

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CERAMIC CONTEST "MY TOTEM"**

The theme of the ceramic contest "My Totem" provides a broad ground for interpretation. In a narrow sense, a totem can be an animal, plant, or object symbolizing the individual or group's internal powers. In a broad sense, it is a personal or community sign, an illustration of an idea or summary of ideas, a sign or a threshold for internal rules. It is characteristic that part of the contestants, following traditional indigenous Totemic pillars, constructs verticals of their own totems. Some of these structures, decoupled from specific content, are more abstracted and decorative. Others, on the contrary, are composed of specific images, pins of associations, wishes, plans or programs of necklaces. In some case, these particular images are easily recognizable, pets, the heroes of famous fairy tales and everyday things that surround our authors, become their totems that wish them good, or incite or mobilize them for productive work. However, some works surpass the conventions of daily life and reflect deeper insights. We can assign to this group works with ethnical symbolism that reflects universal values. In these works, we do not see non-literal, narrow-minded solutions of the meaning of the totem, but unexpected, non-standard as well as ordinary angle of things. It turns out that a tilted chair, shield, dish or a herd of animals fluttering beside a barn can be a totem. The latter work reminds us of one of the most important parts of the mythical Indo-European reality - the battle of light and darkness, good and evil (Perkunas and Devil) for herds of cow symbolizing human powers.

157 students attended the contest. The Jury has selected and awarded with diplomas of the Lithuanian Centre of Non-formal Youth Education and prizes of the sponsors five authors from each of the three age groups. Three authors were additionally awarded the Gratitude and Remembrance Gifts of the Department of Ceramics of the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, one author was awarded a special prize of "Vilnius Potter's Workshop". It was not easy for the Jury to evaluate the works, because there were far more creative and technologically advanced works than could be distinguished and rewarded.

We express our gratitude to talented authors and their teachers.

The chairperson of the Jury – Dainius Strazdas, ceramic artist, director of the public institution "Vilnius Potter's Workshop".