

Finalists of the Jindřich Chaloupecký Award are presented together at an exhibition in the Moravian Gallery

Today the Moravian Gallery in Brno launches an exhibition entitled Jindřich Chaloupecký Award: The Final 2017. Romana Drdová, Dominik Gajarský, Martin Kohout, Richard Loskot and Viktorie Valocká will display their works in the Pražák Palace until 14 January, and in November one of the five artists will receive the most prestigious Czech award for artists up to 35 years. The exhibition of the finalists will be accompanied by a presentation of the renowned German artist Clemens von Wedemeyer.

Jindřich Chaloupecký Award: The Final 2017

Moravian Gallery in Brno: Pražák Palace, Husova 18
Finalists of the 28th edition: Romana Drdová, Dominik Gajarský, Martin Kohout, Richard Loskot and Viktorie Valocká
Curators: Tereza Jindrová, Karina Kottová
22/9/2017 – 14/1/2018

"Each of the finalists created a specific environment, a little world of their own. But in many respects the works communicate with one another and form a single whole enticing the viewer," says the director of Jindřich Chaloupecký Society and co-curator of the exhibition, Karina Kottová. This year it will be for the second time that the final exhibition presents the oeuvre of a guest from abroad. The renowned German artist Clemens von Wedemeyer created a new work based on the sculpture collections of the Moravian Gallery. *"We are excited that the work is a direct response to the local context,"* adds Kottová. Ondřej Chrobák, chief curator of the Moravian Gallery in Brno, considers the bold approach of the artists to the spaces in the Pražák Palace a challenge for the future: *"The finalists show a highly innovative and in places radical method of working with the exhibition rooms which is also inspiration for our other projects."*

The exhibition of five distinctive artistic personalities has certain features shared by all. *"The common denominator is in all cases an awareness of the physical presence of the viewer – a body which needs to sit down, feel the texture of things and apart from sight perceives through the senses of touch, smell, and alternatively becomes itself "part" of the exhibit,"* points out the second curator, Tereza Jindrová, according to which the works are related even in terms of content. *"Each of the five artists speaks of today's world or that of the near future. At first sight they may be more interested in things, technologies and phenomena which surround us rather than man himself. But in the end they all make references to man, via a detour, inspired by human feelings and experience. I believe that this is why the viewers will easily find a way to their works,"* explains Jindrová.

Wedemeyer used works from the sculpture collection of the Moravian Gallery in the making of his new video and installation

A new work for the Atrium in the Pražák Palace was created by the internationally renowned German artist Clemens von Wedemeyer. In the exhibition called Vermin of the Sky he presents a video in which sculptures by canonised Czech sculptors as well as lesser-known artists with incongruous history and content from the collection of the Moravian Gallery in Brno meet in a new rendition of the Space Odyssey. They share in common a strange transitional state on the boundary between creation and destruction. Wedemeyer also prepared an intervention in the permanent exhibition of the collections – an original approach to the physical constellation of the statues used in the video by artists such as Josef Václav Myslbek, Vlasta Prachatická-Kolibalová and Vincenc Makovský.

The laureate will be selected by a new jury

The artist who will receive the 28th Jindřich Chaloupecký Award will be selected by a new international jury. The members include Zdenka Badovinac, director of the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana, Vjera Borozan, director of Artyčok TV, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, director of SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin, Lenka Klodová, artist and head of the Studio of Body Design FaVU VUT in Brno, Vasif Kortun, director of SALT in Istanbul, Marek Pokorný, art director of the PLATO gallery in Ostrava and Laurel Ptak, director of Art in General in New York. In addition to the fact that the jury members represent leading international art institutions, the emphasis during their selection was placed on the variety in geographical locations and ideas and gender balance.

The formal announcement of the Jindřich Chaloupecký Award 2017 will take place on 26 November in the Scala University Cinema. The evening will be directed by Tomáš Luňák who has received The Czech Lion and the European Film Awards, and will be broadcast live by Czech TV on the ČT Art channel.

