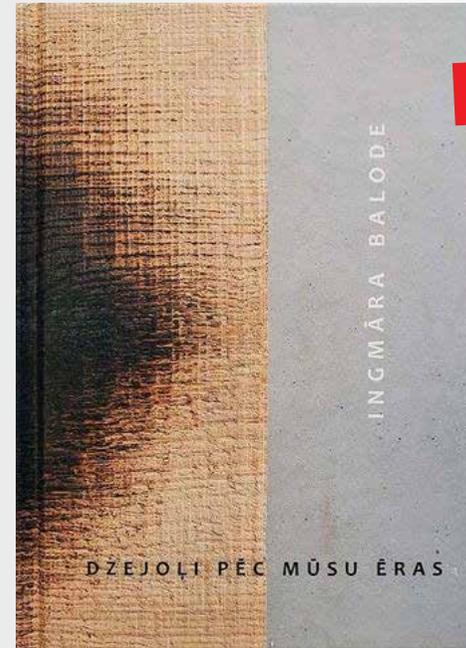
Krišjānis Zeļģis

—
Skaistuma klātbūtne
The Presence of Beauty

—
published by
Neputns

The author himself states: "Ponderings about individual's behaviour in society, the written and unwritten laws, the role of memories in our personal development, and our attempts to face the often beautiful meaninglessness of life every day is what shapes *The Presence of Beauty*."

Krišjānis Zeļģis poetry has lately become even more precise and ample. His observations of contemporaries and his travels have contributed to poems that convey contradicting emotions and curious situations veiled in concise form and external calmness with a potential to unfold unpredictably," elaborates the editor of the collection Kārlis Vērdiņš. *The Presence of Beauty* is Krišjānis Zeļģis' third collection of poems.



Poetry

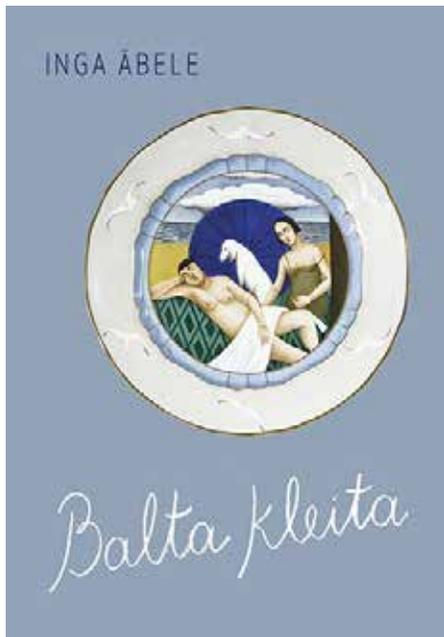
Ingmāra Balode

—
Dzejoļi pēc mūsu ēras
Poems After Common Era

—
published by
Neputns

The author herself says: "Ages or eras can fit into just a few years. Now, in the touchless era, I would like the poems in this collection to convey not only ethereality and elusiveness often ascribed to the genre but also the materiality, presence and tactility encapsulated by words. Not always gentle, but, hopefully, at all times alive and perceptible."

"Similarly to what she achieved in her previous books, Balode masterfully combines the observations and experiences of an urban woman, often so relatable, with a wide range of references which never become self-serving. Reading her latest poems, I feel like her poetry has become even more pure and precise as if continuing on its path to truth," explains the editor of the collection, poet and literary critic Artis Ostups. This is Balode's third collection. Her first collection earned her the Annual Literature Award for Best Debut, while her second book received the award in the Best Book of Poetry' category.



Short Stories

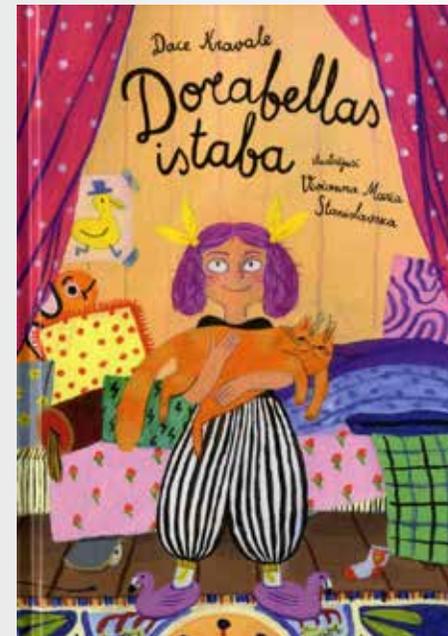
Inga Ābele

—
Balta kleita
White Dress

—
published by
Dienas Grāmata

The book consists of nine stories presented first by the author herself during the Prose Readings festival she calls the Writers' Christmas. Each story is named after a woman, and the author tells these stories in the first and third-person narratives, as well as from the perspective of male characters. One of them leaves her husband, another protagonist fights to shelter her little daughters from the cruelty of the world. Yet another heroine has her flight cancelled making her miss her mother's funeral. Ābele's greatest strength in all her works is her poetic language overflowing with metaphors, pulling you deeper and deeper in, never letting you reach the riverbed.

