

Lettisches Nationales Kunstmuseum

Riga 2024

Eigene Bilder
Teil 7

Sonderausstellung

DEADLY SERIOUS ROLANDS KAŅEPS

Rolands Kaņeps (1925, Riga – 2011, New York) is not only an outstanding painter but also a refined connoisseur and collector of antiquities. He began his artistic education in Latvia, in the art studio of Jūlijs Matsons and Jānis Roberts Tūlbergs. The teaching staff also included Karlis Brencis, whose book *Ka vecie lielmeistari darīdāja savas gleznas* [How the Old Great Masters Made their Paintings] served as a source of reference in his later life. World War II radically intruded upon Rolands Kaņeps' life, in autumn 1944, having been captured in the streets of Riga, he ended up in Germany, moving to Austria a few months later. Kaņeps continued to paint and participate in exhibitions in Salzburg, Graz, Linz and this determination was further strengthened by the positive feedback from art professionals.

In 1949, Kaņeps found the opportunity to leave for the USA, and New York becomes his city. While living in this epicentre of art and culture, Rolands Kaņeps nevertheless remained indifferent towards the new artistic movements of the second half of the 20th century. Likewise, Kaņeps did not quite fit into the overall picture of émigré Latvian art and did not conform to the conventions of Latvian identity.

Rolands Kaņeps was a sought-after and highly regarded interior designer, yet to this occupation he devoted only such an amount of his time as not to interfere with his painting. In the late 60s and 70s,

Kaņeps' works almost never appear in exhibitions, his heyday came in the decades that follow. The impasto expression of his early works is replaced by its complete opposite – a sharp drawing, clear, varnished brushwork, an almost mathematically planned composition. Kaņeps' modest, cabinet-sized shade in Manhattan, fitted with perfect furniture from different centuries and finds from antique shops, brought there by owners out of ignorance, was a gathering place of writers and artists. Yet in this whirlwind of bohemia Kaņeps remains reclusive in the most important matter – painting for the sake of himself and the art of painting.

Rolands Kaņeps was captured by the elegance of 16th century Mannerism and the ease with which artists played with the artistic ideals of the preceding centuries. In Biblical scenes, the sensuality and aesthetics of the bodies oddly dominate over the Christian ideas contained in the work, offering a biting irony about the 'noble' values of the society of his time. It turned out that the artist as well as his work can also be annoying.

In decoding Kaņeps' interpretations of ancient myths, the works' titles play a significant role. When approached during exhibitions or among people close to him Kaņeps was a good storyteller, yet the artist's commentary has only been preserved for a few works. Even in these conversations, while barely touching on what is important, he digresses to provocatively trivial details as though never fully trusting his listener.

The contents of Kaņeps' works are also often linked to his homosexuality, which was not a secret, yet this aspect of life was never mentioned. Nudity and eroticism in his mythological subjects are a direct reference to the means of ruining a man available to an Olympian / earthly goddess. The creatures painted by Kaņeps possess power and energy to disarm, fool or kill a man, or simply run away and lead exciting lives in a demonic environment. They succeed in upending God's designs through their independence. Kaņeps also picks out rarely-mentioned biblical or mythical episodes, turning them through a simple re-telling into a drama of questionable morals, where even the traditionally positive hero no longer appears that way.

In 2017, Rolands Kaņeps' works arrived in Latvia as a request to the collections of the LNMA and the Global Centre for Latvian Art (PLAC). In 2020, PLAC held an exhibition of Rolands Kaņeps' works under the title *Tēls karusēlis* [Carnival of Images]. The exhibition at the LNMA will for the first time present the artist's works in one place. For the making of the exhibition, I appreciate the helpfulness and the research conducted by literature theorist and poet Kārlis Viedīdols and art historian Vija Ozoliņa. I am grateful to Juris Stahovskis for the opportunity to consult the materials in the family archive and the professional skill of graphic artist Inga Čarāne.

Exhibition curator: Iļse Putniga

Exhibition design concept: Elons Rāms

EUROPA
ATVADAS
1968

THE FAREWELL
OF EUROPE

1968

oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm

When the artist was in the United States, he was deeply influenced by the American Abstract Expressionists, particularly by the work of Jackson Pollock. This influence is evident in the bold, expressive brushstrokes and the vibrant, non-representational colors of the painting. The work is a departure from the traditional figurative style of the artist's earlier work, embracing a more abstract and emotional approach. The painting is a testament to the artist's exploration of new artistic languages and his engagement with the contemporary art scene of the late 1960s.





