



220. VÝROČÍ C 220TH ANNIVERSARY
NÁRODNÍ C OF THE NATIONAL
GALERIE X GALLERY
V PRAZE X IN PRAGUE

220 Years of the National Gallery in Prague

The exhibition “Generosity” celebrates both the history and the present, and one of its esteemed guests will be the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, a first-time visitor to Prague

The 220 years of the existence of the National Gallery in Prague marks the institution as one of the oldest public art collections in the world. This year’s celebration of this anniversary, however, does not only commemorate the Gallery’s history but at the same time focuses on the present and the future of the most extensive art collection held in the Czech lands. This is also the subject of the exhibition entitled “Generosity. The Art of Giving” which, for the first time ever, interconnects all Gallery’s buildings and their collections. An array of significant artists accepted the invitation to celebrate the event, among them mainly the almost legendary Chinese Conceptual artist, Ai Weiwei. The opening of his work entitled *Zodiac* will moreover be the first one where the artist will be present in person.

The Many Faces of Generosity

“The history of the National Gallery in Prague began on 5 February 1796 by the establishment of the Picture Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friends of the Arts. The beginnings of the latter were rather modest – the Picture Gallery owned no collections and had to rely on loans from aristocratic properties. In the following years, it gradually acquired own works – mainly thanks to the generous gifts of individual donors and institutions. These are the works presented at the exhibition Generosity. The Art of Giving along with the subjects of munificence, mercy, love and friendship, i.e. qualities without which the establishment of any public art collection would be impossible,” says Jiří Fajt, the National Gallery director. The annual exhibition “Generosity”, held in the Kinský Palace, will display a selection of the most significant works of art from the Gallery’s collections from 5 February to 3 July 2016. Viewers will thus have the opportunity to see the works by Filla, Kupecký, Braque, Picasso, Škréta, Grund, Toyen and many others side by side. The story of the National Gallery is narrated by the individual halls of the Kinský Palace at the Old Town Square, intertwined by a single meandering exhibition panel which, reminiscent of a sceptre, highlights the crucial works acquired thanks to the generosity of Vincenc Kramář, Josef Thomayer, Jiří Kolář and dozens of other outstanding donors. In this way, the National Gallery aims at introducing public to the unforgettable role models and opening a new-quality chapter of cooperation between a public institution and private collectors and philanthropists.



Warhol in Unexpected Contexts

The annual exhibition also gives new dimension to other buildings owned by the National Gallery in Prague. The works related to the ideas of the anniversary are individually marked in the collections and presented in new contexts. The permanent exhibitions of old masters as well as modern, contemporary and Asian art in all Gallery buildings now boast the company of contemporary art interventions. Strolling among the works by Josef Mánes in the Salm Palace, viewers can therefore encounter the Pop-Art icon Andy Warhol. His Polaroids and sewn photographs are the recent donation of the New York Warhol Foundation. A significant donation to the Gallery's anniversary also came from the American grand master of Conceptual Art, Joseph Kosuth. The Small Hall of the Trade Fair Palace, then, comes alive via the monumental sculptures by the Austrian artist Franz West. The artistic duo named Prinz Gholam focuses on the masterpieces from the Gallery's legendary French collection, including Paul Gauguin's painting *Escape*. Its new version is the self-portrait of the two artists who adopt the roles and postures of Gauguin's figures. Yoshihiro Suda, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Lee Kit represent the contemporary Asian art and their works are installed in the Sternbeg and Kinský Palaces. In sum, the six buildings of the National Gallery offer unexpected dialogues between classical and contemporary art through more than twenty exceptional interventions.

220 for 220

At the occasion of the celebrations, the National Gallery in Prague offers free admission to its buildings from 5 to 7 February 2016 and has also prepared a rich accompanying program in the form of guided tours, lectures and programs designed for families. During the "Generosity" exhibition (from 5 February to 3 July 2016), visitors can also purchase a special annual admission for 220 CZK (reduced admission 110 CZK), valid both for the "Generosity" itself and the permanent exhibitions in the six Gallery buildings. A one-time entrance to each building will be possible anytime through the exhibition's duration. The long-term project, co-organized by the National Gallery in Prague and the Commercial Bank, continues in 2016, too, this time offering free admission to the permanent exhibitions for children, youth and students up to 26 years. In addition, the National Gallery in its jubilee year plans establishing a Club of Donors and introducing membership and family admissions.

