

# LATVIAN EXCHANGE PROJECT "CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS 2010"



The Latvian Exchange Project "Cultural Perceptions 2010" involves 20 students from the Latvia Culture College and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire who collaborated to design international photography exhibits in Latvia and in the U.S.

## OBJECTIVE

To share and interpret visual culture between American and Latvian college students that stretches scholarly and professional boundaries of photographic vision, personal understanding, and comfort levels within a faculty and student collaborative environment through photography and music. Guide three Latvian exchange students at UWEC and local students while they explore Latvian and American culture via guest lectures, music, individual research, and online correspondence in an attempt to imagine another culture, to broaden their perspectives to incorporate a worldview of visual art and culture, and to allow for future international creative endeavors.

## METHODS

Baltic Student organization members: Eva Ikstena, Dace Jaundalere, and Liene Indrane (three students from Latvia) presented lectures and visual materials, such as movies, like "Singing Revolution", video clips, and books on the history and people of Latvia. They also selected a song "Saule. Pērkonš. Daugava." by Martins Brauns, as they felt it accurately represents Latvian culture and history. The UW-Eau Claire advanced photography students, guided by Jyl Kelley, interpreted the music through a series of photographs. Likewise, the Latvian Culture College instructor Gunta Andersone directed her art students in their interpretation of an innovative mix of American music provided by UW-Eau Claire students. The technique of taking photographs was chosen by each student individually. Students had a culture exchange evening with Latvian and American traditional food. The exchange of different parts of the culture, like food, personal stories by Latvians, and music helped American students to understand and feel the nuances of the Latvian culture.

## RESULTS

This project tied together elements of scholarly research and faculty-student collaboration in a global setting by creating a *cultural bridge* across the ocean, a bridge that connects two different cultures. Students from both countries learned about teamwork as it took group work to make the exhibits a reality. In culmination of the project, a series of photographs (all together around 50 photographs (??) and one video) was displayed at the Latvian Culture College and the Museum of Foreign Art in Riga, Latvia, Haas Fine Arts Center (April 15<sup>th</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup>), and Infinita Cafe in May 2010. The exhibit will travel throughout Latvia and the United States. Throughout the project participants were shared their thoughts and pictures in their blog <http://uwec-lkk.blogspot.com/>.



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