

RIDER

PRINT OF THE CONTEMPORARY
ART MOVEMENT WALL GAZETTE

— XLVI. AICA

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— CONGRESS

— SLOVAKIA
— KOŠICE, BRATISLAVA

— WHITE PLACES
— BLACK HOLES

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Alena Vrbanová

Loop as a Living Simulacrum

Roman Ondák does not simulate anything. He is really planting trees, bushes and other native vegetation. He transforms the stall for the so-called high art into a park parlor or belvedere, through which one can stroll without merely noticing it.

(follows on p. 2)



Editorial

The special English edition of Rider – Print of the Contemporary Art Movement Wall Gazette celebrates the XLVI. AICA International Congress in Slovakia. It is compiled as a crosscutting selection of reviews, essays and critiques published during the last five years.

It is symbolic how the framework theme of this year's congress entitled *White Places – Black Holes* correlates with the nature as well as the history of our magazine. When its very first issue was published in 2009, the title of Richard Gregor's opening article read: "Zero point of Slovak art criticism!" it served as a manifestation of the stagnant state of the current living art scene reflection, which was rather alarming here at that time.

Hence, the need to discuss, question and create a certain parallel discourse is what makes the Rider magazine distinctive. At the very beginning, it was the blank space and the forgotten and neglected "holes" of the contemporary art, often irritating, even provocative issues and opinions balancing between (subjective) blog posts and objective texts that served as the life-giving motivation as well as ideological content of the magazine.

Thus, the selection of texts follows the intent to introduce the contemporary, mostly Slovak art scene to foreign readers, while focusing primarily on the significant figures and progressive curatorial projects. On the other hand, it also represents a critical or polemical selection of texts in relation to the theoretical tradition of particular issues, or its complete absence.

Finally, the selection also follows the ambition to introduce the authors of the particular texts – national art critiques and theorists, mostly the members of The Slovak Section of AICA, as well as the quality young contributors. We hope that the total of 22 texts included in the special issue, doubled in volume, serves as varied and functional overview of the recent themes as well as forms (methods) of critical thinking about contemporary visual art in Slovakia.

Nina Vrbanová
issue editor
member of the Slovak Section of AICA

Alexandra Tamášová

Oskar Čepán Award 2012

2012's exhibition of the Oskar Čepán Award finalists was well worth watching, from the selection of the young finalists through the new space (the Slovak Union of Visual Arts Gallery) to the installation of the artworks.

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Alena Vrbanová

Loop as a Living Simulacrum

(following from p. 1)

The artwork of Roman Ondák (1966) called *Loop* that he created for the current Venice Biennale of contemporary art can be perceived from several scopes of art criticism:

1. artwork in the context of author's own work
2. artwork in the context of the current biennale
3. artwork in the context of the Czech and Slovak works presented at the Venice Biennale since 1990, as well as from other important contexts of the contemporary art and its paradigms, or through classic comparison with the "highlights" of the current biennale.

When I first saw the reproductions of this particular work of art, I was rather disappointed. The reason was that both formally and with regards to its portrayal, the work belongs to the era of the 80s or the 1st half of the 90s when considering our art. In addition, the artwork suggests strong connotations to land art or the *arte povera*, the authors of which, however, worked with elements of dead nature (nevertheless, we can be grateful for their revolutionary step of introducing fragments of nature into the context of an artwork).

However, during the actual visit in our pavilion, all of these parallels and doubts slowly disappeared, and other critical judgments and threads clearly enthused into the forefront. Ondák's ambition was not an opulent intellectual play, coding of different mementos to our times and the post global world. There is no doubt he would have mastered that with bravura. Ondák's installation derives from a timeless issue, with the nature of which the art has dealt – whether consciously or unconsciously – ever since Plato. Minimalistically, even humbly, he addressed the issue of realism in art. I think his decision to "exhibit" real, living

"simulacra" of the surrounding park nature has risen from crucial postmodern paradigms. In this context, one can recall Michele Foucault's argument about the non-existence of the author, as well as the updated concept of Jean Baudrillard about the nature of art works in the context of postmodern arts as simulacra stripped of the possibilities of originality.

I am bringing this up because Ondák's work both respects and faces these arguments in a rather peculiar, subversive way. He recognizes nature as a given facticity (thing-in-itself, or even ready-made, if we want). He does not simulate anything, he really "plants" trees, bushes and other native vegetation. He transforms the stall for the so-called high art into a park parlor or belvedere, through which once can stroll without merely noticing it. And so it was. The majority of the passing visitors did not actually notice that this was the actual artwork. Even the original architecture of the pavilion (Otokar Novotný, 1925 – 1926) appeared to be the actual, momentarily created work to host the "given park nature".

And I do think that this was Roman Ondák's primary aim – to create an artwork that does not promote itself visually. It does not attack the viewer, does not astonish him, or addresses him with the redundant morals about the post global and unethical age.

Loop, this banal and frequently used term in the world of new media art as the name of the artwork is, however, the key (manual) to its interpretation. A loop represents infinite repetition, repetitive state. The elements of living nature, authentic, demystified, serve the author merely as a tool of

reflecting the nature of art, which, for hundreds of year, has become both closer and distant to nature (and itself), leading to the former declaration of its death, as well as the death of the author. Ondák suggest something previously brought up by Július Koller. The art is infinite, evolving as a sinusoid. One time it is up, the other time it is down, having its plateaus and little moments of surge. Otherwise, it remains pretty constant.

Apart from other things Ondák shows that the nature in its consistency and repetitive immutability is the thing-in-itself, which is something more than art. Instead of creating his own (different) work of art, it seems as though the author has given it its very own space. He declared it as a work of art in the spirit of (post)Duchamp meditations.

P.S.: Whatever the case, the installation requires better care. Spraying the leaves with water from time to time would be sufficient enough. Otherwise, there is a chance of overinterpreting the work regarding its "processuality" and author's aim for it to dry as soon as possible.

P.S.2: It is shameful, even embarrassing, that there is no catalogue, or at least a booklet. Who knows, maybe this is a part of the artwork's concept, or the concept of an international authorship?

Exhibition: *Loop*
 Author: Roman Ondák
 Curator: Kathrin Rhomberg
 Venue: La Biennale di Venezia, Czecho-Slovak Pavillion, IT
 Duration: 7 June – 22 November 2009



^ Roman Ondák: *Loop*, 2009, site-specific installation. Photo: Nina Vrbanová

< Czecho-Slovak Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009. Roman Ondák: *Loop*, 2009, site-specific installation. Photo: archive of the editorial team

Ivana Moncol'ová

Double Fall and a Bivouacking in the Gallery

Artist Štefan Papčo is a trained sculptor, who creates his works intermedially: in the medium of sculpture, object, installation and video. The main topic of his oeuvre is "climbing on ones own account". For his solo exhibition entitled *Double Fall* opened at the Cyprián Majerník Gallery in Bratislava until end of October 2009 curated by Roman Popelár, we had a chance to see a wider range of art based on experience of a climber or a climbing duo. Every room of the Zichy Palace presented an individual work of the author.

The *Vertical Holidays* (2007) referred to his to the experience of the author and his girlfriend, who spent two weeks climbing the rock face of the Italian Alps, 700 meters above the ground. Symbolically, he mediates the experience and experiencing constant presence of the other, his/her mental and physical condition both acquired and lived. A reference of this story was a projection of overlapping hands and their changing injuries consequentially, the present destroyed climbing tools served as a reference of the blisters on the palms. Another project named *Draw a Path/Nakresli cestu* (2003) encouraged the viewers to climb up an artificial climbing wall, onto which the artist projected icefall climbing in the Tatra Mountains.

Papčo often creates a strong experience for the viewer, as he demans his/her attention. This is based on the viewer's participation or the paradox of the situation. The author uses the contrast of storylines and situations taking place outdoors, approximating them in the sterility of the gallery space or our normal, consumerist reality. The object called *Brokeback Mountain/Skrotená hora* was another paradoxical situation (2009) – it represented a real miniature of a mountaintop in Patagonia. It filled one large room of the gallery entirely, supporting viewer's respect for the mountains while offering a haptic experience – the opportunity to touch the top at least once in their lifetime.

You may have heard about the *Bivouac/Bivak* project (2008 – 2010) in May 2008, when a number of Slovak televisions brought reports of the Mountain Rescue Service in the High Tatras called by tourists from Germany and Poland, who spot a dead rock climber on the television weather panorama. It was, however, a life-sized statue of a bivouacking climber, carved from wood. Papčo placed it in the rocks of the Lomnický Peak in the spring of 2008 for the purpose of its permanent transfer to the gallery in Bratislava. Since then, it tackled all kinds of weather. As part of this long-term project, the author intended to let

all the different kinds of weather work "shoulder to shoulder" with the artist. Later, the statue was transferred to the rocks of the Norwegian fjord Jossingfjord, where it remains until now. The viewers had the chance to see it directly through a live stream from the Cyprián Majerník Gallery.

When writing this text, I was looking at the "bivouacking" climber. It was just as chilly above the fjord as it was here in Bratislava, he was cold, slouching, his initially pale wood had turned pallid and dark moss had covered his dents...

Exhibition: Double Fall
Author: Štefan Papčo
Curator: Roman Popelár
Venue: Cyprián Majerník Gallery, Bratislava, SR
Duration: 18 September – 25 October 2009



^ Štefan Papčo: *Bivouac*, 2008 – 2011, site-specific installation (detail). Photo: archive of the author

^^ Štefan Papčo: *Bivouac*, 2008 – 2011, site-specific installation. Photo: archive of the author

> Installation of the *Double Fall* exhibition. Štefan Papčo: *Brokeback Mountain*, 2009, object. Photo: archive of the Cyprián Majerník Gallery, Lucia Bartošová

Omar Mirza

How Deep Can Porn Be?



Painter Igor Ondruš is, without any doubts, a truly unique persona on the Slovak fine art scene. When it comes to him, the cliché claim of the artists about “merely following their feelings” takes on different connotations and does not offer the viewers any substantial explanation of his aims. However, satisfaction of our esthetic cravings is most probably the last thing he is willing to achieve, although formally, there is nothing we might reproach him for. Provocation of his works is evident but not pretentious, thus, labeling him as a pervert would be pretentious, too. His works are a symbolic slap to those hypocritical prudes, who would gladly send him to a psychiatrist. In Slovakia, these subject matters are still perceived rather sensitively, but is there anyone who has never dealt with anything similar (at least in the darkest deep of their conscience)?

Recently, Igor introduced his latest works at a solo exhibition on the boat (Lod') at the Petržalka bank of the river Danube. He enriched his “typical” subject matters with even more extravaganza. Lovers of visual decadence, spiced up with disturbing arousalment of the forbidden fruit with a hint of perversion poetry, could please their eyes with many nudes, erected pahluses and enticing vaginas, scenes of copulation with a precise sense of detail, bewitchingly obscene love professors or horny porn dolls.

The demanding viewers did not lack zoofilia, faeces or ejaculation. It would not be for Igor Ondruš if he didn't come up with a certain form of “provocation” even during the opening. He engaged Ikači, the infamous crusader of Bratislava openings, as the curator of his exhibition. His

speech will undoubtedly become a part of the annals of the most memorable curatorial speeches of recent years. Ondruš, who has lately embarked on experimentations (with sculpture, for instance), introduced a new media at his bratislava exhibition – overpaintings of the pages from those fashion catalogues that come in the snail mail. He turned the posed models into blow-up dolls with unnaturally exaggerated breasts or genitals. In the next series, he transformed them into monkeys. However, criticism of the soulless and shallow models, offering their bodies as if they were some trained monkeys, might seem a little out-of-place and pretentious. After all, the models are not necessarily idiots.

So, is Ondruš's work a pornography? A scandalous attempt? A depiction of dissatisfied pervert's desires? Or a sober point of view on the mankind without a hint of auto-censorship? Are we disturbed by the straightforwardness of these images, or by the fact that – apart from all that “disgust” – we can still find the depth in them? At the first sight, we may see a mere depiction of human urges, passion and erotica. If we, however, look deeper under the surface, we will notice a reflection of reality – depraved values of the society, fetichisation of the unnatural, absurd omnipresence of sexuality, which has become as banal as an advert for chewing gums?

However, Igor Ondruš is not preachy. Rather, he sets up a mirror, both ironically and humorously. On the other hand, it is still only a set-up, without any solutions being offered. However, art can afford to stay purely commenta-

tive, it does not necessarily need to come up with any solutions. What is questionable, though, is whether this approach satisfies the viewer.

Unfortunately, the exhibition had a very short duration. The Gallery M++ (which is, by the way, really unsuitable for hosting any exhibitions) hosts various business events or other “mashabooms”. Concerned about the exhibited artworks, the new tenants of the neighboring restaurant hence came up with a rather absurd solution – to deinstall all the artworks prior to each event, and to reinstall the entire exhibition afterwards. As the place was buzzing with various events of this kind before Christmas, Ondruš decided to shorten the exhibition from a month to barely two weeks. What a shame. Maybe the people – feasting on caviar with champagne – would recognize themselves in that mirror...

Author: Igor Ondruš
Venue: M++ Gallery, Bratislava, SR
Duration: 23 November - 4 December 2009

^ < Igor Ondruš: All the Best, 2009, oil on canvas.
Photo: archive of the author

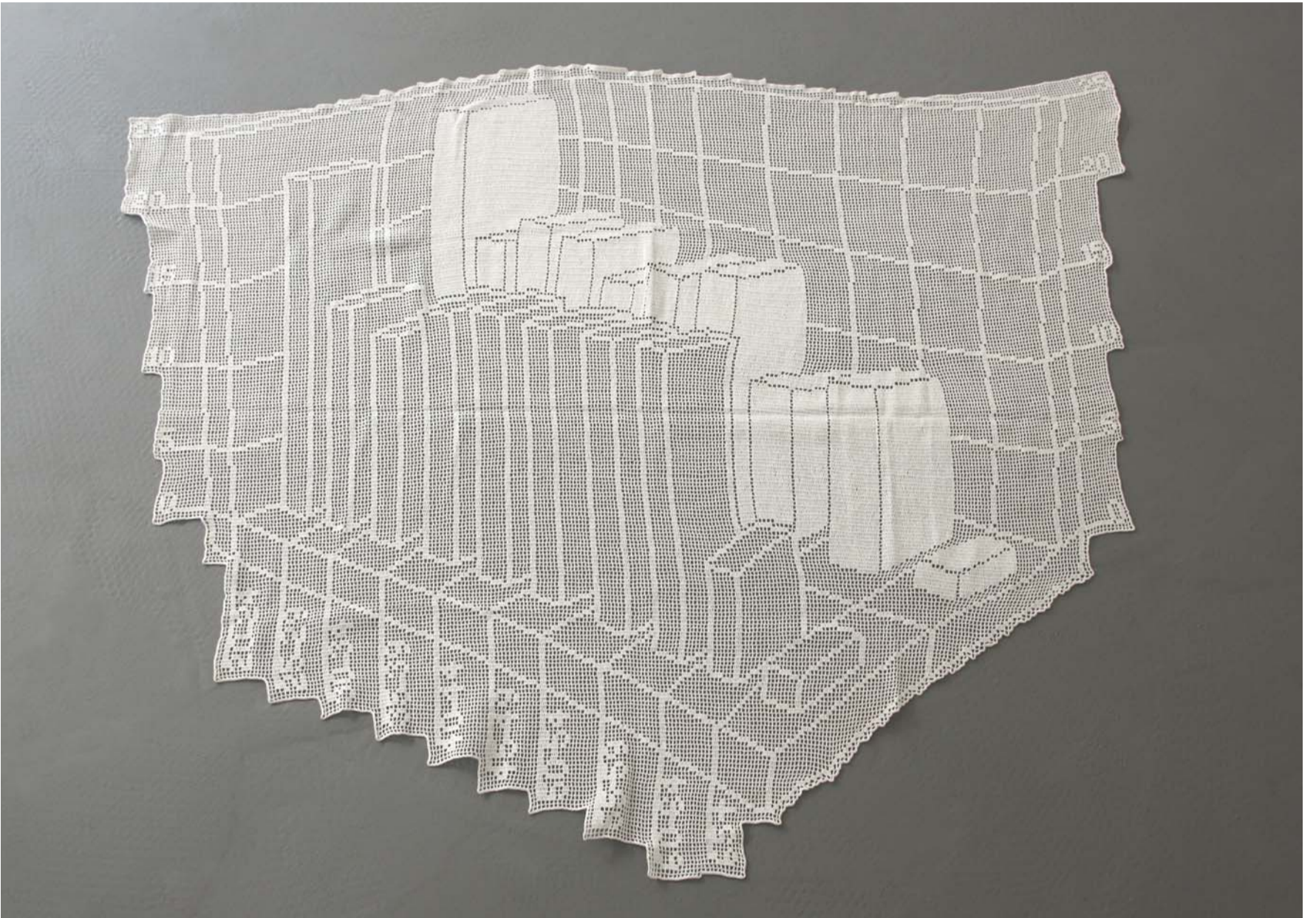
^^ Igor Ondruš: Our Stupid Friends, 2009, oil on canvas.
Photo: archive of the author

^ Igor Ondruš: Eva-no, 2006 – 2009, oil on canvas.
Photo: archive of the author

Andrea Euringer-Bátorová

When Labor Becomes Form

On Anetta Mona Chisa and Lucia Tkáčová's presence at the Gender Check Exhibition



Work as a tool of manipulation is becoming the motif of contemporary artists more and more frequently. Santiago Sierra provokes with his radical actions, in which he subjects the catastrophic state of the unemployed from disadvantaged social groups. While doing so, he uses a simple mechanism appropriated from the working world: he pays them for various absurd or degrading jobs, not focusing on their performance – their activity, but primarily on their passivity. Sierra pays for what the people are willing to undergo, ergo, he is questioning the fundamental human rights. Their misuse on the labour market, that he sees as a common process of the capitalistic society ruled by the dictate of money, affects mostly the marginal groups. For dirt cheap wage, Sierra tattoos lines on their backs or lets them beg in the premises of a gallery.¹ Young Albano Armando Lulaj composed his action called *Work Makes Freedom* around a similar concept. He payed five migrants from Palestine, Iraque, Afghanistan and Kuristan for spending a fearful hour in the company of two dobermans, the owners of which received a double the wage for guarding the hired “prisoners”.²

Among many interesting interpretations on the Gender Check exhibition in Vienna’s MUMOK stands out the work of Anetta Mona Chisa and Lucia Tkáčová called *When Labor Becomes Form* (2007).³ Unlike the abovementioned approaches, the authors chose a more conceptual and peculiar way of depicting the situation on the labor market. At first sight, the object – crocheted table spread – installed in a display case is no different from those we know from elegant sitting rooms. We are used to perceiving

such objects routinely as crafts pursued only by elderly women, serving as decorative elements. The second sight, however, reveals an unconventional pattern – in the middle, there is a graph that evokes tedious graphs in textbooks or newspapers. However, this graph depicts the statistics of the *Institute for Public Concerns* (Inštitút pre verejné otázky) in Bratislava, published in the *Women, Men and Age in the Statistics of the Labor Market* (Ženy, muži a vek v štatistikách trhu práce) work, which expresses the proportion between the work enforcement and age. The artists published an ad seeking for an unemployed woman aged from 50 to 60 (the most critical age), who was willing to crochet a table spread for money. Her wage was determined by the fee the authors received for participating at the exhibition.

