



Inta Ruka - Press Folder

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BIOGRAPHY

- 1958 born in Riga, Latvia
- 1973-76 business school of Riga, certificate as a seamstress
- 1979-82 education and collaboration at the "V.E.E." studio in Riga
in the class of Gunārs Birkmanis
- 1983 starts to work on the photographic series "My Country People"
- 1983-84 member of the photographer-group "Riga"
- 1984-88 member of the photo-studio "Ogre", Ogre (LV)
- since 1985 member of the photographer-group "A", Riga
- 1986-88 works as a freelance photographer
- since 1990 member of the Designer Association of Latvia
- 1998 grant of the "Hasselblad Foundation"
- 1999 "Spídola-Award" of the Latvian Culture Foundation
- 2000 starts to work on the photographic series "People I happened to meet"
- 2002 scholarship at the Villa Waldberta, Feldafing/Starnberger See (D)
- 2003 "Price of the Year" of the Artist's Union of Latvia for her exhibition
with Egons Spuris at the State Art Museum in Riga
- 2004 starts to work on the photographic series "Amalias Street 5"
- 2006 starts to work on the photographic series „Neighbours“
- 2007 two-month artist-in-residence-scholarship of the IASPIS
(International Artists Studio Programm in Sweden) in Stockholm

Inta Ruka lives and works in Riga.



SOLO-EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2009 "Amalias Street 5a", Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga
2008 "Amalias Street 5", Moderna Museet, Stockholm
"Amalias Street 5", heden, The Hague (NL)
"Amalias Street 5", Flo Peters Gallery, Hamburg
2007 "Meine Leute vom Land", Galerie Camera Obscura, Dortmund, as guest at
Galerie Utermann, Dortmund
"Portraits", Baukunst Galerie, Cologne
2006 "People I Happened to Meet", Photography Center Istanbul
2005 "Portraits", Baukunst Galerie, Cologne
2003 "Portraits", PAK, Palais für aktuelle Kunst, Kunstverein Glückstadt (D)
"Portraits", Baukunst Galerie, Cologne
Königliche Bibliothek, Stockholm
2002 "Inta Ruka – fotografiju paroda", Prospekto Photo Gallery, Vilnius (LIT)
2001 "Latvia. Changing and Unchanging Reality", Giedre Bartelt Galerie, Berlin
"People I happened to meet", Pomerania Dukes castle South gallery,
Szczecin (PL)
2000 "My Country People", Museum of Applied Arts, Riga
1997 "Inta Ruka", Photostudio 1, Boston
1995 "My Country People", Bratislava (SLO)
"Inta Ruka", Amiens (F)
1994 "My Country People", Centre Photographique de Normandie, Rouen (F)
"My Country People", Museum of Regional Studies and Art, Madona (LV)
1992 "My Country People", im Rahmen von "Pārmijas - Aktuelle Kunst aus Riga"
1991 "My Country People", Karlshamn (S)
1986 "Inta Ruka", Kiek in de Koek, Tallinn (EST)

GROUP-EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

- 2008-09 "From M to ZZZ, Contemporary Art from Latvia", Langhans Gallery, Prague
2008 "On the Human Being. International Photography 1950-2000" (with
Nobuyoshi Araki, Diane Arbus, Rineke Dijkstra, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Boris
Mikhailov, László Moholy-Nagy, Bernhard Prinz, August Sander, Cindy
Sherman, Thomas Struth et al.), Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo,
Sevilla, in cooperation with the Folkwang Museum, Essen, and the Picasso
Museum, Málaga, curated by Ute Eskildsen
„The Greenrom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art
(Part I)“, CCS Bard Hessel Museum / Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson,
New York
"Art from the Future Contemporary Art Museum, Riga", European
Commission, Berlaymont Building, Brussels
"Private. Exhibition of contemporary Photography from Latvia", in the
framework of the "Moscow Photobiennale 2008", Contemporary Art Center