The Czech Premiere of Ai Weiwei and African Art

"The overlap of the exhibition Generosity to the present is also accompanied by other launched displays of contemporary art. Their concept reflects the most up-to-date social issues, such as identity, multicultural society and the refugee crisis. We, however, do not offer solutions; our aim is just to inspire ideas and contribute to the current discussion", as Jiří Fajt explained. The main personalities – Ai Weiwei and the Senegalese artist El Hadji Sy – not only share their opposition standpoints towards the domestic policies in their respective countries but also the fact that they both exhibit in the Czech lands for the first time. Ai Weiwei's presence at the opening of his famed Zodiac, however, was far from certain several months ago. Jiří Fajt adds: "It was only last summer when the Chinese authorities returned him his travel documents after several years, and the National Gallery in Prague is therefore the first institution where Ai will present his twelve bronze heads in person." Weiwei's Zodiac, created as a replica of the sculptures destroyed by the French and English troops during the



1860 opium war, was first on display in the New York's Central Park while in Europe, it was only hosted by Denmark, Germany, Russia and Spain.

During Weiwei's visit to Prague, organized by the National Gallery, there will be two more opportunities to meet the artist in addition to the opening presentation of his work. On 5 February from 4:30 p.m., the National Gallery and the Václav Havel Library co-organized a round table moderated by the National Gallery's director, Jiří Fajt, on the premises of the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague. On Saturday, 6 February, at 5 p.m., the National Gallery offers the screening of the film *Ai Weiwei: No Excuse*, which will be followed by the artist's discussion with the audience.

The National Gallery facilities will also for the first time present contemporary African art via one of the most influential Senegalese artists, El Hadji Sy, and his exhibition entitled "Painting – Performance – Politics". The oeuvre of the latter, who is a painter, curator and both domestic and international cultural activist, will be introduced in the context of his Senegalese contemporaries. The mall of the Trade Fair Palace will house the installation *The Apotheosis* by Jiří David, which had enjoyed much attention at the last year's international biennale in Venice. David's monumental work thus finds itself under the "same roof" as its prefiguration, *The Apotheosis of the Slavs, Slavs for Humanity!*, alias part of Alfons Mucha's famous cycle *The Slav Epic*. The independent scene of contemporary art is represented by the next part of the cycle "Introducing", formed by the installations *Moving Image Department* by Helena Hladíková – this time pursuing the subject of time in, for example, the oeuvre of Tomáš Svoboda – and *Poetry Passage* by Jiří Thýn.

The Grand Opening with Mišík and Bregović

The celebrations of the National Gallery's anniversary will start along with the opening for wide public, held in the Trade Fair Palace on 5 February 2016 at 7 p.m. The Grand Opening, participated by the exhibiting artists, will include live interventions and performances of both Czech and foreign artists as well as concerts of Petar Introvič, Vladimír Mišík and Goran Bregović. As Jiří Fajt encloses, "*We merely want to follow up with what has already been said in the very beginning – that the National Gallery in Prague must become a vital, vibrating and attractive place of encounters, embracing most various kinds of people, art and ideas. I believe that the colourful and indeed multicultural program will be an entertaining and at the same time dignified launch of the celebrations of our grand jubilee.*"

The anniversary year of the National Gallery in Prague is held under the auspices of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Bohuslav Sobotka; the exhibition "Generosity. The Art of Giving" under the auspices of the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic, Daniel Herman, and the exhibition "El Hadji Sy: Painting – Performance – Politics" under the auspices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Lubomír Zaorálek.



