

Jana Kasalová and Jan Šerých have been selected from the younger generation of artists in Prague. The result of a complex tradition based on memory, their works draw our attention to the two opposite poles of Bohemian culture, with its continuous oscillation between magic and logic.

Jana Kasalová has a preference for drawing, although she often uses photography, video and sculpture in her work, as in the case of the small wax sculptures that she assembles in scenes recalling ancestral memories and enclosed in Plexiglas domes. In her work we find organic lyricism accompanied by a strong link with nature resulting in an instinctive identification with what she refers to as 'the animal that therefore I am', a phrase that is repeated in the titles of several of her videos. The cycle of works entitled Anticipation Series recalls ancient fragments of lost alchemical notes, the schemes and structures of matter as yet unknown. At times they seem to be magic formulae that, perhaps, could help man to make contact with paradise lost. Or, at least, by giving rise to a state of astonishment, they try to eliminate the rift caused by human self-centredness with the rest of the universe. Kasalová manages to evoke a very distinctive spatio-temporal contact, allowing her works to be penetrated by human, plant and animal elements.

The resulting image is constituted by a network of unexpected connections: these revelations create momentary confusion and disorientation in the spectator, who is, however, almost immediately aware of an invitation to start exploring a different world that has only partially been disclosed. This aesthetic adventure leads us to a potential guided tour in the Tabulae Terrae series (2002–09), in which a number of maps resemble an old diary that has been rediscovered. It seems to be the record of remarkable journeys undertaken in the animal and plant kingdoms. Portions of mysterious lands drawn with great precision and juxtapositions between clear-cut signs and the tones of the drawing give rise to stratification of the possibilities of perception and interpretation. Kasalová's drawings are imbued with the essence of human sensibility, which is able to recreate the idea of a mutual symbiosis between the fantasy of magic and the natural world.

Jan Šerých explores a vast and almost unknown universe: the private and public labyrinth of the mind. Although clearly linked to the tradition of Concrete and Minimal art, his paintings, installations and videos manage to create intuitive ambiguity, which, by giving rise to a suspicion of irony, produces a cognitive short circuit. Precise forms used by the artist are associated with a new type of information linked to the virtual objectivity that has recently been created by the increasing use of digitization in the means of communication.

The artist highlights cybernetic space, with its repetition and obsessiveness. Unlike the Geometrical Abstraction of the last century, his paintings are not linked to geometry, but explore the interpretative ambiguity of simple yet rigorous forms. They are, therefore, intended to encourage us to consider how to penetrate the chaos of the new artistic languages. The multiplicity of possible meanings, some of them ambiguous, is also expressed in the form of numbers and letters in Šerých's output. Works such as Goodyear and Uuuuaaaa oscillate between the possibilities of interpretation of the meaning of the words and their actual meaning, like the map of any mental or real construction.

Šerých often draws inspiration from puzzles and intelligence tests — those that can be described as 'cultural cryptography' — revealing their total banality. He transfers them to the artistic context, where they acquire an element of instability that is in contrast with their logic.

Furthermore, the artist also manages to conceive the idea of the 'unknown void', which is filled with reassuring, identifiable forms that appear to be rational, but are, at the same time,

disturbing. The black space of the video *Paramnesia* (2009) is invaded by creeping white lines with an unpredictable and surprising rhythm. Šerých also makes use of numbers that are adopted for their visual aspect, but are fraught with different meanings. Two works dating from 2008 — *Dot, Dash and Dot, Dot* — are also based on the difficulty of interpreting meanings. In these works, the artist represents the word ‘*lu pí ne ček*’, which in English means ‘leaflet’ (that is, one of the divisions of a compound leaf), but in Czech also serves to memorize the letter L of the Morse code (._..). Thus he gives free rein to a complex series of definitions, images and associations of ideas. To put it another way, the written word recalls both a plant form and a sign consisting of a dash and three dots, causing a breakdown in communication.

Beyond this, there’s only imagination

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