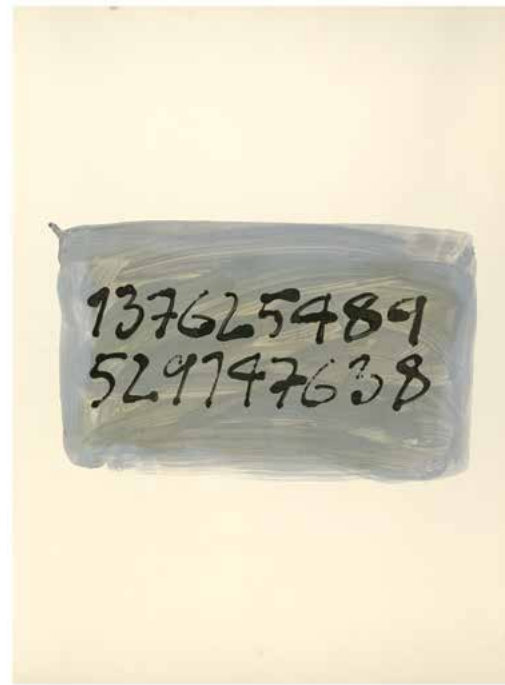




Anna Daučíková
Photo-perforations, 1995
6 perforated photographs



Anna Daučíková
Portrait of a Woman with
Institution – Anča Daučíková /
Catholic Church, 2011
video, colour, sound, 19'28"



Anna Daučíková
Untitled 1, 1992
painting, combined
technique on cardboard

Anna Daučíková
Collages – Diptych, 1989
series of 16 paper
stapled collages



Anna Daučíková
Celebration 3, 1989
photography



Anna Daučíková
Individual Effort,
Bratislava 1992–2012, 2012
16 photographs, detail



Anna Daučíková
„2584“, 1994
oil on canvas

ústí nad labem
house of arts

Make an effort
to remember.

Or, failing

that, invent.

Anna Daučíková
Moscow / Women / Sunday
1988/1990

Monique
Wittig

Curator
Michal Koleček

Anna Daučíková
Politics of Gestures
September 7 –
October 18, 2017

Anna Daučíková (1950) is one of the most distinctive woman-artists on the Czech, Slovak and even European scene. Her art combines a wide spectre of expressive media: drawings, paintings, photographs, conceptual photo collages, performances, and since 1990s, this solitary minded author has also been engaged in video-art. Within the context of the Czechoslovak arts of the post-totalitarian era (the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s), her works are of such a unique nature it is difficult to draw any parallels with other domestic authors. Despite that, her pieces of art have been deemed prestigious and respected at recent shows and exhibitions abroad (*Gender Check* exhibition, MUMOK Vienna, 2010; *Documenta 14*, Athens/Kassel, 2017).

After graduating from the Studio of Glass in the Architecture at The Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia (1978), she moved to Moscow for personal reasons and spent more than a decade there, occupying herself with glass works, structural numerical paintings and later also with conceptual photographs and collages. The stay had a huge impact both on the key topics she would choose later in her life and on her mostly conceptual approach of a socially sensitive author and civic activist to expressing her inner attitude towards her personal, artistic and non-artistic topics.

In 1990s, Daučíková was one of the cofounders of the first Slovakian feminist magazine *Aspect* with which she collaborated both as an editor and an artist. The magazine proofed to be of a great help in spreading the discourse and increasing the awareness about feministic, gender and cultural links, introducing translations of fundamental foreign studies. Daučíková was one of the very first Slovakian post-revolution woman-artist who claimed allegiance to feminism and homosexual orientation, and she perceives herself as a representative of non-identical streams of both the queer theory and practice. Her pieces of art have been more systematically mirroring her deep inner interests in unstable sexuality, longing and sensuality as well as in the problematics of a political, or even desexualized, body. A substantial part of her works deals with analysing the term obscenity which she understands as something that is on the scene although it “does not belong” there. Using acoustic image hints, situation anomalies of a slightly gagish nature and voyeuristic recordings, she finds an amazing ally in the technically reproducible media of videos and photographs. Often there is a narrative somewhat ambiguously levitating above the captured image, a natural extra-product of working with new media. Thanks to this, the storyline becomes more complex and dynamic and her moving pictures or sequences of static pictures enable her to change social, artistic and philosophical perspectives.

The concept of Anna Daučíková’s exhibition ‘Politics of Gestures’ in the Ústí nad Labem House of Arts is based on several cycles from her pivotal era of 1980s and 1990s when the socialistic dictatorship was in remission in the Czech and Slovak Republics and Soviet Russia and the new ideological, social and economical model brought many uncertainties. Daučíková witnessed the organization and the workings of the Russian society, often truly bizarre, and she captured these phenomena with visual configurations and space-time gestures. Her cycle of photographs called ‘Moscow / Women / Sunday’ (1988–1990) was partially created for the purpose of documenting a specific Sunday situation in Moscow where one barely met any men in the streets. While men were getting a good sleep after a long Saturday night full of alcohol, women had to take care of their households with their shopping bags. Daučíková was very sensitive towards the fact that the languishing era of perestroika was drawing to a close in a political agony, and she wanted to capture one of the everyday fragments of the collective memory of the Russian soul with her feigned bittersweet nostalgia. And with the benefit of hindsight, the series can now be seen as a post-soviet memento.