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Generosity. The Art of Giving

Duration: 5 February – 3 July 2016

Places: the annual exhibition – the Kinsky Palace; the accompanying installations and individual works – in the permanent exhibitions of the Kinsky Palace, the Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia, the Sternberg Palace, the Schwarzenberg Palace, the Salm Palace, and the Trade Fair Palace

The exhibition was jointly prepared by the chief curator of the National Gallery in Prague, Adam Budak, and the curatorial team of Eva Bendová, Kristýna Brožová, Oldřich Bystřický, Markéta Hánová, Adéla Holubová, Veronika Hulíková, Štěpánka Chlumská, Martina Jandlová, Rea Michalová, Zuzana Novotná, Michaela Pejčochová, Radomíra Sedláková, Petr Šámal, Olga Uhrová, Marcela Vondráčková, and Petra Zelenková

The annual exhibition “Generosity. The Art of Giving”, held in the Kinsky Palace, presents the most precious and most interesting works donated to the National Gallery throughout its history, today spanning 220 years. Apart from the masterpieces from the Gallery’s own collections, which illustrate the ideal of donating and generosity, it moreover offers works of international contemporary art. The event, organized at the occasion of the significant anniversary, for the first time ever interconnects all Gallery’s buildings and their collections.

The exhibition in the Kinsky Palace illustrates the National Gallery’s history via six chapters pondering over the expressions of generosity and analysing the concept “generosity” from the point of iconography. The Gallery and its collections are introduced here as the heritage of generosity in the course of the 220 years of their existence and the donating activities of both outstanding personalities and institutions. The exhibition has thus become a kind of a self-portrait, the autobiographic journey of which can be best described as an “obstacle course”. This resonates with the architectural solution of the overall display where the individual halls of the Rococo palace are intertwined by a single meandering exhibition panel which, reminiscent of a sceptre, maps out the individual subjects. Visitors can at once see works by artists such as Joan Miró, Toyen, Georges Braque, Norberd Grund, Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger, Jan Kupecký, Pieter Claesz, Max Pirner, Karel Škréta and many others, presented in an immensely interesting context of the entire event.

The exhibition presents works of art reflecting the fact that the existence of the collections held by, what is today, the National Gallery in Prague is possible due such outstanding personalities as the members of the Society of the Patriotic Friends of the Arts who had once established the Collection of Old Masters. These included Vojtěch Lanna (1836–1909), whose deeds and fervour helped form the Collection of Prints and Drawings; Vincenc Kramář (1877–1960), who had significantly influenced the form of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art, and Lubor Hájek (1921–2000), the founder of the Collection of Oriental Art (today the Collection of Asian and African Art). The exhibition moreover pays homage to the generosity of various institutions and associations that had supported the Gallery in acquiring works of art of such quality and quantity that could hardly be achievable by an individual.

The most extensive of the exhibition’s chapters is the one presenting the collections and the successes of the individual patrons and donors who had supported the National Gallery in acquiring the majority of its collections throughout its existence. In the beginning of the



activity of the Society of Patriotic Friends of the Arts, for example, one of its most generous patrons, Dr Josef Karel Eduard Hoser (1770–1848), donated a complete collection consisting of 253 paintings by old masters to the Gallery. Some lawyers and physicians, with Leopold Katz (1854–1927) and Josef Thomayer (1853–1927) among them, then, contributed by the collections of the 19th-century works. The development and flourishing of the collections was also possible thanks to many others, such as – in the case of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art – Emanuel Hloupý (1904–1967), Jiří Kolář (1914–2002), Jiří Valoch (born 1946), and Zbyněk Sekal (1923–1998). The 1950s' establishment of the Collection of Oriental Art (which is, today, the Collection of Asian and African Art) was fundamentally boosted by the pre-war Czechoslovakia donation from Baron Jirohachi Sacuma who generously shared his collection of Japanese works of art. The second part of the exhibition's story follows the iconography of generosity, represented by the works of art originating from most various collections. The individual chapters illustrate how painters and their patrons tried to capture the generosity of the natural world and the abundance of Nature, i.e. generosity in the sense of sympathy and mercy, but also love and friendship.

