

## **Janek Rous: *A Suitable Desert for Fata Morgana***

Memory in itself is not an entity. If we want to make a reference to memory we always need something to compare it to and this helps us to imagine its concrete outlines. The differentiation is always feasible, at least in the relation to another entity and the new circumstance (presence). Janek Rous's video installation '*A Suitable Desert for Fata Morgana*' is divided between two projections, which are posed as the prologue, and the epilogue. The prologue represents the supposed authenticity of the world as such (10 min video) and the epilogue is a reflection and an explanation of the imagined reality.

Both projections are divided by a pause, by a metaphorical desert, by a tunnel which is laconically explained in the second part as follows: '*At certain moments I wondered if the water stream at one side of the bridge would flow out on its other side; would it be completely the same water or does it undergo some changes?*' In fact, the childhood play at watching the stream of water is also a serious mathematical question, which was firstly tackled by mathematician and philosopher George Spencer-Brown. He enquired whether all train carriages entering a tunnel would be the same after leaving the tunnel and questioned whether it was possible to prove this assumption. He claimed that the exact description of the world was possible if the train carriages had been separately marked and counted, each mark had formed a basis for a potential theoretical calculation which could be verified; in this respect the proof existed. From the perspective of provability, photographs as the evidence determining the amount of water or number of carriages are insufficient. According to the artist, the flow of the water under the bridge can be transcribed as a thought process in the human mind. Rous interprets the stream of water that cannot be for a very short moment observed or controlled as the thought's stillness: '*Time and space are separated from one another and within the next second they are reconnected but with a slightly different ending than the minute before and as a result they always form a different constellation of elements.*'

The artist's audio-visual theory reveals that in order to identify a certain statement (what happened and what is going on now) it is necessary to take into account the process in its whole: so called the beginning and the end, entrance and exit, the present and the past. The work deals with a very different visual semantics to that we have been accustomed to. The method of a film essay constructed upon our inner differentiation is instrumental to possibilities of the categorization of particular elements of human processes as well as of the world around us.

*2 video channel for screen projection, full HD 16:9 Stereo, dimensions variable*

**Janek Rous** (1981) was born in Prague and graduated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (2013). Rous's performances, sculptures, research, anthropology, conceptual art and actions explore the ways in which social and political systems have been restructured in the former Eastern Europe. He devises works often full of uncanny performances, incorporating all kinds of unusual tools. His latest exhibitions include: Karlin Studios, Prague (2013); Festung Hohensalzburg, Salzburg, (2013); National Gallery, Prague, (2013); Meetfactory, Prague, (2013); TranzitDisplay, Prague, (2013), Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art, Krakow, (2013). Janek Rous lives and works in Prague.

## **St pánka Sigmundová: *National Museum***

Memory in itself is not an entity. When the memory is embedded in the context of the museum, only then its value and its defined form can emerge in full. The institution of the national museum operates within this generally familiar mechanism; it reflects the contemporary political atmosphere of the present, distributing to the nation a specific interpretation of its own past. In this respect, those in control of the past reinforce their present status and consequently they ensure their future continuity. The exhibits are curated to fluently narrate their history. The relics bear often a powerful story: the audience is psychologically enticed but is offered no reflective possibilities. Light parts of history are coloured by all the colours. Murder, rape, torture and other barbarities are left out, simplified, quoted bluntly or simply discarded to be forgotten. The museum stands as a legacy of the 19th century national historiography which was saturated by myths, symbols, legends and stories. It can be argued that *national* institutions reproduce the collective memory with a little

critical engagement which applies to the history reproduced by them, too.

The National Museum is undergoing a reconstruction between 2011 – 2018. The institution, one of the basic pillars where power is manifested and reproduced is laid bare to a thread. The power mechanisms caught in the stillness are seeking new outlets. The photographic series ‚*The National Museum*‘ by Štěpánka Sigmundová show empty spaces of the National Museum where the historical objects and relics stood displaying *national* narratives. The images create an open platform into which viewers can project their *national* memory according to their own subjective experience. Through the photographs the audience is not approached as a politically correct and aesthetic concept, which arose under the leadership of institutional research teams. Unfortunately, the intentional mis-interpretation of the official interpretation of the past acts as an uncontrollable force. This process results in a very different story than that constructed from personal fragments of memory.

*Negative film, Colour and B&W Photographs, 35mm, 2013*

**Štěpánka Sigmundová** (1990) has been studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague since 2011. Sigmundová is an obsessive collector of objects and stories which form her remembering, external memory and subjective experience. In a series of works the artist accentuates different interpretations and views of personal narratives. In parallel she maps and emphasises processes in her own environment in relation to the public sphere. Her latest exhibitions include: *Šaloun On A Walk*, Antik Shop Krymská, Prague (2013); *Into The Minds Of Choices*, 35m2, Prague (2012); *Praha/Rennes, Anne Frank Memorial*, Brno (2012); *Behind The Spines Of The Books I have Not Read*, Hvězda Summer Pavilion, Prague (2011). Štěpánka Sigmundová lives and works in Prague.

Text: Frantisek Zachoval  
Translation: Hana Janečková