By the means of direct reality crackdown, the authors managed to subject the situation at the Slovak labor market, which gives older unemployed women minimal chances of finding a job. An important aspect is not only the subject of depiction, but also the crocheting medium itself – traditional “female” craft, deceding in the age of mass production and cheap goods from China. This is not the first time that crocheting has appeared in the works of A. M. Chisa and L. Tkáčová. At the exhibition named *A Room of Their Own* (2003), they covered in crochet the goods of everyday use typical for men: a hammer, a case, a football etc. In their *When Labor Becomes Form* artwork, they intervene into a particular life, leaving the premises of a museum and intervening directly into the reality, making use of their observation of the capitalistic “something for something”

system. “The crochet is, in essence, a translation of ideas into material, statistic data – the pattern is transformed and materialized by work, thus changing its meaning into a commodity with aesthetic function.”⁴ This way, art becomes work, work becomes form, and form becomes an artistic testimony.

1. “250 centimeter line tattooed on five paid people” (1999), “Dos Maraqueros” (2002)
2. Kunsthalle Lothringer 13, Munich (2010). Migrants were hired based upon an advert in the newspaper.
3. The work is presented in the Equity and Gender section of the exhibition devoted to current artistic attitudes in post-communist countries. It was originally created for the Equal Opportunities exhibition at the Open Gallery. The English title *When Labor Becomes Form* evokes the famous exhibition of H. Szeemann entitled *When Attitudes Become Form*.
4. From a personal interview with A. M. Chisa

Exhibition: Gender Check
Curator: Bojana Pejić
Venue: MUMOK, Vienna, A
Duration: 13 November 2009 – 14 February 2010

Anetta Mona Chisa & Lucia Tkáčová: *When Labor Becomes Form*, 2007, crochet tablecloth.
Photo: archive of the authors

Sabina Jankovičová

© Viktor Frešo

Viktor Frešo presents himself at a fairly rich showcase of his works at the premises of the SOGA exhibition hall and the Kressling Gallery. For many years, the author is successfully promoting his authorial strategies through many diverse individual presentations and activities, collective exhibitions of a rather alternative nature, as well as those serious ones. Last year, he was even selected as one of the Oskar Čepán Award finalists, although it was claimed that this was to be understood as a challenge or a test for the author to confirm his qualities and to defend his, according to the jury, apparently non-conventional work, stemming primarily from the wow-factor. However, this reasoning surely did not catch the attention of common viewers and press release consumers, nor had it even had the chance to reach them, so that by selecting him, the jury confirmed his status of a prominent young artist, thus evaluating the importance of his work. Consequently, Viktor Frešo showed his typical gesture at the exhibition, questioning the gravity of gallery as a solid institution, laughing merrily at the annual competitions for the prize, though being quite aware (as any other artist) that such competitions go hand in hand with general acceptance necessary for being taken seriously. Another similar sanctification is, naturally, an exhibition at the premises of the prominent auction company. Such exhibition, of course, a selling one, confirms the quality as well as the value of the artworks.¹

Viktor Frešo presents himself with his recent paintings (using mop) and objects – sculptures (*"this is what I call a sculpture"* V.F.). In the galore of young contemporary abstract painting, his works would barely stand out, wouldn't it be for the fact that their author is Frešo in particular. The reason is that these works undoubtedly carry fairly stronger expressiveness than the majority of similar works. Frešo is a label of his own, thus even a little monotonous gestural painting receives its fair share of attention. It is quite attractive at the first sight; however, the gestures he used are too repetitive. It is the objects that are author's greatest strength. They show that the author thinks both in and about space, effortlessly adopting different elements of reality. Using them, he creates absurd objects, which play with viewer's perception, that are truly funny. The author uses everything he can – wrapping paper or laminate flooring. By framing them, intervening with paper, he turns them into an artwork. Thus, Frešo somewhat mocks not only the Slovak concept, but also the potential buyers of his works.

Inconsistently, the author initially often presented himself as an alternative, conceptual artist creating ephemeral works, tailored to fit the particular gallery space, for example by spraying on the gallery walls, through actions with the Ego-art duo he was a member of, etc. But in recent years, he suddenly shows that he can paint (e. g. his pop-art paintings of plants) and creates various objects, sculptures, and reliefs, basically everything. Everything that is graspable and can be sold. This way, the author slightly doubts his status of an artist staying on top of things. This exhibition offers something for everyone: paintings and objects of every size, thus with different price tags, so that it is possible to pick something small or big (artworks and prices). Should someone find the overly intellectual art boring, Frešo has a number of "artistic" acts up his sleeve – photographs that will surely satisfy different tastes of those interested ones. It remains a question whether this conscious marketability and adjusting to the market reality is a concept, making Frešo a unique young conceptual artist, or it is merely an impudent calculation. On the other hand, it should be appreciated that as a contemporary author, he managed to build an indisputable image, respected by everyone despite his or her reservations.

1. Frešo is practically independent even from this form of support, as he takes care of selling his works quite well by himself. From the circles of the J&T Company, we have learned that even the highest ones count on Frešo's word and purchase whatever he points out. The company calls him Pičasso (Dickasso), meaning they are quite familiar with his oeuvre. Thus; Frešo has managed to promote art where nobody would expect it.

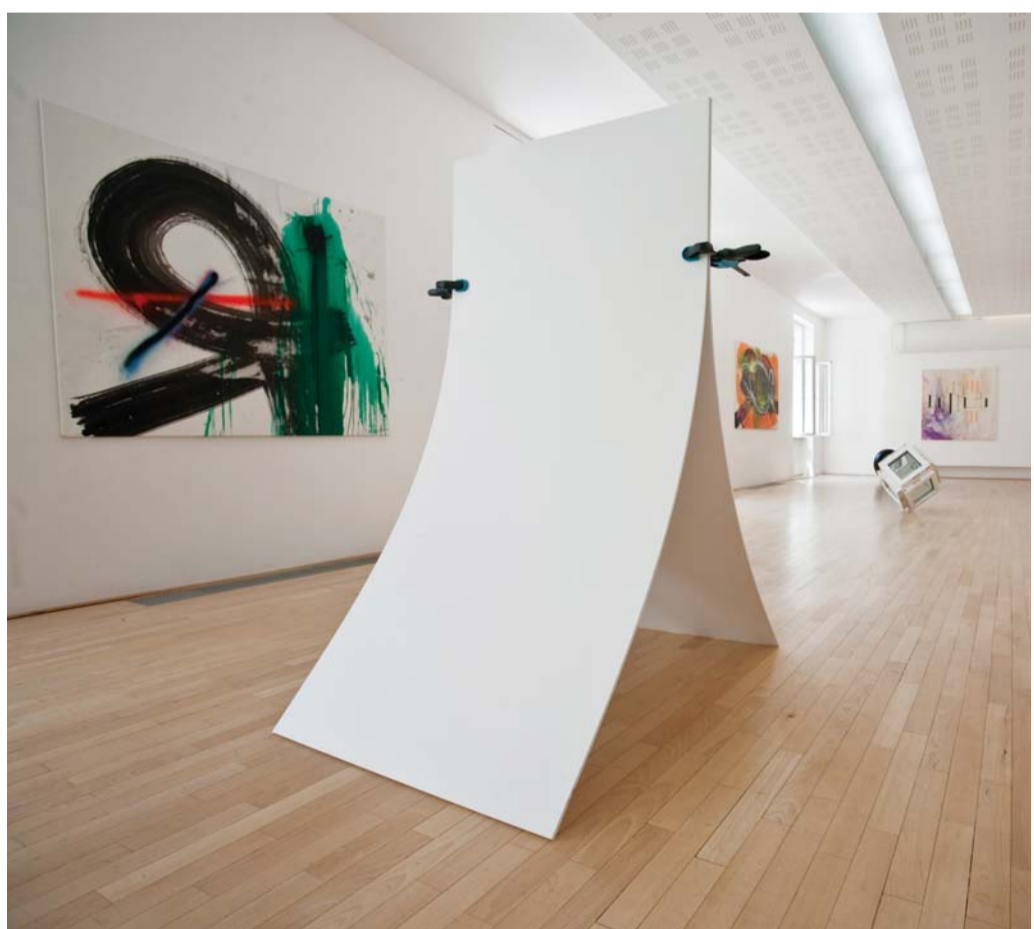
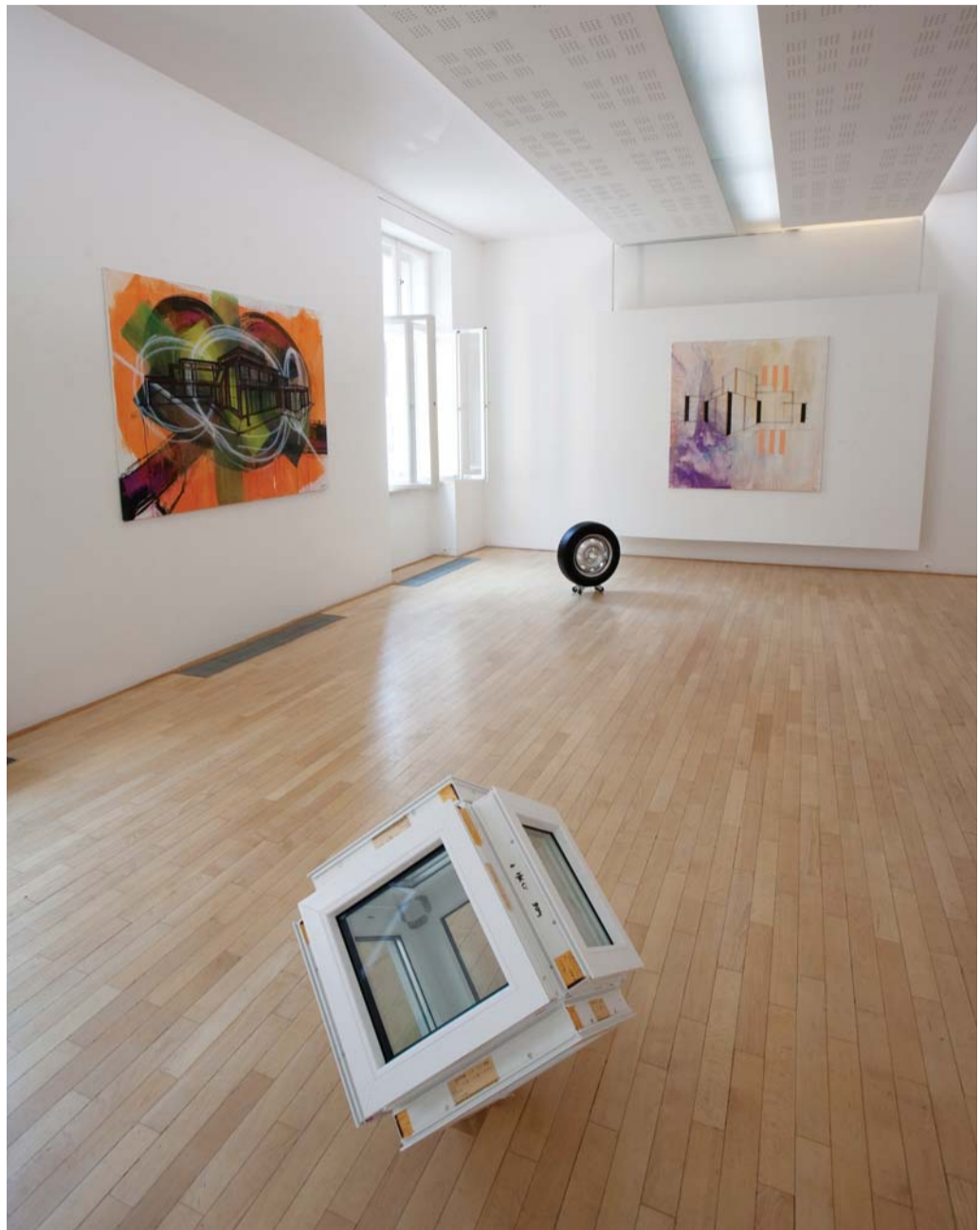
Exhibition: POP-MOP

Author: Viktor Frešo

Curator: Nina Gažovičová

Venue: SOGA Auction Company, Bratislava, SR

Duration: 31 March – 22 April 2010

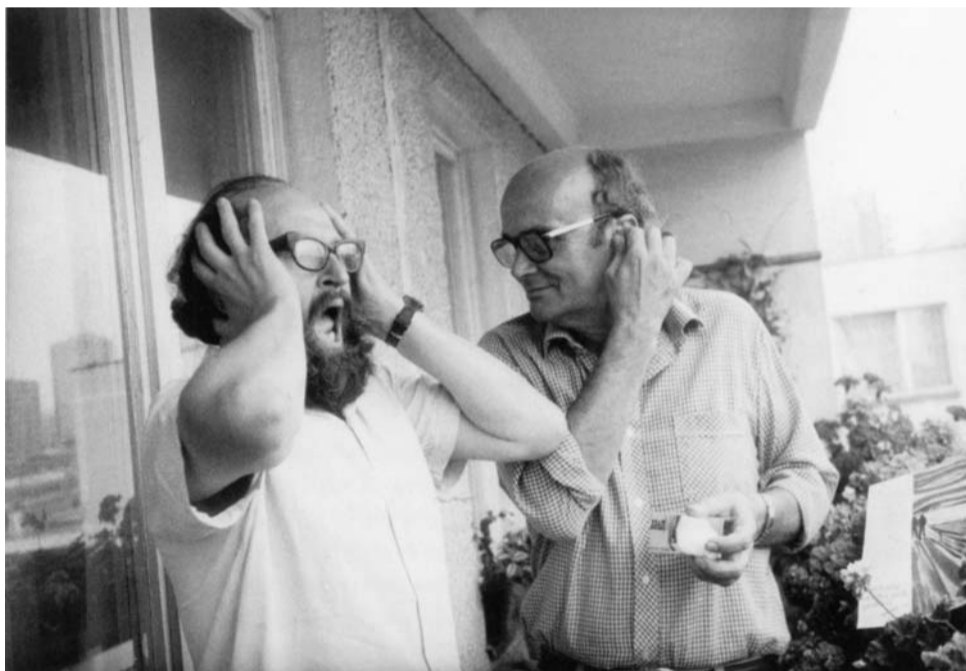


^^ Installation of Viktor Frešo's POP-MOP exhibition in Soga Auction Company, 2010. Photo: Viktor Semzö

^ Installation of Viktor Frešo's POP-MOP exhibition in Soga Auction Company, Komatex object (2010) in the foreground. Photo: Viktor Semzö

Daniela Čarná

I Have Become a Question Mark



Joseph Beyus claimed that everyone could be an artist, provided that they discovered the source of creativity within themselves. For Július Koller, everyone is ufonaut, but not everyone is aware of this role. He identified himself with it. He expanded the boundaries of art to the concept of culture, including everything that belongs to life, and everything beyond into the notion of art.

A protagonist of the unofficial art scene during the former regime, Július Koller (1939 – 2007) is currently a coveted author represented in the most prominent national and international collections. For over four decades, he commented on the everyday life during socialism and after its fall through antipaintings and antihappenings, textile paintings, text signs, cultural situations, sport events or Universal Futurological Operations (U.F.O.). The Science-fiction Retrospective exhibition in the Slovak National Gallery curated by Aurel Hrabušický and Petra Hanáková with the ambition of travel around (yet unspecified) international institutions. The exhibition reflected author's legacy that included artifacts as well as great amount of documentation material and material of newspaper character, on the borderline of art and documentary.

Among many civil paintings, Koller painted his legendary text painting *The Sea* (1963 – 1964) and in 1964, he carried out the provocative ready-made *A Glass of Pure Water* (exhibited empty, unfortunately), breaking the traditional model of art, already during his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts under Ján Želibský. His work is intertwined with comments on his times in the form of antihappenings, text cards and signs that work with words and shift of their meanings: POROZ UMENIE, NEDOROZ UMENIE, UME NIE, or the U.F.O. acronym – Universal Fantastical Occupation, Universal Fyzcultural Organization, Universal Futurological Sign, etc. They sound almost like a play,

an instruction for coming up with one's own meaning. Koller used the distinctive question mark as a signature and symbol for his works since 1969: "I specialized on doubting everything, on questioning, on questions. The question mark has become my signature; I have become the question mark." He painted it on canvas, on his forehead, on a wooden house in Čičmany as an ornament, on a ping-pong racket, or in nature. In 1970, he becomes the ufonaut and in this adopted role, he appears in the entire series of situations and self-portraits captioned on photos: "*What cannot be pictured in paintings, painted with colors, one must redeem in person.*" He used every opportunity for communication with UFO civilizations: the roof of a house, the Sandberg mountain on the outskirts of Bratislava, or the balcony on the fourth (the top) floor of his flat as well as studio on Kuldáková Street no. 5 at the Dúbravka neighborhood (where he "proceeded" from his mother's basement apartment on Klobučnická Street no. 5. He created a fictional UFO Gallery on a plateau of a Tatra mountain as "*the first gallery for cosmohumanistic culture, a medium of communication between heaven and earth*".

In the final part of the text sign *Universal-cultural Futurological Operation: Total Painting* (1970), a certain "manifesto", he writes: "*U.F.O. T.M. is a "picture" about the self of a professional painter that he personally leaves in the conscience of other people.*" The picture that Július Koller (painter, conceptualist, ufonaut, documentarist and commenter of the daily life) left after himself came to an end untimely and unexpectedly. This, however, opened up the possibility of further probes into its unknown and unexplored layers. One of the possible pictures about the author was brought up by the exhibition that introduced Koller (on ochroid walls) in a communicative, highly attractive way for the viewers that was, however, maybe a tad too refined for the author's strictly "anti-artistic" and anti-

aesthetic style. A representative monograph offers a different picture. In addition to dedicated texts of Austrian theorist Georg Schöllhammer, it is enriched with an interview of Petra Hanáková with Kveta Fulierová, Koller's lifetime partner, graphic and photographer of many Koller's actions (their relationship naturally translated into Koller's work and covered a special part of the exhibition). In the conclusion of the interview with a novel-like title *I Lived with a Ufonaut*, the curator asks a question of how seriously Koller actually treated his UFO project, she tactfully keeps his secret answering that it remains a mystery even for herself. And Koller would probably add: I don't mind the unknown. Or maybe he would answer with a mean typical for himself: the question mark.