A similar concept focused on the same country was also applied in other cycles of photography (‘Family Album’, ‘Celebration’, 1989). This simple sociological metaphor in images was supposed to be a commentary of concentrating on an attentive observer who tried to personify specific schemes of interpersonal relationships using typical Russian mugs arranged in various ways. As there are special standardized mugs differing in their size in Russia, the author could work with them as if they were representatives of both sexes, male and female family members, creating authentic pictures referring to the aesthetics of pictures in family albums. Her ‘Garden Party’ cycle (1989) is probably an even more amusing reaction to a very peculiar habit of Russian men who used to put their mugs on branches of trees in city parks so that they would have them at hand the next day. Daučíková intervened into the promising situation a little bit – she added her own stem mugs from cut glass to recultivate this decadently-functional improvisation of local drunks, elevating it to a dignified ritual that was worth to be photographed.

Another crucial line of Daučíková’s twenty-year-long art trajectory is represented by collages of promising photographs, newspaper cuttings and other graphical materials. She sews pairs of abstract graphic scraps together and adjusts them on a coloured paper to set off the absurdity of such union and to make the viewers, influenced by the “tertiary effect of perception”, subconsciously perceive new contexts at the same time (‘Collages – Diptych’, 1989). The Dadaistic and subversive

nature of these pieces of art lies especially in the hybrid paradoxes or in visual and content analogies of various historical, contentual and aesthetical syntaxes of the pictorial materials. Nowadays, we do not hesitate to describe collage as a phenomenon related to modern culture and mass production of pictures, serving the purpose of either propaganda or anti-propaganda. However, collage is a platform connecting various time and space frames in the first place. If we take into account that Daučíková created these collage diptychs and montage juxtapositions (‘First Aid’, 1989) first in Russia and later again in Czechoslovakia, one cannot prevent looking at these works of art through the prism of Soviet inter-war photomontages, lush in images and often mural. However, the ambitions of Daučíková’s fine and intimate etudes are completely different – while these etudes may open a dialogue with the past, they immediately trivialize metamorphoses of the found realities and materialized memories. There is perhaps the strongest connection to a quote of Monique Wittig (1935–2003), a French-Canadian radical feminist and a lesbian theoretician, a quote the author chose from one of Wittig’s most significant published works called *The Straight Mind* (1992): “*Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent.*”

At the beginning of 1990s, the author came back to photographs, this time using it more like a time-lapse documentation. The image-sequential framework of these pieces of art extremely aptly captures situations of a raw and authentic nature, showing rather general aspects of political transformation. The key topics include poverty, civic activism and social exclusion. Daučíková becomes an inconspicuous voyeur, documenting contemporary beggars in big cities in Europe and later also in the US. A symptomatic work of this period is her *photo-chain* called ‘*Wie geht es Ihnen?*’ (2000) in which a well dressed woman addresses passer-bys with a perfectly memorized heartbreaking story, asking them for money. The same original principle of *common voyeurism* was used for documenting the activities of an unknown, mentally unstable woman-activist who used go around Bratislava, Slovakia, obsessively writing various comments, empty phrases and criticisms of present political and social affairs all over public poles (‘Individual Effort, Bratislava 1992–2012’). The project had not been ripe until 2012 when the artist decided to reconstruct these writings on identical poles and took photographs of them, this time in colour. As if she paid tribute to an old unknown (anti)heroine of her forgotten story and, at the same time, showed us the stagnation and the failures in development of certain new social and political mechanisms and pillars of the post-totalitarian block, using the principle of the twenty-year-long time-lapse.

The exhibition also displays a selection of quite an extensive cycle of big paintings and smaller drawings and monotypings with a single theme of number variations. All these gestural drawings with almost a calligraphic potential follow an abstract system – the numbers are placed in layers, cover each other, are approached as mirror images, form arithmetic series or cumulate in a chaotic way. As if they always want to coax each other, confrontationally, using the language of polarities and oppositions: chaos – system, hierarchy – anarchy, positive – negative, gesture – sign, development – stagnation, cold – warm, desire – apathy, aggression – passivity... The repeated decomposition and recomposition of numbers can be read as an attempt to capture the age-old inner fight between our own and foreign identities, systems and languages.

For several decades, the author has been developing her own style, often funny and ironic, which she employs to examine various polarities of the gender and social identity, social aspects of physical bodies, sexuality, trans-sexuality, erotica and obscenity – yet her style does not lack an existential depth. In her works, Daučíková clearly shows the inherent political aspects. She is convinced that art is inherently political, yet she tests all topics and statements with personal experience. Since 1990s, she has been carefully balancing on the edge of socially correct art, yet there is the critical drive, aimed at the prudish Church morality of a desexualized and controlled body which reached the peak in the then Slovakia, permanently present in her video arts. The works by Daučíková are interwoven with her inquisitive, analytical and critical view of the society in which she lives but which she never judges in a shallow and superficial way. Quite to the contrary, she is interested in everyday, almost banal aspects of gaps in the society, searching for ways of evocating them and transferring them to the viewers who then can approach them from the perspective of their own personal reflection.

Since 1999, Anna Daučíková has also been systematically engaged in education, teaching at The Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia, and since 2011, she has been the head of the New Media Studio at Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, the Czech Republic.

Anna Vartecká

Anna Daučíková Politics of Gestures

September 7 – October 18, 2017

Curator: Michal Koleček

Open: TUE–SAT 10 am–6 pm Admission free

**For all those who do not want just to watch and contemplate contemporary art in silence, we offer guided tours of the exhibition in English upon request.
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