

# PETRAS GINTALAS

## belongs to the world of medals

**“I know my place in the world”**

**Medal for the past time**

**Medals for persons and characters.**

**Medals for towns.**

**Medals for personal history.**

**Metal plastic arts: flat surfaces against form**

**“I know my place in the world”**

(Petras Gintalas)

Petras Gintalas is an artist without whom the present-day picture of Lithuanian medal art would be completely different. It would be much more boring, with fewer actively creating artists and much less professional. Gintalas' contribution to the art of medal in Lithuania undoubted; many of artists working successfully in the field today, especially of the younger generation, have chosen medals with his encouragement. However, the oeuvre of this author encompasses not only medals – he also creates plastic arts objects, metal works for public spaces, paintings and drawings, and even poems. Petras Gintalas is a versatile artist who has left his mark in his native Samogitia which is his physical and artistic place in the world. The road he has taken is neither straight nor simple, as for the majority of artists, “restless souls” who can hardly find a place to stop and a way to do this.

Born in Telšiai, Gintalas soon moved with his parents to Palanga, where he left secondary school. An interesting fact is that he also attended the “production class” in which he learned to work with amber; therefore, he received the third category in amber processing qualification along with the secondary school graduation certificate. It seems that the road towards the “applied art” had to be completely straight, logical and simple, while the turn towards design could take the author somewhere else. And it almost did. After completing his design studies at Vilnius Academy of Arts and after constructing a heater as his graduation work, Gintalas could have taken the designer's path, especially having in mind that the diploma indicated that he was an artist-designer. However, after working as a designer at the Technical Aesthetics Scientific Research Institute in Vilnius

in 1968–1970, he realised that the construction and design of industrial objects was not exactly his vocation. After receiving an invitation to Telšiai from his former fellow student Algis Mizgiris, the artist made a certain circle and, in 1970, returned to the place where he was born. From Telšiai – back to it again, from a designer – to a lecturer at the Design Division at the Applied Art Technical School in Telšiai, as it was called at that time. The town became the place where his most significant creative ideas have been born. The place which, on the one hand, inspires and, on another hand, demands to return what you have taken. This is why Petras Gintalas dedicates his works to the capital of Samogitia again and again as if he had irrevocable commitments to Telšiai, its history and famous people. Those Samogitian motifs and the town stand out in the artist's entire oeuvre: many medals have been dedicated to famous Samogitian (and not only) personalities. Many reliefs and the majority of works of plastic arts have also been dedicated to the events that took place on the Samogitian land. During the years of lecturing at the Faculty of Vilnius Academy of Arts in Telšiai, the artist has taught many students (e.g., Romualdas Inčirauskas, who has become an close friend and fellow “metal worker” – a medallist; is also a former fellow student). Medal designers camps have been organised in Telšiai since 1985. Petras Gintalas seems to have such deep roots in the Samogitian soil with his life and works, his metal and medals that it is impossible to pull and tear him out from there – either by tongs or any other instrument. Metal, medals and Samogitia are most probably the author's major motifs of life and creative work.

Petras Gintalas is a prize winner and laureate of many prestigious medal competitions, professor at the Faculty of Vilnius Academy of Arts in Telšiai, a member of FIDEM, a promoter of the art of medal designing, who has held twelve solo exhibitions and has participated in 103 group shows in Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland, Poland, and the USA. He is the author of many medals, works in public spaces, works of plastic arts and poems.

## **SCHERZO**

Troublemakers

disastrous years have passed  
warm stormy winds started blowing  
in your hair  
and the moustache curled on the face  
in the profile of broken heraldry  
do not sulk, it's only a mask  
according to Dobužinskis' drawing,  
which was not recognised by a member of the coin

committee

do not call me any more – I know all:  
after speaking on the phone with Thomas Mann  
Michael Augustin in Lübeck  
started moaning – what they wanted from him  
why the dead did not give peace  
Thomas understood he had turned to the wrong

person

and called me reproaching  
why I had modelled his portrait  
without his agreement  
and why I did not give peace  
for them THERE

## **FINALE**

They will keep in touch

all of them will call,  
whose portraits I have modelled  
yes, there are many of us  
well, thanks Michael Augustin for connection

(Petras Gintalas MKČ)