The laureate of the Jindřich Chaloupecký Award traditionally receives one hundred thousand Czech crowns to organise an exhibition, publication or another original project, a six-week-long scholarship in New York in collaboration with the Residency Unlimited centre and a material prize from the workshop of the designer Maxim Velčovský. Visitors to the exhibition of the finalists will again choose the holder of the Visitors' Award of the Czech Centres who will be given an opportunity of a residential stay in one of the European Czech Centres.

The exhibition was supported by City of Brno.

Organisers: Jindřich Chaloupecký Society,
Moravian Gallery in Brno

Main partners: Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic,
Council of the City of Prague, J&T Bank

Main media partner: Czech Television

Exhibition partners: Council of the City of Brno,
State Culture Fund of the Czech Republic,
Czech-German Fund for the Future,
Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V.

Financial support: Czech Centres, City Quarter of Prague 7,
Trust for Mutual Understanding,

Partners: National Gallery in Prague, Centre and Foundation for Contemporary Art Prague, Residency Unlimited, Scala University Cinema, Stuchlíková & Partners, Fair Art

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Press Release Supplement The Final 2017

Romana Drdová

Romana Drdová (1987) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (New Media Studio I/ School of Tomáš Svoboda). She went on a number of educational stays, including at the Korean National University in Seoul, HfG in Karlsruhe (studio of Urse Lehni) and in studios of the visiting teachers at the Academy of Fine Arts, Florian Pumhösel and Nicol Wermers. Her creative output, often in the medium of object, photography, and installation, involves specific pure aesthetic, bordering on transparency, as well as working with light, mass and void in combination with original materials and procedures for which the artist finds inspiration, apart from the context of visual art, in the world of fashion, technology and design. She makes sensitive and metaphorical comments on the subject of perception and interpersonal interaction in a time of “data smog”. Her work has been presented mainly in Czech independent institutions (solo exhibitions at the Prague centre of contemporary art - Meetfactory, and Karlin Studios), but also in the National Gallery and, in an international context, in Vienna, Berlin and Liège in Belgium.

Romana Drdová's work is deeply rooted in unflagging fascination with the experience we live in – an experience of the individual in a world defined by globalisation, consumerism, commodification and virtualisation. She finds inspiration in fashion, gastronomy, design, advertising, cosmetics and in general product aesthetics, which she uses, and even abuses, through exposing the absurdity of overproduction. The main motifs in her installation for the final are emotional alienation on the one hand, and physical presence/experience on the other. The artist poses the question of how one should cope these days with the need to feel something? She proposes that a possible answer could be found in objects of everyday use – which by their pleasant shapes, materials and textures satisfy the desire for the experience of touch. Drdová wants to stimulate the urge to touch by the distinctly haptic nature of her objects, playing with materials and colours. Touch is naturally associated with the need for intimacy and confidentiality. When Drdová toys with evoking the feeling of erotic tension (textile surface and fragmentary body shots in the video), she is equally interested in quite the opposite: a depersonalised, sexless form of emotional interaction – the so-called faceless partner, who might possibly be a robot. While we share our experiences and impressions in an impersonal way via communication networks and media or even with virtual partners, our immediate contact with others is modified by growing inhibitions – Drdová takes notice of the separating and protective elements in offices (tills), restaurants (tables in separate boxes), in shopping centres and airports and in similar “transitory” zones, notwithstanding pilgrimage sites and churches turned into mere tourist attractions. And it is different elements from these places that the artist transforms into simple Perspex objects and installs them on a raised platform so that they no longer escape our attention and maybe reveal something about ourselves to us.