- Winzavod, Moscow
- 2007 "Contemporary Art from Latvia", European Central Bank, Frankfurt a. M.
- 2006 "In the Face of History: European Photographers in the 20th Century" (among others with Wolfgang Tillmanns, Boris Mikhailov et al.), Barbican Art Gallery, London
- 2005 "Die Sammlung I: Das Porträt 1970-2000", Fotomuseum im Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich
"Dogs", Flo Peters Gallery, Hamburg
"Generations: Changing Photography", The Historical Museum of Alytus (LIT)
- 2004 "Passage d'Europe", Musée d'Art Moderne Saint-Etienne (F)
- 2003-04 "Modern Latvian Art and Photograph", Estonian National Museum, Tartu (EST)
- 2003 "Inta Ruka and Egons Spuris", Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga
"Dokument 03", Bildens Hus, Fotomuseet, Sundsvall (S)
- 2002 "Latvian artists exhibition", M. Zilinska Art Gallery, Kaunas (LV)
"Pilseta: Stasti par Rīgu / City. Stories about Riga", urban space of Riga
- 2001 "Metropolis. Riga", stock market, Riga
- 2000 "Parallels", Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki
"Utopia", Rogaland Kunstmuseum, Stavanger (N)
"Latvia. Changing and Unchanging Reality" (together with Andrejs Grants), Gallery of the Latvian Artists' Union, Riga
Inta Ruka (together with Andrejs Grants), Strasbourg (F)
- 1999 "Stories. Storytellers", together with Anita Zabilevska and Ojars Petersons, contribution of the republic Latvia, 48th Venice Biennale, Chiesa San Giovanni Novo, Venice
"Art and Spirituality", Museum of Foreign Art, Riga
"Tre sätt att se" (together with Marie Hoeg and Britt Marie Trensmar), Nordiska Museet, Stockholm
"Travel from Liepāja to Balvi" (together with Andrejs Grants), Gallery of the Latvian Artists' Union, Riga
- 1998 "Under/Exposed", Stockholm Underground, Stockholm
"Five Photographers from Latvia", Palazzo Mediceo di Seravezza, Lucca (I)
- 1997 "The Living Space", Galerie Station 3", Vienna
"Farewell to the Empire, Social Photography from Latvia", Gallery XXL, Sofia (BUL)
- 1996 "Inta Ruka, Valts Kleins, Vilhelms Mihailovskis", Polish Culture Center, Stockholm
- 1995 "Inta Ruka, Gints Bērziņš, Andrejs Grants, Egons Spuris", Photo Fair, Gothenburg
- 1994 "Inta Ruka and Odile Debloos", Photo Projekt „Latvia – France", Lettisches Museum für Photographie, Riga
- 1993-94 "The Memory of Images. Baltic Photo Art Today", Städtische Galerie im Sophienhof, Kiel (D); Kunsthalle Rostock; Kunsthalle „Latvija“, Riga; Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius (LIT); Galerie im Martin Gropius-Bau,



