

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

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SELECTED WORKS

BIOGRAPHY

Zbyněk Baladrán was born in 1973 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, where he lives and works.

He is a visual artist, curator and exhibition designer. He focuses on the contradictions of the contemporary world and the possibilities of understanding them through art and artistic practice. He studied Art History at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University and New Media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In 2001 he co-founded Display – Association for Research and Collective Practice, where he works as a curator and organizer.

He participated as a curator in the biennials Manifesta 8 in Murcia (2010) and Steirischer Herbst in Graz (2012). From 2006-2010 he worked on the interdisciplinary project Monument of Transformation. He has participated in exhibitions such as Manifesta 5 in San Sebastian (2004), the 11th Biennale de Lyon (2011), the 56th La Biennale di Venezia (2013). He has exhibited in group exhibitions at MoMA New York (2015), Württembergischer Kunstverein (2019).

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

DES FISSURES DANS L'ARCHIVE

January 25 - April 22, 2023

Maison populaire, Montreuil, France
Solo Show

Curated by Simona Dvorák and Tadeo Kohan

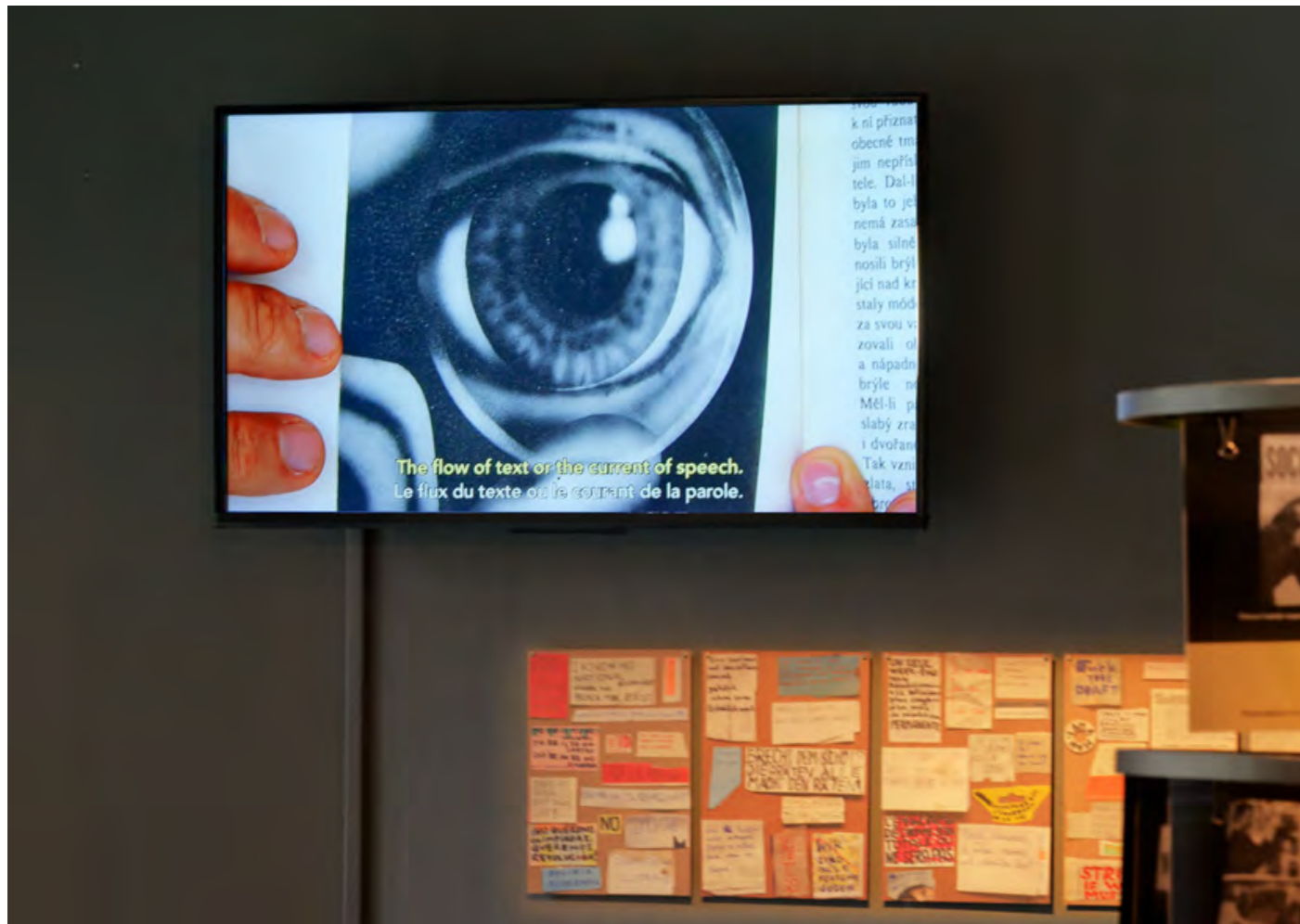
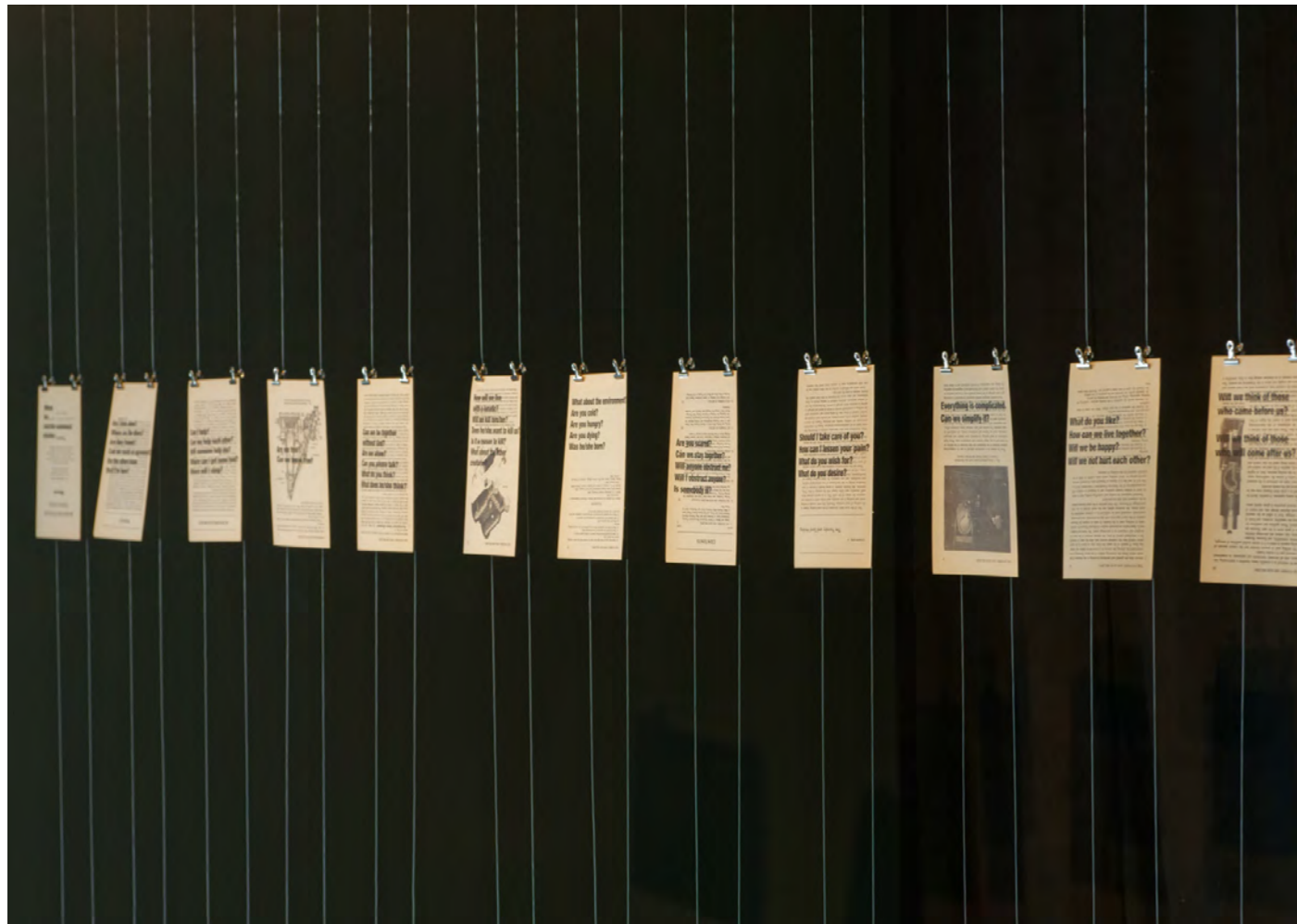
For the first part of the cycle of exhibitions "Actes de langue" presented by Simona Dvorák and Tadeo Kohan, the Maison Populaire art center invites Zbyněk Baladrán, artist and author born in Czechoslovakia in 1973 and based in Prague.