The works of art relating to the above-mentioned ideas, which will be marked throughout the Gallery's permanent displays, will highlight the narrative structure of the individual subjects of the exhibition, deeply embedded into the entire body of the National Gallery, so that visitors can perceive the well-known artefacts in new contexts. The six Gallery buildings will at the same time house contemporary interventions, either inspired by the very contents of the existing collections, or responding to the architecture in a site-specific manner. Some of the interventions pursue the concept of generosity from the point of subject or iconography, other further sketch in the labyrinth of generosity as well as other affiliated terms. Let us mention just few: The sculptural work created by the Austrian artist Franz West, generous in both substance and intention, is on view in the Small Hall of the Trade Fair Palace. The selection of Polaroids and sewn photographs by the Pop-Art icon, Andy Warhol – representing the most recent donation to the National Gallery from the New York Warhol Foundation – is on display in the hall of the Salm Palace, otherwise devoted to the oeuvre of the leading 19th-century Czech painter, Josef Mánes. The Sternberg Palace, then, offers the works of the Brazilian Ernesto Neto and the Japanese Yoshihiro Suda. The six buildings of the National Gallery in Prague – the Kinský Palace, the Schwarzenberg Palace, the Salm Palace, the Sternberg Palace, the Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia and the Trade Fair Palace – thus fulfil their roles of satellites designed to contribute to the understanding of a gallery as a laboratory and a network interlinking art production and its exhibiting.



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Interventions by venues

Kinský Palace

The Art of Asia
Edmund de Waal
Hiroshi Sugimoto
Jaromír Novotný

Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia

Medieval Art in Bohemia and Central
Europe 1200-1550
Klára Kristalová
Matts Leiderstam
Pavel Bůchler

Trade Fair Palace

Collection of Modern and Contemporary
Art
Franz West
Jim Lambie
Jiří Kovanda
Martin Creed
Matts Leiderstam

Prinz Gholam
Roman Ondák

Sternberg Palace

Collection of Old Masters
Ernesto Neto
Yoshihiro Suda
Klára Kristalová
Lee Kit
Matts Leiderstam

Salm Palace

19th century Art from Classicism to
Romanticism
Andy Warhol

Schwarzenberg Palace

Baroque in Bohemia
Matts Leiderstam
Prinz Gholam



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Ai Weiwei: Zodiac Heads

Duration: 6 February – 31 August 2016

Place: Trade Fair Palace

Curators: Adam Budak, Michaela Pejčochová

Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads by contemporary Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, will be displayed as one of the projects accompanying the exhibition *Generosity: On the Art of Giving*, which is devoted to themes such as sharing, generosity and patronage, and is organized in celebration of the 220th anniversary of the National Gallery's predecessor, the Picture Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friend of the Arts in Bohemia. Ai Weiwei's *Zodiac Heads* is the first and long-awaited work by this acclaimed artist to be exhibited in the Czech Republic. The space in front of the Trade Fair Palace will house twelve bronze zodiac-animal heads, copies of sculptures designed for the Garden of Perfect Brightness (Yuanmingyuan) near Beijing, which were destroyed by foreign troops in 1860 during one of the Opium Wars. A reminder of the complex relationship between art, history and politics, this installation speaks to the mission and identity of museums, a theme that also informs the anniversary exhibition in the National Gallery.

The 1.5-meter-wide heads are each attached to a three-meter-high slender post, forming a semicircle. The artist originally made them as “public sculptures” in response to the state of public art in the USA, where he lived between 1981 and 1993. He found most of the sculptures in public space too serious or officious—static monuments rather than objects to amuse and inspire city dwellers. He decided to treat a theme that would be playful and approachable for a typical city dweller, one who is not necessarily a museum-goer. The concept was extremely successful and Weiwei's *Zodiac Heads*—first shown in New York's Central Park around the so-called Pulitzer's Fountain between May and July, 2011—became one of the most famous works of contemporary Chinese art. It is perhaps the only contemporary Chinese artwork that is featured in many publications about international art in the 20th and 21st centuries. Many further copies have been made over the years.

The Czech Republic will be one of the few places in Europe to exhibit the work (along with Denmark, Germany, Russia and Spain). The National Gallery will borrow it from the artist's own collection. By exhibiting the work in front of the Trade Fair Palace, the gallery will contribute to discussions about the role of art in Prague's public space. It will also offer the viewers a glimpse into art's complex relationship towards history, national identity and the art market and, at the same time, allow them to perceive the work in its pure expressiveness. That the *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads* will be exhibited as part of the National Gallery's 220th anniversary and that it will occupy the space in front of the Trade Fair Palace, an example of Czech modern architecture, makes this display a unique curatorial project.