- Berlin; Baltic Art Center, Gdansk (POL); Museum of Photography, Tallinn (EST); Kunsthalle Nikolaj, Kopenhagen
“Borderlands. Photography of the Baltic States”, Street Level Gallery, Glasgow (GB)
“Images de Lettonie”, Galerie Claire M. Laurin, Aix-en-Provence
- 1993 “Inta Ruka and Andrejs Grants”, Museum of Photography „Raevangla“, Tallinn (EST)
- 1992 “A Woman takes Photos of a Woman”, Parlament der Republik Lettland, Riga
“Baltisk Fotografi”, Museet for Fotokunst, Odense (DK)
- 1991 “Comrades & Cameras: Photographs from Latvia and Other Soviet Republics”, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara
“Evidence”, Gallery M6, Riga
- 1991-93 “Latvian Photographers in the Age of Glasnost”, exhibition tour in Canada in until 1993: Toronto Photographers Workshop, Toronto; Art Gallery of St. Vincent University, Halifax; The Photographers Gallery, Saskatoon; White Water Gallery, North Bay; Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay; Floating Gallery, Winnipeg (CAN)
- 1990 “The Song of Fate”, Latvian War Museum, Riga
“Annee de l' Est”, Musee de l'Elysee, Lausanne (CH)
Galerie van der Berlage, Amsterdam (NL)
- 1989 “Inta Ruka, Andrejs Grants and Egons Spuris”, Gallerie Kashirka, Moskau
“One Day in the Life of Ogre”, photo-action with exhibition, Museum of History and Art, Ogre (LV)
“Latvian Photography”, St. Peter’s Church, Riga
“Foto-Annäherung an die Sowjetunion: Ein fotografischer Dialog/Photographical Acquaints with the USSR: A Photographical Dialogue”, Fachhochschule Bielefeld (D)
“Portrait”, Museum of Regional Studies of Limbaži, Dunte (LV);
Latvian University of Medical Science, Riga
- 1988-89 “Inta Ruka and Andrejs Grants”, Museum of Photography, Helsinki; Turku, Pori (FIN)



WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (SELECTION)

Collection de la Banque privée Edmond Rothschild, Geneva
European Central Bank, Frankfurt a.M.
Fotografische Sammlung, Museum Folkwang, Essen (D)
Fotomuseum im Stadtmuseum München, Munich
Heden, The Hague (NL)
Kumu Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn (EST)
Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga
Latvian Museum of Photography, Riga
Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne (CH)
Museet for Fotokunst, Odense (DK)
Royal Library, Stockholm
Rogland Kunstmuseum, Stavanger (N)
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California

BIBLIOGRAPHY (SELECTION)

CATALOGUES / ARTICLES

- 2008 *On the Human Being. International Photography 1950-2000, Cat.:*
Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla 2008.
Tellgren, Anna, "Inta Ruka's Latvian Portraits", in: *Inta Ruka. Amalias Street 5a*, Cat.: Heden, Den Haag 2008, p. 9-11.
Tifentale, Alise, "Exhibition of Contemporary Photography from Latvia in Moscow", in: *Foto Kvartals*, Nr. 1(9), Riga 2008, p. 94-96, images p. 50-51.
Buzinska, Irena: "Inta Ruka, Amalias Street 5", in: *Cat.: Private. Exhibition of contemporary photography from Latvia*, Contemporary Art Center Winzavod in Moscow, Riga 2008, p. 185-187, images p. 114-127.
- 2007 **Kolár**, Viktor: "Inta Ruka", in: *Revolver Revue*, 69/2007, p. 47-55.
Contemporary Art from Latvia. Spotlight: The Collection of the Latvian Contemporary Art Museum, Cat.: European Central Bank, Frankfurt a.M. 2007.
Bernhard, Urs: "Inta Ruka. Der erzählerische Blick", in: *Quadrat, a photography e-magazine by Franke & Heidecke*, 1/2007, p. 12-18.
Fricke, Christiane: "Grosse Kohle oder doch nur Liebhaberei? Wertsteigerung bei Fotos", in: *Photographie*, No. 6, 2007, p. 26-29.
- 2006 *In the Face of History. European Photographers in the 20th Century*, Cat.: Barbican Art Gallery, London, ed. by Kate **Bush** and Mark **Sladen**, London 2006.

