



THE ART OF ESTONIA

Adapting Modernity \ Provocations and Confrontations

10th May – 3rd July 2011

The National Museum in Warsaw

Aleje Jerozolimskie 3

The Art of Estonia. Adapting Modernity. Provocations and Confrontations is the first major exhibition of Estonian works of art presented in Poland after the Second World War. The exhibition shows works by the most remarkable Estonian artists active from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century until the 1940s (*Adapting Modernity*), and from the early 1970s until the present day (*Provocations and Confrontations*).

Adapting Modernity. Classics of Estonian Art in the First Half of the 20th Century

The exhibition, organized by the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, shows 120 works by the most outstanding classic Estonian artists, reflecting the most important personalities and artistic trends from the beginning of the 20th century until the 1940s. The displayed works come from the collection of the Art Museum of Estonia and from the Tartu Art Museum. They have very rarely been exhibited in Poland.

The exhibition is an overview of various faces of Estonian art: symbolism and illustrations for national sagas, impressionist and postimpressionist landscapes, works connected with the avant-garde of the 1920s, varieties of realism and colourism in the interwar period. Despite influences coming mainly from Saint Petersburg and Düsseldorf, and relationships with artistic circles in Paris and Berlin, the output of Estonian artists remains distinct in character.

Curators of the exhibition:

Tiina Abel (Art Museum of Estonia – Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn)

Katarzyna Nowakowska-Sito (The National Museum in Warsaw)

Provocations and Confrontations. A Perspective on Contemporary Estonian Art

The exhibition *Provocations and Confrontations* includes Estonian works of art known from international exhibitions of art and architecture, from the beginning of the 1970s until the present day. It consists of two parts. The part entitled *Provocations* expresses the artists' critical attitudes towards the issues of social violence, domestic violence, and

problems connected with sexuality. *Confrontations* concern ethnic conflicts and political changes.

The exhibited works belong to various trends of protest art, and to a considerable extent refer to the coexistence of the Estonian and Russian communities on one territory. This subject matter is represented e.g. in Kristiina Norman's film *Monolith*. It shows the escalation of a social conflict connected with the removal of the statue of the Bronze Soldier, a symbol of Soviet occupation, from the centre of Tallinn. The evolution of the position of women in the changing reality, and the economic crisis shown from the point of view of women workers at a plant facing imminent closure, are matters dealt with by Marge Monko in a video *Nora's Sisters*.

Many works are a reflection of the freedom of expression gained by Estonian artists in the 1990s. Using the language of provocation, they often confront various social, political, and economic problems. This can be found e.g. in *Invisible Pearls* by Jaan Toomik (generating discussion about the problem of self-mutilation among prisoners), or *Little Dramas* by Marko Mäetamm (showing the problem of domestic violence in the form of an imaginary, brutal vision). Sandra Jõgeva's *Guestbook of a Heart* is a provocative performance, in which the artist focused on the problems of spiritual and physical experience. Paradoxically, pain was experienced to a greater extent by the viewers than by the person whose chest was being tattooed.

Curators of the exhibition:

Eha Komissarov (Art Museum of Estonia – Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn)

Izabela Mościcka (The National Museum in Warsaw)

The exhibition *The Art of Estonia. Adapting Modernity. Provocations and Confrontations*, previously shown in the National Museum in Szczecin, is a result of a cooperation programme between the Szczecin and Warsaw museums concerning the presentation of the art of the Baltic Countries.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of lectures, mainly prepared by Estonian experts, film screenings and an educational programme. Necessary information about over 40 artists and artistic trends can be found in a comprehensive catalogue (text in Polish and English).

Sponsor of the exhibition:

Mazowiecka Spółka Gazownictwa Sp. z o.o.

The exhibition is supported by:

The Technological Partner of the National Museum in Warsaw – Samsung