## Medal for the past time

Petras Gintalas has left the most vivid mark in Lithuanian art (and continues doing so) by his medals in particular. It is a distinctive genre – the medal seems to be a strange object, if we come to think about it. It dates back to Antique times when in the Roman Empire the leaders of barbaric tribes loyal to Rome were awarded with medallions; ancestors of the medal, with emperors' portraits. The Roman concept of the medallion did not differ much from ours: back then and now an object of the original canonical form, with commemorative and artistic value, used for awarding, for expressing respect and marking a significant person or an event was called a medal. Lithuania got acquainted with medals as with the majority of art trends rather late – only in the 16th century, when German, French, Czech, Italian and Flemish medal designing schools were already flourishing in Western Europe. The first Lithuanian medal is associated with the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Sigismund the Old, who ordered a medal in 1520 in order to mark the birth of his son Sigismund Augustus. As we move to the 20th century, in the first half of this century, Lithuanian medals were associated with the creative works of Petras Rimša and later Juozas Zikaras. Meanwhile, since the 1980s and, in particular, the 1990s, Petras Gintalas has established himself firmly in the art of the Lithuanian medal designing. After discovering the art of medal designing as a shelter from routine, the artist created outstanding pieces although they also follow traditions. “My interest in medals is related with my running from Vilnius in panic. I was appointed to the institute, started creating those agricultural machines and panicked realising that I was doing something else than I should. I escaped to Palanga and received a rather good job again – head of the advertising division. Algis Mizgiris came for a visit, saw me and said, Petras, stop fooling around, let's go to Telšiai, we need your ideas. One day I was sitting in my flat of two rooms and a kitchen, a total floor area of thirteen square meters, and started thinking of designing a medal. This idea was like a straw for a drowning man. The first medal was dedicated to Čiurlionis,” the author says.

Medals created by Petras Gintalas could be roughly divided by theme: medals dedicated to persons / personages, towns and himself, his personal history. Each and all of them are commemorating someone or something.

**Medals for persons and characters.** Chronologically, the first medal dedicated to the centenary of Mikalojus K. Čiurlionis, a composer and painter, was created in 1975. The classical composition: Čiurlionis' face in profile, dates of birth and death and his name below. Nothing very outstanding, but it is hard to believe that this was his first

work. The hair and face of Čiurlionis are formed of massive planes, without going into detail, by representing general features. Reservedly, seriously, strictly, but at the same time daringly. The features which represent the reluctance to escape from the classical frames, firm modelling, the skill to generalise and kind of coarseness and temperance have been retained until now. Čiurlionis' face seems to emerge, escape from the relief background speaking about the exceptional personality of Lithuanian culture, and the print of the surname and date stretches on the ornamental strip along the rim of the medal forming a compositional counterweight for the hair caressed by the invisible wind. The medal dedicated to Čiurlionis represents a certain stage – not only due to the fact that it was the first and marked the beginning of the most important period of life but also because it was of high importance to the author himself. “[W]arm stormy winds started blowing / in your hair / and the moustache curled on the face / in the profile of broken heraldry”, Gintalas wrote in the poem “Scherzo” (MKČ cycle). The personality of Čiurlionis is reflected in metal and word, form and material. The focus is on a generalised, smooth portrait that keeps the meaning. He returned to the personality of Čiurlionis after twenty-seven years, which proves the significance of Čiurlionis' personality to the author again, showing his steps on the road of the art of medal designing he has taken. Now Čiurlionis' profile is much more symbolic, austere, still recognisable but obeys the much more rigorous and firm hand of the artist. The medal itself has lost its classical form and has turned into a vertical plaque with geometrical openings which reveal emptiness (earth? sky? space?). Now the sign of distinction turns into a story – there is place for a ziggurat, the sun, an outstretched hand and other symbols of Čiurlionis. From a generalised shape in which the author seemed to try to reveal the features of the face in metal, the medal becomes a place of a complicated narrative.

In general, medals are a complicated object for their creators: the symbolic and cultural value of the object to which this sign of distinction is dedicated has to find place on a small and limited surface, a metal miniature should be created without forgetting the artistic value of this miniature too. Most probably, sometimes creators of medals fervently wish to escape the boundaries of the round or rectangular form, extend the concept of the medal, break or change its form. Apparently, this wish gives birth to medals that are closer to objects that lose their borders, overflow and that pose more questions than answers to the viewer.

It seems that Petras Gintalas does not have such a wish (or at least not a strong one). The technique of his medals is much closer to the traditional form. His medals stand out by their austerity and moderation, particular Samogitian angularity, which grants persuasive imposing features to his works. As well as their reserve – internal and

formal. Traditional forms are full of reserve – rectangular and square medals repeating architectural elements are monumental, neatly created and always based on thorough studies of the theme. By its nature, metal seems to have to register something in time: events, faces, people; a bronze bust is strong and immovable, the cast of a hand that has retained the life line of a prototype even when his life ended long ago. The medal is also strong and immovable. Like a monument. Petras Gintalas adds his expressive and firm but gradually liberating and enlivening creative style to the strength of his medals determined by the material.