Exhibition: Július Koller: Science-fiction Retrospective
 Author: Július Koller
 Curators: Aurel Hrabušický and Petra Hanáková
 Venue: Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, SR
 Duration: 23 April – 20 June 2010

^^^ Július Koller: Czechoslovakia of August 21, 1968, 1968
 Collection of First Slovak Investment Group Bratislava
 Reproduced from exhibition catalog.

^< Július Koller: Question Mark, 1969
 Collection of Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava
 Reproduced from exhibition catalog.

^^ Július Koller: Anti-happening. System of Subjective Objectivity, 1965. Private property
 Reproduced from exhibition catalog.

^ Július Koller: Scream (U.F.O.) II (with R. Matuščík on the balcony of the flat at Kudláková 5). Private property
 Photo: Kveta Fulierová. Reproduced from exhibition catalog.

Richard Gregor

First Joint Exhibition: Pavína Fichta Čierna/Anton Čierny

Video-art, as one of the new chapters of the Slovak art, by which we attribute the era of free non-political intermedial work, experienced a dramatic increase in popularity since 1989, followed by gradual decline in terms of its position on the scene. In the 90s, the progressive art scene preferred intermedia art as an expression of the above-mentioned "newness" and, on the contrary, they represented an important counterweight to the attempt to establish a naive idea of a nationally oriented form of visual culture, supported directly by the state.

After the fall of this contradictory opposition of the art media around 2000, and when the renaissance of painting provoked an instant feedback of the market, the domain of the new media was practically limited to a network of public galleries. Hence, it is necessary to critically note that for the last 10 years, our artists have not managed to find a communicative (investigative) way of succeeding in a broader scope (here!). The problem of the key personas of the first generation of the Slovak video artists and their gradual resignation from the "underappreciated" medium (e. g. Peter Rónai, Peter Meluzín, Jana Želibská, Vladimír Havrilla – who are remaining "mum" for different reasons) is cardinal, as we are currently lacking active and communicating classic artist, who would act as the arbiters of quality and keep the discourse alive. The question of cohesion, width and development of personal style is common for both, but more prominent for the second generation. A strong generation of authors (let's mention at least Roman Ondák, Ilona Németh, Miroslav Nicz, Patrik Kovačovský and Richard Fajnor) have not yet received more complex forms of presentations – the kind that even much older artists lack. Thus, it is difficult to follow and perceive their work in continuity, which is, in many cases, causal. That is the reason the tradition is falling apart.

Last but not least, this part of the scene is also influenced by the fact that video is an enticing way of expression mainly for students and emerging artists, because it is rather easily accessible. For the very fact that the basis of our tradition is composed of silent Nestors, whose works are not often presented on public, labels video-art with a permanent gauge of discontinuity, giving the emerging artists an illusion of perpetual innovativeness and lead.

Seeing the summer exhibition of Pavína Fichta Čierna and Anton Čierny in the Space Gallery, I realized that they represent a certain exception among the above-mentioned authors – they have overcome the infamous vagueness of the post-revolution post-avantgarde in terms of anchoring of their works, even at the cost of admitting their "local" character. Hence, we reveal other, institutional parallels. It is the aforementioned deviation of the scene that tends to hide the mature authors (or at least conforms them to students). This is particularly relevant for those representing (through their creative program) structured and continuous criticism of existing society, who are, unlike the youngest ones, being far more analytical in their expressions. The second concern is the success of these authors abroad, rather than her – for a long time, there has not been a serious presentation of videoart (followed by adequate erudite analysis) by local authors, and absolutely no international ones. Video is used only when there is an option to export the exhibition without special capacities for transportation. Generally, we are witnessing a typical phenomenon of a peripheral scene that, while having examples for all the existing fine art styles and using them as a mean of defence when it comes to declaring plurality – creating an illusion of being perfectly up-to-date – lacks somebody who would actually engage in offering them a proper countervalue.

I don't think it was a coincidence that Čierna a Čierny joint their forces in one exhibition – although they did it for the very first time just now, in 2010. In the past, their work was quite different in nature, both formally and conceptually, but the core stemmed from a common denominator – perception of the self, positioning of themselves in confrontation/definition through their surroundings, from mapping the closest elements to those distant or random ones. A couple of years ago, we could even talk about the feminine empathic and male analytical approach regarding this husband-and-wife duo, as both of them addressed practically the same issue. Maybe it is the mutual realization of the shared platform or the realization that the mutual difference between sympathetic (psychological) and analytical (structural) point of view is not hierarchical, which finally lead the authors to a joint project. Whatever the reason, they managed to create a cohesive, compact exhibition. I was particularly impressed by two videos in which, in my opinion, they overcame their actual "conventions" and indicated the direction of their further thinking – *Therapy* and *Spool/Terapia a Špulka*.

For years, Pavína Fichta Čierna has been documenting stories of outsiders (i.e. in interviews), analyzing them (preceded by thorough and detailed preparation) and commenting them (with various degrees of her directorial presence), while dramatizing them at the same time. In a certain way, she monumentalizes them, returns the socially weaned off ones back into the core of society. What differentiates her from the documentary format is the lack of colonial point of view/approach. Her strategy is represented by a distinctive visual portrayal: on one hand, it focuses on the respondent directly, on the other hand she draws attention anagrammatically to (ir)relevant details, which takes on the role of subject in the structure of her sentence (significant in



her *Folding* (Skladanie) video, for example). Čierna projects many of her feelings into her protagonists, and I assume she discovers just as many of them, too. I don't think that this is a case of priory (or unlimited) empathy. Rather, it is a broader reference to the fact that nowadays we are not willing to listen to the problems of others than those with sentimental or "placebo" happy-endings. In the majority of her works, Čierna makes up for the concealed conclusion of her works with making the viewer realize the limits of his/her ability and willingness to empathize with the protagonists and especially encourages them to step out of the position of a passive viewer and perceive the parallel with themselves, including some sort of a metaphorical responsibility. In these works, she chooses a strategy similar to some female action artists (such as Marina Abramović), who challenge the viewer to attack them – Čierna's works always intervene in someone's privacy (i.e. *Repositioning/Presádzanie*), thus giving the viewer a legitimate feeling of a violator: towards the object of the video and paradoxically (maybe even more importantly) towards the author herself, making the faceless shots the most voyeuristic ones.

In the actual *Therapy* video, the author reveals herself, now acting fully in the role of a protagonist. Her role is not defined only by the representing symbols and signs – there is no need to decode anything or to imagine her and hesitate over her presence. This is really the author – her physicality is not only pictured but also fully admitted, fitting within the context of all her works addressing subject matters of medicine and pain she has created so far. Open mouth and the gesture of the cast dice dominate in the video that questions the value and meaning of final (ethereal) lightness of perception and being that she suggests in some sort of an accessible and involuntary "play" of fatefull necessary medicine addiction. Haste and insistence of the story

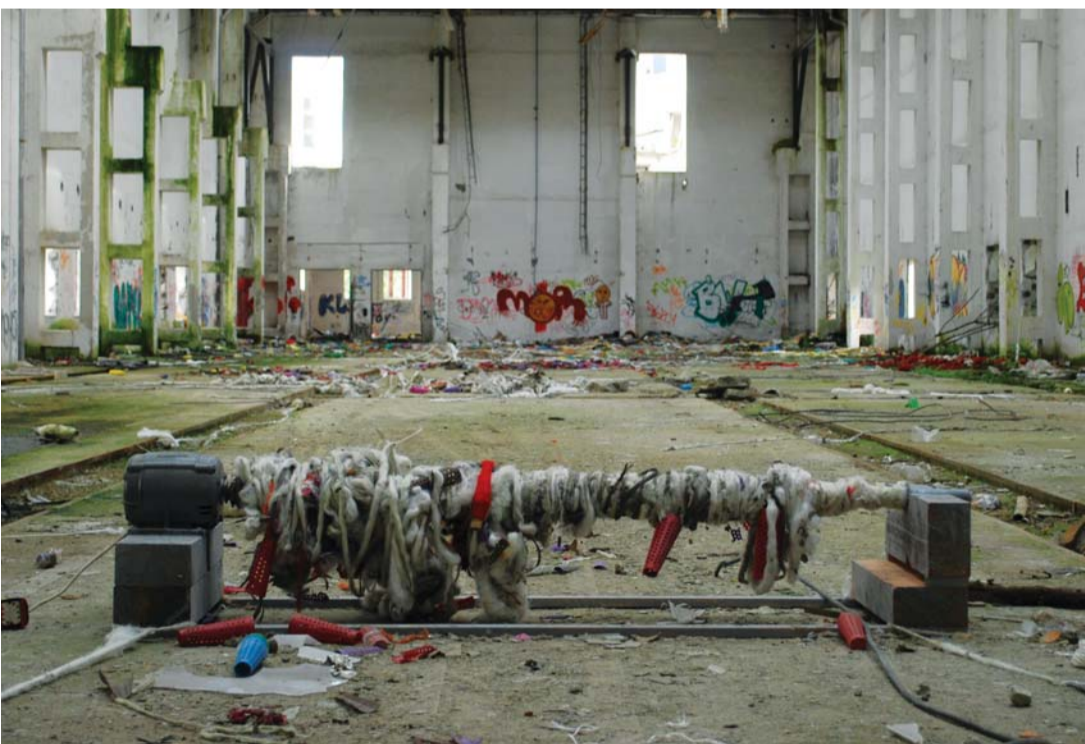
is almost film-like – the moment of catharsis occurs in certain ironic, childlike volatile joy, which is excellent. I think that in this video, the author managed to free herself from the position of a creator who gives (underthrusts) the feeling of responsibility to the viewer (in whichever form or intensity). Thus, she suggested in a rather sophisticated way that she came to the crossroads of her formal language and thematic focus of her works and has considerable potential for detachment and wit.

While *Down the River* can be seen as an etude for the viewers, a start of perception of the entire exhibition project, and *Nest* as a video-action firmly grounded in the context of Anton Čierny's actual spiral scope that started to evolve from its centre a long time ago – from mapping elusive boundaries of his immediate surroundings and eventually spread to the equally elusive/viable borders of the state, the *Spool/Špulka* video is different. Rather, it follows the lesser-known series of "chapels", refined post-dadaist gestures. *Spool* mainly develops the gesture of the narrative segment – a stretch of time period, an authentic sound in real time. It is also a broader application of the gag moment within the possibility of looking "beyond the camera". The bonus is a revelation that its creators are real, communicating characters in the midst of creative process, dragging the preceptor in the game. The video contains absurd "instructions" how to processually collect the undefined and unspecified objects in one place, namely by threading the remnants of fibers from a closed textile factory on a homemade spool. We could argue about the lack of satisfactory visual vindication or the insufficient justification of choosing this object, this factory, this place (Banská Štiavnica) in particular, because the specific site is obvious and crucial for understanding the other two exhibited videos. However, this would politicize the aforementioned

Dadaist purity and certain intangibility of the chapels, as well as inhibit the shift of absurdity and coincidence of our visual experience into the "indeterminate" places of "our" memory. If we perceive the roll as a (pseudo)communicative move, a channel, an accumulation of intangible information on one disc, as well as unwanted preservation of elements belonging to an unknown mandala, left by someone to be scattered, and that cannot be reconstructed (which would also be unnecessary from the perspective of its value). Čierny (for long) questions the predetermination of what's right and wrong, the dominant and non-essential things; in a certain sense, some of his videos share the style of arte-povera – the use of worthless or unsightly objects. However, he is not commenting upon waste or material scarcity. Rather, he is pointing out the minimum level of possibilities necessary to reach one's goal – he turns our reality into a romantic misery, elevating situation into intention, coincidence into decision.

The exhibition at the Space Gallery aims to evoke hyper-text, wants to suggest links between specific themes or contexts of six videos, all sharing the area of a spacious tent. However, this objective would be completely fulfilled if the emphasis was put on the sequentiality of the videos, the need to watch them in a predetermined order. This idea suggests great dynamics of the work as well as, figuratively, the relationship, and the six videos are merely a trailer to a much more complex previous or future whole.

Exhibition: Instructions on Creating Necessary Things and Impressions
 Authors: Pavlína Fichta Čierna and Anton Čierny
 Curator: Katarína Slaninová
 Venue: SPACE Gallery, Bratislava, SR
 Duration: 29 July– 27 August 2010



Anton Čierny: *Spool*, 2010, video.
 Photo: archive of the author

Omar Mirza

Third Crazycurators Biennale in the Little Big City

Somewhere, you have surely spotted a slogan reading Bratislava – Little Big City, that tries to show the tourists that in spite of its size, (although our “littleness” shows, unfortunately, in different spheres as well), our city has a lot to offer. And because our little big city does not want to fall behind the abroad, truly big cities, it hosts our own art biennale – the Little Big *Crazycurators Biennale*, that tries to offer as much as possible, despite its size.

Crazycurators Biennale promotes (a bit ironically, a bit critically and a bit parodically, but – at the same time – seriously) an opposing approach to what can be often seen at vainly megalomaniac, but globally acclaimed biennale. Its philosophy could be expressed in paraphrases of well-known slogans, such as: “Size Matters”, or “One (curator) for one (artist), all (artists) for all (visitors)”. In addition to the method of artwork selection, there is another feature characteristic for the *Crazycurators Biennale* – the thematic unlimitidness, which, consequently, comes with greater freedom and lack of the “violent” labeling. Hence, the organizers prefer quality to quantity; however, what might be quite problematic is the fact that the perception of quality is, after all, subjective. Contentual emptiness, may, in turn, present a number of pitfalls, such as the absence of a clearer, better-defined attitude.

This year, the crazy curators, mainly from Europe, are coming for the third time to serve us art they perceive as progressive, innovative, experimental, young, fresh, or, simply put, contemporary. Despite the proclaimed minisculeness, the biennale expanded this time into three exhibition spaces – the House of Art, the Hit Gallery and the Space Gallery. Among other reasons, The House of Art was obviously chosen nostalgically, as the place traditionally hosts the *Biennial of Illustration* which “brought up” more than one generation of the contemporary art enthusiasts. Personally, I had a bit of a trouble to find my way around the exhibited artworks following the illustrative floorplan that was available to visitors.

The House of Art served as a centre of presenting international artists, with the exception of the Slovenian presence exhibited in the Hit Gallery, and Slovak artist Matúš Lányi,

as his work would not fit anywhere else. I will just briefly mention what intrigued me. I am no fan of long videos, but the work of Hungarian artist Zsolt Keserue called *Tragic Panic* (2009, curator: Petra Csizsek) caught my attention so much that I watched it for the entire 37 minutes and 47 seconds. Sitting in some sort of a living room, I saw women in a similar space, silently listening to quite desperate and often very intimate confessions of men about their family lives, marriage, sexuality and relationships with their wives, mistresses and children. Too bad I didn’t learn more about those women. If they were the wives/partners of the speaking men, the already very thought-provoking video (inspiring to reflect upon one’s own life) would undoubtedly reveal another dimension. Unfortunately, even other works lacked at least brief descriptions, and some of them would really need those (even more than this video in particular).

Another interesting video was a work of Oliver Laric (Germany) called *Versions* (2010, curator: Aaron Moulton), which dealt with the depiction, simulation, production and reproduction of reality, art and paintings. Although it only touched the surface of the issue, it was quite thought-provoking as well. Photographic series of Czech artist Michaela Thelenová called *When You Come Home from Work, the House Will Be Tidy* (2010, curator: Michael Koleček) commented very wittily and hyperbolically upon different situations taking place at home, such as during cleaning routine. Absolutely unmissable was the aforementioned installation (accompanied by video) of Matúš Lányi, in which he used warning tapes to “draw” the floor plan of the Cologne Cathedral (2010, curator: Juraj Čarný).

With exhibited works from Lucia Dovičáková and Jozef Tušan (curator: Diana Majdáková), Mira Gáberová (curator: Katarína Slaninová), Lucia Hájniková (curator: Peter Barényi), Magdaléna Kuchtová (curator: Lýdia Pribišová), Martin Špirec (curator: Ivana Madariová) and Magda Stanová (curator: Eliška Mazalanová), the Space Gallery transformed into a certain form of a Slovak “pavillion”. Slovak representation was the most numerous because each of the workers from the Space Gallery (or the Slovak “crazycurators”) got their own space. The Slovak selection

as a whole was, in my opinion, very satisfactory, very manifold with descent artworks. However, I’m not sure whether it was due to the fact that the Slovak artists came up with the best artworks or because their presence was rather predominant. Or was it even for the fact that their artworks are the closest to myself? All in all, I will let everyone to bear these deliberations individually.

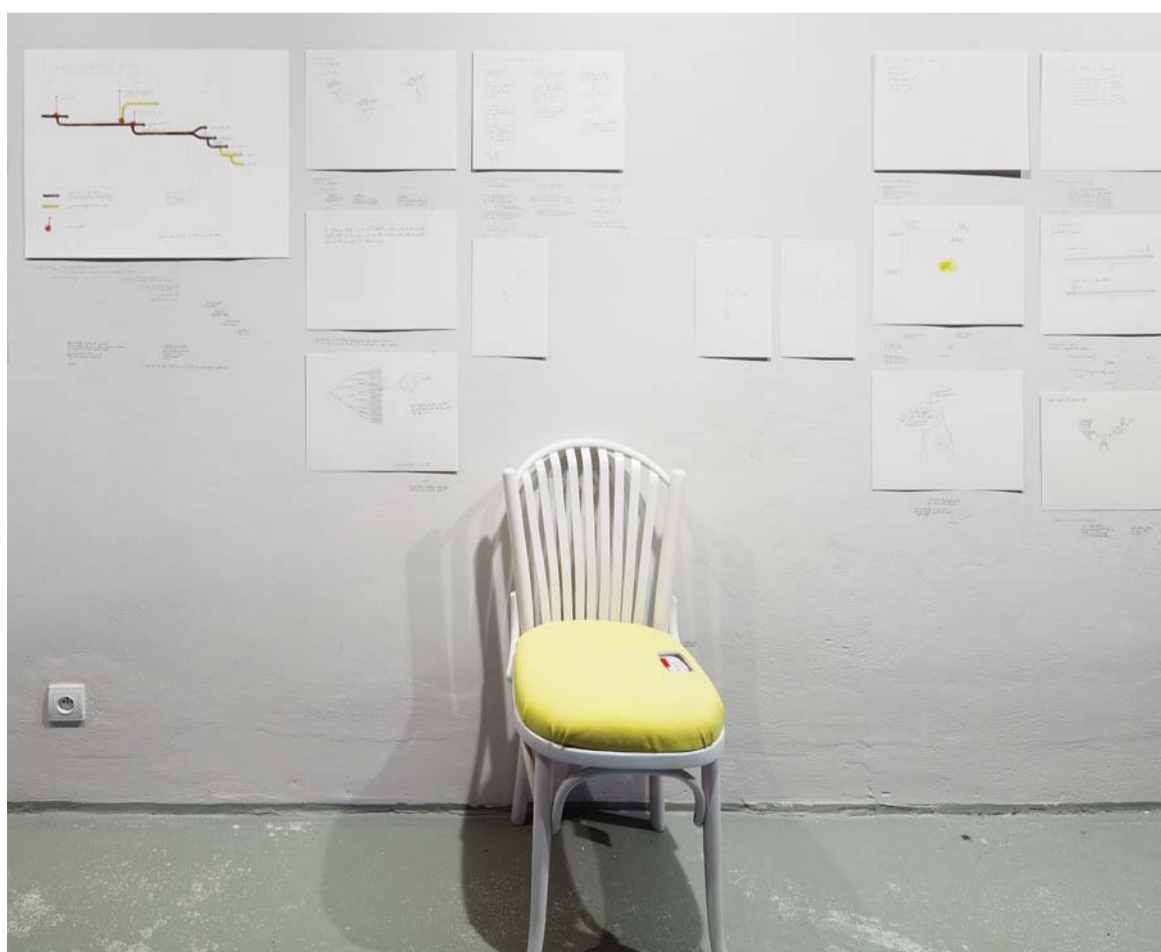
Whatever were the visitors looking for, the exhibition offered something for everyone, and if not, the visitors were at least left with brief, “pocket” summary what was currently going on in the world of art. And it was not even as much of drudgery as in case of the great biennale. The reason behind this was that the congenially chosen strategy didn’t left the viewer overwhelmed, rather the opposite – it even contributed to his/her fitness, as along with visiting all three exhibition spaces, the visitor also took a nice walk through the town. What a kalokagathia! Let’s hope that thanks to similar events, our little city will not remain big only in slogans.