- 2003 *Inta Ruka, Egons Spuris. Fotografijas / Photographies*, Cat.: Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga 2003.
Harder, Matthias: "Blicke in die lettische Seele", in: *Inta Ruka. Portraits*, folder of the exhibition at the Baukunst Galerie Cologne and the PAK, Palais für aktuelle Kunst, Kunstverein Glückstadt, Cologne 2003.
Kaufhold, Enno "Weltbilder vom Lande. Inta Ruka und ihre Lettland-Porträts", in: *Photonews*, Nr. 3, March 2003, 15th volume, p. 6-7.
- 2001 **Kaufhold**, Enno: "Mit geneigtem Blick", in: *FAZ*, No. 92, 20 April 2001, Berliner Seiten, p. 6.
- 1999 *Inta Ruka. Mani lauku ļaudis / Inta Ruka. My Country People / Inta Ruka. La mia gente di campagna*, Cat. published in conjunction with the participation of the 48th Venice Biennale, ed. by Soros Center for Contemporary Arts et al., Riga 1999.
Bankovskis, Pēteris: "People at the margin", in: *Inta Ruka. Mani lauku ļaudis/Inta Ruka. My Country People/Inta Ruka. La mia gente di campagna*, Riga 1999, p. 8-11.
Demakova, Helēna: „Let's have a picture taken. When you're dead I'll have something to look at", in: *Inta Ruka, Mani lauku ļaudis/Inta Ruka, My Country People/Inta Ruka, La mia gente di campagna*, Riga 1999, p. 18-25.
Demakova, Helēna: "Stories, Storytellers", Republic of Latvia: Ojars Petersons, *Inta Ruka*, Anita Zabilevska, in: Cat.: 48th International Exhibition of Contemporary Art, Venice Biennale 1999, p. 140-145.
"Esmu labaka fotografe starp apkopejam", interview with **Inta Ruka**, in: *Santa*, 1999/No. 5, p. 62-66.
- 1998 "There is nothing more interesting than a person", interview of L. **Slava** with **Inta Ruka**, in: *Studija, quarterly magazine of fine arts*, Riga, 1998, No. 3, p. 24-31.
- 1995 **Raphael**, Michel, in: "Images de Lettonie", Cat.: Galerie Claire M. Laurin, La Fontaine Obscure, Aix-en-Provence 1995.
- 1993 **Ruka**, Inta: "My people from the countryside", in: *The Memory of Images. Baltic Photo Art Today*, Cat.: Städtische Galerie im Sophienhof, Kiel 1993.
Linnap, Peter: "Anthropologist Inta Ruka", in: *Borderlands, Photography of the Baltic States*, Ausst.-Kat.: Street Level Gallery, Glasgow 1993.
- 1992 **Straka**, Barbara: "Blick zurück nach vorn. Ein baltisches Memorial (Über die Entwicklung der baltischen Kunstphotographie)", in: *Merian*, September p. 88-95.
- 1991 **Demakova**, Helena: "Grupa A", in: *Maksla. Almanac of Fine Arts* (Riga/Latvia), 1991 / No. 4, p. 56-63.



Changing Reality: Recent Soviet Photography, Starwood Publishing in association with The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Virginia / USA 1991.
Comrades & Cameras: Photographs from Latvia and Other Soviet Republics, Cat.: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara / USA 1991.
Ingelevics, V.: *Latvian Photographers in the Age of Glasnost*, Cat.: Toronto Photographers Workshop, Toronto 1991.

- 1990 **Mikhailowsky, W.:** "Grupa A", in: *Avots. Monthly Magazine*, Riga 1990, No. 10, p. 32-43.
 Querrin, M.: "Ohne Titel", in: *Le Monde* (Paris), 1990, No. 14.
- 1989 *Annäherung an die Sowjetunion: Ein fotografischer Dialog / Photographical Acquaints with the USSR: A Photographical Dialogue*, Cat.: Fachhochschule Hannover, Hannover 1989.
- 1986 **Neiburga, A.:** "Inta Ruka – cela sakuma", in: *Literatura un Maksla*, 23 May 1986.

FILMS

"Foto: Inta Ruka", film-portrait (59 min), director: Arvids **Krievs**, Latvia 2003.

