

## WORKS OF LATVIAN MEDALLISTS IN FIDEM CONGRESS EXHIBITION IN FLORENCE

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### ABSTRACT

Medal is a miniature to be held. As an art form medal has evolved from being decorative to purely modernistic in a sense of creative expression.

Many of Latvian medallists have a long experience in the field of medal art, working as sculptors and educators. Some artists have joined the Latvian Medal club recently.

Latvian national section of medal art was represented in FIDEM (International Medal Art Federation) XXXVII Congress exhibition in *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale* in Florence 2023 with 25 works by 15 artists of a living generation.

Sculptural styles of the exhibited art medals of Latvian medallists varied individually. Many medals were realistic. They accurately showed pictorial likeness of cultural personalities or allegorically depicted philosophical ideas and existential issues. More than few artists responded via means of a tiny art medal to events near and far away, for instance to the war in Ukraine. Then some medals were quite abstract and nonrepresentational while still successfully revealing a purposeful association. Couple of medals were merely decorative, inducing joyful visual perception. Mostly being low relief medals, these small sculptural works also differed in form, size and material. Round and rectangular medals appeared classical by traditional convention. Free shape medals were not restricted by pure geometry, but rather accented characteristic silhouette of a particular image. Eventually the technique of sculpture proved to be an important factor. Half of the medallists made casts, produced in general out of bronze. The rest fabricated their work of composed substances, ceramic materials or created medals in mixed media, even experimented in intermediate art form. Works of Latvian medallists are being collected. Latvian museums have a great number of medals in their stocks. There is the museum of medallic art at Dundaga castle with permanent as well as changing collections.

**Keywords:** *art, low-relief, medal, medallic art, medallist, small-size sculpture.*

### Introduction

Once in two years FIDEM (*Fédération Internationale de la médaille d'art*. International Art Medal Federation) organizes expositions, popularizes and promotes medallic art and facilitates research. Latvian medallists take part in these exhibitions of medals.

Medal art is a particular kind of miniature sculpting tradition. It could be appreciated in regards of its' appearance, as a traditional commemorative low-relief decoration or as a small-size three-dimensional fine art object.

Although medal art is a classical form of sculpture, the definition of the medal has become vague and undetermined lately due to modernistic approach to creativity. In the context of art medal's development, artistic problem is of interest: what are the characteristic features of current Latvian art medal? More than having a notion it seems appropriate to research the exact part of Florence 2023 FIDEM congress exposition performed by Latvian National delegation and thus explore the developmental tendencies of medallistic art and hence facilitate the collection of it.

The aim of current study is to examine the works of Latvian medallists in Florence 2023 FIDEM Congress exhibition. The method is theoretical research of medallistic art; process' study of making medals; an examination of the technical aspects of exhibition in Florence; art criticism and formal analyses of the works of Latvian medallists in Florence 2023 FIDEM Congress exhibition; and an appraisal of the collections of the works of Latvian medallists.

## Theoretical analyses

Art medal evolved in decorative arts but is regarded as a specialized form of fine art sculpture. Traditionally art is appreciated for being beautiful, it is a standard criterion. Another one is arts' truthfulness, when precise visual description – portrayal of the subject is shown. Such principles often manifest in academic and realistic medal art. Historically general public and artists had turned their taste from idealized to precise visual representation. But eventually interest shifted to a new art. (Salagnac, 2023, p. 99) So the main criterion chosen for modern medal appears to be novelty. Referring back in recent time, for instance, the style of simplified, generalized images of 1960s was replaced by more individualized concrete portrayal in the 1970s (Šmite, 1987), to be followed by art that is purely conceptual and where art and craft ideas can even be quoted in a new work. (Salagnac, 2023, p. 110) However some artistic practices seem to reappear. As it happens, the aspects of visual representation and non-uniform approach to art principles are controversial and, furthermore, stylistic differences do not help much to define the medal. Nevertheless, there is a common feature. The medal is a miniature and is favoured by many artists as a branch of sculpture.