Exhibition: Crazycurators Biennale III.

Exhibiting authors and curators: Mladen Bundalo | Darka Radosavljevic Vasiljevic /SRB/, Edwin Deen | Radek Váňa /NL/, Lucia Dovičáková a Jozef Tušan | Diana Majdáková /SK/, Mira Gáberová | Katarína Slaninová /SK/, Dionigi Mattia Gagliardi | Gabriele Gaspari/26cc /IT/, Laura Garbštienė | Laura Rutkute /LT/, Lucia Hájniková | Peter Barényi /SK/, Zsolt Keserue | Petra Csizsek /HUN/, Magdaléna Kuchtová | Lýdia Pribišová /SK/, Matúš Lányi | Juraj Čarný /SK/, Oliver Laric | Aaron Moulton /GER/, Temitayo Ogunbiyi | Anastasia Stein /USA/Nigeria, RUS/, Michael Part | Andreas Huber /AT/, Martin Špirec | Ivana Madariová /SK/, Magda Stanová | Eliška Mazalanová /SK/, Michaela Thelenová | Michael Koleček /CZ/, Matej Andraž Vogrinčič | Škuc Gallery /SLO/, Tomasz Wendland | Slawomir Sobczak /PL/

Venue: House of Art, Bratislava/HIT Gallery, Bratislava/SPACE, Bratislava, SR

Duration: 1 September – 29 September 2010



^ > Lucia Hájniková: Bruce, 2010, installation.
Photo: Patrik Saffko

^ >> Zsolt Keserue: Target Panic, 2009, video.
Photo: Patrik Saffko

< Magda Stanová: Algorithms in Art, 2010, installation.
Photo: Patrik Saffko



Andrea Euringer – Bátorová

No Exhibition Entry!

On Timm Ulrichs' presentation in Ritter Museum¹



18,360 cm, 885 kg, 40,0000 km measuring of the world and us – a favorite subject matter and creative strategy of Timm Ulrichs – welcomes the visitors already at the entrance to the exhibition space. Each visitor must pass through a narrow staircase with a built-in scale. Display over their heads shows the exact weight of each of them, whether they want it or not. There is no other way. Before we step in to see the exhibition (to "measure" it), we are statistically measured ourselves, assigned into coordinates, into the system of parameters. In this context, it is necessary to mention Romana Ondák's measuring of people as part of his *Measuring the Universe* at MoMA. In the Ritter Museum, we are undoubtedly the audience as well as the participants – the co-creator of the exhibited work.

The motto "Art is life and life becomes art" appeared in several artistic concepts in the second half of the 20th century. Drawing on Duchamp's idea of ready-made, the experiencing of synthesis of art and ordinary life spread mainly in the 60s thanks to the artists of New Realism, the Fluxus group as well as the exceptional individual personalities who implemented it through their consequentially enforced artistic view or spectacular actions, perceived as scandalous by some, leaving the others inspired by its existential force. The authors dedicated to body art such as G. Pain, B. Nauman and M. Abramović used their bodies as material, not omitting techniques like self-mutilation and self-destruction. The artists perceive their life, their everyday (and artistic) activities as part of art. For all of them, let's just mention J. Koller and his "cultural situation"² and J. Bartusz with his "Official Confirmation"³.

Exhibition on Timm Ulrichs 70th birthday entitled *Back Forward* opens up with a big black and white photo of the artist sitting in a chair in a glass display case. It is 1961, the year in which Ulrichs begins to perceive himself as a work of art. Through self-exhibition and registration at the office, he has embarked on his journey as a living and walking artifact. It should be noted that the exhibition at the Ritter Museum has no retrospective nature; the exhibition space is too small for such purpose, but mainly the events and performances of Ulrichs' program wouldn't "fit" the profile of the museum focused principally on geometric abstraction and concrete art. The curator decided to lay emphasis on the constructivist works. Most of these "constructivist" works, however, are of a Dada nature, even though we regularly stumble upon geometric forms, such as a cube into which Ulrichs stamped himself, or graphic work from the 60s the corresponding with op-art and study of architecture. Ulrichs actions are mediated by video – excerpts of his most important performances.

At the exhibition, we also get the chance to see his experimental texts in which he manipulates the image, writing and meaning of words in the spirit of concrete poetry, creating different puns (palindromes, tautologies etc.). Witty, dadaistically decorated objects form another group of the presented works: *Dice of Fortune* – a dice with six dots on each side; *Winged Words* – books of quotations of famous people cut into the shape of flying birds. Finding balance is another of the author's favorite activities and forms the principles of the object entitled *Attempt to Settle the Leaning Tower of Pisa* – a scale composed of a flat board with a miniature of the Leaning Tower of Pisa on one side, and a candle on the other side. If we burnt it, the waxy mass continuously disappears and the scale leans on the side of the tower, making it seem "settled" in our eyes.

From the series of anti-authoritative works and the works directed against the institution of art, the exhibition presents only two. His famous photo *I cannot see any art!* from the eponymous performance (1975) shows the artist in black glasses, with a white cane and yellow ribbon on his arm and a sign reading "Ich kann keine Kunst mehr sehen!". At the entrance, instead of getting a ticket, we receive a sticker saying "No Exhibition Entry!" Ulrichs

installed a sign with the same words in Bremerhaven in 1970. Back then, he disinfected the space of the gallery and spread rat poison on the ground. Paradoxically, thanks to that "ticket", we get the chance to enter the exhibition – the prohibition is used only as a memory and joke.

Few works are also exhibited outdoors. On the lawn, there is an enlarged sculpture called *Squaring the circle* (1987/90), that shows us probably like no other work that our vision is always a matter of the position where we stand. While one sees the object as a circle, the observer standing three steps further sees it as a square. There is also a road sign with an arrow and words "40,000 km here", which refers to the distance to the place of "Here" around the globe.

Many avant-garde artists have decided to identify and document their life as an art project, but only a few of them have conveyed it with such consequentiality and extreme deployment as T. Ulrichs. In 1961, he formulated the text called *Life Movie 1*, which perceives his life as a film made after his own life. He even had the words "The End" tattooed on his right eyelid, suggesting that the movie concludes when Ulrichs closes his eyes for the last time.

1. Exhibition duration from 9 May to 19 September 2010 (see: www.museum-ritter.de)
2. "My studio is my flat as well as the entire world. I am interested in transforming everyday situations into "cultural situations", created by my persona "out-of-the-studio" through subjective intervention into the objective reality." Koller in an interview with H. U. Obristom, in: *Univerzálna Futurologické Operácie*, Köln 2003, p. 215.
3. In his *Official Confirmation* action, Juraj Bartusz let himself be photographed in 1971 in various activities during the daytime (such as sleeping, waking up, buying newspapers etc.) and registered the photos with and actual acknowledgment of these activities at the notary.

Exhibition: Blick zurück nach vorn
Author: Timm Ulrichs
Curator: Gerda Ridler
Venue: Museum Ritter, Waldenbuch, Germany
Duration: 9 May – 19 September 2010

Timm Ulrichs: *Betreten der Ausstellung verboten!*, 1970, two-color screen-print on aluminum. Photo: archive of the author

Richard Gregor

A Variant of Contextual Classification of Julián Filo's (1921 - 2007) Oeuvre



When the Slovak National Gallery (SNG) carried out the Slovak Fine Art 1970 - 1985 project in 2002 - 2003 and included classical and officializing tendencies along the neo-avantgarde art, both the institution and the curator (Aurel Hrabušický) faced relatively massive criticism. This, however, was one of the first attempts of a synthesizing and detached take on the infamous era of normalization in a way that can be assumed from our perspective in the horizon of 20 years. Surely, an attempt of such a timeless distance demands sensitive approach to the risk of leveling quality art with the ideological authors and the authors questionable with regards to artistic taste. But more than anything else came to the fore the need to reinterpret the art balancing on the borderline of being both era-approved and critical-in-nature, often represented by excellent and not yet sufficiently appreciated authors, with Julián Filo and the emblematic authors Miloš Šimurda and Jozef Srna among them.

The nature of Filo's recently concluded work clearly suggests his solitary position, which makes it impossible to clearly include it into any style of the period, the attributes or sources of which can be observed in author's work. For example, a number of texts traditionally classify Filo as a figure of pop-art (L. Kára and others) and although the compositional sequentiality and the figural flatness (E. Kapsová) and partially un-signature nature of the image draws Filo's paintings close to advertisements and film, the overall relation to pop-art remains purely metaphorical. In comparison, let's mention the much older historical relation of Ladislav Medňanský with impressionism for such reasons as fundamentally different work with color. We will be more accurate if we discuss the way Filo repeats and crosses his references. Thus, we might come up with names for the principles of his solitariness, particularly if we consider certain psychological, even psychoanalytical reference virtually present throughout all his works as the common denominator.

Let's accept the pop-art source as a source reduced to a certain pattern which Filo enters. However, he disrupts its scheme with the pessimism of grey colors and the presence

of his style that reaches brutal (L. Kára) expressiveness in the majority of Filo's style-defining works. In addition, the expression of actors, different situations and overall character of his works deny the possible pop-art integrity as well. Actually, the expressive tendencies of his style push the styleless (anti-painting) layers into episodic and short-term roles (with regards to his cycle of hyperrealistic paintings, for example). The second most frequently mentioned trend is to assign Filo to group new figuration artists, considered here as greatly influential. The reasoning behind such comparison is supported by the fact that Filo's collage techniques are based on the principles of deconstruction. On the other hand, there are his realistic tendencies that can be considered essential, as he kept coming back to them during the years. The element of quoting, as well as the use of real objects (such as the fragmented objects in assemblages and even the rhythmically repetitive details of hands in his paintings) interconnect in a certain way the above-mentioned two circles (pop-art and new figuration). Apart from that, we may as well understand them as a reference to the principles of neo-dada and neo-surrealism - the principles that contributed to a number of tendencies present in the Slovak art during the 60s such as informel, art influenced by New Realists from Paris as well as the imaginative illustrative graphics, to say the least.

Thus, Filo's assemblages as well as some of his architectural realisations, to a certain degree, fully belong in their morphology as well as into the circle of Ivan Štěpán's objectual work from the half of the 60s, and equally to the objects of Alex Mlynářčik (including those with an affinity to prospective architecture). I admit the polemic nature of this construct, but if we were to admit the surrealist inspiration, which even had a very alive tradition in Czechoslovakia, the aforementioned psychoanalytical reference of Filo's works would get a different layer of meaning that is not strictly individual, intimate or self-exploiting.

Combinations of different, often contradictory artistic strategies are typical Slovak phenomenon of the 20th century. However, only a few authors achieved such a strong reference of their time on the projection of the individual

and individuality, while maintaining their psychological capacity. What's more, there are no universal representations; Filo's stories are mostly short symbolic formations, but even so his thematic focus is on the urban and civilist art that has us a unique place in the spectrum of Slovak art. The subject matters he chooses to work with are neither social (like Sokol), nor hedonistic (like Želibský), us we would expect due to our existing lines of civilism.

The protagonist is the author himself in the role of a kind of Kafka-Bulgakov white-collar, both real and represented in photographic form. He is surrounded by situations full of inaccessible forbidden temptation, unclear conflicts with equally vague solutions. The bottom line of Filo's "fables" does not lie in resolving the situation, which opposes one of the main attributes of the narrative ideological art mentioned by Thomas Pospiszyl (referring to Dave Hickey) in his comparison to the American and Soviet postwar realism.

Although created already in the 60s, it was not before the period of normalization that the treatise of Filo's autobiographical figure in a suit through the crossroads of various dramas started to make sense. In fact, the depersonalization as Filo's essential building structure in the construction of a picture went fully into effect here. The incoherent contactlessness brings us to the German New Objectivity of the 20s, along with the mutual ignorance of the actors of the particular pictures - they are merely gray theatrical stooges and their ambiguous gestures are the only carriers of symbols. Filo caricatures them by thier multiplication, as if he faded the movement (of hands, for instance, which is a recurring theme). Again, the resulting expected grotesque is other than universal, the appearance of the characters is not funny itself, but rather because they represent the twisted ideal of a merry socialist working intelligence with happy faces. In addition, we don't find them funny because we can still recall this social image very vividly and even still encounter it.

In one of his texts, Filo writes that he selects his characters randomly; from newspaper clippings he turns into collages with architectural proportionality or even decollages, alternating and replacing them outside the narrative logic of their micro-stories. Thus, he escalates the disunity and loneliness of the happy or sad, peaceful or aggressive actors, as we can see it in the composition of the kind of joint images, highlighted by corporate mirrors or "niches" where everyone has their own, seemingly intact space, the distortion of which is always taken as an act of unauthorized entry, a certain form of aggression (Tomáš Štrauss).

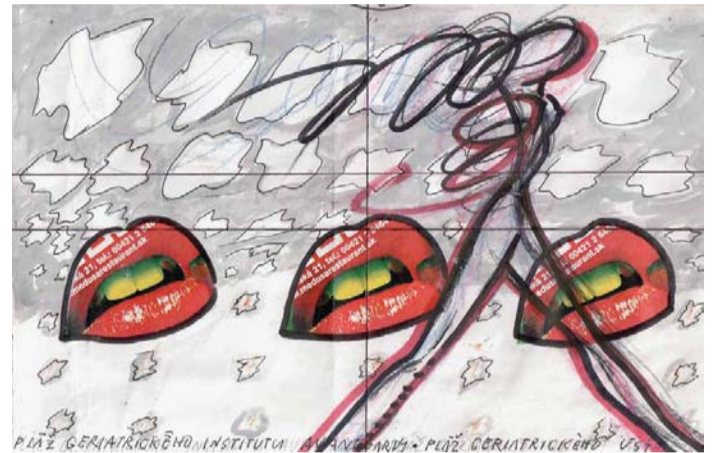
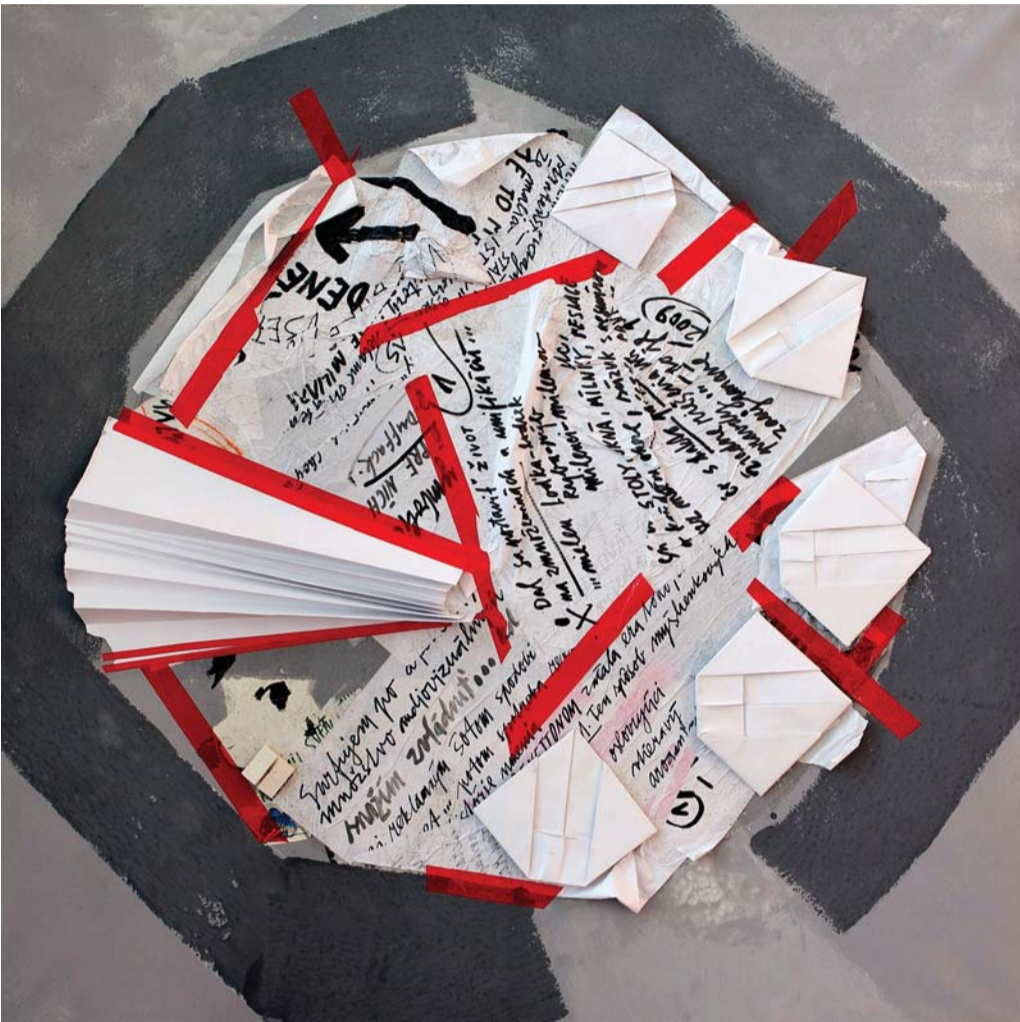
At first glance, detailed examinations of Filo's oeuvre may make it seem that he achieved the greatest quality in his very convincingly composed hyper-realistic American retouchings. However, I would attribute the center of his style in the sense of the unique proportion between the form and the story to his characteristically expressive painting, specifically to those that are, due to their disturbingly dirty lines, on the borderline with perhaps the Bad Painting.