AVILAS
TERÉZE

1973

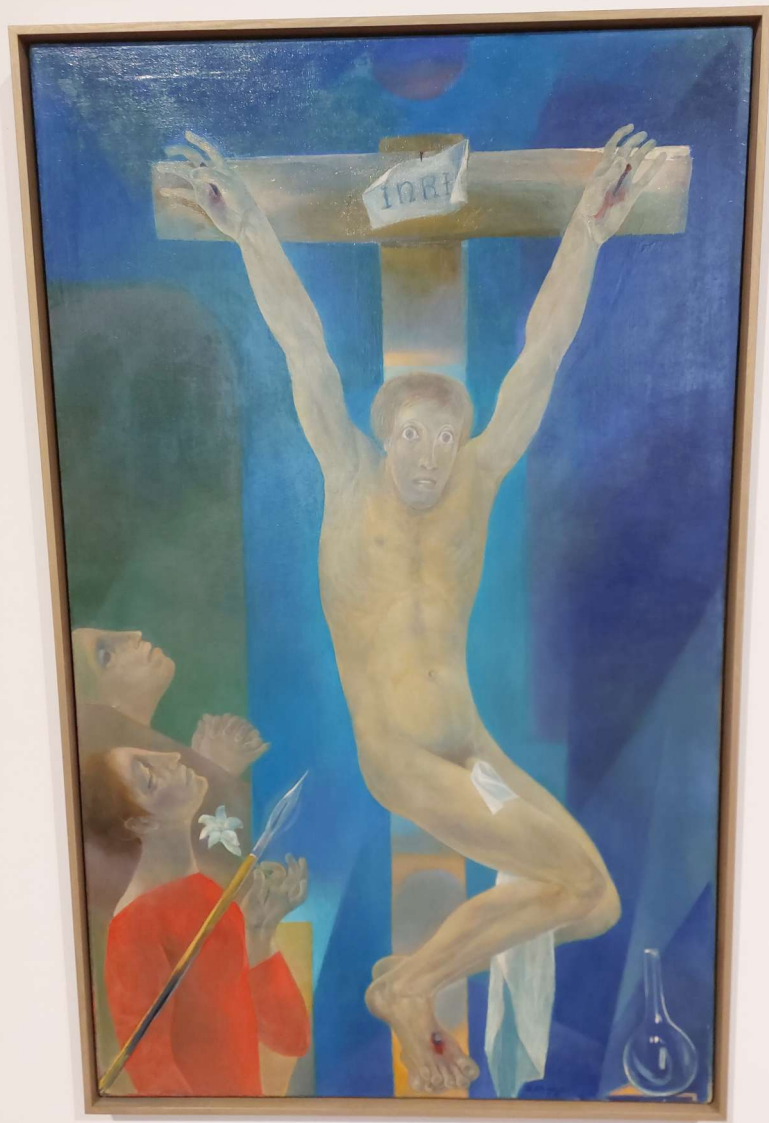
Avilillas, 42x54
(1973) 42x54 cm

TERESA
OF ÁVILA

Oil on canvas
Collection of ANMA

Antoni Tàpies' 'Avilas Teréze' (1973) is a large, abstract painting that depicts the mystic Teresa of Ávila. The work is characterized by its vibrant, geometric colors and the central figures of Teresa and a man, both with halos, set against a background of blue, green, and purple. The painting is a testament to Tàpies' mastery of abstraction and his ability to convey spiritual themes through color and form.

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JUDĪTE

JUDITH

1980

Audekls, eļļa
LNMM kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of LNMA

Judīte ir vienīgais bibeliskais tēls, kura lūgusi Dieva palīdzību būt izmanīgai melotājai. Lai viņas mānīgie vārdi ievainotu un nogalinātu tos, kuri plāno asinsizliešanu Jeruzalemē. Judīte nolēma dzimtā ciema aizstāvību un smago kara gaitu ņemt savās rokās. Grezni tērpusies, lai aizmiglotu ikviena skatu, viņa kopā ar kalponi dodas uz ienaidnieka skatu, kad iebrukums ciemā būs veiksmīgs. Palet dot ziņu, mierīgas dienas, Holoferns uzlūdz Judīti pāris kura laikā viņš dzer vairāk, kā jēkad Judīti uz mielastu, ir dzēris. Pēc īsas lūgšanas Judīte ar paša zobenu divos cirtienos nocērt galvu. Tapt nogalinātam no sievietes rokas ir vīrieša lielākais negods.