Dominik Gajarský

Dominik Gajarský (1986) is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (New Media Studio II/ School of Anna Daučíková). He also spent some time on an educational stay at the UdK in Berlin (Studio of Josephine Pryde). In 2014 he was one of the finalists of the Leinemann Foundation Award. Gajarský expresses himself mainly through the medium of photography and the moving picture with an affinity for analogue technology, including its history. Formally he makes frequent references to modernist role-models, but at the same time approaches the canon and hegemony of western culture critically, particularly with regard to post-colonial discourse, feminism and ecology. He regularly presents his work in solo and group exhibitions in the Czech Republic and abroad, including Close-Up cinema in London, PAF in New York, the Czech Centre in Berlin or the National Gallery in Prague. He took part as a resident artist in the EIB Artists' Development Programme in Luxembourg and at the Summer Academy in Salzburg. In addition to visual art he is also an active musician.

The principal domain of the work of Dominik Gajarský is photography and the moving picture, often in confrontation with the spoken or written word, where he draws on scientific literature and poetry as well as popular jokes and lore as sources. In the past he also worked several times with an atmospheric installation of his works employing coloured lights. These elements are now re-concentrated in his project for the final. A room adapted for screening a new film is far from being a neutral black box: green illumination, a slanted angle of projection and the option of lounging in deck chairs lead the viewer to slow down and be submerged in an environment whose overall impact is amplified by a sensory experience for the nose. Gajarský, who is an experienced perfume maker, prepared a scent based on pure hemp essence to interconnect our physical reality with the observed video. The screened work combining plotless imagery with a personal account relates to the artist's interest in the subject of animals, their relationship with people and in particular the humanisation of animals as an expression of human culture. This time it is a fable-like dialogue between a snake and a goose. Their stories are inspired by “real events” – sensational pieces of news which the artist ran into on the internet, the common denominator of which is an interaction between an animal and a car. The stories are the essence of concentrated human emotions, such as fear, loneliness and disappointment. The artist infiltrated the monologues of the animals with excerpts from classical literature on the relationship between drugs and modern thinking (Thomas DeQuincey: Confessions of an English Opium Eater, 1822; Aldous Huxley: The Doors of Perception, 1954; Sadie Plant: Writing on Drugs, 1999). The selected sentences may not directly refer to their source but as the final result they put the whole of Gajarský's work into a slightly different light – the video and the installation can be taken either ironically, or provocatively, as far as recognition which we usually attribute to human rationality is concerned.

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Martin Kohout

Martin Kohout (1984) is a graduate of the Film Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (Cinematography Department) and the Städelschule in Frankfurt (Studio of Simon Starling). He also studied for two years at the UdK in Berlin. His multimedia works respond to various situations in life, the inability to grasp today's world and the incapability of an individual to find his/her bearings in it. Kohout's principal theme is the medium of the internet and self-reflection of man in global communication, which brings antagonistic experiences – togetherness and aggression, self-confidence and helplessness. Recently he presented his work in a Czech and international context in solo and group exhibitions, e.g., in New York, Beijing, Tokyo, Berlin, Paris and Sophia. In 2010 he was one of the finalists of the Marler Video-Kunst-Preis in Germany. In 2008 he won the Different Visions competition at the Festival of Film Animation in Olomouc and was the finalist of the Jindřich Chalupecký Award in 2014. Since 2008 he has lived in Berlin.

Martin Kohout's work on display, which the author places somewhere between a short film and a video, has its premiere at the JCHA Final. At the same time, it is part of Kohout's more extensive project which includes other videos and the publication of texts made with support from the Video in Common production company. The central subject of the project is the issue of night work and the related social and economic, as well as physical and psychological, aspects. The film/video from the final is composed of several episodes which do not have the structure of a narrative sequence, they could be shown independently. The three semi-fictional characters who are an underlying element of all the individual parts never meet: they are the couple Asli and Bora and their friend Sung. While Asli works during the day, Bora goes to work at night – the time they spend together is greatly restricted and the main part of their interaction takes place through messages and notes. The actual subject of night work, or the alternation of the daily and nightly regime, forms more or less the contextual background to the synchronous relationship and interpersonal communication in general and their forms in the 21st century. Another important level of meaning is modern technologies and the way they change our everyday world – whether it is navigation in the urban environment, protection of property, or purchasing goods ... The three messages that Bora exchanges with Asli are similar to a depiction of dreams or imaginations one might have "under the influence", but they have a parallel effect of rather unsettling absurd anecdotes – they recount situations which we do not experience today but could easily imagine in the near future.

