

Angel for Kaunas  
European Capital of  
Culture 2022

BY SCULPTOR MARIT BENTHE NORHEIM



# SMILE

– a mobile sculpture as a symbolic portrait of Stasé Samuleviciénė; the Lithuanian receiver of the Order of Smiles.

-with incorporated sound by composer Tonje T. S. Norheim



## Introduction:

In September of 2021, my sculptural installation Rolling Angels became part of the European Capital of Culture, Kaunas22 and their wish to bring renewed energy and optimism to the tiny and traumatized town; Linksmakalnis. I understand that wish, after my visit to this place that is heavily loaded with memories and trauma from the Russian and the German occupation periods – and now a town where cheap accommodations gave opportunities for vulnerable people to inhabit the town.

The European Capital of Culture, Kaunas22, is aiming at creating a feeling of unity and new identity by bringing art which incorporates social participation and involvement to Linksmakalnis. The art piece Rolling Angels which consist of 15 mobile sculptures in concrete, all of them modelled around old metal rubbish-bins, with

music from composer Geir Johnson, was brought in from Germany where they had been used by Kunsthaus Dresden in relation to the 75th commemoration of the bombardment of Dresden during the 2nd World War. The sculptures were rolled into large antifascist/neo-Nazi-demonstrations as peace- and art-activist tools. I also created two site-specific angel sculptures for Kunsthaus Dresden that are now part of their permanent collection and use.

Artists have a long tradition in working with the symbol of the hybrid-being that the angel is – in all religions and cultures. In the contemporary art world, it is in many ways a tabu to work with this common symbol, which I think is able to bring keys to all sorts of people in daring to get closer in relating to art. I believe that that the few remaining symbols that we share in the public space – across time, cultures, social background and age may get new actuality and importance if we take them seriously.

## Production of a new artwork for the Angel Museum of Linksmakalnis.

A few years ago The wife of the major of Linksmakalnis made an Angel Museum in their town hall which is situated in the old military barracks reception. The contemporary circus director Roberto Magro continued the idea of giving the irrational angel creatures significance in this little town. He involved acrobats and the local population in making angels visible. In this context my Rolling Angels were brought in almost a year ago and these 15 sculptures have been in use by the European Capital of Culture Kaunas22 as symbols of hope and comfort.

My new angel sculpture which is in the making, will join the flock of Rolling Angels this autumn and will stay on after the rest of the flock will return to Denmark. The collaboration with Roberto Magro will continue during the European Capital of Culture year 2022, where the Rolling Angels and the Angel of Smile will be used as part of his project “Radio Angels”.

## An angel of Smiles

My idea for the angel that I am in the process of making specifically to use and to keep in the village of Linksmakalnis, is based on the creator of Fluffies and children’s books; Stasé Samuleviciené (1906-1988)

I exhibited in the National Art Museum, M.K Cirlionis, in Kaunas in 1995. When I visited Lithuania, I became fascinated with their folkloristic art and also with their wooden religious sculptures. I was drawn by the seriousness that I could identify with in the Nordic attitude. I could also sense the tragedy, as well as a melancholic beauty.

This is also when I bought a small booklet with the main theme of Smile, about Stasé Samuleviciené. I became fascinated by her story and creations. She received the Polish Order of Smiles, for her caring ways and her ability to bring smiles into people’s lives, despite difficult experiences in her own life which made her recognize vulnerability and ambiguity. This Order of Smiles was previously given to a. o. the Pope, Mother Theresa and Astrid Lindgren. As I was thinking of how to include SMILES into an angel – I was suddenly struck with a clear image of The Angel of Smiles – based on Stasé Samuleviciené: – A very expressive and playful Angel of



Stasé Samuliviciené and the book about her

[Link to the book](#)

Smiles, with underlying melancholy. This angel appeared in my mind first and foremost with very playful wings. Curly and quite large in relation to the figure. The tip of the wings will touch the head of the angel. Maybe in a way that will make the viewer wonder whether the wings grow out of her head - as her great thoughts of inspiration, or as wings touching her – for her to be able to create. The Angel sculpture will smile in a subtle way – maybe a bit like gargoyles – curious, intriguing and mischievous.

## **Specially composed electronic music to be incorporated into the sculpture.**

I am modelling The Angel of Smile over an old rubbish bin as armature – like all the other Rolling Angels. -This way there is also created a fine sound space inside the sculpture.

The composer Geir Johnson who made the electronic compositions for all the Rolling Angels, unfortunately died in the autumn of 2021. He should have made the music for "The Angel of Smile". But now I have asked my daughter Tonje T. S. Norheim [www.mirrorship.com](http://www.mirrorship.com), who is a composer and educated at the Aarhus Music Conservatory to create a new composition for this sculpture. Geir has been a mentor for her and it will be a beautiful homage to him as well as to Stasé Samuleviciéné.

## **Measures and materials**

Here are a few sketches, and a model in three dimensions in measurements 1:7

Height 1,8m x Width 1,5m x Length 1m

Recycled rubbish bin, recycled armature metal, wheels, concrete, resin/fiberglas

## **Sustainability**

I have always been using recycled and recyclable materials in my artworks. All the metal being used as armature and construction comes from scrapyards. The traditional building materials that I am using are being researched into at the moment to find more sustainable solutions which include recycling and decreasing of CO2 emissions.







Model in scale 1:7



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Rolling Angels in Dresden 2021