"Death may be awaiting around the corner, however, there can be no life without the sunrise. In their dreams, the women see themselves dressed in white. It might be their wedding or their burial dress, and the apocalypse can come at any moment, anywhere, in any mind," literary critic Guntis Berelis writes about the collection. This is Ābele's ninth book of prose. Her novels *Duna (Thunder)* and *Klūgu mūks (Wicker Monk)* both earned her the Annual Latvian Literature Award in the Best Work of Prose category.



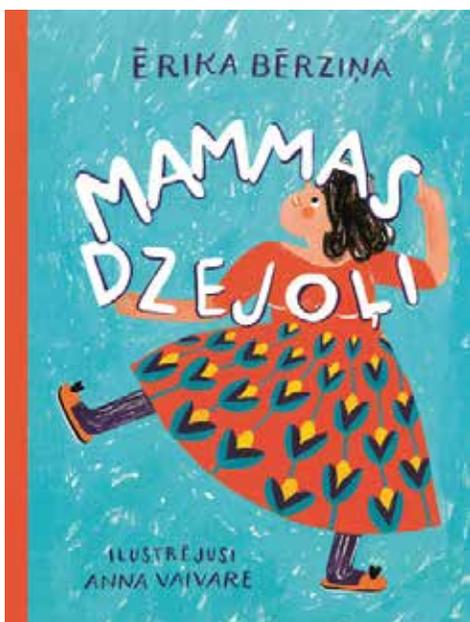
Children's Literature

Dace Kravale

—
Dorabellas istaba
Dorabella's Room

—
published by
Liels un mazs

Dorabella is a girl who has inherited not only her mom Dorianna's and aunt Izabella's "compound" name, but also their character traits, their imagination and passion for art and ancient and curious things – things with their own past and stories, and their own characters. Every creature dwelling in Dorabella's room can speak and tell the girl about their origins and adventures. On the Christmas day, godmother art curator Izabella arrives and sees the drawings and herbaria the girl has been collecting all year. Curated by Izabella, girl's own room turns into a vibrant and joyous art exhibition – the best Christmas surprise for Dorabella and all her friends. This book encourages not to neglect old things and old times which too often are tossed away without much attention and replaced with new ones. The story introduces children to the notion of restoration, invites to pay attention to the historic and human value of old objects, and the relationships they embody. It also focuses on creative imagination and play in family life, creative endeavours of children, as well as creative professions. The book was illustrated by Vivianna Maria Stanislavska. *Dorabella's Room* is Dace Kravale's debut in children's literature.



Children's Literature

Ērika Bērziņa

—

Mammas dzejoļi
Mom's Poems

—

published by
Liels un mazs

The book is a collection of poetic observations about relationships in a big family through the eyes of children and parents, creating a sense of familial unity. In a way it is a family diary documenting children being born, growing up, forming relationships, and having their worlds realized, discovered and expanded. The imaginativeness of the poems and the author's ability to find counterpoints in the views of different age groups in every casual situation, known to every family with little children, is what makes the reader feel the family as their own. The book was illustrated by Anna Vaivare. This is Bērziņa's third book of poems and her debut in children's literature.



Novel

Andris Kalnozols

—

Kalendārs mani sauc
Calendar Calls Me

—

published by
Orbita

The main character of the novel is a young man of a mental state that is hard to define. At times his mind appears to be like a child's mind, other times – he is sharper than most adults. The structure of the story is based on a series of letters the protagonist writes to the local small-town priest reflecting on the events in his life, thus learning more about himself and the world around him. Failure in love has led him to an existential necessity to learn all the name days in the calendar by heart in order to "get closer" to his beloved girl – amidst all other names, there is her name.

The peculiarity of Oskar's or Calendar's memory and his supernatural ability to focus on specific tasks not only reveals the deeply unusual psychological portrait of the hero but also makes for moving, exciting and amusing turns of events. However, what is even more impactful than everything aforementioned is the emotionally unbridled revelations about human beings and their interpersonal relations arrived at by the hero's seemingly distorted consciousness with naive sincerity. Kalnozols is a playwright and theatre director, and this novel is his literary debut.