"Lettland" in: *Länder – Menschen – Abenteuer*, NDR, director: Sven **Jaax**, 2004.
http://www3.ndr.de/ndrtv_pages_std/0,3147,OID2884074,00.html

"Die lettische Fotografin Inta Ruka", radio-interview, in: *MDR – Figaro: Kulturbrücken nach Osteuropa*, reporter: Werner **Sobiello**, 25/02/2004.
http://www3.ndr.de/ndrtv_pages_std/0,3147,OID862190,00.html

"Inta Ruka", in: *euromaxx*, Deutsche Welle TV, reporter: Ulrike **Dörr**, 30/06/2004.

"Die preisgekrönten Porträts der Fotografin Inta Ruka", in: *NDR - Kulturjournal aus Riga*, reporter: Cordula **Meyer**, 09/08/2004.
http://www3.ndr.de/ndrtv_pages_std/0,3147,OID862190,00.html



PRESS RELEASE Inta Ruka "Portraits"

30/01 – 22/03/2003

The Baukunst Galerie dedicates the forthcoming exhibition to the Latvian photographer Inta Ruka. The opening takes place on the 29th of January 2003. It is the first large solo-exhibition with the Riga-based photographer in Germany. We have initiated a cooperation with the PAK „Palais für aktuelle Kunst“ in Glücksstadt where another exhibition with the artist opens on the 2nd of March, which can be seen until the 6th of April 2003. The exhibition project is accompanied by a booklet.

Inta Ruka (born 1958) lives and works in Riga. In 1978 after she has graduated at a business school as a sewer she started to take photos and was trained at the Nation's-Photo-Studio (V.E.E.). 1986-88 she worked as a freelance photographer in Vladivostok (former USSR). Over the years she has become one of the most well-known photographers in Latvia. In 1998 the artist got a scholarship of the Hasselblad Foundation and in the summer of 2002 a working grant in Feldafing/Starnberger See. Photos of the artist are shown in international collections and museums, p.e. in the photo-collection of the Folkwang Museum, Essen, at the Fotomuseum in Munich and at the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm. The most important international exhibition was her participation at the 48th Biennale of Venice in 1999. For the first time Ruka's photos have caused international attention in 1990, when her work was shown at the Musée de l'Elysee in Lausanne. In 1991 followed an exhibition at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (USA) and an exhibition tour through Canada until 1993. From 1993 to 1994 her work was shown in the context of the exhibition „The memory of pictures. Baltic photography now“ in several European cities. In 2003 the State Art Museum of Riga dedicated a considerable exhibition to her.

Inta Ruka's motives are the people of Latvia. She focuses on the portrait of people from Riga or Balvi, a rural region near the Russian border where Ruka has spent her childhood. Ruka works in series, lately she worked on the series „People I Happened to Meet“ and „Latvia. Changing and Unchanging Reality“. In 1983 she started the most well-known series „My Country People“ which has been shown at the Venice Biennale in 1999. By undertaking trips to Balvi for about twenty years, she regularly meets people and takes photos of them. In this long-term project Ruka documents the faces and histories of whole families. She makes notes of the names and biographical facts of the portrayed persons. She adds some sentences to each photo which can be quotes or part of their conversation as an additional information.

The artist chooses the situation for the taking while communicating with the people about their lives wishes and ideas. This way the setting has always to do with the living conditions of the person. Inta Ruka's black and white photos have a timeless character by focussing on the human being. The artist works with a Rolleiflex-camera from 1937 on a tripod. She only uses natural light sources and succeeds in using light as an expressive but also subtle demonstration of the brilliant contrasts of photos.



PRESS RELEASE Inta Ruka - Portraits

27/01 – 15/04/2005

The Baukunst Galerie, Cologne, dedicates the forthcoming exhibition to the Latvian photographer Inta Ruka. The opening takes place on the 26th of January 2005 from 6 to 8 p.m. with an introduction by Sylvia Böhmer, curator at the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen. At the beginning of 2003 the Gallery introduced the artist, who lives in Riga, with a solo-exhibition showing pictures of the series "My Country People". Inta Ruka represented Latvia with this series at the 48th Biennial of Venice in 1999. The second large exhibition with the artist primarily shows works of her new series "Amalias Street 5" and photos of the series "People I happened to meet".

