

# UK artist duo The Caravan Gallery invited to create a museum about Savanoriai Street in Kaunas



Kaunas Photo festival hosts the unique British artist duo, "The Caravan Gallery", Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale are in Kaunas for a three week "Flaneur: new urban narratives" artists' residency programme. In addition to exploring Kaunas with their cameras the artists are creating a new phenomenon in the cultural life of the city – a temporary museum dedicated to Savanoriai street; informal experimental, and spontaneous, this evolving exhibition in an old sewing factory gives local people an opportunity to respond to their surroundings in a creative way.

The Caravan Gallery say: "We set the scene by exhibiting some of our own photographic observations of Savanoriai Street. The museum is inspired by our Pride of Place Projects which involve creating accessible thought-provoking exhibitions exploring people's connection to places. We describe them as reverse visitor information centres because it is the visitors who provide the information. Our aim is to reveal the character of Savanoriai Street, past, present and future, which is why we are asking local residents and visitors to the city to contribute to the exhibition. Exhibits so far include photos, paintings, drawings, sculptures, old maps and memorabilia which tell a story about Savanoriai Street. The exhibition grows every day as visitors bring along items and add observations, memories and facts to a large interactive map of Savanoriai street. We ask: "What does Savanoriai street mean to you? What attractions, hidden treasures or landmarks would you show visitors? What would make a great souvenir of Savanoriai street?" ''.

Kaunas Photo festival expects that Savanoriai museum will become a dynamic cultural organism for three weeks. Local dancers, singers, artists, actors and cultural organisations, especially those working in and around Savanoriai street, have been invited to share their talents and participate in the creation of this unique museum.

Jan Williams and Chris Teasdale, creators of the Savanoriai Museum, are inspired by the ordinary and extraordinary details of everyday life and use photography to document the 'reality and surreality of the way we live today'. Since setting up The Caravan Gallery in 2000 to take art to people and places other galleries might not easily reach, they have travelled thousands of miles and exhibited in hundreds of locations nationally and internationally. Sometimes they exhibit in their unique mobile gallery in a caravan, other times in pop-up spaces and 'normal' galleries. Favourite lines of inquiry include local distinctiveness and regional identity;

pyschogeography and people's connection to place; clichés and cultural trends; leisure, landscape and lifestyle; the language of marketing – dream versus reality; absurd anomalies and curious juxtapositions typical of places in transition; chance encounters and serendipitous discoveries; incidental art and everyday creativity; maverick enterprise and small scale human interventions. Their photos tell stories and ask questions. Frequently tragicomic, occasionally irreverent, they are always real, drawing attention to what is directly before our eyes but often unseen.

With the aim of developing international collaboration and interdisciplinary practice, Kaunas Photo festival has invited Daiva Citvarienė, lecturer at Vytautas Magnus university and leader of "VDU 101" gallery, to lend her support to the Savonoriai museum project. It is hoped that some of the material generated will make a useful contribution to her existing "www.atmintiesvietos.lt" archive.

Kaunas Photo Festival's interest in Savanorių street began in 2009, when Kaunas born Lithuanian-American photographer Darius Kuzmickas created a photographic series called "Camera Obscura. Savanoriai", merging views of interiors with street-views and panoramas of Kaunas city seen from the buildings of one of the longest streets in Kaunas. The success of the project led to a continued interest in Savanoriai street and its inclusion in the Kaunas Photo Festival 2016 programme.

Kaunas Photo Festival is one of ten partner organisations in nine countries involved in "Flaneur: new urban narratives". The first artist in residence was Ukrainian photographer Sergiy Lebedynskyy in November 2015 followed by Finnish photographer Henrik Duncker and Mariusz Forekci from Poland in 2016.

The Caravan Gallery arrived at the beginning of May to create their own iconography of the city and initiate new ways of connecting with the community. A selection of photos produced

during their residency will be exhibited in Rotušė square during the autumn programme of Kaunas Photo Festival 2016.

Kaunas Photo Festival, established in 2004, is the only annual festival of art photography in the Baltic countries and is a member of the Festival of Light organisation. It is mainly funded by the Lithuanian Council for Culture, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Kaunas Municipality. "Flaneur. new urban narratives" project, co-funded by the "Creative Europe" programme.