Judith is the only Biblical character to have asked God's help in becoming a shrewd liar. So that her misleading words would wound and kill those who are planning bloodshed in Jerusalem, Judith decided to take the defence of her native village and the difficult course of war in her own hands. Dressed luxuriously in order to blind everyone, and the her maid she heads to the enemy encampment, together with tent of Assyrian general Holofernes, promising to tell him when the attack on the village has been successful. After several calm days, Holofernes invites Judith to a feast during which he drinks more than he has drunk in his entire life. After a short prayer with two strikes Judith severs his head with his own sword. Being murdered by the hand of the woman is man's greatest dishonour.



HĒRODIJA
UN SALOME
AR JĀNA
KRISTĪTĀJA
GALVU

HERODIAS
AND SALOME
WITH THE HEAD
OF JOHN THE
BAPTIST

1978

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA

Salome ir realizējusi mātes vēlmi un uz sudraba paplates atnesusi nocirsto pravieša Jāņa Kristītāja galvu. Šī ir toksiska meitas *fille fatale* un māte *femme fatale* savienība. Bībele minētas vairākas negantas sievietes, kuru seksualitātes nāvējošais valdzinājums liek vīrietim zaudēt galvu. Pati pirmā, kas sagādāja nepatīkšanas, pacienājot ar gardo augli, bija leva.

Salome has fulfilled her mother's wish and brought the severed head of the prophet Saint John the Baptist on a silver platter. This is a toxic union of daughter, *fille fatale*, and mother, *femme fatale*. The Bible mentions several unruly women, the deadly allure of whose sexuality make men lose their heads. The very first to cause trouble was Eve by offering the delicious fruit.



SFINKSA

SPHINX

1980

Audekls, eļļa
LNMM kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of LNMA

Sfinksa jau labu laiku uz šauras klinšu takas terorizēja ceļiniekus pirms Tebām. Notupusies uz ceļiem Edipam, stāsta savu miklu. Aiza zem viņas jau pilna ar nelaimīgajiem, kuri viņas miklu nav atminējuši. Edips šo slaktiņu izbeidza, atminot miklu, un Sfinksa, atbilstoši mītam, ielēca aizā un nositās. Tomēr Edipa nezināšana atklājas turpmāko notikumu gaitā - kā tas bija iepriekš prāvētots, viņš Tebās nogalināja savu tēvu un apprecēja māti.

For some time, Sphinx has been terrorising travellers on a narrow mountain path before Thebes. Squatting on Oedipus' knees, she is telling her riddle. The ravine beneath her is already full of the unfortunates who have failed to solve her riddle. Oedipus puts an end to this slaughter by solving the riddle and, according to the myth, Sphinx jumped into the ravine to her death. Yet Oedipus' ignorance is revealed over the course of subsequent events - as prophesied, in Thebes he murdered his father and married his mother.



LILITA UN TRĪS DIEVA SŪTĪTI ENĢEĻI

LILITH AND THE THREE ANGELS FROM GOD

1990

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA

Lilita ir būtne, kuru Dievs radīja tajā pat laikā un no tā pašā materiālā kā Adamu. Peva ievēro, ka līdzvērtīgi būtnei, un turpmāko notikumu gaita liecināja, ka viņas pieņemtie lēmumi bija patstāvīgi un pretrunā Dieva sākotnējai iecerai. No Adama aizbēdzas atstāvot Alkāt, Lilitas pēc tālāk veda neizdevās atstāt Alkāti, Lilita pēc tam veda uz Sarkano jūru un tur viņa atrada sev tikamu demonišķo vidi. Lilita spēja ienemt arī čūskeidīgās formas un, iespējams, Edenes dārza, tā bija viņa, kura rosināja Ievu iekosties abolā.

Lilith is a creature made by God at the same time and from the same material as Adam. She saw herself as an equal creation and the course of events that followed shows that her decisions were independent and contrary to God's original design. Even the three God-sent angels could not bring Lilith back to Adam. Lilith's path led farther to the Red Sea where she found a demonic environment to her liking. Lilith could also take the form of a serpent, and possibly it was her, who encouraged Eve to take a bite from the apple in the Garden of Eden.