In terms of subject matters, I find the dating of the era of normalization as most pertinent for the abovementioned legitimization of their common self-portrait denominator. Leaving aside the typically realist references of these images, characteristic not only for Filo but for all realistic images, such as realia, clothes design, design references and so on, we find out about the surprisingly contemporary language of the images in terms of the abovementioned expressive expression, not putting an emphasis on form, even in deliberate decomposition. This is particularly true when one considers the fact that Filo does not admit or convey any pathos, mystery and uncertainty that occur in the most common situations as a kind of profane mystification. Then, it is even shocking to find out about the post-modern perspective of these paintings, arising from a seemingly contradictory era.

Julián Filo: Women Friends, 1967, assemblage.
Foto: archive of author

Gabriela Garlatyová

Graffiti, Fantasies, Meditations and Reports



^ Vladimír Popovič: Beach of the Geriatric Institute of Avant-garde, 2009, combined technique. Photo: Richard Friedmann

< Vladimír Popovič: My Universe, 2010, combined technique. Photo: Richard Guzman

The *Déja vu* exhibition presents new paintings of Vladimír Popovič – the ones that were created after his Great Retrospect in the Slovak National Gallery in 2002. The text of Beáta Jablonská, the curator of the current exhibition, is rather “loose” and reflective and does not try into categorize something that is uncategorizable, avoiding any labels and boxes. Her text is void of the categorization to painting, drawing or “media” of the author, of any contexts, speculations or references; his creative process is not interpreted as ideology. The reason is that Popovič is neither ideologue, nor critic, sociologist, nor strategist... Neither in his early years, nor now, when he sinks into his visual meditation, beaten up by his own art experiencing. The journey by train to the Soviet Union in 1975, drawn as a record from a diary on wallpaper, was not a political message or response to what was happening in the society, but a poetic metaphor of this charming yet uncertain route. Popovič was touched by the spiritual energy of the magical Spiš area – he couldn’t get all those fantasies and mysteries out of his mind and felt the urge to paint them. But he was equally touched by the unique human soul that believes its voice, follows it and paints by it. When it comes to Popovič’s paintings (or other art in general), it is necessary to forget about the traditional approach to the analysis of his work that is used rather often in the writings about him as an artist. What do you see when you stop looking at forms, themes, iconographies, techniques...? The art of Vladimír Popovič is comprehensible both traditionally and scientifically, but this space of this bulletin board allows me to express my doubts, which have even began because of this particular bulletin board (although only I know when and how). Popovič is comprehensible through his literary themes, references, sources, hints and “iconography” (I would be careful in this case – he is neither a theologian nor a dogmatist). This means his oeuvre is readable, which makes it more accessible to those literary types like myself. And that’s why I sometimes perceive it that way as well. We can also read them at the *Déja vu* exhibition: *Ships, Leaves, Violinists, Lovers, Lips, Girls, Runners, Alleys/Lode, Listy, Huslistky, Milenci, Pery, Dievčatá, Bežci, Aleje...* Or we can observe Popovič as an expressionist painter, recalling the 50s or the 80s or 90s and his own contribu-

tion to the postmodern neoexpressionist movement in painting. B. Jablonská, who studies this movement, did so in the text. In Popovič’s paintings from the 80s and the 90s era, we can see the link to and continuation of the “gray paintings” and their “different” unstable energy echoing in contemporary paintings, not as a theoretical speculation but as traces of sadness, irrationality, despair of the 80s/90s that are not ornamental but subjective painting expressions. In his paintings, Vladimír Popovič overcame his penchant for decorativeness in favor of search for honesty through sensitivity or openness of an adult child. I associate his dance figurations *Royal Gardens* (1965), *Actors for Palmström* (1965), *Alley* (1973), *Legend of Cyprían the Monk* (1972), *Runers/Kráľovské záhrady*, 1965, *Herci pre Palmströma*, 1965, *Aleja*, 1973, *Legenda o mníchovi Cypríanovi*, 1972, *Bežci ... with the “sofa for the soul”* of Henry Matisse (*Dance*, *Ermitage*, S. Petersburg, 1910, and 1909 in MOMA NY) and the entire French hedonistic and colorist tradition, which comes to life again through its vitality in contemporary art. He doubts it in his grey paintings *Congresses*, *Hygiene*, *Russian Eggs/Kongresy*, *Hygiena*, *Ruské vajcia...* and his paintings from the zero years combine these seemingly contradictory principles into one whole: joyful painting along with pessimistic doubts. Popovič is a unique painter. What is his place in the Slovak art? In our environment, the most acclaimed painting is the literary, narrative, contentual, ideological painting with serious subject matters and dark color scheme that now shares the spotlight with the conceptual, simply rationalized and aesthetically scarce and unobtrusive one. Are the paintings for the painting, the joy of painting, and their sensual qualities a part of our spectrum of art, or are they rather perceived, with suspicion, as something obsolete (with the exception of the decorative fashion painting)? Vlado Popovič writes us letters that cannot be read as letters. He is not a painter of subject matters. Rather, he paints fluid records, doodles, and fantasies of eternal romance, meditation games. Graffiti are not that familiar to his students from the Academy of Fine Arts, where he led the K.R.E.S.BA studio (since 1993) after 1990, but closer to the paintings of Erik Binder or the serious anti-paintings of Viktor Frešo.

As someone who likes to travel and discover and have become fond of Cy Twombly’s paintings, I was pleased by the gestural energy, doodling, graphemes and graffiti of Vlado Popovič: *Tantra Crater/Tantra kráter*, 2000, 100 x 200 cm, *Stars/Hviezdy*, 2003, the unique *Alley/Aleja* painting, 2003, 240 x 360 cm, *Diary/Denník*, 2009, 150 x 309 cm... as well as the *Creasings/Krkváže*, 2000, and *How to Fold a Boat/Ako sa skladá loďka*, 2009, and other paintings, installed tightly next to each other in the gallery reflecting on the water.

“Don’t explain the picture – you won’t be understood. Each apprehension must be heard out. Forget about perspective and leave anatomy to medical students. If you are admired for your craftsmanship, you’ve missed out on something fundamental... Work so that you can leave the PICTURE in any stage (you might get hit by a car.) Painting is not horse racing; the exhausted horses end up in a stew... A game of chess begins already with the second move on the chessboard Feel the noise of civilization, feel the COSMIC BREATH. Don’t suppress EMOTIONS – you’ll get sick. Don’t let anyone take away the ILLUSION of the existence of GREAT LOVE from you – you’ll remain with NOTHING...”¹

I guess I wasn’t the only one who wrote a confession into the guestbook: *“I love the paintings of Vlado Popovič!”* Among other reasons, it is because I don’t seek for a borderline between what is art and what is not.

1. From the catalogue of Vladimír Popovič, *Déja vu 2000 – 2010*. Jablonská, B.: *Predčítateľka a kúzelník*. Published by Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, 2011, unpaginated, from the handwritten notes of V. Popovič

Exhibition: *Déja vu 2000 – 2010*
Author: Vladimír Popovič
Curator: Beata Jablonská
Venue: Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, Bratislava, SR
Duration: 11 December 2010 – 6 March 2011

Nina Vrbanová

Re: Inter-view

The Year of a Woman

Late last year, an exhibition named *Naked Girls - Uncensored Acts of Modern Masters/Holé baby - necenzurované akty moderných majstrov* (Slovak National Gallery, curator Petra Hanáková) significantly resonated at the domestic art scene. The exhibition met with a rich, largely critical response, mainly questioning the relevance of feminist reading and interpretation of the selected acts as something attributed, added externally, inadequate in relation to the original context of the works and the intentions of their authors. In parallel, Centre Pompidou in Paris hosted the *elles@centrepompidou - Women Artists in the collections of the National Museum of Modern Art* for over a year. The collection presented the work of key international authors from the 20th century to present (Valie Export, Eva Hesse, Kiki Smith, Rebeca Horn, Pipilotti Rist, Rineke Dijkstra and others) and had two fundamental levels of meaning and for today's context and interpretation of women art. The first and dominant one, which is shown on the background of a wide spectrum of themes, was the fluctuation of the very concept of women's art as an umbrella definition for further specifications (feminist, post-feminist, gender, as well as specific subject matters such as body, family and domestic chores in addition to material, formal and expressive aspects - softness, gentleness, roundness, emotional versus rational etc.). Thus, artworks diametrically different and mutually incompatible under the prism of women art appear side by side - from the self-reflexive modernist painting through radical and programmatic feminism to geometric abstraction and product design, practically without any evident signs of the female gender. The second level, although a temporal one, was to draw a specific picture of history and aesthetics of the 20th century - women only exposition, very comprehensive and convincing one, largely alternative to popular, "mainstream" picture usually presented by international art museums and galleries.

At the turn of 2009 and 2010, the MUMOK museum of modern art in Vienna offered another interpretation of visual art of the second half of the 20th century and presence observed from the gender perspective. The Gender Check exhibition (curated by Bojana Pejić, Slovak cooperation Zora Rusinová) presented a panoramic view on the phenomena of femininity and masculinity in the art of Eastern Europe and set yet another different, mainly more open, dialogical framework for interpretation of the basic

gender positions through their simultaneous reflection. The Profil magazine analyzed this exhibition in details. Another domestic exhibition currently taking place in the Nitra Gallery called *Inter-view* (November 2010 - February 2011) enriched the spectrum of the exhibitions thematically focused on the "phenomenon of femininity" in fine arts and the issue of its new contextualization. Curator Barbora Geržová presented twenty Slovak and Czech women artists, testing the various and often ambivalent possibilities of interpreting women art. In addition to the selected artworks, she presented short interviews with the authors as an autonomous part of the exposition, asking them about their attitude towards feminism, whether and to what extent they identify with feminist reading and interpretation of their works as women artists.

The duality of the artworks as independent statements and interviews, exempt from the authorship and, on the contrary, semantically bound with the intentions of their authors and their own readings, opened up the door to rather uncertain, doubtful arbitrary attribution of these categories (female, feminist etc.) to a priori the oeuvre of the particular women artists.

Interpretation possibilities

In 1962, philosopher and aesthetician Umberto Eco published a book entitled *Opera aperta* (The Open Work). In it, he thematizes the idea of an artwork as semantically open, unfinished by author's intention, specific historical-political context or any other reading. This conception allows for the artwork to be interpreted again and again, in an entirely new way and differently, with each of these readings being correct and valid, because the artwork as such is open and semantically infinite. His conception was later significantly supported by the postmodern situation that resigned from the universal modernist categories of truth or objectivity and resulted in strengthening the position of the individual, usually subjective reading - position of the interpreter. During the 90s, Eco reapprised his original conception and formulated The Limits of Interpretation. He claimed that there had to be "limits" that cannot be crossed or underestimated in the pursuit of an adequate interpretation (i.e. overinterpretation or underinterpretation). He differentiates between three basic, initial intentions of interpretation - author's intent, text/artwork intent, and reader's/ viewer's/interpreter's intent.

Although the 20th century conceived several very strong and distinctive models of interpretation of art (especially psychoanalytical, formalistic, structuralist and post-structuralist), it is Eco's conception in particular that describes the problematic aspects of exhibitions and allows to reveal their background incentives. It is a fact that the very words "feminist reading" do imply a clear monopoly of the reader/interpreter. When it comes to the Naked Girls exhibition, this approach is evident (see the *Nine Responses on the Naked Girls/Deväť odpovedí na margo Holých báb* article by Petra Hanáková). The *Inter-view* exhibition attempts to doubt the heroic position of the interpreter through surveying the female authors. Their answers pointed out the difference between the intent of the author and the reader, the lack of their semantic encounter.

Re: Inter-view

Following its aims, the exhibition in Nitra encourages discussion. It presents a collection of quality works with most of them created in recent years by their authors. Among others, let's mention Milena Dopitová, Emöke Vargová, Michaela Thelenová, Pavlína Fichta Čierna, Eva Filová, Dorota Sadovská, or Lucia Tallová as a representative of the younger generation. Generational openness endows the exhibition space with a wide spectrum of media - it observes the issue of feminist reading on an appropriate platform of painting, photography, video, installation and their overlapping. Parallely, the concept of the exhibition reflects upon the diverse content diapason of the selected works, categorised into several topics (deformed body, advice for wife, family, children, relationships, etc.).

While the contentual and media variety of the presented works opens up possibilities of interpretation and as a whole aims towards the negation of arbitrary attributes like "feminine" and "feminist", the presented topics return this figurative motion back and, on the contrary, confirm their legitimacy to a certain extent. If we don't take into consideration the semantic presence of the interviews and focus only on the presented works ("texts", in Eco's words) in the context of this exhibition, there is not much space for a deeper reinterpretation. The feminine aspect is confirmed particularly in the themes reflected in the presented works as well as the specific authorial strategies. One can presume it was the thematic scope of the artworks that was in the forefront of the curatorial concept and the particular selection.

If we attempt to define and generalize something so specific, and from the point of view of authorship (individuality) even reluctant towards any categorization, like the contemporary visual art undoubtedly is, there is de-facto only one possibility - to observe the intent of the work itself. When it comes to the *Inter-view* exhibition, this level of interpretation projects into the selection of the works that, however, presents a selective sample of Czech and Slovak women art.



Emöke Vargová: Jellyfish, 2000, object.
Courtesy of Slovak National Gallery



Pavla Sceranková: Floor plan of Grandma's Apartment, mentioned - real, 2007, object.
Photo: archive of the author

The authors and their works represent the positions of art that don't support feminist reading (e.g. Pavla Sceranková and her work entitled *Floorplan of Grandma's Apartment, mentioned - real/Pôdorys babkinho bytu, spomenutý - skutočný*, 2007), or are ambivalent from this perspective (e.g. Milena Dostálová's videoinstallation *M.M.D.*, 2009) as well as those that include the feminist aspect quite clearly (e.g. Emöke Vargová's work *Medusa/Medúza*, 2000, or the works of Eva Filová - video *Mysterious Object of Desire/Tajomný predmet túžby*, 2003 - 2010, or the installation *Seven Ages of Woman/Sedem vekov ženy*, 2003). What's quite interesting is that this third group confirms their affiliation with the feminist context of their work also in the interviews - authorial intent, intent of the artwork as well as the interpreter thus, relatively rarely, agree. It is necessary to add that this group mainly consists of authors of middle and older generation.

Despite the possibilities that this exhibition reveals in this sense, there is a lack of case studies to the situations when the author negates her relationship to (post)feminism, but her work/oeuvre clearly belongs into this field. Pars pro toto, we can mention Ilona Némenh's *Polyfunctional Woman/Polyfunkčná žena* (1996) or several works of Jana Želíbská. Although quite solitary here, the work of Anna Daučíková could open up another, different level of thinking about these issues. Thus, if the questions asked by the Inter-view exhibition are not just "rhetorical" and there is an attempt to form or formulate the answers and define the interpretational context of women art present in the subtext, it is necessary to spread its scope further. It is also disputable whether the notion of feminist art, the bearer of a pretty limited meaning, is relevant to the selected artworks and is primarily related with the art of the 60s in the West. Would the answers still be absent if the problem was defined differently?

Exhibition: Inter-view

Artists: Gabika Binderová (SK), Veronika Bromová (CZ), Milena Dopitová (CZ), Lucia Dovičáková (SK), Katarína Ďuricová (SK), Jana Farmanová (SK), Pavlína Fichta Čierna (SK), Eva Filová (SK), Mira Gáberová (SK), Tatiana Grófová (SK), Zdena Kolečková (CZ), Petra Malá (CZ), Monika Mikyšková (SK), Ildikó Pálová (SK), Dorota Sadovska (SK), Pavla Sceranková (SK), Lucia Tallová (SK), Michaela Thelenová (CZ), Emöke Vargová (SK), Vlasta Žáková (SK)

Curator: Barbora Geržová

Venue: Nitra Gallery, Nitra, SR

Duration: 26 November 2010 - 20 February 2011

Lenka Kukurová

War, KGB and Artists in Russian Jail



News about nominating the Moscow activist street-art group called *Voina* (War) for the Russian State Prize for visual art innovation has appeared in global media. There are several reasons why this information appeared in the media, usually not paying much attention to art. The first reason is the artwork this group was nominated for - over 60 meters tall phallus painted on a drawbridge in Petrohrad right opposite to the headquarters of the secret service. The second reason is the fact that two artists from the group are currently in jail. Last but not least, the involvement of famous British graffiti artist Banksy who offered the group a great sum of money to bail them indisputably contributed to the group's presence in the media as well.

The artwork called *Dick Captured by the FSB* (FSB is the Russian secret service, successor to the KGB) itself is not there anymore. Thanks to the intervention of authorities, this artwork lived barely for 12 hours. The artistic action of a guerilla character didn't take longer than 30 seconds. The symbol was painted by a number of activists who poured white paint on canisters. It only took a couple of minutes to achieve the desired effect - the phallus erected towards the secret service headquarters. Arresting and cleaning of the bridge took place immediately. If it weren't for the picture documentation, albeit of a poor quality, the artwork wouldn't arouse any attention. Even to this day, the well-known artworks are based primarily on visuality.

The work was created in June 2010 in response to the restrictive measures of the Russian secret services against the protesters before the start of the economic forum held last summer in St. Petersburg. That is to say the *Voina* art group is composed of politically active male and female members, who partially adhere to anarchism. Despite its militant name, the students of philosophy at the Moscow University found the pacifist group in 2007. It organized

several art happenings, all characterized by radicality on the borderline or beyond legislation. Members of the group organized a funeral feast in the Moscow subway wagon, a punk concert that took place right in the courtroom during the trial of a politically persecuted curator, hanged figurines of migrants and homosexuals in the supermarket to protest against the Mayor of Moscow, or had sex publicly in a science museum to "support" Medvedev just before his election. Harsh social situation obviously raises provocative artistic reactions. And these didn't remain unnoticed by the authorities. Although the detained activist was released after the *Dick Captured by the FSB* action, he found himself back in jail along with other members of the group in November 2010, after the *Palace Coup* happening, when they overturned several police cars on the pretext of looking for a child's lost ball.