As we continue down the artist's medal designing road chronologically, we meet philosopher Vydūnas (1982) – the face emerging from a round plane, the strong-willed cheeks and prominent forehead are modelled in a sleek manner, the same as in the medal of Čiurlionis. Subsequent medals were created at the end of the 1980s, at the crucial time for Lithuanian medal designers. Looking back, it is evident that the rebirth of Lithuanian medal art took place then – it should be dated 1984 and related with the local medal exhibitions (the first one was organised in Vilnius in 1984) and Lithuanian medal designers' camps organised since then. The majority of Lithuanian medals were born there, and their initiation and organisation is hard to imagine without Petras Gintalas. "First FIDEM, later camps appeared, and the latter ones require to do something each year. I wanted to get out of it every year but I am still here. Already for thirty years", the author states modestly. The medallists' creative camps have been held in Telšiai since 1985, and they encouraged the formation of a certain medal art centre in the capital of Samogitia. Lithuanian medallists established a separate section in the Artists' Association in the same year, and in 1986, the first Baltic Medal Triennial was held. Therefore, it is not by chance that Petras Gintalas' hand became firmer at that time, the author started to portray his favourite characters bolder, and the number of medals created grew: writers Višinskis, Žemaitė, Ieva Simonaitytė, Maironis, Janis Rainis – all these medals were created in 1987. The portrait similarity of all these characters while creating their representations has been retained, and is based on their classical images. The portrayals can be recognised easily, it is possible to read the birth and death dates on the rectangular plates for writers Žemaitė and Višinskis who promoted Lithuanian identity, as well as their contemporaries and the titles of their books. Meanwhile, Ieva Simonaitytė seems to be completely different: half-sitting, half-sliding from the armchair, looking towards a window, with an open book next to her and oak leaves at the bottom, from which the writer is separated by the line of words crossing the medal: "I was there where I was needed". The figure is leaning at the same angle as the oak branches – in this way the author creates the compositional unity, and the sliding movement

of the figure subtly reminds of the writer's disability. The medal to Rainis was created using the principle of contrast: the serious and contemplative face of the Latvian poet is pictured on the obverse and the silhouette of a flying bird with wings stretched over the entire round plane is on the reverse. A line of poetry can be seen at the top. Strength and reserve are combined with the poetical nature here, and the harmony of these two qualities will become the distinctive feature of medals and plaques created by Petras Gintalas. However, we will return to that slightly later. Back then, at the end of the 20th century, medals were created for the architect and set designer Vladimiras Dubeneckis, oncologist J. Vaitkevičius and Donelaitis, who, like Čiurlionis, was and still remains close to Petras Gintalas. By his poetic power, proximity to earth, and his spiritual strength if you will. The author returned to Donelaitis, just as to Čiurlionis, a number of times. If we compare works for Donelaitis created in 1988 and 2011, we will see the direction the artist has taken. The former is cut deep into metal, with an angular arch above, which frames the figure as though the university arch that frames the monument to Donelaitis. The latter is of a free irregular form, as if the hard medal has melted; even the well-known features of Donelaitis have softened and the entire surface of the medal is covered by a net of cuts. Finally enamel appears, which grants colour to the medal. Donelaitis is soft and almost "domestic" here; it seems that there have not been thirty years of the strict form and precise line. Still, nothing has disappeared, only the years have brought freedom to his hand and thoughts. The artist feels comfortable knowing that the lines or letters will depart from the canons.

Martynas Jankus, an enlightened person of Lithuania Minor, who attracted the artist's attention twice, may be attributed to the characters who the author wants to return to. Holding the volumes of the newspaper *Aušra* bound as books, the bearded Jankus of 1990 gazes at the descendants like an Oriental oracle; the stylised bony hands with disproportionately long fingers look like an ornament. The first medal to Jankus is stern, serious and professional. Meanwhile, the new medal created in 2012 has a playful relief. The drawing has remained, the figure is pictured from the front, with long-fingered hands, but the entire surface is covered by a dynamic relief as if we were looking at Jankus through the rippling surface of water. Enamel gives colour – it sinks in the dents of the medal imparting vitality to the entire medal. The image breathes; it is no longer a monument but, in a certain sense, a fragment of former life.

"Creating medals my aim was not to make symbols not emblems", the author says. Moreover, it is evident that he headed in this direction, along the road of liberation and conceptualization, slowly but surely all the time.

Gintalas' "mature" medals created in the 1990s and dedicated to Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara,

art historian Vldas Drėma, writer and pastor Kristijonas Donelaitis, the newspaper "Aušra" and its contributors, Jonas Šliūpas among them, writer Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, researcher of folk art Paulius Galaunė, Bishop Ignacijus Masalskis, and writer Simonas Daukantas stand out by the clearly articulated metal expression and "monumental" robustness which remains in the memory of the viewer for a long time. The mutual relation between the print and character is harmonious, the persons portrayed are easily recognisable, the features are slightly stylised but not caricatured. The classical composition is arranged professionally both in the rectangle and the round format. The merits for which medals are dedicated to the personalities portrayed are conveyed through symbols and are pictured in a generalised manner on the background: the face of Drėma shows against the background of St. Anne's Church and architectural elements, fragments of the gone Vilnius. The medal to Chiune Sugihara is decorated by hieroglyphs and columns supporting the fragments of a synagogue behind which a Lithuanian village hut is visible. The medal to Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius pictures a church / belfry surrounded by clouds. It is evident that the artist is perfectly sure what, why and how he wanted to picture. There is story behind every medal; traces left by man in history, collected materials, studies of archives, historical sources. The mood is grave, almost austere. Only the Czech writer, Jaroslav Hašek, does stand out in this crowd of serious men – he forecasts the next stage of Gintalas' medals: the young writer in a suit is looking staring into the distance, the head in the circle looks as though surrounded by a nimbus, everything is as it should be, except for the left ear which looks as large as almost the entire face, the little Švejk whispers something to it, flying like Karlsson from Astrid Lindgren's book looking as if he had stepped out of the canonical illustrations of Josef Lada. The element of grotesque that appears unexpectedly forecasts the later stage of Petras Gintalas' medals – the free stage.