NYX. NAKTS

NYX. NIGHT

1992

Audekls, eļļa
LNMM kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of LNMA

Nyx piederīga pasaules radīšanas pirmspēkam. Sākotnējā tumsā bija melns putns, kas izdēja zelta olu un daudzus gadus to perēja, no olas tapa debesis, zeme un ūdens. Nyx mājvieta ir pazemes dzīles Tartarā zem pašas radītās pasaules. Tā pārvietojās straujos divu zirgu vilktos ratos. No šī speka varenības pat Zevs baidījās.

Rolands Kņeņs - sākumā bija nekas, tumsa, tumsa, tumsa un haoss. Tumsa un nakts ir divas dažādas lietas. Nakts brauc savā ekipāžā pa pasauli riņķi pa tumsu, un piepeši viņai rokās sudraba ola
Grieķu mitoloģijā, savienojoties Hronosam (Laikam) un Anankei (Neizbēgamībai), no olas izšķīlās hermofroditiskā dievība Phane / Protogonos - visa dzīvā rašanās pirmelements.

Nyx belongs to the primary force that created the world. In the primeval darkness there was a black bird that laid a golden egg and brooded it for many years, the egg became the sky, the land and the water. The home of Nyx is in the depths of the underground in Tartarus, under the world that is her own creation. She travels in a dashing cart drawn by two horses. Even Zeus himself feared the might of this force.

Rolands Kņeņs - In the beginning there was nothing, darkness, darkness, darkness and chaos. Darkness and night are two different things. The night travels in its cart around the world in darkness, and suddenly she holds a silver egg.

In Greek mythology, the union of Chronos (Time) and Ananke (Inevitability), results in the birth from the egg of the hermaphroditic deity Phanes / Protogonos - the primary element of all life.



**MARIJA
MAGDALĒNA,
SAŅEMOT DEBESU
ATSPIRDZINĀJUMU**

**MARY MAGDALENE
RECEIVING THE
HEAVENLY
REFRESHMENT**

AP/CA 1980

Audeklis, eļļa
LNMM kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of LNMA

Kaut arī te šēž tikai Marija, ir jāpiemin arī viņas māsa Marta, jo abas ir viens simbols un abām būtu jāiet kopā, apvienojot lūgšanu un darbību. Marta nes dievišķā pārmetuma smagumu, ka pazaudē sevi liekās nodarbēs, Marija – uzslavas smagumu, jo pratusi izvēlēties labāko. Engelim, kurš pasniedz Marijai ko veldzējošu, rokas nelēcas zieds, kas uzplaucis vietā, kur pēc Jezus sišanas krustā asaras lējusī Jaunava Marija. Marija nav isti klātesoša, eņģeļa skatiens pievērsts dūjai, kas cenšas blāvi mirdzošo nimbu noturēt virs sievietes galvas.

Although only Mary is seated here, her sister Martha should also be mentioned, since both are the same symbol and both ought to go together, joining prayer and action. Martha carries the weight of divine reproach for losing herself in unnecessary activity, Mary – the weight of praise for having had the awareness to choose the better part. The angel who hands Mary something refreshing, is holding a carnation that blossomed in the place where Virgin Mary shed tears after the crucifixion of Jesus. Mary is not truly present, the angel's gaze is turned to the dove trying to hold the dimly shining nimbus over the woman's head.



