The exhibition focused not only on how each artist can be viewed in terms of our current era, but on how the works presented relate to a larger continuum of time, space, and memory—one in which a shared consciousness connects diverse individuals across borders, regardless of nationality. Restart was not interested in photography as a vehicle for "universal truths" through straightforward documentation or mid-twentieth-century objectivity; rather, it attempted to present photography as a medium in which the unreal, dreamlike, and fantastical thrive and can be seen through one’s singular frame of reference. Dzalbe quotes from Susan Sontag’s 1977 essay "The Image World": "Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality. . . . Or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote. . . . Proust somewhat misconstrues what photographs are: not so much an instrument of memory as an invention of it or a replacement." Select photographers have instead opted to incorporate their memories and dreams to create pathways toward a more remarkable future. The exhibition was unconventional: visitors crossed paths with multiple examples that veered far from the norm of photographic expression, and there were multiple works that spoke to the phenomenon of post-internet art as well as sculptural and literary experimentation.

Restart occurred in one of Riga’s most popular spaces: Rīgas Mākslas Telpa (Riga Art Space). The exhibition was not designed to display creations in a specified sequence; instead, its layout allowed visitors to move freely through the show in any direction, contributing to an amorphous, liberated atmosphere. All works maintained their own creative trajectory, and visitors were left to decide on their own which form of expression suited them and why. Brūvere forfeited the explanatory text that often accompanies works in a group show such as this one, believing that the imposition of superfluous explanations limits the critical space necessary for viewers to solidify independent conclusions.

Photography is not only a tool for documentation but also a craft for exploring the imagination. Some works spearhead a movement toward expanding the medium so that future artists can follow through with their own ideas less influenced by the weight of the past. Such is the case with Argentinian–born Spanish artist Amalia Ulman’s Excellences & Perfections (2014), a nearly five-month scripted performance on Instagram and Facebook comprised of 175 photographs, several of which were on view at Riga Art Space. In the performance, the artist pretended to move from a small town to a city, chase dreams of fame and fortune, inevitably go off track, run out of money, secure a sugar daddy, start doing drugs, get plastic surgery, become depressed, have a breakdown, and return to her parents’ house in a cycle of exploitation and despair. The work uses the language of the internet to highlight the construction and performance of femininity and our perceptions of authenticity, both online and in "real life.”

Another potent work was Meggy Rustomova’s video Invitation to the Voyage (2014), which emphasizes the blurry space between fact and fiction by inserting oversized, yellow Post-it notes into video sequences to blot out or conceal parts of the frame such as a face or important visual component. This act of erasure pushes viewers to confront their assumptions about traditional narrative and shifts the focus to the unsaid—that which is obstructed from view or consideration. The camera moves from images of the artist’s childhood, to her academic life, to romantic pursuits; observers should pay attention to what they might be projecting onto Rustomova’s images, for she aspires to relieve us of forced or standardized perception.

Polish artists Agnieszka Polska and Witek Orski presented the video Guns (2014), based on a true story related to Warsaw’s 1968 student protests in which the Polish government attempted to drill holes into historical guns archived in the city’s Military Museum out of fear that students would obtain the guns and use them as weapons. The film is entrancing: the guns with holes slowly spin alone or with their counterparts on a split screen through intense, saturated filters. The drilled holes are magnified—their black holes can be viewed at close range. Visitors could make connections between our minuscule existence and a world that easily spins out of control.

Shanghai-based artist and curator Zane Mellsupe takes photography in a different direction by sharing her way of “thinking in images,” which explores the overlap between photography, art, and mixed media with a focus on image, object, and body. Her works are not confined to one medium; the viewer is delighted by the relationships exhibited. In a process she calls "graphies," the artist experiments with...
encoding methods in which she inscribes conceptual meaning onto an image’s name, causing the name either to survive or cease to exist depending on whether or not anyone else adopts the name in question. Other methods the artist uses in her work are “metamorphography,” “mat- tegrity and evolution. The photographic medium.

Another notable contribution to Restart was Danila Tkachenko’s Restricted Areas (2013–15), a series concerning technological progress and evolution. The photographs focus on deserted or abandoned locations that were once significant but are now forgotten utopias. Photographer Uldis Briedis exhibited another series, Riga–Vladivostok (1975), which was taken during a six-month, one-way cycling tour from Riga to Vladivostok to search for Latvian descendants in the Russian Empire who migrated there only to discover broken promises and brutal treatment. Swedish artist Katinka Goldberg displayed the photographic collage Bristningar (Rup-