Put metaphorically, winds of freedom started blowing in Gintalas' medals almost from the beginning of the new century. The personalities pictured gain characters which could have not been given them by anybody else, except Gintalas. They start to change by becoming original and often grotesque symbols from emblematic portraits. And it appears that this is possible in the art of medal too. As authors gained complete freedom in the postmodern fusion of genres, the medal, at their wish, could also lose its traditional look. The round canonical shape may be replaced by a rectangle, and sometimes the form may become completely amorphous and undefined: a flat relief becomes almost a sculpture, reserved aristocratic metal is replaced by glass, stone, relief is furrowed with grooves as if eaten by worms or coloured by enamel. Everything is possible. Thomas Mann has been paired with the towers

of Lübeck, the words "Achtung Europe" twist like serpents on the surface of the plaque; here is a crack and the eye jumps from Lübeck to Mann who, due to some reason, looks away from the city. Medals become alive, the relief is of various height and depth, they are soft and attract the eye. Characters are portrayed in three quarters, their eyes are look towards the viewer, not to the side where the face is turned. Perhaps this is the reason why such rather sad looks of set designer Liudas Truikys and write Thomas Mann start to pursue the viewer. In medals, not man and the environment are confronted in medals now, but two persons who are completely unrelated at first sight. In this way Truikys is paired with nobody else but Salvador Dalí, whose famous moustache protrudes from around the corner and makes one unwittingly search for parallels between these two artists. Wilhelm Ernst Beerbohm, the chief steward of the Curonian Lagoon, poet and collector of folklore, is standing with his hat off and is looking into the distance as if trying to see whether somebody has sailed into the lagoon. Freedom and conceptuality is typical of the newest medals of Petras Gintalas; in them, the idea is much more important than form, there is no strict composition and a static relief any more. The personal relation with the character becomes increasingly important. Although the author says that this relation as a rather complicated one, it only confirms the importance of that relation. Here an imagined conversation of the author with Mann turns into a poem: "Thomas understood he turned to the wrong person / and called me reproaching / why I'd modelled his portrait / without his agreement / and why I did not give peace / for them THERE" ("Troublemakers"). It seems that Gintalas starts looking over his shoulder searching for characters for his medals. Has he done everything right? Namely this proves the vibrancy and vitality of his medals: the characters start stepping out of the frames, they give no peace to the artist even at night. Everything becomes alive, starts breathing, a net of the modelled relief and cuts cover the surface of a medal or a plaque creating a dynamic and free object.

**Medals for towns.** This move from truth to freedom, putting it metaphorically, can be noticed in another group of medals too: in medals dedicated to towns. Here most probably, the author's task is even more complicated: it is hard to avoid patterns and clichés. How should a medal for a town be created so that it does not turn into a repetition of a frozen photograph in metal? Still, Petras Gintalas succeeds in choosing a nonstandard angle to catch the poetic mood or flair of drama in medals dedicated to different towns. Like in the medal "Kražiai – 750" dedicated to the town. The town is pictured as though from a bird's eye view, scattered clouds are on the level of the viewer's eyes and look like the silhouettes of cranes. Clouds-cranes above the school in Kražiai are reflected in the lake.

Expression and concern is retained in the small circle of the medal, and the generalised silhouette of the town composed of various architectural details fills the surface of the medal dedicated to the year 2000 too. A white column in the middle cannot be classified according to any order system. It is simply a town as such: a centre of culture and religion, a church, a column and houses. Or the framing in the form of the heart that surrounds the city on the reverse of the medal “Palanga – Lithuanian Capital of Culture” with the inscription *ant krašto marės Palangos miestelėj* (on the coast of the sea, in the small town of Palanga). Or the straight graphic lines of the tree branches surrounding the coat of arms of Telšiai on the reverse of the medal dedicated to the city, with an equality strict famous Samogitian commandment *Kon daraa veiziek gala* (Whatever you do, take the responsibility) on the obverse. The artist manages to find a generalising symbol or visual expression for every town pictured in a medal without turning these medals into boring clichés – photographs repeated on metal. Every town has something distinctive, something worth bringing to the front to draw the eye. There are also enough details that would surround the central motif. The complex medal “City 2011” dedicated to Kaunas is formed of a total of eight fragments: the architectural panorama of Kaunas is in the centre, surrounded by a mosaic of three larger fragments of the same panorama, as if the view has been cut into several parts, and by round smaller medals each of which represents a person or event important to Kaunas. A medal with satellites, a medal composition – no matter what we call it, it is a complex and symbolic view of the city that turns into an image. The image alone is revealed in the most monumental composition “City Road”. Here three monumental medals are united by a winding line-road. Still, these medals are dimmed by glass shades so that it would be understandable that a city view is under them. Only that. One city, second, third. Or from the city panorama towards man, towards the coat of arms, i.e. symbol? I believe that this is the case. The city for Gintalas is formed of three aspects here: view – man – symbol. The medal does not have the third side physically, no matter how much we would like to “introduce” it metaphorically, and it becomes necessary to create three medals to express the city. Gintalas’ city is a repository of history: people, buildings, events. Moreover, all this can fit into a small circle, intertwine into a relief ornament, and highlight the most important features of every city or town.