VENERAS IZMISUMS

THE DESPAIR OF VENUS

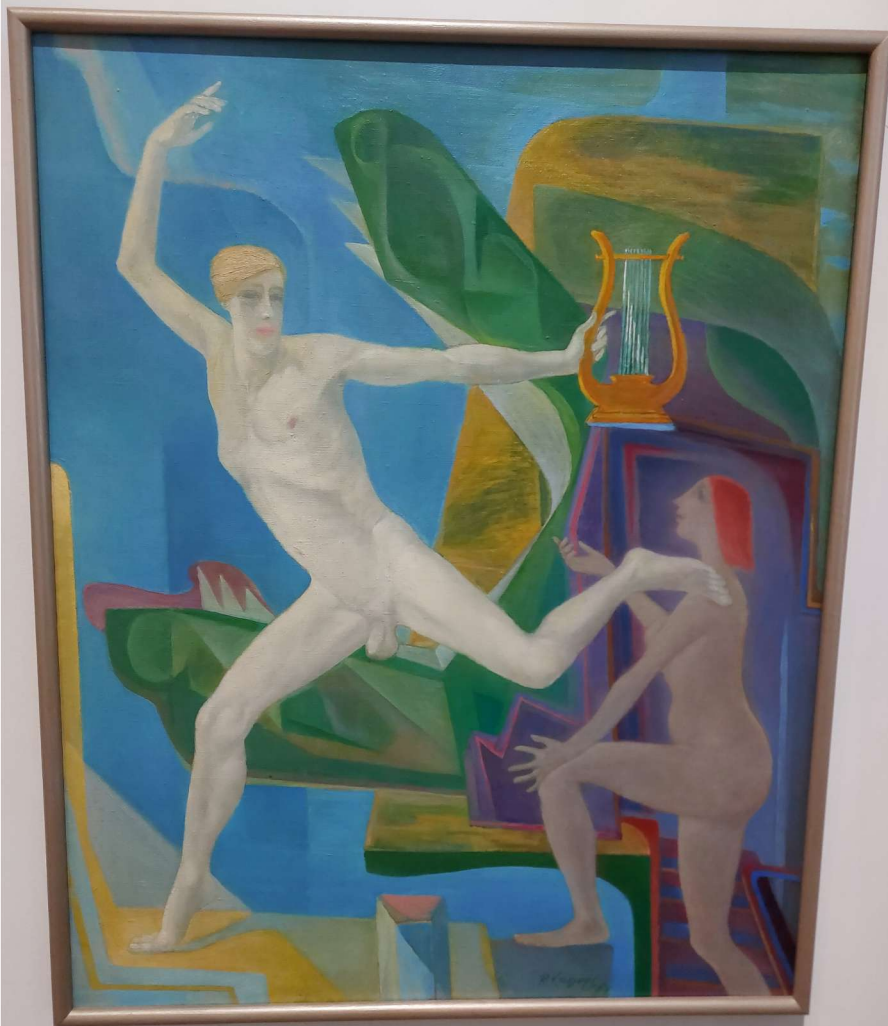
1975

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA

Veneras un Adonida traģiskais mīlasstāsts. Kad Venera bija romantiski noskaņota, viņa laidās pie mīlotā gulbja mugurā. Venera bija arī kaislīga medniece, dodoties medīt, viņa lūdza arī kaislīga neiet mežā, bet Adonids bija pārgalvīgs, iemaldījies biezoknī, nespēja izvairīties no mežacūkas uzbrukuma, kas viņu nāvējoši uzplēsa ar ilkņiem. Cūka patiesībā bija daudz niknāks ienaidnieks - greisirdīgais dievs Arejs, kurš arī bija iekārojis Veneru.

This is the tragic love story of Venus and Adonis. When Venus was in a romantic mood, she travelled to her beloved on a swan. Venus was also a passionate hunter, and heading out for a hunt she asked her beloved not to enter the forest, yet Adonis was rash and, having strayed into the forest, she not avoid the attack of a boar, which gored him to death with its tusks. The boar in fact was a more fearsome enemy - the jealous god Ares, who also desired Venus.



ORFEJS UN EIRIDĪKE

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

1984

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA

Stāsts par Orfeju un viņa mīloto sievu, kura kāzu dienā mirst no čūskas kodiena. Orfejs nolemj doties uz mirušo valstību un atgūt sievu. Viņa spēlētajai mūzikai tur bija lielāka vara kā fiziskam spēkam un ieročiem. Tomēr stāsts ir skumjš, jo Orfejs neizpildīja nosacījumu – neskatīties atpakaļ, līdz sasniegta virszeme. Orfejs atskatījās, bet Eiridike tikai ar vienu kāju bija spējusi izkāpt no pazemes. Otro iespēju dievi nedeja. Visā grieķu Olimpā Orfejs ir vienīgais varonis, kurš visdziļāk pabijis ellē.

This is the story of Orpheus and his beloved wife, who dies from a snakebite on their wedding day. Orpheus decides to head into the kingdom of the dead and recover his wife. The music that he plays has greater power there than physical force and weapons. Yet this is a sad story, because Orpheus fails to follow one condition – not to look back until the surface has been reached. Orpheus looked back while Eurydice had managed to only get one foot out of the underworld. The gods did not give him a second chance. In the entire Greek Olympus, Orpheus is the only hero to have travelled so deep into hell.