Indeed, the medal is a generic term for a tiny portable artistic object. Literally the term "medal" sheers affinity to "a metal coin" (*moneta*). The production of coins and medals look similar. Often there is a sculpted or engraved model for a scale sized coin. This model could be kept, perceived, held and valued as the medal and edited in numbers.

Classical medal is a small relief. Informally, the size of the medal corresponds to that of a hand, it should fit in a palm. (Šmite, 1987) This means that the artwork could be touched, held, (FIDEM medals org.) passed and comfortably handled around. In a sense, the tactility of medal is an important feature accepted by medallist community.

If a medal is two-sided, front size- obvert has a portrait depicted on it; the other side-revert is allegorically figural, with inscription or depiction of heroic deeds. For better perception quite often the obvers and revers of the medal are fabricated and exhibited as separate pieces. (Odnoralov, 1983) Otherwise, there is a practical tendency to combine all visual information, showing it on just one-side. Therefore, one-sided medal nowadays is the most frequent one. Elaborate background with a principal image on it is an attempt to unify the medal and reveal the category of the medal's composition.

There are many categories or types of medals regarding genres: Portraits; History, also called the battle / war genre; (p. 16) Landscapes; Animals; Scenes of daily life, agricultural and industrial themes, architecture; Household / domestic genre; etc. (Kosareva, 1982, p. 16)

Individual style of artist differentiates genres and at the same time facilitates an interaction of medallic types. Definite pictorial elements determine particular type of medal and clarify the content of an image. Allegories and symbols in medallic art help to understand the plot of the story: laurels and palm tree symbolize victory; oak tree is a symbol of strength; muses are depicted as flourishing girls; animals and birds symbolize virtue and vice. Objects also are used to represent certain abstract notions: obelisk – immortality; scales – justice; ring – eternity. Memorial medals are often decorated with the crown of tree leaves, wreath and garland. All these details should be considered to build a representational, meaningful medal. (Odnoralov, 1983)

Medal making starts with a sketch. Fine proportions are transferred from the drawing to a background plain. Outlines are drawn with a pointed tool, modelling is done with a small wooden or metal tool, spatula. A well-established old sculptural technique is by pressing patches. Plasticine (modelling clay) can be applied with fingers and shaped with a sculpting tool. Various techniques can be combined to transfigure original two-dimensional design into three-dimensional relief. An image can protrude from the background in high, medium, low (Italian *alto rilievo*, *mezzo rilievo*, *basso rilievo*) degree or it can be sunken, id. est. incised (*intaglio*). (The Medal Maker. Film, 1929) Medals traditionally are in low-relief. It takes lot of skill to create the impression of volume employing the limited thickness of the model.

Enhanced depth and spatial illusion of an image is achieved by supplementing modelled parts of an extremely low-relief with graphic details. Lines drawn in linear perspective diminish and planes flatten towards vanishing point. (Odnoralov, 1983)

The development of medal-art changes the notion how the space is depicted. Pictorial area in classical medals is confined to a rim on the outer edge of the medal. Traditional medal has a concluded space in the round composition. In contrast, the medal with open volume has the form specified by an image. (Šmite, 1987) The whole medal is an image and surrounding space acts as a background. (Kosareva, 1982, p. 116)

Image is the essence of the medal, but text also contributes in conveying an idea. Text is a sign, most often it is a subordinate part of composition and aims to commemorate an event depicted in the medal. Text on obverse side traditionally is designed around periphery, text on revers side is more descriptive. (Odnoralov, 1983) Lettering as a rule is

sculpted in capital letters although there are variations. Lettering should be in harmony with the theme of the medal and letters frequently have symbolic meaning or decorative value. (Odnoralov, 1983) Lettering is often the most tedious part of modelling. The form of the letters is cut, shaped, sculpted in plasticine. Other technique for fine precision lettering is applying a cast (The Medal Maker. Film, 1929) or matrix.