**Medals for personal history.** The third category of medals – personal medals – is very significant to the artist himself. These are real miniature monuments created to remind others and oneself what was and still is important in the artist’s life. First of all, we should speak about the monument to Gintalas’ son, also Petras, who died tragically. The talented young poet who drowned in the sea

disappeared with all possible roads that waited for him, with all the words, which he could have said or written throughout his life. Petras Gintalas turns his son’s words into metal. He preserves and seals what can be preserved. A boy’s figure with uplifted arms says in the plaque created in 2012: *I am going home*. The light is real. Petras P. Gintalas, who never came home, returned on metal feet and stayed for good. He wrote once, “I’d like to have hands inside me / so that I could knock on my heart nervously / when it is pouring with water outside (selection “I am going home”, Lithuanian Writers’ Union, 2007), he stays for good with his arms victoriously raised and pressed in metal. And now the hopelessly old-fashioned mobile phone does not stop asking – where are you, little Petras? Although we all know the answer. Petras Gintalas often goes back to the theme of his son’s tragic death. However, the tragic theme closely intertwines with one more aspect which is also very significant to Gintalas: family, roots, continuity. A writer and a man of theatre, who promoted Samogitian culture, Petras Gintalas (1908–1971), has also been immortalised in a medal. The three-fourths of the silhouette of the head seen on the medal disappears surrounded by a chaotic relief. It seems that the coat of arms of Klaipėda and the letters P Ė D A emerge, the face is modelled from architectural fragments and the entire medal appears as a string of crossing lines. The artist’s father, collector Bonifacas Gintalas has also been honoured by a medal: the image is generalised but recognisable, it perfectly fits into the genre of a commemorative medal. The family in which the given names Petras and Bonifacas go one after the other is worth immortalising in metal. Enlightened persons of Samogitian land, writers, collectors, promoters of culture and its creators; a representative of the Gintalas’ family, the artist cherishes their honour and continuity ensuring its survival in metal. This cherishing is serious, patriotic and worthy of respect. The relation with the people pictured is clearly different here. It is touching, personal, serious and close. If each of them called him in a dream, the artist would not become nervous or tense but would be happy and start to tell what new happened under the low sky of Samogitia – it seems so.

### **Metal plastic arts: flat surfaces against form**

Undoubtedly, Petras Gintalas leaves the most obvious mark in Lithuanian art by his medals in particular. However, metal art in public spaces, small works plastic arts, which do not restrict the artist by formal requirements set for the medal, obey the artist’s hands too. Among the more significant works created for public spaces, one should mention the decorative detail for the Karolina Praniauskaitė Central Library in Telšiai – a gate-partition with a clock (co-author

R. Inčirauskas), the decorative composition “Ingathering of the Crops” (together with R. Mizgiris) and the composition “Flight”. The house on Respublikos Street in Telšiai, where Vydūnas lived, stands out by the commemorative plaque dedicated to the thinker. Another joint work by Gintalas and Inčirauskas “Big and Small Gates” can be found in the same street too. There are some of Gintalas’ works for the interior and exterior in other towns: the decorative detail “Book” (co-author R. Inčirauskas) has been created for the exterior of a bookstore in Klaipėda (it has not survived), and the metal composition (co-author R. Mizgiris) for the lobby of the Draugystė Hotel (now the Crowne Plaza).