Ai Weiwei is China's best-known contemporary artist. His innovative and provocative works have earned him extensive international recognition, and have also made him an enemy of the Chinese government, which he has often openly criticized. Ai was born in Beijing in 1957, and he began his studies at the Beijing Film Academy in 1978. At that time Ai became a part of the influential avant-garde artistic collective Xingxing (“Stars”), whose famous 1979 unofficial exhibition was shut down by government officials. Eager to escape the limitations



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and repression of Chinese society, in 1981 Ai immigrated to New York City, where he encountered artworks by Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and Robert Rauschenberg. These artists significantly influenced Ai's developing artistic practice, for example, by inspiring an interest in readymade sculpture, commercial imagery, and conceptual art.

Some of Ai's most famous works manipulate and even destroy ancient Chinese artifacts in order to investigate rapidly-modernizing China's relationship with its ancient past (for example, *Han Dynasty Urn with Coca-Cola Logo*, 1994, and *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995). In addition to visual art, Ai has also undertaken architectural projects, including serving as Expert Consultant to the building of the Beijing Olympic Stadium (the so-called "Bird's Nest"), a role which he would later regret for its association with official propaganda. Ai has long been involved in political activism, for example, with his famous but short-lived blog which criticized the Chinese government. Ai's encounters with Chinese police culminated with his arrest in 2011. Since then, Ai has received a number of prestigious international awards, including the Human Rights Foundation's 2012 Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent, the 2013 Appraiser's Association Award for Excellence in the Arts, and Amnesty International's 2015 Ambassador of Conscience Award. Ai's major solo exhibitions have been held at venues including the Royal Academy (2015), Martin Gropius Bau (2014), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (2012), and Tate Modern (2010).



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El Hadji Sy: Painting – Performance – Politics

Duration: 6 February – 22 May 2016

Place: Trade Fair Palace

Author: El Hadji Sy

Curators: Adam Budak, Markéta Hánová

The National Gallery in Prague features this retrospective of Senegalese painter and curator, El Hadji Sy (*1954) as an introduction to contemporary art in Africa. El Hadji Sy: Painting – Performance – Politics introduces the artist as a singular painter but also as an important performer and cultural activist. Shown for the first time in the Czech Republic, El Hadji Sy's paintings, installations and performances dating from 1970s up until the present will also be presented along with other contemporary Senegalese painters. The artworks will be accompanied by archival documents, posters for El Hadji Sy's performances and film documentaries that capture his workshops.

The exhibition is organized as part of events celebrating the National Gallery's 220th anniversary. Its main part is on loan from the Museum der Weltkulturen in Frankfurt, however, the artist prepared a new concept for the Prague exhibition, in which he leads dialogue with the traditional artefacts from the National Gallery's Collection of Asian and African Art. This is the first ever National Gallery exhibition to present contemporary African art and its response to cultural and political matters.

El Hadji Sy, one of Senegal's most prominent contemporary artists, has been influential both locally and internationally as a painter, curator, and cultural activist. Sy was born in Dakar in 1954, and he studied painting at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Dakar from 1973 to 1977. As a student he grew skeptical of the then-dominant style of the École de Dakar, and instead turned to unconventional materials and methods, including laying his canvas on the ground and painting with his feet. Sy would later on use jute sacks, butcher's paper, and tar in his paintings. Since the very beginning of his career, Sy has supported his fellow artists by organizing exhibitions, developing workshops, and establishing collectives, often working in opposition to the Senegalese government's cultural policies. Two of his most famous collectives from the 1970s were the politically-critical Laboratoire AGIT'ART and the Village des Arts, which was raided and destroyed by the Senegalese military only five years after its founding. Undaunted, Sy went on to develop the Tenq workshops of the 1980s and 1990s, which established new networks between artists across Africa and Europe. In 1985 the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt commissioned Sy, along with German art patron and linguist Friedrich Axt, to compile a new body of Senegalese art for the museum's collections. Sy's collaboration with the Weltkulturen Museum resumed with his appointment as Artist in Residence in 2014. His current artworks unite painting with installation, performance, and dance, and they thrive not only within, but also outside of the formal gallery space. Sy has displayed his works both in international museums and on house walls in Dakar's working-class neighborhoods. His most recent solo exhibitions have been held at the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt (2015) and in Galerie Bookoo in Dakar (2013), and his installation Marine Archaeology (2014) was featured in the 31st São Paulo Bienal. He has also recently exhibited in group shows at Galerie IFAN (2007) and Galerie Nationale (2007) in Dakar.