Quite often artists not only build a model of the sculpture but also practically do all the mould making work (Skalberga, 2019, p. 102) and produce a cast by themselves. Nowadays many new materials for casting are at hand and offer many possibilities for making and finishing sculpture. The surface of medal can be brightened, texture can be hatched, outer layer can be polished, colour can be enriched by patinas and by enamels or paints. Many techniques of oxidation are well known for sculptors as surface finishes. Desirable shades can be achieved when chemical and mechanical processes, as well natural weathering are combined to enhance the interplay of light and shadow. (Šteinbergs, 2006) Although, much depends on the knowledge and experience of an artist, it is still the right balance between the craftsmanship and art that ensures quality and also leaves a place for experiment. (Salagnac, 2023)

Completed medal could be one-of-a-kind or depending on theme could be a part of a group. The medals of broader theme are united in a series. Some of related medals are put together in closed cycles with definite number of items. Other series are opened for further additions to be supplemented with new artwork. For the set of medals, the method of exposition is predetermined to show all individual pieces of artwork together, thus adding an extra meaning in the visual communication of the theme. (Šmite, 1987)

The exploration of themes and artistic possibilities leads to innovative trends and fashions in the contemporary European and global medallic art. The syncretism of various forms of art merges the boundaries of expression, resulting in original spatial solutions not typical of the low relief medal. (Mainski, 2021, p. 9) As an effect, the medal production is diverse and subject matter in the image of medals is restricted no more. With little or no impact of commissioned pieces, the themes of medals are chosen by artists themselves. Of course, medallic art reflects the values of an artist living in a society. Medals express concepts, comment on or commemorate certain aspects of life, depict current events, show portraits, reveal humanity. (Stevens-Sollman, 2020) But the medal does not have to be beautiful, instead it has to be precious. The philosopher's stone is artistic idea that converts the chunk of manipulated material into the precious item of medallic art. Once engraving machines allowed sculptors to challenge engravers, nowadays graphic artists use computer technology. The limits of expression seem to have disappeared. Medals are made by potters, painters, graphic artists and designers. One can notice diverse interpretations of what is a medal. A number of these artworks are small size sculptural objects, three-dimensional things, distinctive units, ready-made items, assembled pieces, or even virtual manifestations, each of them stylistically unique or remarkable and suggestive of plural definitions. Many artists started naming their work "medallic object".

Each FIDEM congress strives to broaden an understanding of medallic art, to expand the attributes of medal and to search new technologies of medal making, to encourage experimentation, to facilitate creativity. FIDEM operates in over 40 countries worldwide. (FIDEM medals org.) Federation aims to popularize medal art and to affirm its place among the arts; to increase the knowledge and to search technology and history of the medal art by the means of publicity. (FIDEM statutes 2016, p. 237)

## Methodology

FIDEM Florence 2023 exposition was held in the National Library. Magnificent *Biblioteca Nazionale* building is classical in its layout. The library has a splendid rotunda hall named after Dante. Premises and in particular this rotunda are frequently used for cultural events. It was there the international exhibition of contemporary medals was staged. (National Central Library of Florence) Medals were presented in showcases placed around the perimeter of the hall and adjacent hallway. Artworks in the Florence exhibition were displayed sorting medallists in to alphabetic order, thus, it was easy to find an artist, although the artwork not always harmonized with surrounding pieces. Nevertheless, medals were dispersed enough to keep sufficient distance in-between.

Florence 2023 exhibition had 542 pieces of artwork made by 375 medallists from 32 countries. Among them 15 Latvian artists showed a total of 25 individually crafted medals. (Skalberga, 2023) Each artist wrote a short statement for exhibition catalogue describing an idea behind the work that served as the concept of artists' creativity.

Bērziņš Andris makes medals that are round classic circles, regular in shape with low-relief realistic images. (Ludavičiene, 2022, p. 76) His portrait medals look classical in their artistic expression. (Mainski, 2021, p. 9) Long established values are present in his portrayals of outstanding individuals. (Skalberga, 2021, p. 79) He dedicated his two medals to the greats of Italian culture. "Dante il poeta eterno" medal shows half the figure in profile with the hands atop an opened book. Carefully modelled text is on the left side. "Verdi" medal is almost the same size, but the portrait of the composer is bigger in scale, it shows the composer in three quarter view. Lettering is placed above the head of an image and follows semi-circle direction. Artist sculpts in a classical manner. (Skalberga, 2018) He builds an image just with fingers, intricate details and lettering is formed with small wooden tool. His imagery is recognizable and sculptural form has the distinctiveness of plasticity. (Čaupova, 2023) His style is a bit expressive but in portraiture he achieves a high degree of likeness with the character. Both the medals are made of bronze, casts being done by artist himself.