However, features from medals can be seen in metal plastic arts objects too; they are particularly visible in works with low relief. Among them, the composition “Samogitia” formed of four metal plates is worth mentioning. Three vertical plates symbolise three last years of the second millennium: 1998, 1999 and 2000. The silhouette of the bird’s eye view of the city, a hanging bell and contours of architectural details can be seen on the plates each of which looks like the silhouette of a separate building. Three houses, three years are joined by the fourth horizontal plate going through all the three vertical plates. It serves as a technical and notional chain: architecture and nature are united by Samogitia. The plate is slightly curved as if it were a cut off top of a barrow. Or a pike that flashes under the water and disappears under the rocks. In any case, “Samogitia” with a low, precise and sensitively modelled relief, a rigid but not schematic composition evidently proves once again Gintalas’ unmistakable attachment to the Samogitian land (could it be otherwise?) and the reluctance to stop using the experience gained while creating medals. It can and must surely be used. The skill perfected in medals to create a concentrated and generalised composition, a subtle and accurate relief is clearly reflected in “The Trip to Telšiai” (co-author R. Gilytė). The bronze relief is divided into four parts – as if a window through the rectangles of which a different view is seen. The town consists of the past and present here: a mill at the Open Air Museum, silhouettes of multi-storeyed buildings, the chapel in Rainiai designed by architect Jonas Virakas – all this is open for the viewer’s eyes. A real patriot of Telšiai, Gintalas relates many of his works with the history and folklore of his beloved capital of Samogitia and transfers legends, myths and real events to metal. This is most clearly seen in the largest metal work dedicated to the town “The Myths of Telšiai”. Sixteen cast plates of bronze form one big plane; these plates were once used for the gate through which the lake could be reached, but the turbulent 1990s, which manifested in Telšiai not only by the collapse of the Soviet Union but also by the resulting unemployment (after the closure of the calculating machine factory that supplied products to the republics of the Soviet Union) and

aggression, did not spare the wonderful reliefs. The plates disappeared, evidently, during unrest at night. Or perhaps somebody needed bronze – the time when everything was sold, broken, ruined and destroyed brought much harm to Telšiai. Sculptures tumbled, rails broke and signboards fell down. Meanwhile, the metal gate through which it was possible to reach Lake Mastis from Respublikos Street lost its bronze plates with Telšiai myths. Therefore, unfortunately, now these plates are no longer in the street but can be seen as a separate composition. As a window divided into sixteen parts through which the history of the town can be seen. Full of legends, generalised and embellished. Could it be otherwise? Džiugas Mound at the bottom of which a man wrestles with a bear also reminds of a legend about the Samogitian giant and the Samogitian symbol – the bear. It is still not known who will win, but the further fate of the bear may be guessed in the plate “Magdeburg city rights granted in 1771”. The bear has turned from a wild animal into a cultural image, it now embodies Samogitia, which is still hard to tame, almost wild but which is becoming part of civilization. One of the most eye-catching plates is with an oak in the centre. The oak is evidently a symbol of strength and longevity here, and human figures holding hands are turning around it. The branches of the oak itself do not look like arms – they are formed of human bodies and arms. This dance looks dramatic and frenzied, it seems that souls tossed by the wind but not bodies are flying around the tree of the world. Or perhaps it is really so, why couldn’t it be? The oak appears in several plates, the same as in “Mažvydas”: “Roots towards hell, branches towards heaven”. It is a symbol of stability, invincibility and, finally, the famous Samogitian stubbornness. The author pictures the uprisings of 1831 and 1863 with equal expressiveness: a market square, old part of the town, main street and a church in the distance. Everything looks almost the same like now. Only in the foreground there is a gendarme with a whip trailing down the street like a snake. A woman runs with her hand covering the mouth, she faces the viewer; lonely geese in a cart – there was no market. In the plates, we also see the Swedish cannon that sank in Lake Mastis and a mysterious Swedish treasure. As well as people dressed for the Shrove Tuesday carnival, the tradition which is cherished and lives until the present day in Telšiai – in the plate they are dancing wildly on the frozen lake with the nine-storied buildings in the background. The past and present, reality and imagination are intertwined in bronze; from the cart pulled by an old nag with wheels sinking into the clayey soil to the Alka Museum in Telšiai above which Swedish cannons glide. Gintalas has created a monument to Telšiai – it is expressive, memorable and artistically valuable. Lines cover the bronze surfaces in small patterns; they become denser and turn into planes and protuberances forming tree branches or human faces.

Low reliefs are far from being dull – they make the eyes and hands follow them. “The Myths of Telšiai” is a solid artwork of sixteen parts intertwining into one rich and memorable Samogitian novel full of events.

Several other his bronze plates are also dedicated to the history of Samogitia; it seems that this genre – something between sculpture and medals – is close to the artist’s heart. It is a monument anyway. “Samogitia” created in 2010 pictures the great coat of arms of the Duchy of Samogitia – the Samogitian bear with a torn chain on the shield, two figures bearing it on both sides – a knight and female figure with an anchor symbolising Hope. The motto of the coat of arms *Patria una* is below. Still, it is not only a mechanical repetition of the Samogitian coat of arms – the plate is covered by a relief of indentations, the figures in its background are sharp and clearly seen, and the motto of the coat of arms is supplemented with the author’s words: MON TAU ANĖMS (For me, you, them) on the left side, UŽTEKS VĖITAS (There will be enough room) below, MŪSA TĖVINIE (In our homeland) on the right side. There will be enough space in Samogitia for everybody whose homeland it is – this is the meaning of this dedication.