Richard Loskot

Richard Loskot (1984) is a graduate of the Faculty of Art and Architecture at the Technical University in Liberec (Studio of Visual Communication). He also studied for two years at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Munich (Studio of Magdalena Jetelová). The work of Richard Loskot is steeped in process and creating situations and environments, which take as their theme human perception itself. He employs sophisticated means and the latest technologies where the final result may impress the viewer as an elaborate magician's trick. He regularly presents his work at solo exhibitions, mainly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (including the national Gallery in Prague, the Brno House of Arts and the City Gallery Prague), as well as group exhibitions at home and abroad (e.g., Biennale Giovani Monza, Rotor gallery in Graz and Astrup Fearnley Museet in Oslo). In 2013 he was one of the finalists of the Blumm Prize in Brussels. In 2007 he won the Exit competition (Galerie Emila Filly, Ústí nad Labem) and was the finalist of the Jindřich Chalupecký Award in 2012 and 2014, when he received the Visitors' Award.

Richard Loskot's project for the final is an ambitious amalgamation of a number of motifs and procedures from his previous work into a new whole. The multimedia installation spread over two rooms of the Pražák Palace relates in its own way to the history of this particular building, originally built as an apartment house. Using minimal forms, Loskot creates an environment evoking an apartment interior – study/bedroom and drawing room/dining room. However, the principal characteristic of this "apartment" is the absence of its inhabitants or their immediate traces. The formal purity borders on emptiness and even elements which might perhaps have a soothing air of cosiness – a singing canary, a reading voice, sun reflections or a sprawling cat – are paradoxically shown to be strangely alienated. The artist also tempts our vision by placing obstacles in our way, using modern technologies, determines our angle of view and doubles or amends the image of reality by adding a virtual (and richer) dimension. Richard Loskot masterfully conducts the art of appearances and illusion, but rather than a perfect illusion he is after the moment of disclosure, during which we may realise the purely technical nature of something which we at first sight considered "natural". In this way he questions the category of naturalness itself.

Viktorie Valocká

Viktorie Valocká (1988) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (Painting Studio II/School of Vladimír Skrepl). She has been on an educational stay at the Universidad Complutense, Faculty of Fine Arts in Madrid and spent two semesters in the studios of the visiting teachers at the Academy of Fine Arts, Florian Pumhösel and Silke Otto Knapp. First and foremost a painter, she also works in the media of collage, drawing and ceramics. Her large-size paintings reveal inspiration by art from the beginning of the 20th century, in particular artificialism and poetism, rather than current trends on the international scene. Yet, her nearly abstract works are typified by contemporary idiom and mature brushwork. Valocká has presented her work mainly in the context of the Czech independent art scene, but she also exhibited at the National Gallery in Prague and Sør-Troms Museum in Trastad, Norway. She was a resident artist within Are-events in 2016 in Athens.

The painterly expression of Viktorie Valocká is easily recognisable: her work is reminiscent, on the one hand, of 20th century art movements, such as Art Informel, tachism, surrealistic decals by Max Ernst or Czech artificialism á la Toyen; while on the other hand it is in accord with the contemporary tendencies of the renewed interest in materiality and handmade artefacts or the blending of utilitarian forms (textile production) with "high" art. Experiments with dyeing and bleaching cloths (e.g. used bed sheets) opened up new alternatives of working with a painting and its installation in space. The collection of three large-size paintings made for the final marks a "return" to classical painting – i.e. paint on prepared canvas stretched on a frame, although it simultaneously draws on previous experience with dyeing cloths and their formal repertory. A combined technique using acrylic, oil paints and wax involves the accumulating of colour layers, which in places fuse into an impenetrable mass, but elsewhere attract attention by their brightness and transparency. The shared characteristic of the canvases is an agitated calligraphic line as in automated drawing. The hardly discernible motif of a dolphin hiding under the layers of paint in all three canvases, from which one of the paintings takes its name, also appears on the painted couches. These accompany the traditional wall-mounted triptych as a spatial installation, which enables us to experience the paintings from a different perspective. The impetus for Valocká's paintings usually comes from the things and people around her as well as her travels abroad. The largest of the exhibited canvases called HighFa combines an abstract background surface with a realistic detail: it is the sacred Bahá'í garden in Haifa, Israel. The "true-to-reality depiction" of a site revered as sacred, although built just a few decades ago, is a kind of an ironic comment by the artist on realistic painting.