Introducing Helena Hladilová: Fake Lake

Duration: 6 February – 22 May 2016

Place: Trade Fair Palace

Curators: Adam Budak

Helena Hladilová's artistic practice is characterised by an on-going dialectical investigation into object production and performativity. Her artworks embody an intimate intersection of object, audience, event and surrounding space, through which she defetishises the art object and creates an egalitarian relationship between artist/performer and spectator/participant.

Artworks, while autonomous, are often created within the context of or in a response to their display, and underscore the ambiguous nature of an exhibition space and its ability to shape the presentation and experience of art. The relationship between physical space, social experience and the natural world creates a body of work that is at once ephemeral, unpredictable, and exquisitely tender.

At present, Helena Hladilová (1983, Kroměříž) lives and works in Italy. She obtained her bachelor degree at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the VUT in Brno, and she took her master's study programme at the Academy of Fine Arts at the sculptors' studio in Carrara, Italy. Along with Namsal Siedlecki she is at the head and works as a curator of the exhibition space GUM studio, which was formed in Carrara and later moved to Turin. Her solo exhibitions include Swinger (Artissima, Turin), Fake lake (CO2, Turin), 6Artista (MACRO, Rome), Vitrine. 270° (GAM, Turin), NaCl (L'A Project, Palermo, together with Namsal Siedlecki), Barega (Giuseppe Frau Gallery, Gonnos). Her work has been presented within group exhibitions, among others, at the MAXXI Gallery (Rome), Fondazione Nomas (Rome), Fondazione Pastificio Cerere (Rome), Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa (Venice), Moscow International Biennial for Young Art (Moscow), Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (Turin), Cripta 747 (Turin) and the Prague Biennial. She also took part in the residential projects, Art Quarter Budapest (Budapest), Fondazione Pastificio Cerere (Rome), Cite internationale des arts (Paris), Fondazione Spinola Banna per l'Arte (Turin), and Fondazione Antonio Ratti (Como).



Moving Image Department – 4th Chapter: The Rhetoric of Time, Revisited

Duration: 6 February – 22 May 2016

Place: Trade Fair Palace

Curators: Adam Budak, Piotr Sikora

Time and temporality of (moving) image lie in a centre of the 4th chapter of Moving Image Department. According to the philosophers, cinema's generous task is not just presenting images, but also surrounding them with a world. In today's reality however the line of distinction between the real and the film became blurred and obscure. Is it that the world surrounds the images or it became a huge moving image itself accepting the mechanism and dynamics of the motion picture, being constantly recorded, getting on tape and going on-line.

“There is no film beyond this point” says a small board placed at the entrance of the Moving Image Department. In the humble way it reminds us that the reality outside either holds a high probability of becoming a new youtube blockbuster video or it is closely observed by the CCTV cameras. To pronounce it right, it's a FILM. In Tomáš Svoboda's first video, the artist claims that the film “has arrived by the train”. The author points back to the beginnings of the cinematography and the famous Lumière Brothers motion picture “The Train Arriving at La Ciotat Station” (1896) that caused fear and terror first time being shown. So we do live the film. However we've become so used to it, no one could really comprehend the panic attack caused by one of the first moving images ever made.

Tomáš Svoboda brings us back to the very basis of the motion picture industry, bends over backwards to remind what are the principals of film narratives and to deconstruct them with conceptual treatment. In his practice the present moment disappears and “the camera became a gateway of the future” unlike in the multi-channel video installation “The Visitors” by Ragnar Kjartansson. The present moment: this very short, transitory zone turns to be the only space for the meeting of nine musicians performing Ragnar's song “My Feminine Way”.

Kjartansson's oeuvre operates as a carrier of crystals of time; it is a perpetual time machine, constantly moving between the already-there and the not-yet, always balancing on the borderline. “The Visitors” is a short moment of rest, a video where nine friends gather together in Rokeby Farm to carry out very personal music piece. All of them play alone to meet uniquely as a one, synchronized composition in the gallery space.

