

ústí nad labem
house of arts



THE SHAPE OF THOUGHT

**Feb 16 - Apr 1
2017**

**conceptual, constructivist
and lyrical tendencies in
Czech art from private
collections of citizens
of Ústí nad Labem**

**Marie Blabolilová, Václav Boštík,
Jitka Géringová, Daniel Hanzlík,
Pavel Hayek, Dalibor Chatrný,
Jiří John, Roman Kameš,
Olga Karlíková, Jan Koblasa,
Jiří Kolář, Martin Kolář,
Stanislav Kolíbal, Inge Kosková,
František Kowolowski, Jan Kubíček,
Jiří Kubový, Alena Kučerová,
Petr Kvíčala, Karel Malich,
Milan Maur, Vladislav Mirvald,
Daisy Mrázková, Ladislav Novák,
Jan Řezáč, Zdeněk Sýkora,
Jiří Valoch, Martin Zet**

Curator: Michal Koleček

**Exhibition Opening
15/2 at 6 pm
Ústí nad Labem
House of Arts**

**Open:
TUE-SAT 10 am-6 pm
Free entry**

Ústí nad Labem House of Arts
Klíšská 1101/129a, 400 96 Ústí nad Labem
(next to the student dormitories K1, K2)
trolley bus 52, 58, 59, bus 9, 17, 27
bus stop Klíše - lázně

Visit www.duul.ujep.cz or our facebook page for more information
about the exhibition and its accompanying programme.

The Shape of Thought

The curatorial intent of the exhibition *The Shape of Thought* that comprises the works from private collections of personalities connected with the culture and art in Ústí nad Labem presents two mutually connected content levels to the audience. This collection of artworks represents the development of Czech art from mid-sixties to the years shortly after 2000 and focuses on artworks with conceptual, (neo)constructivist and lyrical tendencies. At the same time, this distinctive, though temporary, exhibition of contemporary art of high quality points out the absence of adequate collecting activities in Ústí nad Labem and the potential of local cultural environment that is still insufficiently perceived.

The exhibition *The Shape of Thought* is to some extent a follow-up to the curatorial projects from previous years – *Parallel history: Contemporary Art in Ústí nad Labem in 1990–2009(2010)* and *From the Centre Out – Regional Art 1985–2010 (2014)*, which attempted to evaluate the significance of the art scene in Ústí nad Labem from the artistic-historical and institutional point of view in a broader context. However, unlike the previous ones, this exhibition studies the development of the art scene since the sixties. The common theme of these projects is mostly the criticism of the absence of any collection-making activities and the overall environment for the contemporary artistic creation work in Ústí nad Labem. Private collections in the Ústí nad Labem region partially supplant such activities and the exhibition, presenting some works from these collections, creates a temporal collection that could be a part of the city museum in ideal conditions.

The motivation and the reasons for and the manner of the creation and the development of the private collections of the citizens of Ústí nad Labem in the period under study, however, differed from the collection-making activities of typical collectors. The fact that an artist and their work was put in a collection file was for the most part influenced by the close relationships between artists-collectors or curators-collectors. This also led to a specific thematic focus of the collections that came into existence due to the interactions inside the art scene. Thanks to these circumstances, it was paradoxically easy to start or extend high-quality private collections in the years before the revolution and also during the nineties. The character of such acquisition activity can also be seen in the texts acquired from the owners and presented at the exhibition. These texts describe the specific situations that lead to the acquisition of the individual artefacts.

The conceptual focus of the exhibition *The Shape of Thought* studies the development of Czech fine arts, represented mainly by the late-modernistic common ground with an emphasis on lyrical-abstract, minimalistic, conceptual and (neo)constructivist tendencies. This tradition was quite strongly represented in this region because for the independent scene in the seventies and eighties, the figurative depiction was connected mainly with official artistic production that represented the ideology of real socialism. It is thus obvious that these personalities among collectors with distinct views often met authors whose work had similar aesthetic and formal values through their own artistic or curatorial activities. The exhibition *The Shape of Thought* shows this connection both on the personal level and in the context of fine arts as such – there are works of artists with similar views even though there is a generation gap.

The timeline of the exhibition *The Shape of Thought* starts with the works of the generation that worked already in the fifties. These represent the circles that are connected with the visual poetry or rather the lyrical abstraction (Václav Boštík, Jiří John, Jan Koblasa, Jiří Kolář, Ladislav Novák, Alena Kučerová and Daisy Mrázková and following these also Marie Blabolilová). On the other hand, there are also works of the “second avant-garde” – (neo)constructivism and the New Sensitivity movement. Such works were characterized by rationally controlled composition, the relations between geometric surfaces or the attempts to capture the surface as a space using proportional constructions (the Louny school of artists –

Vladislav Mirvald and mainly Zdeněk Sýkora, but also Stanislav Kolíbal, Jan Kubíček or Karel Malich). A new conceptual movement (mainly the Brno circle) started to form at the end of the sixties; it was characterized by the fact that the final form of the work was perceived primarily as the result of the artist's intellect (Dalibor Chatrný or Jiří Valoch and also Jiří Kubový to some extent). With the climax of modernism came also dematerialization of traditional art forms. A conceptual work can thus be even an almost immaterial artefact, often in the form of an immediate record, to some extent inspired by, for instance, natural processes (Olga Karlíková, Inge Kosková and later also Milan Maur and also Roman Kameš in some sense).

The neoconceptual tendency is represented by the works of artists who are connected mainly with the atmosphere of the nineties. Their aim was to connect the tradition of the late-phase of modern art with the new thematic and to some extent also socio-cultural, civilistic focus. These movements are represented by prominent generational personalities (Pavel Hayek, František Kowolowski, Petr Kvičala, Martin Zet) as well as the representatives of the Neoconceptual circle of Ústí nad Labem (Jitka Géringová, Daniel Hanzlík, Martin Kolář, Jan Řezáč).

This brings us back to the influence of the crucial personality of Czech art of the second half of the twentieth century whose work are presented at the exhibition: Jiří Kolář who devoted himself to the topic of dailiness and the interest in the periphery. (After all, Jiří Kolář influenced even the forming of the conceptual and (neo)constructivist circle; he influenced its establishment by his views and by introducing the Czechoslovak art into the international context.) In the end, it was Jiří Kolář who directly or indirectly fascinated also the authors of Ústí nad Labem and directed them to the sensitivity to the uniqueness of artistic expression as well as to the exasperated perceptiveness to the environment from which they started and in which they stubbornly look for inspiration.

Barbora Hájková with the assistance of Michal Koleček

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