The fact that the group's activities were not merely the source of adrenaline rush is proven by their explicit political views, direct targeting of their actions, but also by the fact that the group has become dangerous for the Russian state power. The members of the group were well aware of the penalties they faced for their open criticism of authorities; their punishment was only a matter of time. Two of the group members - Leonid Nikolayev (27) and Oleg Vorotnikov (35) are still in jail, awaiting their trial (February 2011). Upon their arrest, they were handcuffed; their heads were covered with plastic bags and they were transported from St. Petersburg to Moscow sitting on the metal floor of a van. The Russian prison system is certainly no dreamland; poor conditions and battles are not uncommon, many prisoners and guards sympathize with neo-Nazism.

Other female members of the group got her documents seized and the authorities have threatened with the withdrawal of her child into institutional care. An allegation of the arrested reads: "riotous conduct, based on political or ideological hatred or hostility towards a group towards people." They face several years of punishment. Classification of their offense clearly does not correspond to reality - the activists didn't harm or attack anyone. Banksy helped to rise public exposure of their case and offered them £ 80,000 from the sale of his works as bail. However, bail was refused despite the high amount, although the Russian system is notorious for releasing corrupts and even suspicious murderers this way. Artist Vorotnikov said that considering the given circumstances, he sees the stay in prison a part of the artistic process. Hence, art is intertwined with real life in a rather extreme form, uncontrollable by the author.

Recently, the *Voina* group has been nominated for an award for innovation in the visual arts. The award, which comes with a great financial reward, is awarded by the Russian Ministry of Culture, together with the National Centre for Contemporary Art. Andrej Jerofejev, one of the jury members, has personally experienced persecution because of his curatorial activities. However, the members of the *Voina* group rejected the nomination. The award of

the prize would not necessary mean their release, which is their primary requirement. Adoption of the sum of money for their artistic activities, which would undoubtedly come handy when it comes to legal services, is, however, incompatible with their beliefs about the freedom of art. A statement of one of the group members may seem a little dated at the first glance: "The most important thing for an artist is to be honest and uncompromisable", later loses its naive tone: "In Russia, people are exposed to torture and executions; once more, the prisons are full of dissenters. There is xenophobia and homophobia and society of slaves is being built." Unfortunately, these statements correspond with the official report on the murders of journalists and burgeoning neo-Nazism and corruption, and are not at all exaggerated.

The happenings of the Russian *Voina* group might serve as a contribution into a discussion about activist art in our environment. In 2007, the Czech artistic group *Ztohoven* intervened into television broadcasting of the weather "Panorama" with images of a cloud of an atomic bomb explosion. The happening arose great attention mainly thanks to the media, several members of the group stood before the court, but were eventually freed. For this action, the group was awarded by the National Gallery, and despite the controversy surrounding their connection to Milan Knížák, the director of the gallery. Thanks to awarding this controversial group, he improved his image of young art disapprover. A number of media as well as several professional articles described the *Ztohoven* group as "activist". When comparing the actions of these two creative groups (apart from the fact that they took place in a completely different social context) the activities of the *Ztohoven* group cannot be called activist, even though they are certainly innovative and provocative. Members of this group do not express publicly their political opinion, don't protest against the establishment or some social problem. They are not politically active in civil life and don't present their moral beliefs by art. Although the form of their activities was often associated with activist art (transfiguration of the heart symbol at the Prague Castle into a question mark, replacement advertising space with question marks, "falsification" of IDs), lacked the fundamental attributes of activist art.

Unfortunately, this terminological confusion is detriment to the artists themselves, as from every artist who touches political or controversial topic is automatically expected to express his or her personal moral opinion. And that may or may not be a part of a political artwork. However, the current political art should clearly represent the deliberately critical or subversive attitude.

For more information on the *Voina* group and support options, see: <http://free-voina.org/>.

Documentation of the *Dick Captured by the FSB* action, 2010. Photo: archive of the *Voina* group

Lenka Kukurová

Prague Biennale 5

What could be worse than an exhibition arousing a negative reaction? Maybe one that just aroused absolute silence. And that is exactly what happened at this year's Prague biennale. One of the main reasons might be the choice of the exhibition venue, which could have been accompanied by the slogan: from centre to periphery. The high-rise Microna building in the Modřany district of Prague is an interesting and unusual venue for the exhibition, but on the other hand it brings about several disadvantages in terms of location, as well as the premises themselves. After you get through hot summer Prague to the periphery of the town, you might experience a quite bizarre feeling at the biennale – to find out you are the only visitor at the twelve-floor building. The fifth Prague biennale and the second Prague photo biennale which take place simultaneously introduce more than 200 artists from 25 countries and are divided into several sections. These sections are set at two higher floors and in a nuclear shelter under the building. While the "Czech" section could have profited from the interesting underground location, doing the installations in the other parts of the build was – I suppose – a nightmare. Abandoned former offices are not a visual opposition to the gallery's white cube but more of a system of smaller white cubes supplemented by distasteful grey-blue stained carpet. Besides the shelter, another interesting area – the staircase, which might have offered the possibility for experiment, unfortunately remained closed. This space only became a subject for reaction for Tomáš Svoboda in his well-executed sound installation of running on the stairs. While the premises of Karlín hall – where the biennale used to take place before – was structured by generous panel boards and thus gained a sort of unified conception, here the particular section was placed in offices. So although the building called for a parody in presentation style of "corporate art" in companies or ironic reactions towards the exhibition premises themselves, nobody really decided to use this opportunity. Maybe that is the reason why the impression from passing through the long abandoned corridors remained rather disconcerting. The Czech section named *To Perceive in the Darkness of the Present* and curated by Vjera Borozan and Mariana Serranová relied on established Czecho-Slovak quality (Dopitová, Kořátková, Náleška, Othová, Salák, Sceranková, Šimera and others). While the selection of contemporary artists is quite representative, the concept of the curators is a bit problematic, since it was difficult to read even from the texts for the selection of works: *"Aspects of timelessness, the transformative potential of creative processes (origin and the perception of a work of art)*

in connection with the need to consider the elementary presence of here and now are our main objects of interest... The aim of the exhibition is to make the subjective approach and gesture visible as a natural way of relating to reality." A conception based on the artist becoming a subject that experiences expeditious reality is too wide, undefined and inexpressive and almost anything can be included within. That was proven also in the case of this section where all the artists presented deal with a vast number of topics and exhibit them in contradictory contexts. The most remarkable works of this section were videos by Tereza Severová, Erik Sikora, Ladislav Vondrák and some precisely installed objects – such as underground flowers by Milena Dopitová and heating metal object by Tomáš Džadoň placed by a dysfunctional radiator (the double irony was that at the time of my visit even Džadoň's work did not function anymore).

The Slovak section curated by Lýdia Pribišová and Katarína Slaninová had to fit into two offices. The name of the section *No matter What We Do We Can't Connect with You* referred to the topic of (non)communication in the world of art full of misunderstanding and mistaken interpretations. Considering the given topic, one might find several contemporary Slovak works that have met with misunderstanding or conflict. Therefore, inclusion of these works is not readable for me. Despite the missing connection, however, good quality works are presented. For some of the works the placement couldn't be considered as a correct option – for example the carpet "mop" by Viktor Frešo would definitely create a better impression somewhere more puzzling, for instance near the storage. (Non)communication was probably also processed by Erik Binder, since the point of the work – plastic spiders coming out of buckets after clapping your hands – was not recognized by many people who did not understand the instruction "no applause = no art". What was interesting was the collection of videos by Anna Daučíková about women and institutions, from which this year's capture of herself and the Catholic Church was the most particular. The author reacts to her experience from the 1990s when she had to testify regarding the dysfunctional sexual relationship of her friend in front of a church committee. Daučíková reproduces the process on the street in front of a church. She appears in various roles on the shot, then disappears, asks questions and answers. The ingenious effect of presence-absence is created probably by a mirror. Unfortunately, the sound on the video is not good and the viewer can hardly hear the script which is crucial for the video.

The news of this year at the Prague biennale is the Indian section, which introduces 22 established and new artists. Although the main visual of the biennale – the creation of Adam in the form of an Indian divinity – (the work of Vivek Vilasini) – is based on exotica, the choice of the works is balanced and more conceptual. The artist Charmi Gada Shah for example introduces a project dealing with the history and form of the gallery premises in Kochi and investigates architecture. The inclusion of this section was a big contribution to the biennale.

The main part was covered less this year. It was traditionally focused on "expanded painting", with several subsections. However, it remained a mystery to me. If the "new directions of international painting" are really supposed to be introduced, then this section might be understood more as a criticism of these directions, which probably wasn't the intention. According to Politi's press release: *"The old saying goes: 'the best soup comes from an old hen.' But that might not be the case today. In well-chosen contemporary painting nothing is old and the soup is still equally tasty."* However, I would rather recommend not visiting this section very hungry.

High quality and attractiveness can be attributed to this year's photo biennale, which introduces mainly Czech, Polish and Dutch photographs. What is remarkable is also the Canadian section *Selective Affinities* managed by Marius Tanasescu. Cecile Martin introduces videos on perception of space on which she cooperated with musician Francisco López. Artist Aude Moreau presents her video – of a helicopter-shot neon sign *Sortir (exit)*, which she created from above the high-rise building of the Montreal stock exchange. On the subject of the periphery edition of this year's biennale it should be stated that the non-traditional venue did not work well. An exhibition in Microna – just because of its location – creates an impression of confinedness and lacks the technical support (dysfunctional overhead projectors, stereopticons, screens, projections...).

An exhibition of the biennale type that required a lot of energy should not remain in the periphery. Maybe, after the departure of Milan Knižák it could get back to the *Veletržní palác (Trade-Fair Palace)* and raise its otherwise not very impressive reputation. May a new director help curators with that...

Exhibition: Prague Biennale 5/Prague Biennale Photo 2
Venue: Microna, Prague, ČR
Duration: 16 June – 13 August 2011



Ilona Németh: Mud wrestling, 2010, performance and video.
Photo: Daša Barteková



Erik Binder: So Far So Close, 2010, interactive installation.
Photo: Daša Barteková

Mira Sikorová-Putišová

SCOOTER

- not only the third, but also maybe the last

In the final phase of writing this text I received a message that another (?) temporarily assigned director of the Jan Koniarik Gallery in Trnava – Mgr. Jakub Slobodník – had cancelled the prepared festival *Multiplace 2011* and other planned projects conceived by former gallery director Vladimír Beskid. Obviously, it is a result of the considerations of the gallery's founder (the Trnava Self-Governing Region) as to what the programme of the gallery should look like. This was presented by terse rejection of the exhibition plan that had been formerly approved by the gallery's committee – which was by the decision of the founder recently abolished as well. This text was originally written as a review of *Scooter III* and the whole young art biennale project. Considering the aforementioned circumstances it might, unfortunately, be a review of the last exhibition held in the gallery lead by Vladimír Beskid.

The three years realized so far have shifted the Scooter Biennale to the status of entrenched event. It is not only thanks to its periodicity, during which it maintained its form and original aim after some corrections, but also because of the setting and reach among the art audience and critics. The conception of *Scooter* is based on regular reflection of the fine art of the younger generation of authors up to the age of 35, initially mainly from Slovakia and with a representation of Czech artists. However, it didn't stay static and its further shaping and development resulted in many more Czech artists taking part in the second and third year of its holding. The reason for the change in conception leading to almost parity representation of artists from Slovakia and those who belong more to the Czech scene (in the last biennale it was 10 out of 19, while in the first year in 2007 there were only 2 from the same amount of participants) could have been the aim to provide the event with a wider confrontational frame. On the other hand – so far the highest number of Czech participants represented an attempt to avoid the repetitive introduction of the same artists. That was the issue criticized the most during *Scooter II* (2009), when the same seven names from the first year re-occurred on the list of exhibitors. Probably, it was a result of the safe choice from, at that time, well-established "Košice scene" (Boris Sirka, Vlasta Žáková a Laďa Gažiová), artists whose works were successful at other competition events – the Oskar Capan Award, National Gallery Award and Prague 333 Award (Viktor Frešo, Marek Kvetan); or it was a declaration of the curator's subjective preferences.

To expand the event towards a presentation that could be defined as a biennale of young Slovak and Czech art – whether it was the aim or out of necessity – was a good step indeed. Let's admit that our young (Slovak) scene is only seemingly rich in new interesting works relevant for this type of exhibition. Considering that a generation is differentiated from the following one (quite artificially and forcedly) by the age limit of 35 and is mainly represented by artists who do not create student works anymore (which are otherwise quite often presented in galleries), it is rather complicated to choose good quality works. Furthermore, organizers are searching for new names with at least partially verified works (in exhibitions and texts) and they have to take into account the fact that these should not re-appear in the exhibition in two years time. There are many factors influencing the composition of the exhibition. However, Vladimír Beskid is a skilled curator who can make the most out of them. The composition of the exhibition requires continual observation of both visual art environments, good judgment in considering the originality of works and authenticity in the approach to selection – also with the risk that a young author might not be able to develop his or her creative potential in future or even disappear from the art map completely. The aim to introduce young art in the wide spectrum of visual arts – with balanced proportional representation – is a significantly decisive element in the conception of the installation of the exhibition.

Scooter is a competition-type of exhibition. An award called Cyprían supplements the modest group of existing awards for young visual artists in Slovakia (which are, however, given by non-gallery entities) such as: the Oskar Čepán Award, the VUB Foundation Award and the international Essl Award. The stimulating reward for the laureate is 1,500 EUR which comes from the budget of the gallery, without the need to obtain further funds from grant programmes, or the banking or business sectors. Thus it was an example of the institutional model of financing contemporary visual art. Besides, Vladimír Beskid was constantly criticized because of the presentations by the founder – who was (paradoxically) providing the financial means. Part of the conception of *Scooter* was to gain a new acquisition to the collection from the winner. A synergic effect was thus created which was reflected after the donation of

the work in the dramaturgy of the gallery – an individual exhibition of the artist's work was organized (the Cyprían laureate of 2007 Pavla Sceranková exhibited in The Synagogue – Centre of Contemporary Art in 2010, and the Cyprían laureate of 2009 Tomáš Džadoň in cooperation with the Monogramist TD are presently exhibiting their works in the Koppel villa).

The Scooter Biennale III was for the first time assigned with a common theme. Although some of the works fitted into the topical framework rather freely, it was still pleasant to perceive them within the intended "Good Old Globalkan" – as a conflict of globalization and related issues (such as mass media or the world of advertising) with the local sphere of privacy (touched by destruction, disintegration and the baffling of the system and order).¹ The topic endorsed the coherence of the exhibition and the biennale thus moved to another level – where in comparison with previous years, the first one was interesting because of its "newness" and the second partially confirmed the good selection of the artists from the first year.

According to the decision of the committee² the Cyprían Award was given to the Czech artist Mark Ther for the video *Pflaumen* (2011). His video approaches film creation using full HD technology, editing, operating with the length of the shot as well as the emphasis on music selection and overall soundtrack of the video. Besides these elements, what was very interesting was the topic of the displacement of Sudeten Germans, which was presented via the micro-story of a small boy. Among other dominating works exhibited at *Scooter III* were certainly the installation *Home Prison* (2009 – 2010) by Eva Kořátková, which consisted of photographs and drawings dealing



^ Martin Špirec: *Reservé*, 2011, installation.
Photo: Zuzana Dohnalová

^^ Mark Ther: *Pflaumen*, 2011, video.
Photo: Zuzana Dohnalová

with corporeity tested in untypical situations. The artist is presently one of the most remarkable persons in the young Czech scene and therefore her inclusion in the biennale was a must. A particular contribution to the topic of home and privacy (which was present in more works) were the works by Katarína Hládeková. Her works are based on memories according to which she reconstructs no-longer-existing environments and life situations. Those thus turn into memory models in her installations. Alice Nikitinová who was awarded by special appreciation of the committee uses in her paintings banal utility things (such as cardboard boxes, staplers, ladders,...) and abstracting away their shape to a form close to geometric abstraction, which reveals their simple visual poetics. Another artist awarded by special appreciation of the committee is Martin Špirec who approached his presentation generously. His *in-situ* realizations infiltrated into the space of the gallery balanced on the borderline of absurdity or other artistic usage of common objects (mainly painting equipment). The inclusion of Lucia Dovičáková was not surprising, but her work could have been introduced in the biennale earlier, together with other members of the Košice scene. She presented a series of older paintings in which she characteristically subversively embodies the pro-

hibitions from her childhood – *Teapot* (2009), *Do not lick...* (2009) – or creates entertaining metaphors – *Mother in Law's Tongue* (2009). These are supplemented by a series of newer aquarelles, *Housewives* (2011). The whole collection was qualitatively balanced, even though it mainly consisted of works by artists with a different rate of reverberance by critics. The curator for the first time also chose artists with a smaller frequency of exhibitions, such as Roman Rembovský, Lucia Sceranková, Svetlana Fialová, and (still studying) Monika Vrancová. Less-known Czech artists presenting their works were Mark Číhal, Pavla Gajdošíková and Jiří Thýn.

The *Scooter* biennale of young art is a project that in our milieu compensates for the deficit in similar exhibitions as well as varies the practically non-existent choice available. It has become a "brand product" of the Ján Koniarik Gallery and appropriately supplemented the balanced profile of the contemporary art exhibitions. Moreover, it is the only event of its type organized by a gallery in the region – other types of biennales of young art are usually organized by different types of institutions (e.g. *Crazycurators*). Indubitably, it would be a pity if such a model of Scooter weren't made in Slovakia anymore.

1. For more info read the press release at: <http://www.gjk.sk/sk/vystavy/archiv-vystav/2011/skuter-iii-bienale-mladeho-umenia-trnava/>
2. The laureate was chosen by the following committee: chairman: MgA. Milan Houser, dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Brno; members of the committee: prof. MUDr. Bohumil Chmelík, PhD. – a representative of the Trnava Self-governing Region, a member of the committee for education, sport, and culture; Mgr. Renáta Niczová – director of the Nitra Gallery; doc. Ilona Németh, formally trained painter, the head of the IN Atelier at Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava; Mgr. Mira Sikorová-Putišová – a curator of the Museum of Art in Žilina.

Exhibition: Scooter III – Biennale of Young Art in Trnava 2011 (Good old GloBalkan)
 Authors: Miriam Bajtala, Andrej Dúbravský, Marek Číhal, Lucia Dovičáková, Svetlana Fialová, Pavla Gajdošíková, Katarína Hládeková, Dorota Kenderová, Šymon Kliman, Eva Kofátková, Alice Nikitinová, Daniel Piťín, Jakub Reken, Roman Rembovský, Lucia Sceranková, Martin Špirec, Mark Ther, Jiří Thýn, Monika Vrancová
 Curator: Vladimír Beskid
 Venue: Ján Koniarik Gallery, Trnava, SR
 Duration: 15 April – 5 June 2011

Alexandra Tamásová

Oskar Dawicki Knows How To Do It

On 25 August the Faica gallery opened its second exhibition. Again, it is the individual presentation of one artist – Polish Oskar Dawicki, with an enigmatic name *What is Wrong with Oskar Dawicki?* The curator of the exhibition, which will last until 22 October 2011, is Omar Mirza.