A new feature in last year's edition of the Jindřich Chalupecký Award was the launch of a fresh tradition of presenting an exhibition by a foreign guest artist who would create an independent project shown in parallel with the exhibition of the Award's finalists. It should be an outstanding contemporary artist, whose work resonates with what's currently going on the Czech art scene, although it has so far not been presented here on a larger scale. After the previous exhibition of Laure Prouvost our guest for 2017 is the German artist Clemens von Wedemeyer. In his works from the field of conceptual moving picture and audiovisual installations Wedemeyer works with (film) archives, historical and symbolical references, which he supplements with engaged comments thus fusing archive material with current topics. Wedemeyer's search mostly springs from inspiration from a specific place and situation. The artist pays special attention to social and physical constellations and the relationships of power, associated with a particular space in a present or past moment. In *Heavenly Creatures*, a project created specifically for this occasion, Wedemeyer made a subjective selection from the sculpture collection of the Moravian Gallery to act in a new video, presented in the Atrium of the Pražák Palace, and an installation cum intervention in the permanent exhibition of the collections in the same building. The artist created a poetical yet political narrative, in which he establishes unexpected links between historically and content-wise disparate works: from considerably damaged Gothic Madonnas via archetypal portraits to canonical Czech sculptors, such as Josef Václav Myslbek and Vincenc Makovský, and including lesser-known works and artists. During the surrealist encounter in space the digitised sculptures are subjected to the manoeuvres of dominance and submission. A bust of a locally recognized general, the mask of the principal patron of the Czech lands or the head of Prométheus become mere physical mass, actors in a re-told Space Odyssey. The work continues in the tracks of the previous examination by the artist of the subject of discursive, social and symbolic value of sculpture in relation to film, the actors and the viewers, which Wedemeyer dealt with at the exhibition entitled *The Cast* in the MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts in Rome (2013) and within the *Cast Behind You The Bones Of Your Mother* project presented by the Berlin KOW gallery in 2015.

Clemens von Wedemeyer, was born in 1974 in Göttingen, Germany, currently lives and works in Berlin and is the professor of new media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig. He studied photography and media at the Fachhochschule Bielefeld and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Leipzig, where he graduated in the studio of Astrid Klein in 2005. Clemens von Wedemeyer participated in group exhibitions, for example, at the Moscow Biennial (2005), the 4th Berlin Biennial (2006), Skulptur Projekte in Münster (2007), the 16th Sydney Biennial (2008) and dOCUMENTA (13) (2012). His solo exhibitions were presented including MoMA PS1 in New York, the ARGOS Centre for Art and Media in Brussels, the Barbican Art Centre in London, the Frankfurter Kunstverein, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Hamburger Kunstthalle. His film "ESIOD 2015" premiered within the 66th Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin (Berlinale) in 2016.

Members of the international jury:

Zdenka Badovinac
Vjera Borozan
Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung
Lenka Klodová
Vasif Kortun
Marek Pokorný
Laurel Ptak

director of the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana
director of Artyčok TV
director of SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin
artist, head of the Studio of Body Design at FaVU VUT in Brno
director of SALT in Istanbul
artistic director of PLATO gallery in Ostrava
director of Art in General in New York