The usual portrayal method of Petras Gintalas, the combination of dynamic relief and print, is seen on the plate dedicated to the Samogitian wall (in Telšiai, Respublikos Street, architect A. Žebrauskas) depicting the Battle of Durbė. The Great Samogitian Wall immortalising the most important historical events of Samogitia is one of the most significant and aesthetically suggestive visual highlights in Telšiai, which started in 2010 with his plate “The Battle of Durbė” dedicated to the 750th anniversary of the battle. The surface of the plate is covered by clean lines which merge the main figures of fighting infantrymen and horsemen and the background. There is one more compositional element on the sides – a peaceful inscription explaining the situation slightly ironically and calmly: “Mums reikieje tep – anėi nuorieje kėtep” (We needed this way, they wanted differently). The Samogitian interpretation of the battle reminds of the famous story about a Samogitian refused to step out of the devil’s sack: it is important to have one’s own position and to hold on to it; as a result, the situation will change in your favour. If it does not, at least you will appear in a story or on a metal plate. Static infantrymen, dynamic equestrians, the head of the bear swimming in water seen at the top of the plate (how can it be omitted?) – everything creates an integral story.

And now it is high time to proceed from plane to form, as the author proceeded from medal to plate in the first decade of the 21st century; in fact, it is not far at all. The same distance as from plate to spatial composition of plates. Therefore, it is logical that the creative search had to take the artist to plastic arts works, sooner or later. At first these works were politicised. Petras Gintalas is usually

not indifferent to what is happening around him – with us, our environment, native city, Samogitia, to which the majority of the author’s works are dedicated in one way or another. Sometimes the artist is eager to express his civic position using the metal language. For example, regarding the litas. The artist said farewell to this currency not in 2014, like entire Lithuania, but much earlier – in 2005. The sculptural composition “Farewell to the Litas” created that year displays a enlarged metal coin of fifty litas fixed to a granite rectangle as if to a tombstone. Granite reminds of monuments built in cemeteries as if saying that the litas will no longer be used but it will always be there, attached to its monument. It is screwed on firmly, as firm as Lithuanian identity, so that it would not disappear anywhere. Or perhaps it is getting ready for work. Perhaps the fifty litas coin is screwed on so firmly so that the script present on it could be remodelled and the Vytis, the coat of arms of Lithuania, could be replaced by the Euro sign? The reserved and manifold composition does not provide with a single answer. A similar case is with his other work with political implication “Souvenirs of a Politician” (co-author Eglė Čėjauskaitė-Gintalė): two bronze cups and a tea spoon, apparently full of salt, carelessly sit on a white stone. The cups bear the coat of arms of Telšiai and Samogitia. The politicians are also local, thus Samogitian. Could it be otherwise, I think silently. Petras Gintalas will not make souvenirs for Angela Merkel. The bronze live-size cups are however impossible to drink from: they are frozen to the white stone as to the ice. And a simple aluminium tea spoon with salt nearby. Politicians have to eat much more than a *pood* [about 36 pounds] of salt with their people. They should.

The same aluminium spoon was transferred to the sculptural composition dedicated to one of the most lyrical and completely apolitical Lithuanian poets, Vytautas Mačernis. Only now milk / gypsum is poured into it from a glistening metal cup. There is also a chair / throne nearby for the king with a sad oval face “seen in himself”. The associative and spacious composition breathes with sadness; the chair–throne has kept the trace of modelling by hand, it is simple to imagine plasticine instead of bronze, from the form of which the composition was most probably moulded. It seems that the vertically outstretched throne will slump like warm clay soon and that only a sad recollection will remain from all the imaginary royal grandeur. This is why the author adds a fragment of Mačernis’ face portrayed in on wood at the chair so that it would not disappear.

The theme of memory is one of the essential ones to the author; while the medal naturally is an object dedicated to someone’s memory, in the plastic arts, where the author uses the artist’s privilege to choose themes and motifs completely freely, Gintalas remains loyal to his

principle: to remember, to preserve, to immortalise. The composition important to the author himself and dedicated to personal memory, immortalises the memory of all three Gintalas (we should probably say three Petras Gintalas). It is a composition in which words are as important as form. "Hello, this is Gintalas speaking / also a Samogitian", one sculpture seems to say. Another one answers in the words of the poet Petras P. Gintalas: "Only the last words. / Fifteen minutes past ten. / I feel strange. / And with no thoughts / in my head / I climb the mountain. / Real light". And finally words are seen again on the polished stone pedestal: Perhaps I am afraid of the blind light of black darkness. This group monument for the late members of the Gintalas is an uninterrupted dialogue: the sculptures communicate with each other by movement creating an impression of a continuous action under the glass. As if some shadow theatre or a Baltic souls' bench made of metal. Here, under glass, are ones who are gone, who climbed the mountain for real light and who feared it. The conversation remains to continue eternally.