Inta Ruka is one of the most important contemporary photographers of the Baltic States and she is already internationally known. She lives and works in Riga, where she was born in 1958. In 1978, after her graduation at a business school as a sewer, she began to take photos. Afterwards she finished her training at the 'Nation's-Photo-Studio'(V.E.E.). 1986-88 she worked as a freelancing photographer. In 1998 she had got a scholarship of the Hasselblad Foundation and a working grant of Villa Waldberta in Feldafing/Starnberger See in the summer of 2002. Works of Inta Ruka are shown in Germany, p.e. in the collections of the photography museum in the museum of the city of Munich and in the photographic collection of the Folkwang-Museum, Essen. Ruka's photos have already gained international attention: in 1990 her work was shown at the Musée de l'Elysee, Lausanne, in 1991 at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, U.S.A., and in the context of the exhibition 'The memory of pictures. Baltic photography now', which took place in 1993-94, her work was shown in several European cities. In 2003 the artist was appreciated with a considerable exhibition at the State Art Museum of Riga, and in 2004 Ruka's work was presented at the Musée d'art moderne, St. Etienne, in the context of the large exhibition-project 'Passage d'Europe', curated by Loránd Hegyi.

Inta Ruka's motives are the people of her country. For about twenty years the Latvian photographer has been taken photos of her countrymen in small villages of the rural area Balvi and in the capital Riga. Sometimes she documents the same persons for several years. Almost every picture is accompanied by a short notice – similar to notes in a diary – which tells us in which situation Ruka met the persons and what she knows about their lives. Thus in her photographic series the artist documents the faces and histories of whole families. Ruka's task to portray a spectrum of the Latvian people reminds us of August Sander, who tried to create a documentation of society by portraying workers and representatives of different social classes.

Inta Ruka works in series. Since 1983 she has been working on her series "My Country People". On excursions to Balvi, where she spend her childhood, she regularly portrays her countrymen. In 2000 she started the series "Poeples I happened to meet", where she asked people in Riga, if she is allowed to take a picture of them. In her new series "Amalias Street 5", which she began in summer 2004, Ruka is portraying inhabitants of a house at the address mentioned in the title. As in many parts of the capital the houses of Amalias Street 5, which enclose a backyard, are to be renovated. Young families are buying properties and moving in. By the different portraits of people, who are living there, Inta Ruka fixes the mood of change, which dominates Latvia since its integration in the European Union.

Ruka uses a Rolleiflex-camera of the year 1937 and a stage for her black and white photos (classical gelatin silver prints on baryta paper with a format of 33x35 cm). She doesn't use any kind of artificial light. The artist succeeds to use the light for an expressive but also subtle demonstration of her motives, which convince by their perfect contrasts of light and shadow. Inta Ruka chooses the situation for her photos together with the portrayed person after a long conversation. Sometimes they choose a common surrounding, but it has to be always connected with the life of the person. The portrayed persons look into the eyes of the spectator. In most cases they are positioned in the middle of the picture and shown at a half-distance, which allows to include the surrounding of the person.

Inta Ruka's photos combine the search for her own origin and the anthropological-sociological documentation of her countrymen's environment with the exceptional artistic ability to transform her own experiences into images of great intensity.



PRESS RELEASE Inta Ruka - Portraits

19/04 – 14/06/07

The Baukunst Galerie opens on Wednesday, the 18th of April 2007, a large solo-exhibition with works of the Latvian photographer Inta Ruka. Matthias Harder, curator of the Helmut-Newton-Foundation in Berlin, will give a short introduction in her artistic oeuvre. In the first exhibition of her works in 2003 the gallery presented the series "My Country People" which represented Lettland at the 48th Biennale of Venice. In the second show in 2005 portraits from the series "People I happened to meet" (started in 2000) and first works from "Amalias Street 5" (started in 2004) were exhibited. The consistent advancement and elaboration of this last series – realised in the Latvian capital – is the main focus of the forthcoming exhibition. For the first time the portraits are combined with images of deserted interiors providing an insight into that complex of buildings bringing out the milieu of the portrayed people.