Breģe Ligita (a younger generation artist) showed her medal "The war is not over" in a more philosophical non-figurative way. Small colourful synthetic material tubes, ready-made plastic plugs and amber pieces are packed by wrapping in the rectangular mesh of metallic grid. (Skalberga, 2023) She likens her composition to an envelope with a message about impersistent condition of the war. The whole structure looks like a shining tiny

cage with colourful material artefacts locked inside. It is a kind of assemblage construction. The artwork is fabricated by artist herself.

Burvis Ģirts showed his medal “Mount of lambs” in dedication to Johan Steinhauer and the brotherly congregations in Latvia. It depicts a landscape which is a frequently featuring motif in his art. (Skalberga, 2023) Transparent glass, representing sky or heavens, is melted over the lightly greyish stone used to depict a mountain with village. Panoramic view is produced by engraving the silhouettes of houses. Much softer curves and blurry dots depict clouds. As the medal is made of see-through material it could be perceived from both sides. The way of fabrication implies an eye-catching combination of glass and stone, two opposed materials. (Skalberga, 2021, p. 79) His technique is innovative, such materials were not used in the classical medallic art, especially when being fused. (Mainski, 2021, p. 9) Artist himself fabricated the medal.

Dzintare Vija Ilze (a senior generation artist) had two same size circular medals that could be viewed as illustrations for Divine Comedy. Both the medals depict human figure in a landscape scenery. Elements of nature and landscape motifs constantly feature in her medals. (Skalberga, 2023) “Forest of Delusion” shows a character, standing in the centre of composition. He is surrounded by a dense forest of vertical trunks of trees, he fears of being lost in the dark terrifying forest. The other medal “Storm” shows the sea landscape. Wild water is a metaphor for the unknown. (Skalberga, 2023) A tiny human figure kneels near the centre of the composition. A giant wave rises up. The wave has a texture of foam and bubbles. Both the medals are made of bronze. The surface of medals is patinated and polished to enhance the shading.

Franckeviča Ligita fabricated two medals depicting nature. This theme is omnipresent in her sculptures. (Province: LTV, 2007) Her medal “Nest I” could be considered as a high-relief sculpture. An image of a stylized decorative bird is shown wrapping its wings around three smaller eggs in a hug, in an almost protective posture. Overall form of an artwork looks quite spherical. Composition is nearly symmetrical. (Skalberga, 2023) Ochre brownish colour adds imaginative warmth associated with expression of love and tenderness. Medal “Nest II” looks more like a low-relief. Irregular roundly cornered and asymmetrically curved form depicts a profile of a bird. One can recognize its beaked head with circle eye and a long talon leg bent in an ankle. The style of these small form terracotta ceramic sculptures is skilfully laconic. (Skalberga, 2019, p. 99–104) Both the medals are fabricated by artist herself.

Grīnfelds Edgars in his medals usually deals with difficult subjects. (Skalberga, 2021, p. 79) He dedicated the artwork to Ukrainian people in their fight for independence. The medal commemorates The Liberation of the City of Kherson. This is a classical round low-relief medal. It shows a winged figure of a woman – the heroic angel bringing joyous message of victory. (Skalberga, 2023) In lifted arm she holds a wreath, in lowered arm she carries a heraldic shield with the sign of Ukraine’s coat of arms, the stylized trident. She is standing on the base of a ship, floating in the waters of the Dnieper. Subtly modelled rough waves seem to rush out of the incised square gates of a dam. Composition is symmetrical and lettering redoubles this sense of symmetry. Although this is a one side

bronze medal, it makes an impression of combined obvers and revers. Medal is cast by artist himself and it has a slight polish.