**AMORS UN
PSIHE**

**AMOR AND
PSYCHE**

AP/CA 1980

Audeklis, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA





KENTAURS

CENTAUR

1990

Audeklis, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA

ARIADNE UN DIONIŖSS

ARIADNE AND DIONYSUS

1986

Audeklis, eļļa
LNMM kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of LNMA

Ariadne ir Krētas valdnieka Minoja meita, kura ar mirdzošu dārgakmeņu pavedienu palīdzēja Tēsejam tumšajā labirintā uzveikt puscilvēku, pusvēral Minoštauru un atgriezties mīdies gaismā. Tēsejs ar Ariadni, bēgot no valdnieka dusmām, pietāst ar kuģi Nakšas salā Egejas jūrā. Ariadne nākamajā dienā pamostas viena. Noskaidri ir daudzi – Tēsejs nekad nav bijis patiesi un iemīlējis, vai Dioniss aizvīlis Tēseju, jo pats bija iemīlējis Ariadni. Kusi, maza laivāja ar panterādas apmetni pār plecu un smaidu uz lūpām Dioniss parādās vientuļās salas krastā. Abi iemīlās un apprecas. Ievērojot dabas Ariadnes zelta kroni, ievērojot zvaigznājs Ziemeļu Vainags, grieķu mitoloģijā Ariadne personificē loģisko domāšanu, vīgas mirdzošais pavediens ir līdzas trakajai ceļojumā labirinta tumšā starp dzīvi un nāvi.

Ariadne is the daughter of King Minos of Crete, who with her thread of shining jewels helped Theseus in the dark labyrinth to defeat Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull, and return to sunlight. Running from the ruler's wrath, Theseus and Ariadne meet their ship at the island of Naxos in the Aegean. The following morning Ariadne wakes up alone. The stories vary – either Theseus had never been honest and in love, or Dionysus lured Theseus away because he himself had fallen in love with Ariadne. Quietly in a small boat, shoulders covered with panther skin and a smile on his lips, Dionysus appears on the shore of the lonely life. Both fall in love and get married. When Ariadne's golden crown is thrown into the sky, the constellation of Northern Crown appears. In Greek mythology, Ariadne is the personification of logical thinking, her shining thread accompanies the hero on the crazy journey between life and death in the darkness of the labyrinth.



LANIA

NARCISS

NARCISSUS

1983

Audeklis, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA



**TANATS.
NĀVE**

**THANATOS.
DEATH**

1992

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA



LAURI UN ROZES DZEJNIECI

LAURELS AND ROSES FOR THE POETESS

1982

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA

Kā ierasts, trīs grāciju pavadīts, Apolons ir apsēdies
paklausīties. Mēness dieviete Selēna debesis traucas
savos ratos. Dzejniece, papēmusi rokās lapiņu, lasa
savu odu dievītei. Viņa ir drusku ieķērusi, un tā
dzejošana viņai viegli izdodas. Un tur ir pudele un
zils naktspodīņš. Tās grācījas ir kaut kur dabūjušas
lauru koka lapu vainagu un rozes, un sniegs to visu
dzejniecei, bet lauru koks ir Apolonam aiz muguras.
Bet kas ir lauru koks – Dafne. Māsiņas nopleš māsiņai
lapas, lai varētu kronēt vēl vienu māsiņu.
Un pavisam mazais Erosiņš, pirkstu mutē iebāzis,
brīnās, es taču neko neesmu izdarījis, nevienu bultu
neesmu izšāvis, bet viņas lokās lielās milas mokās.
Šāds ir paša Kaņepa skaidrojums.

As usual, accompanied by Three Graces, Apollo sits
down to listen. Selene, the goddess of moon, is
dashing through the sky in her chariot. The poetess,
a piece of paper in hand, is reading her ode to the
goddess. She is a little tipsy and the verses come
easily to her. And there is also the bottle and the
blue chamber pot. The Graces have gotten and the
laurel wreath and roses are going to hand it to the
poetess, while the laurel tree is behind Apollo's back.
And what is the laurel tree – it is Daphne. The sisters
tear off leaves from a sister to crown another sister.
And the tiny little Eros, a finger in his mouth, just
wonders. I have done nothing, I have not shot a single
arrow, yet they suffer under love's great torment.
This is Kaņeps' own explanation.





**AFRODĪTE -
URĀNIJA**

**APHRODITE -
URANIA**

1993

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA





**MARIJA SEV
IZRAUDZĪJUSI
LABO DAĻU.
LŪKAS 10:2**

**MARY HAS
CHOSEN WHAT
IS BETTER.
LUCAS 10:2**

1993

Audekls, eļļa
PLMC kolekcija

Oil on canvas
Collection of GCLA