Petras Gintalas is affectionate and loyal: after finding or taking some motif or form, he uses it as often as he can. Metal cups that came from souvenirs of a politician and Mačernis' milk receptacle appear in "Tower" again. Now these cups stacked on one another as if building blocks for children simply mean a tower – a game, which may be interpreted as the artist's wish to stick to his favourite form and as the striving to make a daily object abstract. Towers can be built from pebbles in the Vilnelė River, from metal constructions, from bricks. First of all the metaphor of a tower brings back to memory the ivory whiteness and then the abundance of mixed languages of Babel. The tower of Petras Gintalas does not use any of these allusions: he is far from being smart, he seems to say: I build because I want to build. I had a stone cylinder and here – cups go well with it. That is all. Form for the sake of form.

In fact, the three-dimensional small works of Gintalas are frequently abstract, unlike medals. They are quite refreshingly from the inclusion of necessary information in the small circle of a medal. Medals require specific knowledge, encyclopaedic data and the precision of an image. It is important what happened and when, the years of birth and death, where something stood and what somebody was doing. Plastic arts works do not require such details. The feeling of form and proportion, surface tactility and understanding of the scale are the most significant things here. As in the sculpture "The Modified" (2007), in which an anthropomorphised silhouette tries to make steps awkwardly and arms do not acquire hands, they stretch and turn the silhouette gaining the human shape into a letter of an unknown alphabet or the G-clef of the violin. The head has a bird's beak, arms turn into a spiral and the personage seems to be still transforming; not born yet he is already

running somewhere – it does not matter that it remains unfinished. It does not matter.

Bronze sculptures cast by Petras Gintalas are tactile, amorphous and expressive at the same time. "The Modified" is one of such sculptures. These qualities are even more vivid in the series of small plastic arts works created in 2008. The author says: "When I worked in a creative camp in Bulduri [Latvia], I started creating sculptures. Perhaps those sculptures were primitive. My colleagues said, 'you dedicate so much time and energy to medals, you should take up sculpture'. But I put them aside then. I piled them. They were made of plasticine and I noticed later that the legs, arms and heads had fallen off. After they had fallen, and only the torsos remained, I laid them down and they appeared as a layout for a set design." This cycle of bronze sculptures actually looks like created in one breath: it is soft and lively, no matter that there is not much figurativeness left in it. It is not needed. And they can be called a cycle only conditionally; each of them tells its own story by its language and the plot. Unobtrusively, quietly, intriguingly. If we had to find the prevailing theme, most probably, these sculptures could continue the line of Mačernis associatively.

First of all, this line shows in the choice of motifs. "I recognised a king in you", wrote Mačernis. With his sculptures, Petras Gintalas creates crowns for kings walking incognito. Twisted, irregular, ugly, to tell the truth. Kings are homeless and landless, not only incognito but also in exile. "The Homeless and the Crown" (2008) tells about two things that can be put on one's head – a little creased crown and a crest of a homeless person that reminds of the decoration on an Ancient Greek helmet. They are both equal to Gintalas: the king and the homeless. A crown without a king is only a piece of metal; on the other hand, it is the crown that frequently creates the king. This interpretation, most probably, is closer to the artist because the crown as a symbol of power lives its own life even when the king is unknown yet and non-existing. The crown exists as pieces of art in museums and as the status symbol in carnivals and photo sessions. Sometimes a human figure grows out of it like from a flower. It is flexible, graceful and abstracted, referring to no particular person but to the kingliness that is present inside each of us ("Carunarinė", 2008). It is an unfinished figure, clearly from the ones which "lost their arms," according to Gintalas. However, the arms are not needed to see the graceful movement. The figure is female (most probably), with a slender waist, flexible folds of an implicit robe – as if of a caryatid turned slightly to one side. It is transfused with sadness, which is the second component of "Mačernis-like" sculptures. Inherent in the poet as well as the artist. The small sculptures of Gintalas are essentially sad. They are sad because they are incomplete by the meaning of fruition, they seem to be frozen in the status of becoming,

doomed to stay “in between” forever. Trying to gain the complete shape, they become tired with hopelessness. The movements are graceful and melancholic: “Carunarinė”, “Lady on a Hill” and “The Modifiers-Likeminded” are not completely anthropomorphised – they have gained life but have not turned into humans. The lady looks down from the hill – a glass bowl (one more constantly seen detail that is used by the artist willingly and wittingly for exhibiting sculptures) and holds a lock with a key on the stump of her hand. The lock is melting, the same as the hand. It is a lock of an unknown door. The modifiers (a mysterious title) remind of keys that have come into life by the forms of their outstretched vertical bodies and their heads have gained birds’ beaks due to some unknown reason. Having gathered on the glass hill (the same glass bowl), they are looking upwards, performing some incomprehensible ritual. Nonetheless, most probably all this is too pathetic. Perhaps Petras Gintalas is simply playing. With bronze forms melting in the eyes, glass bowls and moods. In order to create the Mačernis-like atmosphere, for instance. In addition, the viewers would try to guess what it is.

Still, most probably there is no need to guess. It is a metal expression of the lyrical personality of Petras Gintalas. The personality which bursts with poetry in the verbal form and with plastic arts works in the material form. It is evident that Gintalas has his own place in life and in art. Every medal, every sculpture, every drawing, as well as every poem testifies to it.

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