Jumītis Nils is an artist of the youngest generation. Being a student, he shows interest in tackling various materials. In artist's statement he speaks about space as a mental trap. Published artwork shows an abstract form consisting of curved streamlined base, that seems to be fabricated out of ebonite, and a delicate cylindrical chunk of fused, pressed or cast patterns. He skilfully combines various synthetic materials. (Skalberga, 2023) In turn, exhibited medal is square by its format, a rusty metal or steel plate with polished edges serves as a background and a rough die-cast baby-doll's face lies on it in the middle of composition. Small size of an artwork is in contrast with brutal but naturally colourful texture of the surface.

Mickeviča Māra portrays images filled with spirituality. Her laconic works are philosophical. (Skalberga, 2021, p. 79) She presented two medals. One of them is "The Power of the Sun". The seed of light radiates like divine essence, full of the synergy of positive emotion and thought. (Skalberga, 2023) Medal sends a message of hope to overcome difficulties and look for a sunny future. Low-relief is in the shape of stylized profile. Just in the middle of the head, half the disk of the shining sun is incised. Patinated ceramic medal looks gilded with light emerald green paint rubbed over. The other work "Creation" is artistic paraphrase of the Vitruvian man by Leonardo da Vinci. Medal depicts an idea of divine proportions. Work is symmetrical, its form is made of a square that overlaps a circle. Simple contour of a human body with outlined stretched hands and legs is depicted standing straight. Small bump in the centre indicates heart. Technique of the work is the same- patinated ceramic. Medal is treated with golden paint and greenish hue is smudged over revealing surface textures. Both the medals are fabricated by artist herself.

Nātriņa Inese showed a commemorative medal of poetess Amanda Aizpuriete. Medal affirms artist's enduring interest in portrait. (Skalberga, 2020) The medal is a classical low-relief, round in form. It portrays a middle-aged woman from the frontal view. Proportions are carefully modelled. Portrait has the likeness of the person, moreover a kind of emotion is depicted. Image is almost symmetrical, except hairstyle. Strands of thick hair are wavy on one side and straight and less voluminous on the other to spare place for lettering. Bronze medal is slightly patinated and has a fine polish.

Nikifs makes medals which are noted by different interpretation of corporeity when portraying the embodiment of physical world. (Skalberga, 2018) Artist presented two medals. The duality of the female and male nature is shown in the medal "He and She". The artwork communicates an idea of revolving polarities of masculinity and femininity. The medal is a low-relief. It depicts crouching figures. Image is meticulously modelled, with detailed anatomical features and textured hair. Medal is made of silver. The other artwork "Leonardo's cat" deals with animal motif. Image radiates grace and tenderness. (Skalberga, 2023) The medal is a paraphrase of the sketch by Leonardo da Vinci. Silhouette of animal's body defines the form of the medal. Intricate details are sculpted in low-relief and elaborate texture is incised. The medal is cast of acrylic resin by artist

himself, technique frequently applied in his previous works, but which is not familiar in the classical medallic art. (Mainski, 2021, p. 9)

Svetlana Saveljeva is distinctive figurative artist in Latvian medallic art. (Skalberga, 2021, p. 79) Representational proposal in her medals has been noticed earlier. She is experienced in making small sculptural objects. (Ludavičiene, 2022, p. 76) Her work can be characterized as the plastic expression of the medal and technical innovation concerning materials and techniques. (Gimeno, 2019, p. 26) Her medal “Oblivion” deals with a theme of sadness about temporality of life when memories turn into forgetfulness. This is an allegorical motif. The artwork has a rectangular form. The composition of the medal is nearly symmetrical. It shows a female body lying on her back covered with veil that reveals fine details of the forms beneath. The folds of drapery cloth are sculpted meticulously in low-relief. Anatomical details are modelled in high-relief. The surface is manipulated to enhance the expressive quality of shading, showcasing fine mastery in the design of this silver plaquette (medal). (Skalberga, 2023) The other work “Loral wreath” celebrates the greatness of achievement raised to eternity. Medal has a roundish form. Distinctive and elegant, weedy and slender curved laurel branch with leaves and drupe like berries in high-relief grows almost out of the field of tiny split plains of background and adds a sense of motion to this vibrant centric composition. Bronze medal is patinated by artist herself and has a fine polish to accentuate main details.