Inta Ruka is one of the most well-known, contemporary artists of the Baltic states. She was born in Riga in 1958 and received a scholarship of the Hasselblad Foundation in 1998, the "Spídola Award" of the Latvian Culture Foundation in 1999 and a scholarship of the Villa Waldberta in Feldafing in 2002. One year later the Artist's Union of Latvia awarded her the „Price of the Year 2003“. Inta Rukas oeuvre has already been presented in several important international exhibitions: From 1991 to 1993 her portraits were shown at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in California, at the Musée de l'Elysee in Lausanne and on an exhibition tour through different Canadian cities. In the context of the project „The Memory of Images – Baltic Photo Art Today“ from 1993 to 1994 exhibitions in different European cities were following. In 1999 the already mentioned, exposed participation at the 48th Biennale of Venice finally publicised her name far beyond the frontiers of Latvia. Last autumn the Photography Centre in Istanbul organised a large solo-show of her photos. Until January of this year her photographs were shown together with works by Wolfgang Tillmanns, Boris Mikhailov and other famous artists in the exhibition "In the Face of History: European Photographers in the 20th Century" at the Barbican Art Gallery in London. In Germany Inta Ruka's works are represented in the collection of the Museum of Photography in the Munich City Museum and the photographic collection of the Museum Folkwang in Essen.

Since more than two decades Inta Ruka is photographing the people of her country – from 1984 to 2000 primarily in the rural area of Balvi ("My Country People") and later on increasingly in the Latvian capital Riga. In the series "People I happened to meet" she strikes up conversations with unknown people in order to ask them for a portrait. By contrast in "Amalias Street 5" she is focussing on the inhabitants of a certain ensemble of apartments in Riga. Off the beaten track of the picturesque Old Town with the entirely restored tourist features she provides an undisguised view on the current state of flux in Latvia since its integration into the EU. In the former countries of the eastern block she shares her documentary-anthropological approach with Anatanas Sutkus and Boris Mikhailov and internationally with her American colleagues Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange.

On Inta Ruka's portraits the environment is always visible as a result of the exposure from a medium distance. This way the spectator is getting an impression of the whole building-ensemble. Its architecture is attractive but very ruinous and the limited financials of the owners cause a very slow refurbishment. People of all generations are living here together in very crowded conditions – whole families as the Kurovas are sharing a single room. This is the reason why the yard is serving as an urban retreat for working, playing and communicating. Over the years Inta Ruka established a very close relationship to the inhabitants – she is even planning to rent a flat in Amalias Street 5 in order to be even closer to their daily life. Her journalised notes – written in the exhibition below the photos on the wall – emphasize her emotional approach to the models of her photos. The texts tell in concentrated fragments about the life story, fears and hopes of the portrayed people.

Photographing without artificial light and a Rolleiflex from 1936 takes time because of the long time exposure. Inta Ruka uses this time to listen to her models, concertedly finding appropriate poses and waiting for a moment of silent frankness, when they are forgetting the camera. This way the Latvian artist creates portraits with a centred composure, abundance of details and brilliant depth of sharpness which remind of the later works by Diane Arbus. Average persons and outsiders look with the same self-esteem into the lens of the camera. This direct view in the eye of the spectator gives those portraits an immediateness and intensity, which unveils not only the outer but also the inner world of the portrayed persons. Inta Ruka has the extraordinary ability to extract something archetypal and characteristically human from the concrete moods and situations. This way her patient and empathetic creating process generates an amazing moment of concentrated life.