There were three types of works presented at the exhibition. At first there were videos (or performances originally performed live and then adapted to video), then a series of photographs and then one more conceptual project.

In the video *I'm sorry* from 2005 the artist cries and apologizes for the exhibition which according to him is not good enough. In the *Hanged Man* Dawicki hangs on the gallows and he is "saved" by tens of white balloons he is holding in his hands. Doing that, he ensures the viewers that "it is not a video" and if anyone had any doubts about the realness of what he or she sees, he recommends to "discuss it with any specialist". The *Tree of Knowledge* portrays an artist who bites into all the apples in the night orchard. A similar sense of absurd humour and irony is presented in the exhibited photographs that portray, for example, a bouquet made of toothbrushes or a Christmas tree with fallen plastic needles.

Behind the first humorous layer lies a deeper consideration upon more serious questions. In a press release on the exhibition the curator says that Dawicki deals with "the status of an artist in society, as well as the role of viewer and artist." I would also add that in some of the exhibited works he also investigates the functioning of the work, its creation and reception. In this context probably the most significant work is the *Stone and a Feather*, presented in the form of photo documentation, action and covering text. The main participant is not Dawicki but older Polish artist Zbigniew Warpechowski. In the text Dawicki explains that he by mistake joined two of Warpechowski's actions in his memory (in one of them Warpechowski was throwing a hard stone and in the other one a light feather) and he described them as two parts of the same project. On realizing his mistake he talked that artist into realising the action as he, Dawicki, "invented" it. The photographs show Warpechowski throwing both objects far and although they are different they are of the same resistance and fly the same distance.

Leaving aside the suggestive content of the throw by a stone and a feather as such, Dawicki subtly sets several serious and up-to-date questions by form, which approach the essence of the artistic production. Which processes create the meaning of a work? To what extent can one rely on the truth of any later (or even original) interpretation? And who actually is the author of the (meaning of) work?

Is it the person who produced it, or are these whole generations of interpretations and interpretations of those interpretations? (Some of these questions have several possible solutions, but that does not mean it is not worth asking them).

Therefore we can see that this exhibition in Faica has two levels – all the works are at first sight visually attractive or almost (I apologize) entertaining. On the other hand, when observing them more in detail, they show us other meanings that are hidden much deeper under the surface. Thanks to this feature various groups of viewers might enjoy the exhibition. Oskar Dawicki simply knows how to do it.

1. The name is additionally explained via a supplementary text, where the curator clarifies complicated communication with the author and danger of cancellation of the whole project.

Exhibition: What is Wrong with Oskar Dawicki?
 Author: Oskar Dawicki
 Curator: Omar Mirza
 Venue: Faica – The Gallery of critics of the Slovak section of AICA, Bratislava, SR
 Duration: 25 August – 22 October 2011



^ Oskar Dawicki: *The Tree of Knowledge*, 2008, video-performance. Photo: Daša Barteková

^ ^ Oskar Dawicki: *The Hanged Man*, 2011, video-performance. Photo: Daša Barteková

Alena Vrbanová

The Crossroads of Time

On Karol Pichler's TIME SQUARES at the Faica gallery

The last exhibition at the Bratislava gallery Faica (Gallery of Critics of the Slovak Section AICA) – of which further holding would (after a quite successful year) probably not be supported by the representatives of the municipal authorities of the Bratislava district of Staré Mesto – was the authorial exhibition of Karol Pichler TIME SQUARES.

Based on the conception of the curator Lýdia Pribišová, Faica prepared an exhibition of the remarkable artist of the middle generation Karol Pichler (1957) who belongs to the initiators of our neo-conceptual art. Although he moved away from Slovakia in the late 1990s and now wanders around the world as an unwanted nomad, he has always been successful – in art, design, effect. Simply, we miss him! When he sporadically appears, it should be an event of heightened attention. He used the modest premises of the gallery in order to create new, first-time presented installations which arouse the impression of a (post)commercial triptych. In the centre stands an interactive furniture installation, *Presence*. It consists of unified furniture, a wall map of the world, mobile phone and trivial wall clock situated en face to the viewer. He or she can thus call anyone in the world (for a reasonable time) and afterwards push a pin into the map in the place where he or she called. As a result it creates a Bourriaudian map of an anonymous (and factual) network of relations. The work represents an implicit bridge of communication between people. Private calls become an immediate and crucial part of it. It is similar to when we used to "travel by finger on the map" (as the Slovak phrase goes), although presently we can actually communicate via the work. Pichler reacts to the topic of globalization in its purest form – free of massaging by the media and unlike the internet networks respectful of the participant's privacy. The aim here is mainly the motif of temporality, the seizing of time and uniqueness of the moment.

The second part of the exhibition is again an interactive presentation – the *Past*. It offers the viewer the possibility of capturing visual footprints of the past – the abstract time

aspect saved only in one's own memory. It provides a visual aid for a reconstruction – plastic templates with various motifs from social life and pastels, pencils and markers. A viewer can thus draw on the wall and promptly make use of their own artistic creativity for the reconstruction of memory. What emerges on the walls is a sort of collective graffiti story – a thicket of postmodern micro-stories and individual constructs of the past (according to the offered language of visual patterns of templates). This part of the exhibition has the character of a psychological catharsis. The author also works directly with the appropriation of collective language (visual signs) and action.

In the third part a furniture installation is aimed at the naive desire of humans to know the *Future*. It contains a large minimalistic table, two chairs placed opposite to each other, a low-set light, fortune-telling cards and fortune-telling book. With the book material a viewer can individually search for the contours of their own future, but at a pre-arranged time also has a "professional" soothsayer to help him. What he or she finds out earlier remains an untold secret, an ephemeral extension of the exhibition act out of the reach of the author.

Time is the main but not only topic of the exhibition. Time as a central philosophical category of being is one of its crucial issues. Time covers everything, defines and motivates all. However, at the same time it does not actually exist and is ungraspable. The phenomenon of time is modestly offered for discussion. Pichler has chosen means that a person knows from everyday life. Despite the entertainment and playfulness that prevail on the surface, the exhibition as a whole addresses a different level of being – its value. The name *Time Squares* is obviously not coincidental – on the surface attractive and well-known to tourists since it actually represents the globalized world. Using the plural Pichler presents the instruction on its reading on time axes of life that are dominated by the value of freedom (as implied in the interpretation of meaning by the curator Lýdia Pribišová).

In this complex room-sized installation Pichler continuously follows his older works of thematic orientation to the essence of a human via testing himself by form of rebus or other type of intellectual game. Let's remember the first big exhibition by this author in the UBS on the topic of testing oneself in the context of his newer installations from the exhibition Zero Years. Every time, his works are means not only of direct communication and interaction with the viewer but also a pointer and encouragement to the inner value of being. In this meaning line Pichler's works are contradictory to certain equalization of the position of art nowadays within its approaching from the position of visual studies – this means its inclusion and evaluation together with advertising, media or any other type of visual image. From the point of view of aesthetics these works are anaesthetic *par excellence* since with a considerable amount of absence of the aesthetic – calculating with trivialness – they contain its marginal opposite metasign – reference to the value of own life. This – as an archetypal topic in the history of art – has had a whole series of models and pictures of one's own representation perceivable by senses. Thus, via the anaesthetics of installations it became a category of majestic (in the sense of the aesthetic seizing of reality).

Pichler's mocking triptych can be in a way read as an interpretation of Kosuth's *The Eighth Investigation, Proposition 3* from 1971, which had a form of purist reading of the texts about expressive disposition of the written word (linguistic transcription of reality) in connection to his concept of "art after philosophy... and afterwards". Pichler's shift and asset are related to this period – they give a vivid picture of the trivialness of the times and show the possibility of choice (and therapy).

Exhibition: TIME-SQUARES
 Author: Karol Pichler
 Curator: Lýdia Pribišová
 Venue: Faica – The Gallery of Critics of the Slovak section of AICA, Bratislava, SR
 Duration: 15 June – 25 August 2012



Karol Pichler: Present, 2012, site-specific installation (detail).
 Photo: archive of the Faica Gallery, Daša Barteková



^^ Karol Pichler: Present, 2012, site-specific installation.
 Photo: archive of the Faica Gallery, Daša Barteková

^ Karol Pichler: Future, 2012, site-specific installation.
 Photo: archive of the Faica Gallery, Daša Barteková

Ján Kralovič

Variability

Plan

From 27 April to 9 June 2012, the ZAHORIAN&co GALLERY hosted the exhibition of Jiří David (1956), a significant personality of the Czech art scene. I don't consider it necessary to elaborate on the diversified, critically and theoretically often assessed oeuvre of the artist who, apart from the ("preliminary") retrospective (Jiří David: Preliminary retrospective, GHMP, 2009), has taken part on numerous group exhibitions as well as solo exhibitions. I primarily aim to word a solely personal feel from the seen and name David's fundamental strategies from the perspective of a selective gallery presentation. The literary "spell" in the title of the exhibition (*To light... Vertigo... Panic... Stendhal Syndrome... Local Anesthesia... Geopornography/Príliš ľahká ... Závrť ... Panika ... Stendhalov Syndróm ... Lokálna anestézia ... Geopornografia*) is rather blurring and crypting, barely unveiling the exhibition's thematic framework. On the other hand, it provokes a personal visit to the modest exhibition space of the gallery.

The curatorial concept of Silvia Van Espen presented the work of Jiří David through number of his recent pieces that represent pars-pro-toto the formal as well as contentual multidimensionality of the artist's oeuvre. The variety of media encompasses painting, site-specific drawings on the walls of the gallery, photography, objects and sculptural installation, which, in this case, divided the space into a hardly comprehensible arbitrary percept. It is the fragmentary scatterness merged into relatively small individual units of exhibited artworks that can be observed as a significant model of David's work. Material randomness in his objects maintains a function of sensual disturbance, puzzling, and even surreally irritating statement. However, the absurd-ironizing spirit of his works is never a demonstration of austere sarcasm, but rather a story of banal actions made visible by their visual hyperotrophies.

Dried paint in carton boxes occupies the wall of the gallery, creating a legitimate painting, a "charming" mandala freed from abstract geometrical form (*Before Grace/ Před půvabem*, 2009 – 2011 on the other side. In David's pic-

ture-objects, the "poor", artistically underestimated materials are transformed into a defraudation of the elitary approached act of painting itself and call for reconsideration and updating of contemporary painting. In his administration, it was rather subversive "stalking" beyond aesthetic and formalistic large format painting as an effective antithesis (*Glory/Sláva*, 2009 – 2011). However, certain romantic pathos, tendency towards artistic presentation remains present in his work. It is mainly present in the strongly subjective "self-portrait" (*New Artmasturbation*, 2012), which the author uses not only to associate ironic rhetoric about the modern artistic creation as a means of self-gratification, but especially towards the presentation of the "bare embarrassment" (Marek Pokorný) as an apt emotional commentary on the current situatedness of an artist in the society.

In addition to fragmentariness or inscenation of absurd "moments" (such as his work *I'm so glad to know the reason I'm crying/Díky, že vím, proč mohu plakat*), a different motif of David's work is also apparent at the exhibition: linking rational thread with emotional unpredictability. In terms of his oeuvre, these key factors can be elaborated upon: David links a focused drawing with affective gesture, dissolves coherent strategy in aleatoric principle and vice versa. Convergence of the methods is reflected in the penetration of geometric and numerical patterns into fine art work, as well as in the "recovery" of the "machinery" lines through spontaneous intervention. David's improvisation is also reflected in rather liberal approach to installations, spontaneous handling with individual works or their parts. His pieces exude "collage" technique of pairing subjective memory with objective effort to increase the awareness of things and phenomena. The resulting artifact is presented with certain degree of exaggeration, not as a disparagement of the theme but primarily as its visual evocation.

A new moment in the artist's oeuvre is the hanging object of a welded construction, imitating the floorplan of the gallery (*What I Can Do Forces Me to Walk Through*

/To co mohu, mně nutí procházet skrze, 2012) created specifically for its exhibition space. The appropriated plan transformed into a metal model creates a kind of stylized intermediate stage "between" linear surface of the floor plan and three-dimensional space of the gallery. It remains a visual shortcut, but one which objectifies its function of a sign and transforms into a minimalist "sculpture". For me, a "gallery" hanging inside a gallery represents a question on the possibility of finding an "emergency exit" from the hermeneutics of some of the current exhibition strategies, from their unreasonable withdrawal from a wider social debate.

The style of Jiří David includes a penchant for certain form of authentic (often subversive) strategies. Thus, the works presented often contain relatively complex amount of deliberate imperfection, recycling, ironic variation and multiplication, diy poetics and principles, or juxtaposition of material. From the viewers' perspective, however, the comprehensibility of the given strategies dissolves in excessive genre diversity of the exhibited works. When it comes to me, the content of the works does not create a sense of a defined subject matter, but rather the incomprehensibility of the exhibition's major thread. In this sense, the major issue of the certainly interesting and heterogeneous oeuvre of Jiří David for me remains the context and its externalization. Rather than focusing on the area in which the author moves, the exhibition should aim to introduce a more concentrated take on the individual layers. In this case, I tend to feel lost in such a small gallery space and sometimes even a "light panic" of the "cabinety" selected works gets hold of me.

Exhibition: *Too Light... Vertigo ... Panic ... Stendhal Syndrome ... Local Anesthesia... Geopornography*
 Author: Jiří David
 Curator: Silvia Van Espen
 Venue: ZAHORIAN&co GALLERY, Bratislava, SR
 Duration: 27 April – 9 June 2012



Jiří David: *New Artmasturbation*, 2012, combined technique.
 Photo: Kristína Vavreková



Jiří David: *Glory*, 2009 – 2011, combined technique.
 Photo: Kristína Vavreková

Nina Vrbanová

Stray Art

On contextual art of Stano Masár



One of the thematic sections of the recently elapsed decennium exhibition the *Zero Years - From Space to Beskid* /Nulté roky - Od Priestoru po Beskida, theoretically formulated and prepared by curator Juraj Čarný under the title reading "self-thematisation of the art world", was one of the first¹ exhibitions that drew close attention to the new ideological trend of art, the subject matter of which became the art itself - its history, theory and criticism, institutions and operation.² Although Čarný situated this phenomenon as a new (emerging) one in the period of the first decade of the new century, we could speak about the institutional critic³ present in the Slovak art much earlier - from the *Anti-gallery* of Peter Bartoš and Július Koller (1968 - 1969), as well as *The Foundations of the New Slovak National Gallery Building* by Rudolf Sikora and Viliam Jakubík (1971), through several initiatives of the 90s (e. g. Peter Rónai, Roman Ondák, Richard Fajnor or later Anton Čierny), to the indeed "outstretched hand" of this line in the zero years in cumulated and enlarged form of contextual art⁴. Although Stano Masár, one of the leading representatives of the middle generation (1971) was indeed represented at the Zero Years exhibition, his works were placed in a surprisingly different section, different subject matter.

His current solo exhibition installed in the Medium Gallery in Bratislava convinces us again about the strong anchoring of the author in concept - specifically deeply in the context of history and present of visual art as such. After his presentation at ideologically similar exhibitions such as the *After Duchamp* exhibition (SPACE Gallery, 2008) or the *MoMA Space & Tate Modern Corner* (Manifesta 9, 2012), the author escalates the leitmotif of his recent work into a far more sophisticated, universally comprehensible effort. He deprives his works of individual elements, interpretationally reductive and citational and metatextual layers so that he can name the problem of the status and position of art in a broader socio-cultural contexts of today, hence attempting to address the problem in its essence. With the exception of one presented piece, Masár left us (lay and professional public) in the "total universality". This shift from the concrete to the universal can be assessed positively, as it opens the door to a wider reception as well as (relatively comprehensively) unmasks the problem itself - the critical state of art operation as of today. At the exhibition, this subject matter was reflected especially aptly by the mobile object named *Stray Art/Zblúdilé umenie*, embodied as a "homeless" moving carriage with a cargo of artworks like some forgotten airport box. It moved chaotically around the gallery room, twisting around its own axis, bumping into the wall, shaking the fragile cargo. In a witty and uplifting way, it thus drew attention to the otherwise serious problem - the lack of understanding of art, a question mark over its existence and meaning so prominent in

today's society and its hegemonic (de)cultural entertainment. The semantic background of this even grotesquely conveyed object "chasing its own own tail" also reflected its own inside - it asked about the meaning, the inner faith of the art in itself that today, especially after the experience of postmodernism and symptomatic relativisation of values, probably does not really provide sufficient support or offer a way out of the crisis. Even its title (same as title of the exhibition), named the problem clearly and pointedly, though with a certain - maybe not quite adequate - amount of romanticism.

In terms of the number of the presented works, Masár kept the adjacent room in an equally minimalistic, yet just as striking and convincing spirit. With its purist aesthetics (clean, strict, white), the *Tired Wall/Unavená stena* installation seemed like a reminiscent of some of the objects by Viktor Frešo, while its strategy of animation motion in a static 3D piece resembled the works of Pavla Sceranková, followed the subject matter of the exhibition with a suggestive motif of a fallen gallery wall. It appeared limp, separated from itself, and slid to the ground due to extreme overburden of the non-stop artistic operation. A bit beyond necessity, the author poeticised (adjectives like "tired", "stray") the phenomenon, which is, in fact, not that "funny" in our daily professional reality - the unstoppable carousel of fine art operation, often self-serving and running to the expense of quality. On the other hand, maybe it is Masár's detachment and distance, which helps his works to communicate in an ambivalent tone, even at this exhibition. Although this installation is characterized by the significant multilayeredness of its meaning, it can be seen simultaneously at different levels of the relationship of the galleries (exhibition area) and art, the gallery and the artist, and in a specific case maybe even the relationship of art and the viewer (the motif of the "wall" falling into the space).

In the third installation named *Gallery/Galéria*, the author attempted to express again a certain generally valid postulate of the contemporary art as its inherently related context. He constructed a deliberately trivial gallery in the gallery, a space in the space, as a 3D model of the real gallery "cube". Closed without an option to enter it, cold and inaccessible, yet still not quite in the style of the white cube. The visitor had the chance to take a peek into the space from the outside (motifs of detachment and alienation) and observe the emptiness, the nothingness. However, Masár (unlike his predecessors - avant-garde artists such as Kazimir Malevich or Yves Klein) anchored these "qualities" quite clearly in the communication context of contemporary art - critique of the museum, respectively the institution. The theme of his work was neither the emptiness itself as a philosophical or existential category (Klein), nor the analysis and reflection of the contemporary limits of the

language of art (Malevich or a trio of Slovak authors of Filko - Laky - Zavorský), but the very nature of the art space - the gallery institution and the associated implications, including the problematisation of the relationship of the viewer. As if something like that could not miss at the exhibition about exhibition, spatial reflection of existentially emptied space. And although we are quite familiar with the process of (simulated) appropriation of the gallery space and its segments via several examples from the end of the last century and present, Masár updated it ideologically as well as visually (the installation worked as a banal stand, as a flat utilitarian space, which can be seen as the author's criticism of the deteriorate tendency of institutions and consequentially of the art itself).