Strautiņš Bruno has developed an expression of sculptural structure. His medals comprise of lifted or hollowed forms that are highlighted, as well possess the plasticity of rounded volumes that stand out. (Čaupova, 2023) The variety of his art style is a constant quality. He uses allegory in a complex philosophical way to communicate ethical values. (Skalberga, 2021, p. 79) He showed two medals. One of them “The dream of forgotten ship” speaks about intersecting paradigms of reality and fantasy that oppose each other. Parts of depicted ship appear real but the whole image looks abstract and decorative. The form of the medal is a regular circle. The artwork is made in low-relief. Composition is well balanced. Upper part of the medal has a distinctive texture made of imprinted net. A droplet and a flux lay on it completing composition. The other medal “The personification of an archetype” has a slightly distorted round form and a rim. On the central axes there stands figure in a curved posture completely twisted in a wrap except a tiny hand positioned in the centre of the medal. The appearance of an image still reminds some classical statues. Background is plain and smooth, and a flux-splashed drop of tin is adjacent to the left side of the figure. The blend of materials looks harmonious. (Skalberga, 2023) Both the medals are made of golden-brown bronze, except the outpour of silverish tin, and are patinated and polished. The casts are done by artist himself.

Strupulis Jānis favours the standard type of low-relief. (Šmite, 1987) He has developed the basic forms of traditional medals and the methods of sculpting small size works. (Čaupova, 2023) His portraits are classical. (Mainski, 2021, p. 9) Depicted images communicate beauty and truth (Skalberga, 2018), and his medals are precise documents of important occurrences. In the exhibition he presented three medals on momentous issue. The triptych shows anxiety and existential suffering ignited by the war. (Skalberga, 2023)



These artworks are dedicated to graffiti of British artist Banksy in war torn Ukraine. Although medals slightly differ in size, they can be considered as a series, due to the unified theme, rectangular shape and the same pictorial style and lettering type. Medals are the transfers of original artwork on the walls of destroyed buildings. All three medals have graffiti image depicted as a sunken plain and have roughly textured foreground. “Two children. Banksy, Kyiv” shows depiction of a boy and a girl swinging over the broken tank trunk. Composition is balanced, diagonal. “Young boy defeating a grown man. Banksy, Borodyanka” shows a judo match of a young boy throwing black belted adult to the ground (literally meaning Ukraine defeating Putin’s Russia), the background pictures half-broken real wall with cracks and ruins of bricks. “A female gymnast. Banksy, Borodyanka” shows a young female doing a handstand amid ruins of the building. Composition is symmetrical. Background is textured as well, picturing damage of the real wall. Lettering in all three medals is carefully done, maintaining individual art style. Various font types are constantly elaborately modelled with the same diligence as the features and details of an image. (Čaupova, 2023) Each work of this set is patinated and polished by artist himself to enhance visual quality.

Urtāne Antra showed the medal “Shimmering substance”. Her artwork expresses the joy of creation. (Skalberga, 2023) The medal is supposed to evoke the association of experiencing chaotic shimmering particles that will reshape into live substance. The form of artwork is round. On its field more than a dozen tiny tubes are scattered randomly and fixed irregularly to the surface. Each of these minutiae particles are bent and folded at a sharp angle. Medal is made of brass using mixed technique. Artistry is similar to that of assemblage, it even resembles jewellery.

Zemīte Gunta is an artist of older generation. Her medals are bright-coloured. In her works she combines contrasting materials to achieve attractiveness. (Skalberga, 2023) She fabricated series of two medals/ small size objects. One of them – “Metamorphosis” is about never-ending change around us. The artwork has a symmetrical composition. Medal is made of metal hinge that is used as the base and of yarn threads that are pierced, pushed and pulled through the holes and fixed in a knot. Ready-made bronze hinge has an elaborate silhouette. Stiches of red, bluish-green, dark blue ultramarine and yellow threads create geometrical pattern of lines that in colour and texture contrast with metal base. The other artwork “Today” deals with the theme of values. It shows square bronze metal base with holes in the corners. Greenish-blue thread of wool yarn is pushed through the holes and spread diagonally creating criss-cross pattern. Ready-made iron key is sewed and fastened to the base. Composition is almost symmetrical. The technique of both the medals/object resembles fibre art.

