

# Exhibition “Border City: Tallinn – Lisbon” at the Tallinn Art Hall Gallery and the City Gallery

The Tallinn Art Hall Foundation announces that an excellent dual exhibition of works by Estonian and Portuguese artists – titled “Border City: Tallinn – Lisbon” with the subtitles “Arrival” and “Departure” – will open at the Tallinn Art Hall Gallery and the City Gallery on Wednesday, 31 August. Seventeen artists from each country are participating, the majority of which are jewellery artists.

Artists from Tallinn are: **Katrin Amos, Piret Hirv, Katarina Kotselainen, Tiina Käesel, Urve Küttner, Leonhard Lapin, Laurentsius, Kristiina Laurits, Eve Margus-Villems, Kadri Mälk, Maarja Niinemägi, Villu Plink, Jaanus Samma, Rait Siska / Risto Tali, Ketli Tiitsar, Tanel Veenre**; artists from Lisbon are: **Ana Albuquerque, Madalena Avellar, Miguel Branco, Sónia Brum, Miriam Castro, Rui Chafes, Paula Crespo, Catarina Dias, Cristina Filipe / C. B. Aragão, Hugo Madureira, João Martins, Teresa Milheiro, Marilia Maria Mira, Typhaine Le Monnier, Inês Nunes, Tereza Seabra.**

Curator and editor of the catalogue is **Harry Liivrand**.

Exhibition design made by **Taso Mähar**, catalogue design made by **Jaanus Samma**.

Assistants: **Kadri Mälk, Eero Kangor, Cristina Filipe, Paula Crespo.**

Salt is the material that motivated and pervades the exhibition. Through salt, as the mineral that symbolises the commercial ties between the two cities during the Hanseatic period, and the keywords of “arrival” and “departure”, this project conceptualises the phenomenon of two historical border cities and the state of arrival and departure mostly metaphorically and associatively, by appealing to the viewers’ imagination.

The exhibition titled *Border City*, which will be on display in Tallinn in 2011 and in Lisbon in 2012, is the first joint project between Estonian and Portuguese jewellery artists. The exhibition gives a design-based meaning to the identity of two capitals that have symbolised the borders of Old Europe. The idea for the exhibition was born after the curator made a trip to Lisbon and became conscious of the historical connections between Tallinn and Lisbon, and also considering the high-quality jewellery art that is related to metaphysical values in both countries. In the geographic dimension, Tallinn and Lisbon define totally different and, in the context of mental attitudes, even contradictory peripheral cultural spaces. However, the status of a border city that is open to the sea and the location’s context as a fateful end terminal are the points of departure that have motivated this project. Both cities are met by the sea; there is no other possibility – one must turn back or sail away, to cross the border ... or to be inspired.

Historically Tallinn and Lisbon have been connected by salt, which was one of medieval Tallinn's most important import articles. A large part of the city's wealth and prosperity was based on the trading of salt, thus one could say that Tallinn was built on salt. The salt was imported primarily from Portugal's historic Setubal region. The white salt from this area was also called Lisbon salt and was transported in open ships. In this way, Lisbon salt arrived in the Estonian Hanseatic City of Tallinn. This ancient salty connection has inspired the artists participating in this exhibition.

Borders unite and divide. Psychologically, crossing a border is always related to fear, time and context. Border cities are related to possibilities and impossibilities, to departing and returning, to anticipation and desperation. Intensive port cities, which produce meaning, are fertile ground for the development thousands of seaside stories that the locals protect like holy secrets. These stories form the subconscious of border cities, which are simultaneously paradoxical and magical. The chaotic, proto-dynamic material that accumulates in border cities is transformed into something cultural. In the magical cauldrons of jewellery smiths, this is given a jewellery-like – in the meta-meaning, an amulet-like – form.

Based on the concept, the exhibition in Tallinn is occurring simultaneously in two galleries – in one the sub-topic is *Arrival* and in the other *Departure*. Seventeen artists from each city are participating, of whom the majority are jewellers and international representatives of their country's jewellery art (e.g. at the Munich *Schmuck* participated Cristina Filipe, Kadri Mälk and Tanel Veenre). I am extremely happy that they have decided to participate in the project. They have combined salt and gold, silver and raw diamonds, sheet iron and salt crystals, salt and fabric ... They perceive the magical power of jewellery, the meaning encoded in object art, the mystical impact of materials, and the greatness of symbolism. Coming to a border city gives them additional power and self-confidence. In addition, a few figurative artists from Lisbon and Tallinn are interpreting the topic (among them Rui Chafes has exhibited at the Venice and São Paulo *biennale*). They also have an excellent mastery of the fantastic feeling of being on border – the materials include canvas, acrylic, gold leaf, photo and bronze.

"Arrival" is open at the Tallinn Art Hall Gallery until September 18th.

"Departure" is open at the City Gallery until September 25th.

In February 2012 the exhibition will be open in Lisbon at the Instituto Camões.

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Harry Liivrand