



Inauguration of the contemporary art environmental object LATS

On 10 January, the monument dedicated to our national currency – the contemporary art environmental object LATS – was inaugurated beside the Castle of the Livonian Order. In 2014, shortly after joining the euro area, the Deputy Director and leading researcher of the Ventspils Museum, Armands Vijups, came up with the idea of a memorial dedicated to our former national currency – the lats – which would be preserved in the urban environment and remind of the lats as one of our national symbols in addition to the coat of arms, flag, and the anthem.

After long discussions, it was agreed that the environmental object would be located on the hillfort near the River Venta. Before that, it was suggested that it should be located on the Market Square, in the area of the intersection of Tīrgus iela and Pils iela, on the Town Hall Square or in the area of Pils iela at the intersection of Pils iela and Jāņa iela, etc.

The initial idea of Armands Vijups was much more modest than that of the 'Salmon' inaugurated on 10 January. Initially, he had suggested to create the environmental object as 'coins scattered on the pavement' by embedding some larger coins of lats and santims and a commemorative plate in the pavement at a particular place in the city. In the early 2021, a memorial design tender was announced. A total of 21 projects were submitted thus reaching a record number. . The contract was awarded to the joint project by the well-known sculptor Gļebs Panteļejevs and the architect Andris Veidemanis which depicts a salmon jumping out of the 1 lats coin.

Ventspils is historically associated with the lats. In 1926, the silver lats coins minted in London were unloaded in Ventspils, which is a random, yet significant historical fact. The idea of a memorial dedicated to the lats is original in the context of the Baltic states; however, it is not new in the light of the experience of other countries. A memorial dedicated to the drachma – the ancient Greek currency which was used 2500 years ago – is set in Athens, while in the city of Fuengirola in Spain we can find the Peseta monument celebrating the old pre-euro currency, but in the city of Rieti in Italy – a monument to the Italian lira. Now Ventspils has joined these memorials and monuments; however, it is not just any memorial but, in terms of the artistic design, undoubtedly the most beautiful memorial, which demonstrates that we have not forgotten and are able to respect and honour our history.