## Discussion

According to allotted quotas 15 Latvian artists showed a total of 25 individually crafted medals. (Skalberga, 2023) (In comparison with Tokyo 2020 exposition where 20 Latvian sculptors participated with 35 artworks, (Skalberga, 2020) or with Ottawa

2018 Exhibition where 14 Latvian sculptors submitted 24 medals.) (Skalberga, 2018) Of those 25 artworks 15 medals were die-cast and 10 medals were fabricated (There were no die-struck medals). Almost half of the medals were made of bronze. Many of the works analysed above have been shown in other international, regional and local exhibitions. The majority of the participants of National delegation are the most active representatives of Latvian Medallist Art Club. (Skalberga, 2019) After Florence exposition the number of Latvian individual members of FIDEM has grown. They are medallists of different age, old (b. 1940) and young (b. 2002), including professors and students, art and design professionals and recent graduates. Their output is artistically valuable and culturally significant.

The works by contemporary artists and previous generations' skilled masters have been collected. Many notable museums started as the Cabinets of curiosities, also known as wonder-rooms, and now are respectable museums holding impressive collections. (Kosareva, 1982, p. 15) There are medals in a number of museums in Latvia. A lot of the artworks of such kind are in the Collection of Sculpture and Objects at the National Museum of Art. Moreover, a permanent show of medallist art opened in Dundaga at the medieval castle in 2008. A total of 426 (up-to-date 500) artworks are exhibited there. Most of the displayed items of this particular collection there are produced by Latvian artists: 32 medallists in total. A number of medals were fabricated during annual Dundaga Medal art symposium. (Skalberga, 2024) Thus determination and efforts are put to preserve, promote and celebrate medal art.

## Conclusion

The medal is open to individual interpretation. Current system affirms miniature size and tactility, assuming that the artwork is three-dimensional. Medals differ in genre and sculptural form. The classical process to make a medal is by modelling, the illusion of space can be enhanced with the help of linear perspective. Lettering is carefully added to comment the image and to reflect on the theme. Visual symbols are used to convey an idea. Copies can be made by casting (or striking) or by fabricating. Fine finishing is done by applying various patinas or paints.

Latvian medallists of many generations participated in FIDEM Florence 2023 exhibition. 15 Latvian artists showed a total of 25 individually crafted medals. Some artworks counted as representational pieces. A couple of medals had a portrayal of culturally significant personalities or had an illustration of classical literature. Quite many artists dedicated their works to current events, such as the war in Ukraine, pictured resistance to aggression and via artistic means expressed solidarity. A number of works showed human empathy and interaction. A couple of medals expressed concern about nature. There were also works that dealt with existential questions. Some medallists used citations of popular artworks and employed symbols of culture. As to the subject representation style, images emerged in a realistic, decorative or abstract form. Each medallist had developed individual artistic style, every medal had a distinctive accomplished form.

Such multitude rendering of ideas resulted in low-reliefs and miniature size sculptures id. est., small plastic fine art. In Florence 2023 exhibition Latvian medallists showed only cast medals and fabricated ones, and the technology of production proved to be skilful. Still majority of artworks were classical medals, although not a few were to a great extent modernistic or conceptual. Among works there were round and rectangular medals / plaquettes, and free silhouette sculptural pieces. Creative expression also included intermediate forms of visual art. Taking into account the laborious and time-consuming process of making the medal, the current developmental tendencies of medallistic art are towards: diversity of chosen subjects; free expression of form; and fabrication in mixed media. Evolution of this miniature art form looks promising.

The significance of research is the endeavour to record and describe the works of Latvian medallists in FIDEM XXXVII Congress exhibition. Latvian medal art has been appreciated. Artists have donated their medals to National museums. A lot of these valuable miniature items have enriched existing as well as recently established collections, such as the exhibition of medals in Dundaga castle.

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