The works by both Tomáš Svoboda and Ragnar Kjartansson are collections of images set up in a double motion: they embrace the visitor with their temporal unfolding and magic while emanating the world they are surrounded by. Their immersive quality generates an illusion of inhabiting an image, „living it“ in present and in recollection. 4th chapter of the Moving Image Department demonstrates the medium of video and cinema as an apparatus, able to speak a collective voice of and through time.



Poetry Passage#2

Jiří Thýn, Heinrich Dunst, Alejandro Cesarco

Duration: 6 February – 22 May 2016

Place: Trade Fair Palace

Curators: Adam Budak

While the Poetry Passage#1 had been focused (after Franco „Bifo“ Berardi) on investigating the poetry’s role as a „hidden resource which enables us to shift from one paradigm to another“, the Poetry Passage#2 explores (after Gilles Deleuze) poetry’s ability to produce sense and it considers language (after Paolo Virno) as a transindividual reality which always presupposes a public exchange. For Italian philosopher and semiologist, the human species, precisely because it is capable of speech, is not composed by separate individuals, but rather remains both the theatre and the audience for any linguistic performance.

Thus, all in all, the Poetry Passage#2 contributes to the National Gallery’s all embracing investigation of the politics of generosity and a construction of a collective voice in 2016. Staged on the Trade Fair Palace’s grandiose functionalist staircase, it orchestrates the photographic work of Jiří Thýn (1977, Czech Republic), a performative visual poetry of Heinrich Dunst (1955, Austria) and the cinematic consideration of an act of reading by Alejandro Cesarco (1975, Uruguay/USA) who explores the „suddenness of language“ in his most recent work „Allegory, or the Perils of the Present Tense“ (2015).

Additionally, the Poetry Passage#2 includes an exquisite appearance of a dance company „Le gens d’Uterpan“ (France) with a site-specific choreography, addressed towards the audience and taming the space. This is yet another attempt to explore a blurred area between acting (pratting) and producing (poiesis), reexamining over and over again, Aristotlean Nicomachean Ethics and Wittgensteinian Philosophical Grammar towards the performing artist’s naturalistic virtuosity and the language as a transitional phenomenon.



Jiří David: Apotheosis

Duration: 6 February – 16 June 2016

Place: Trade Fair Palace

Curators: Katarína Rusnáková

This site-specific work by Jiří David draws inspiration from Apotheosis: “Slavs for Humanity”, a monumental painting from Alfons Mucha’s Slav Epic cycle. The installation was presented in 2015 in the Czech and Slovak Republic Pavilion at the 56th international biennale in Venice.

Jiří David reinterprets Mucha’s heroic saga about the history of the Czechs and Slavs, approaching it from the position of a contemporary artist endowed with a sense for critical analysis. David’s black and white version of Apotheosis is an act of deconstruction, enhanced by his subtle intervention in the individual parts of the composition in the form of apocrypha. The installation is a stimulus to critical thinking about a number of serious political, economic, socio-cultural, philosophical and sociological issues that reference the past and the present of the world in the broader relationships in which local and global issues intersect.

The installation aims to inspire active participation of the spectators, providing them with a whole range of interesting mental, emotional and visual experiences. The focal point of the installation is in a corridor, where the viewers/participants encounter the reinterpreted version of the Apotheosis. The painting is reflected in a mirror wall, making the viewer an ephemeral part of the artwork. The installation makes the viewer think about geopolitical and socio-cultural questions in the period of more than one hundred years. Jiří David’s Apotheosis asks questions linked with the re-assessment of terms such as home, motherland, nation, state, the Slav identity or history of the Czechs.

Jiří David (1956) is one of the most distinctive representatives of contemporary Czech art. The rare diversity and richness of his oeuvre won him a brilliant reputation in his country and abroad. His areas of interest include painting and mixed media art – especially photography, installations and realizations in the public space. David’s approach is characterized by a considerable degree of personal involvement as he seeks to convey a multi-layered message about topical socio-cultural and political problems. He is a type of artist who persistently seeks original and innovative visual conceptions and poses critical questions through his works, helping the viewers find better orientation in the complicated contemporary world. David regularly exhibits in the Czech Republic and abroad and his works are represented in the collections of many prestigious institutions, both local and international (for example the National Gallery in Prague, Prague City Gallery, Moravian Gallery in Brno, Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art in Budapest, Museum of Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig in Vienna, or Art Institute of Chicago).