**"Hanging Gardens" Exhibition: Lithuanian Keys in Authorial Odours**

**From April 9 to May 6, 2017, the exhibition hall of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania will host "Hanging Gardens" – an olfactory art exhibition where a group of olfactory artists will invite us to "read" their visions of the garden from authorial odour notes. Over a wide range of scents we get a wealth of information that could change our understanding of the world if one dares to educate his/her nose, say organizers.**

Olfactory artist Laimė Kiškūnė, one of the initiators of the exhibition, seeks to distract people from the stereotype that a scent is fascinating only if it appears as a sort of some sensual animalistic shocking trickster or as something exotic, unusual, spontaneous or simply as a perfumery...

“Scent is an invisible dimension of life that actualises the spaces where we appear. The dynamism, agility and changes in an odour allows to – depending on the day, time of year and the human activities – sense the very aesthetics of our usual living spaces, their mood, atmosphere, and finally, get information.

Another feature of the olfactory works is their narrativeness. They are not only characterized by each one‘s unique expression, architectonics, and aesthetics, but by being spread in time and space, they tell multifaceted, polyphonic, dynamic stories – those that have not yet been inspired by other senses. So the installation is the opportunity to experience without words, images or sounds", says Laimė Kiškūnė.

Olfactory (relating to the sense of smell) art is still developing, not yet established but already independent form of art, by now hosting festivals and competitions (in the US, Germany, the Netherlands), but still a novelty to many in Lithuania. Olfactory art group "Hortus Apertus" organized an olfactory art exhibition for the first time in Lithuania in 2010 and this year sum up and reflect their first seven years of development by holding "Hanging Gardens" - an exhibition accompanied with educational events.

"At the Art and Olfactory Awards in Sadakichi category in 2016, the winner was a project revealing the problem of climate change via scents. The "Hortus Apertus" team also selected the nature issues: the disclosure of the (un)changing human relationship with nature in the contemporary urban world in the context of ancient hanging gardens phenomenon", says Reda Valentinavičienė, member of the group.

Some of the oldest gardens in the world, Mesopotamian gardens of Nineveh and Babylon, required enormous amounts of water and complex engineering solutions: they were surrounded by 95 kilometres of aqueducts and the trees required 300 tonnes of water per day. Yet that was a place where water was invaluable item for the greatest part of the year.

Many years have passed by and the modern human, longing for the nature, is enticing her into the cities. Les Jardins Atlantique du Gare de Montparnasse above railways, Jardins de Beaugrenelle on the roof of a shopping centre, MoMA Gardens in the Modern Art Museum in New York, Jardins Vertical in Chicago, Jardins de Skypark in Singapore - all these real hanging gardens in the height of 300 meters are only a few famous ones of the modern hanging gardens.

In 2014–2017 in Vilnius, a group of artists in olfactory art dived into anthropological and creative research: Why did people need and still need gardens? Is it possible to impart the illusion of garden through scents? How important are the scents of gardens and living space for humans? Does the scent affect *only* emotions and memories? On the basis of historical, anthropological and olfactory research material, personal experience and memories, the artists described different scents by using odour descriptors and redesigned them, authoring new creations. Among the exhibits are imaginations of the oldest historical gardens and explications of the scents of artificial, isolated and miniature gardens employing natural materials along with synthetic ones. The group of olfactory artists was led by professional perfumers Gael Peltier (France) and Laimė Kiškūnė (Lithuania); the team included seven artist who have accumulated no less than 5 years of olfactory exploration and creative experience.

"Hortus Apertus" usually create their projects in groups – due to the specifics of human olfactory system, teamwork makes an outstanding space for expressing fragrance composition ideas, so even when the work comes from a particular author, the group is a part of its birth history. This method has been communicated by Laimė Kiskunė, olfactory artist and professional perfumer who, together with Gael Peltier from France, is this a co-author of the project idea.

"Working in a group is always very exciting for each new member‘s input and output. The knowledge shared by exhibitor Gael – professional French perfumer with a remarkable personal and professional biography – provided "Hanging Gardens" project with a new note, and inspired the authors for research in the group, made creative process balancing between experimantal scent art object and more usual perfume format. We hope that the audience will unleash their sense of smell, and will be able to scent the differences between the "fine art" of the odour and perfumery, between naturalness and syntheticity", says Jurga Katakinaitė-Jakubauskienė, author of the scents.

The team has chosen light installation author Urtė Milda Širvinskaitė as their exhibition designer. Her main dilemma was to exhibit a scent so that the image does not mask the message of the odour. Therefore, olfactory artists present their works placed into hanging plexiglass hoods that are adapted for smelling, whose inside is filled with the odour. A person smelling them immediately plunges into the entire "vertical" of the scent, or, in other words, has the ability to inspire the entire volume of the odour in one breath. The domes are not closed, so with people and air moving around, the scents go out of their hoods and spread in the space, blending freely with each other, thus creating one more cumulative odour.

The exhibition "Hanging Gardens" emphasizes not just the odours, but also those who smell them. The main "exhibit" is the visitor of the exposition, because the exhibition gives the audience the opportunity to explore their own sense of smell, to develop it and consciously experience that it is the sense of smell that gives us the opportunity to realize that every moment is unique and incomparable.

The exhibition organizers invite their audience to get to know the scent culture: when it began, how the scents have manifested in the various arts, and how olfactory art has gradually become an independent branch of art. Therefore, the exhibition will be followed by lectures, workshops, experiential sessions, discussions on odours art and design, their possibilities of expression, the artistic and aesthetic education of human sense of smell, and the effects of sensations arts.

Aromata Mirabilia, the famous local manufacturer of natural cosmetics and products for aromatherapy hosted project participants in *Officina Artis Odorum* (odour mixing art studio).

The project is partially funded by the Lithuanian Council for Culture and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania.

Please find the entire programme of project "Hanging Gardens" at www.hortusapertus.lt