

**Else Marie Bukdahl's Speech at the Launch of Marit Benthe Norheim's *Life-Boats*,
Aalborg Harbor, June 18, 2016**

Today we have experienced a poetic vision that has revealed itself to belong to our own world. We have seen three monumental works of art – three seaworthy boats shaped as female figures – sail majestically into Aalborg Harbor. They are created by the internationally renowned artist, Marit Benthe Norheim. For several years, she has, in an exemplary and timely way, created ever larger projects in public space. These works have always established new spaces of experience and reflection, which have given us fresh inspiration in our everyday lives and in society as a whole.

With great visionary and artistic power, she has found new answers to one of the central questions in the art world: how can close new relationships be created between art and the people? She has always managed to draw us into her magical circle and reveal surprising new horizons within a familiar world. In an original way, she has created large projects – most recently the well-known *Camping Women* – which can move around the country, and through Geir Johnson's music in particular, have acquired an inner resonance space, appealing to both emotion, intellect, sight, and hearing.

With the creation of the three *Life-Boats*, her works have now left the land and, in an artistically convincing way, have become ready to build new connections – not only in the Nordic countries but also in lands within – and perhaps later even beyond – the borders of Europe.

The three sailing women visualize three stages in a woman's destiny – youth, maturity, and old age – and so the boats have received poetic titles that point to stories, inspiring us to imagine their lives:

1. *My ship is loaded with Longing.*
2. *My ship is loaded with Life.*
3. *My ship is loaded with Memories.*

The sailing women are made of concrete, which we know as a functional and rational material. With confident artistic craftsmanship, she has transformed the concrete so that it conveys an impression of sensuality, inner strength, and fullness of expression. The women are at once monumental, alive, and present, and the soundscape that Geir Johnson has built around them makes them both more poetic and more intense.

Through the sensitively executed artistic treatment of the concrete and the modeling of the monumental female figures, through the almost poetically gliding movements of the boats, and through the rhythmic sound structures created by composer Geir Johnson, Marit Benthe Norheim has brought forth an artistic totality where images, movements, and sounds establish an intense space that draws the viewer deeply into it.

The three sailing women are above all charged with the hope that love and tolerance, peace and humanity can gain a central place in our world. The boats are platforms for artistic activities, both onboard and in the cities where they dock. Through art, they create a fine-meshed system of communication that engages and activates people both near and far.

A great artistic achievement has come into being today.