Paradoxically, they were the additional, subtle installations and objects that served as a certain manual on understanding the exhibition in the context of the author's intent, i.e. the object named *Emergency Exit Out of the Gallery/Úniková cesta von z galérie* example embodied in the typical visual code of an evacuation sign, the reversed sign at the entrance reading Gallery entitled *Reflection of Reality/Odraz reality*, and above all the installation of the relatively inconspicuous series of 12 square boards named *From Malevich to Malevich/Od Maleviča po Maleviča*. Through it Masár again presented the same type of his research of the art history, although focused and reduced solely to such works of art that radically and fundamentally for the further development of art problematized the phenomenon of (art) space, both in physical and semantic terms.

Emblematic works of Malevich, Klein, but also of Slovak authors such as Peter Rónai and Roman Ondák, transformed into a sequence of identical, austere geometric characters of black and white squares on a white background, and again used the unified language of brands, logos, etc... In addition to different interpretations offered by such authorial manipulation (high to low, artistic to utility etc.), we mainly reveal the background and sources of Masár's thinking about space as a means of communication, the central problem of art in general. However, the works he presented at the exhibition showed contextual rather than autothematic (e.g. citation methods) or analytical (e.g. analysis of media and styles) understanding of this phenomenon. As if the space as a problem was no longer a private or internal matter of art, but, according to Masár, the opposing "outer" or solely contextual. Yet, the extended context of contemporary art may be understood not merely as the tradition (history), but also in terms of further respect of his oeuvre and its existence in the accelerated era of accelerated criticism, non-stop operation, (over)production of products - the so-called art, the power of institutions and, of course, the sovereign market.

Paradoxically, the aesthetic uniqueness of Masár's works is generated by the solely "inartistic" visuality, respectively its appropriation from the normal, productive sector of (not merely) visual culture. Here, the key works of art of the 20th century are transformed into a lump of informational signs that are no different from one another and the new shape and order of which conjures rather the conclusion of history or their hermetic interpretation (cube, square). In turn, the model of a real 3D gallery acts as a small kiosk, a stall for goods that is empty and cannot be entered. The transport carriage is loaded with protective boxes, equipped with a safety harness, but on the other hand, its nonsensi-



cal ("stray") movement refers to its lostness, loneliness and the chaotic search for a place of its own, which can be understood at the level of significance as the displace of communication – the primary and ultimate function of art.

Everything we see is somewhat puzzling – the wall is fallen, the sign (banner or logo) is illegible, the consignment lacks valid address and the evacuation sign warns against art. In addition to the aforementioned thematization of the art world⁵, which is one of the ideological trends of art today, the exhibition of Stano Masár is also interesting for the way the artworks are presented by "non-artworks", respectively the inartistic form and appropriated visuality as features typical for neo-conceptual art. A birdhouse with an installed audio system on a tree at the courtyard of the Academy of Fine Arts was a truly solitary appendix of the exhibition. The viewer got to see it thanks to an evacuation sign in the exterior of the object. Similarly to other works, it failed to evoke the expected escape into nature, into natural environment with different (better) type of communication. The author simulated birdsong by human whistling, which enhanced the feeling of lack of an escape route, the lack of communication as a leitmotif of the entire exhibition.

<<< Stano Masár: Tired Wall, 2012, installation. Photo: David Trčka

<< Stano Masár: Gallery, 2011/2012, installation. Photo: David Trčka

< Stano Masár: Stray Art, 2009 – 2011, mobile object. Photo: Daša Barteková

1. The first exhibition of such subject matter was presumably the *All about Museum/Všetko o múzeu* exhibition (the Slovak National Gallery, curated by Vladimíra Büngerová, 2008). *The Dream about a Museum/Sen o múzeu* exhibition (Museum of Art in Žilina, curator Radislav Matuščík, 1991) can also be considered as the precursor of such (presentation) thinking in terms of institutional critique.
2. See: ČARNÝ, Juraj: Nulté roky. In: SIKOROVÁ-PUTIŠOVÁ, Mira (ed.): *Nulté roky. Od Priestoru po Beskida. Slovenské výtvarné umenie 1999 – 2011 v štyroch kurátorských pohľadoch*. Žilina: Považská galéria umenia, 2011, p. 13 – 17, ISBN 978-80-88730-77-4.
3. Theoretical research of this issue is the primary focus of texts mostly by Petra Hanáková. See.: HANÁKOVÁ, Petra: *Múzeum ako site specificity – od „inštitucionálnej kritiky“ k dekorácii*. In: GERŽOVÁ, Jana – RUSNÁKOVÁ, Katarína (ed.): *90-te + Reflexia vizuálneho umenia na prelome 20. a 21. storočia*. Bratislava: Slovenská sekcia AICA a Združenie teoretikov súčasného výtvarného umenia, 2003, p. 44 – 55. ISBN 80-968902-1-2.
4. This stems from the assumption that all segments or (sub)themes of this issue, which can be distinguished mainly to a reflection of art history, institutions and operations, critique and curator in the local practice, can be summarized by one particular umbrella term: context. That expresses situation or direct link of art with its particular tradition (history) and environment (institution, operation, etc.). This specific ideological field of art is clearly focused on its surroundings, its situation and context, while not being "self-thematizing" in the traditional sense of citations, style analysis etc. The designation of the "Wart world of Art" is another example of appropriation of western terminology, which seems to be equally divergent in relation to the given subject.
5. See: HRABUŠICKÝ, Aurel: *Tichá dohoda*. In: *Jazdec – Print nástenky o súčasnom výtvarnom dianí*, no. 4/2011, p. 4 – 5. ISSN 1338-077X.

Exhibition: Stray Art

Author: Stano Masár

Curator: Gábor Hushegyi

Venue: Medium Gallery, Bratislava, SR

Duration: 7 September – 7 October 2012

Jarmila Sabová
(Džuppová)

On Nasty Anti-Roma Walls

I made up an article about those nasty walls against the Gypsies. It was the morning of 28 October and I couldn't sleep (from 3 AM). It was almost 6 AM when I walked past the Moussonova elementary school towards our houses. As I passed the big composte (piles of apples fall down on the ground and the passer-bys step on them), the bells of a monastery were ringing and the round moon was dawning – half a day before the full moon. Yesterday, we were watching Andrej Rubľov from behind the table of our kitchen. We saw the horrendous things that really happened during the film. Andrej Tarkovskij let a healthy, strong horse fall from about the height of a second floor of a subtle wooden staircase that broke down under his weight. He broke something in his hind legs, then there was this gruesome muteness..., he tried to get up but rolled backwards (through his arse on his back) and somebody finished him with a lance stabbed into his neck. It was/is true. Maybe he even let to set a cow on fire (we may also believe that the cow was covered with a fireproof blanket, topped with a flammable layer, but why?). I will try to write that article.

In the morning I arrived to my parents' and read and interview with Tomáš Rafa in the fresh issue of the SME daily. Mute screams and associations accumulated. Artists and free-thinkers make trips to a symbol – the wall ("Wall is segregation"), work with the Roma people for a single time and, for a single time, traduce those narrow-minded others living in their neighborhood. Standing next to the wall, they look around to see what is closest to them and spot a settlement called Angi mlyn. Being so damn open-minded (the easiest thing in the world is to be friendly to

people you will probably never see again, or if you do, you will just "be back in half a year with some new attraction"), perform a kitchy gesture and leave happily to report back to the media. They share their hopes of follow-up events as they present the documents. The Union likes it. If this wasn't the case, they would, naturally, not go anywhere.

In a sweet, harmonic haze, the TV news from Michalovce talked about the wall as a new sportsfield – there would be basketball cages and even lines for squash (!), which needs at least a pool, as it requires three or four walls. What a funny camouflage.

As far as I know, the desire to cast concrete walls came from the inhabitants at the periphery of the settlement, who were willing to divert massive, sometimes muddy corridors, shortcuts from the Angi mlyn settlement to the city. As far as I know, this is because they fail to cultivate anything next to the corridors, they cannot plant the trees plus keeping the garbage in the containers, as the sticks from the seedlings are ideal for scrabbling about the trash, and these are not obtained gently, with respect to fragile root systems. And the wind blows the thrash all around the place. This is a view through a misty acute-angled lense – God knows what is behind all that frustration. Everything can be rambled over, frustrations should be vented out continuously and I guess the wall is, among other uses, the vent.

As far as I know, the Roma people are the most vital among us – they don't hang their doleful heads along the wall in despair. Young beauties toss their black manes and make use of new echo to improve the resonance of their songs, the still-alive folk ones, maybe. There is no need to be worried about them, as well as there is no need to polish them up. The Roma (through this misty lense) are healthy people interactively living deep in the closest urban land and other picturesque and forgotten land-in-between, cultivating it while watching how the evil owners show up from time to time and not coming back for long. When it is hot out-outside, their bath their entire beings in the nearest river and when the fruit falls of the trees, they pick it. They are not familiar with the still-up-to-date opinion of people from Michalovce (apparently, the news from New York transmitted through the Oskar Čepán Award taking place in Bratislava still hasn't reached the people – non-artists, and after fourteen years, it will spontaneously dawn on them that they can illegally plant their own fruit tree or two in the city, and in the city, they are doing so every autumn without leaflets artificially honored as art) on the filthiness and uselessness of the fruit constantly falling from the trees, yuk. As far as I know, the Roma are those fit, frustration-free people wandering around the abundance of our dumps, construction sites and unused products of nature on their bikes/or with a cart instead of a bike.

Undoubtedly, they don't depend on the abundance of the whites. They seek for the fruit of the land on a daily basis without calling it work. However, this is what real work is. It is a joutful everyday activity in the fresh air that feels a little festive and there is no need to pack up for an expensive rejuvenating getaway afterwards. I am mentioning the Gypsies whom I like so this may sound a little immature. To me, they are a bit of an example – we shall bow to their way of living, with the added value that we are capable (theoretically, though we sometimes get a little forgetfull) of growing, cultivating and protecting, recognizing the sacred (read: untouchable) (...not like they are incapable of that) while being naturally humble, or rather...our way of understaning voulduntary modesty is shorter. Wow, I am labeling people and I would be happier not to know what this says about me.

The only thing that terrifies me is that they (maybe just seemingly) don't give the least damn about the nature. From some unknown reason, the kids are throwing rocks into stork nests with storks. They are tremendously skilled when it comes to ravaging, plundering, trampling... but then again, when it comes to targeted degradation of the country on various leves, we are doing it just as vigorously.

In a tiny pink book called *The Continuum Concept* (J. Liedloff), I read that the language of the South American Indian Tribe called Yequana only includes the word for "work" indirectly (derived from Spanish) for the needs of newcomers (this is probably valid for other tribes as well).

That is because everything they do to survive is engaging, joyful and festive. They don't differentiate their behavior to duties and post-duties relax. They are doing various activities in the well-known nearby forest. I'm surprised that Tomáš Rafa wants to involve the Roma people in our dying system: to keep their noses to the grindstone of some strage WORK distant from life, produce money and purchase goods. And I'm equally surprised how stupidly kitchy he painted the wall behind Sečovce, which is probably no more segregational than other walls separating inhabited places from the big road nearby. It stads next to school, there is a busy road to Košice behind it. I don't think it is necessary to awkwardly aestheticize it – the paint it is covered in it as brutal as the nature of the construction. As a vouldgar cry or sour kick to the barrier. Some walls that separate roads are nasty and there is an effort made to refine them. Yeah, from his point of view, it is certainly not necessary to refine it, but to underline its ghastliness. Right. But the one is Sečovce is so... if there was any other school, there would surely be a wall next to it as well. And maybe it would be covered in ivy with sparrows and blackbirds living in it noisily. And that's certainly interesting.

Alexandra Tamášová

Oskar Čepán Award 2012

(following from p. 1)



The final presentation improved the slightly battered reputation of the project, which had to withstand a great amount of criticism after the previous year. Back then the professional public expressed their disapproval of the underground space of the Cvernovka Gallery, which many didn't find decent enough for organizing such an event. In fact, the most significant prize awarded to young Slovak artists serves as a showcase of the national art scene. Thus, it is appropriate for the organizers to strive for a certain degree of prestige. Personally, I found the punk atmosphere of the previous year rather attractive; it is necessary to admit that the new space moved the entire event to another level.

An object, respectively a sculpture by Tomáš Džadoň that filled the major part of the foyer welcomed visitors right at the entrance. The cylindrical object of a golden color was rather interesting on its own as a geometrical, almost architectural element, but in fact it was a gigantic Tibetan praying mill. The locals who are familiar with such objects mostly from travel photographs and or documentaries are used to their tiny versions (although the mills are sometimes part of buildings even in Tibet). That was the reason the size of Džadoň's object was almost astonishingly impressive. A play with scale is typical for the author and as some of his previous works show (i.e. a piece of bacon covering entire countries on the map, miniature of an apartment building in a moat of a renaissance manor-house, a model of the entire neighborhood, etc.). Džadoň uses reducing or enlarging of objects as a mean of achieving a significant shift, when we perceive a truly familiar object as something "unheimlich". However, in case of the mill – quite an exotic object for us – he is practically talking to us through its aesthetic qualities (which is, by the way, rather unusual for this sculptor, as his works are usually anchored in author's own cultural, even family roots and respond to specific domestic context). The artwork was completed with the prints of author's fictional interview with Oskar Čepán. Young sculptor admits he doesn't know whether Čepán is "a literary theorist, amateur archeologist or the name of the award". Thus, the interview is practically his profile and the author must have been preceded by Džadoň's thorough study of and the result is rather sympathetic popular-educational action. The correlation between the mill and the interview is explained in its conclusion: "Mr. Čepán, I constructed a praying mill like the one they use in Tibet. The one who spins it also spins the prayer encased inside. My absurd prayer is this interview that I put into this mill. However, its casing lacks the mantra..."



As the resulting artifact reflects upon the reasons behind its creation (nomination on the Oskar Čepán Award), it is, in a certain sense, an autoreferential artwork. We have already encountered similar principle last year when Katarína Poliačiková, one of the finalists, decided to base her work upon a reflection on the process of its creation. Džadoň managed to solve this "messy" task a bit more efficiently, because his mill has certain artistic qualities on its own, not to mention the audience attractiveness and the element of playfulness (spinning the mill and its rotation). Thus, his work included further aforementioned added values (educating the audience about the personality of Oskar Čepán, author's own research, architectural completion of the space).

Another artwork the visitors had the chance to observe at the exhibition was the installation-documentary presentation of Matej Vakula. Since the previous year, this author worked on a project named *Manuals for Public Space/Manuály na použitie verejného priestoru*. Its basic principle is that the author organizes temporary "work groups" composed of volunteers, who create manuals to solve a particular problem of a public space. The currently attractive topic of several art projects, public space is the focus of several discourses: artistic creation, civic activism, politics, or even subversive actions of anarchist character. Vakula's manuals are original, yet simple food for thought or guidance on active participation of each one of us. One of the most interesting ideas is "tele-terrorism" – the author made up a plan of achieving changes in public space through phone: "Let's say there are no bike stands in front of a shopping mall. You grab your phone, call their customer service and say: "Hello, I visited your mall today and there was no place to lock my bike. Could you do something with it?" Now, imagine they would receive such phone calls from 20 people each day."

If the entire Vakula's project remained in such intents, it would be more of a social-activist project rather than an artistic one, although solid and hard-hitting one. In such case, an adequate presentation would be an exhibition of the mobile library, which was an actual part of the installation and contained prints of all manuals created. The author decided to breach the motto of reaching "maximum effect with minimum means" and even included visualisations of the manuals, their 3D models, a map and another element that broke the project down into mutually too remote "postprocesses" and "postproducts".

A bit like from another world seemed the artwork of here relatively unknown artist Oto Hudec, who until now worked more abroad than in Slovakia. On his web blog, Hudec declared his intent "to use art as a tool for social change, while sticking to what it was for centuries – an expression of beauty". Anachronism? Expression of sentimentality? I think it was rather sympathetic attempt to be honest to himself, even if that means going against the flow, or looking naive. His work *If I Had a River/Keby som mal rieku* is a model of a ship, a modern Noah's ark, intended as a self-sufficient survival shelter for one family, with everything necessary for meeting the basic needs of a human being such as real plants, food supplies, composte, etc. The life on this ship should be based on the principles of altruism, solidarity and mutual help as an antithesis to today's society, which sees everything through the prism of potential economic profit. Until 21 October, he presented his project named *Corn Song*, the bottom line of which was to transfer positive energy to corn growing in the fields, at his exhibition in the Youth's Gallery, a part of the Nitra Gallery in Nitra.

The artwork by Mira Gáberová (who was eventually this year's winner) was installed in a separate room. The collection of four videos – documentaries of actions performed by other artists in Gáberová's flat – partially evokes practices of the informal domestic scene of the 70s (i.e. Rudolf Sikora's *Open Studio*). From the many actions recorded, the authorial selection gave us a chance to watch a video in which András Cséfalvay washes the feet of other present participants (using cold water, as it is more "prehistorical"). This time, Gáberová gave up on the anesthetization (almost her trademark) of the particular videos, left the camera rawly documentarist, even amateur. This time, it was the installation of the videos that was visually sophisticated. The project as a whole (or its main idea) can be viewed as an attempt to retrieve the importance of get-togethers, mutual sharing of the "mythical time", when we are, at least for a moment, removed from our daily errands and experience the sheer joy of the existence itself.

Despite the variety of creative strategies of the individual finalists, we can conclude that the final presentation at the exhibition created a cohesive whole, brought together by a few main ideas – the will to offer the viewers an unusual sensory experience of art, the emphasis on the element of beauty and above all the faith in the ability of the art to change society and people for the better.

Exhibition: Oskar Čepán Award 2012
 Authors: Tomáš Džadoň, Mira Gáberová, Oto Hudec, Matej Vakula
 Venue: Slovak Union of Visual Arts, Bratislava, SR
 Duration: 20 September – 14 October 2012

^ < Oto Hudec: *If I Had a River*, 2012, object.
 Photo: Daša Barteková

^ Mira Gáberová: *Performance Group*, 2012, video installation. Photo: Daša Barteková

Masthead

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