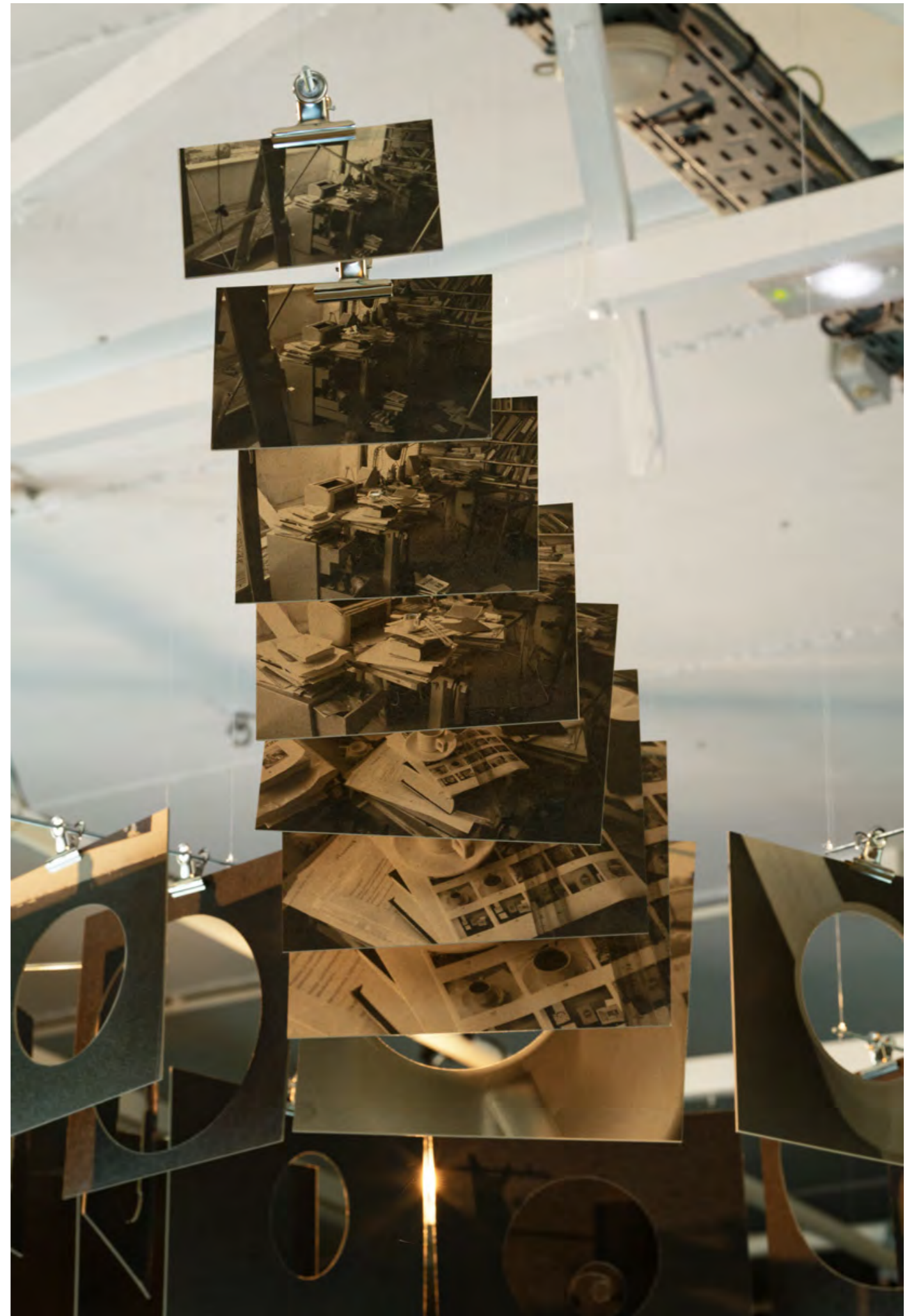
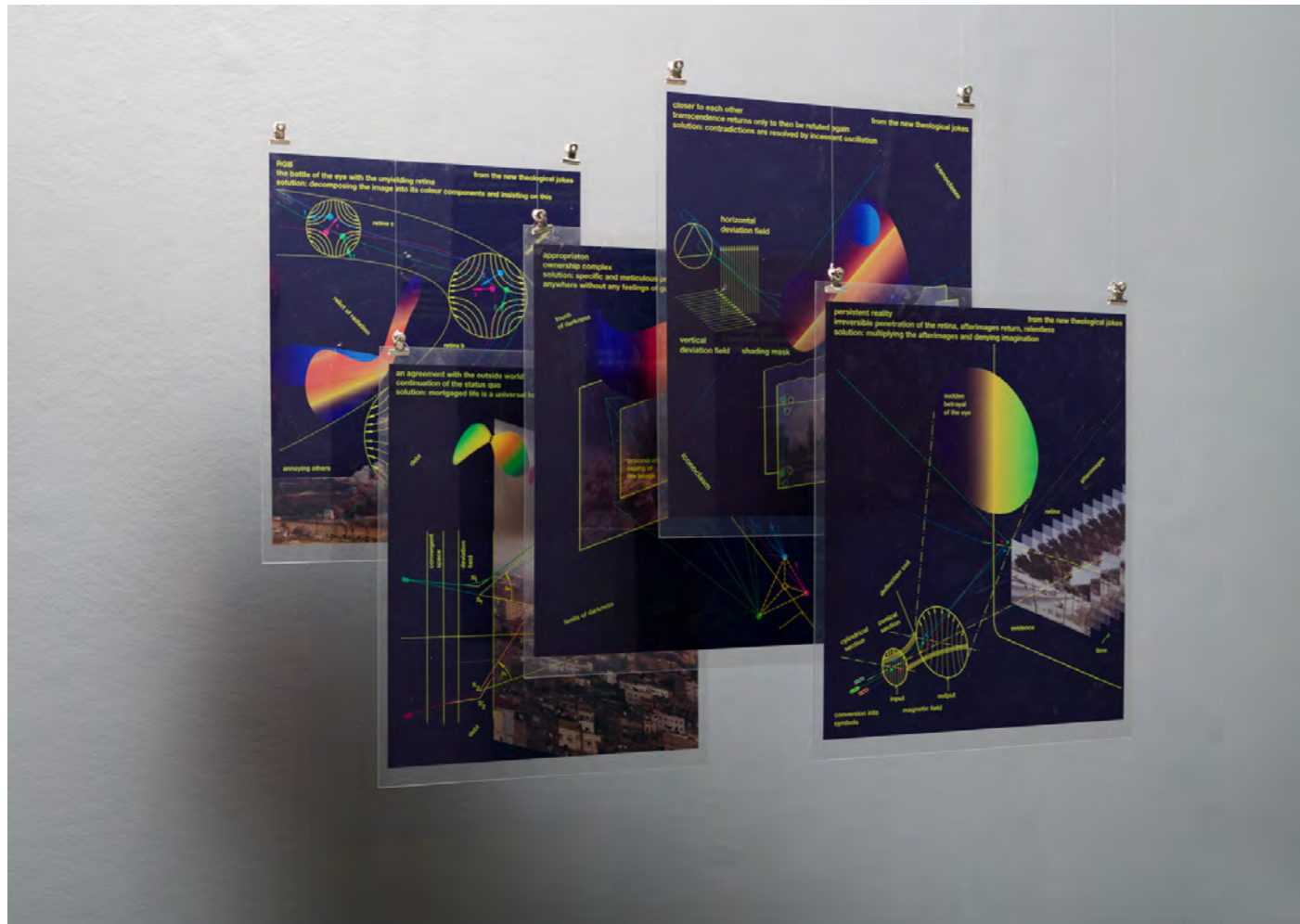
Through a collection of sculptural, scriptural, pictorial and video works, "Des fissures dans l'archive" (Cracks in the Archive) explores the politics of memory, the power of the archive and the role of fiction in our collective narrative. Examining the political and historical potential of language, the exhibition is a research based on two questions: "Does the truth really exist?" and "who has the 'power' to write it, to dictate it?". By transforming a range of sources (press articles, video archives, scientific documents), Zbyněk Baladrán highlights the power of language and its operating potential on the reality. His works underline the way in which words and images are used to compose a transient "truth" – like the Ministry of Truth described by the writer Georges Orwell in his visionary novel "1984" published in 1949, where the archives and articles are constantly being destroyed and rewritten to match propaganda news.

In the work of Zbyněk Baladrán, the archive allows us to understand how the stories that have been preserved from the past contribute to the reading of the present and anticipates a possible future. The artist's works are conceived as a discursive support, a performative word, which starts from the semiotics of images and texts, to examine historical and scientific facts with a critical perspective. Conceived as a fictional space, like a script being written, "Des fissures dans l'archive" invites us to rethink the mechanisms hidden behind images and words, and to experience language as an active and collective experiment for an emancipated world, open to writing a new story.

Source : Press release







ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

OUT OF CONTROL

May 6 - July 8, 2022

Studio Tommaseo, Trieste, Italy
Solo Show

out of control: our primary emotions and the artistic way of thinking of a post-humanist archaeologist digging up the remains of a not so distant past.

Trieste Contemporanea is glad to present Out of Control, the solo exhibition of Bohemian artist Zbyněk Baladrán [...]. The exhibition is organized by Trieste Contemporanea in collaboration with Gandy Gallery in Bratislava. [...]

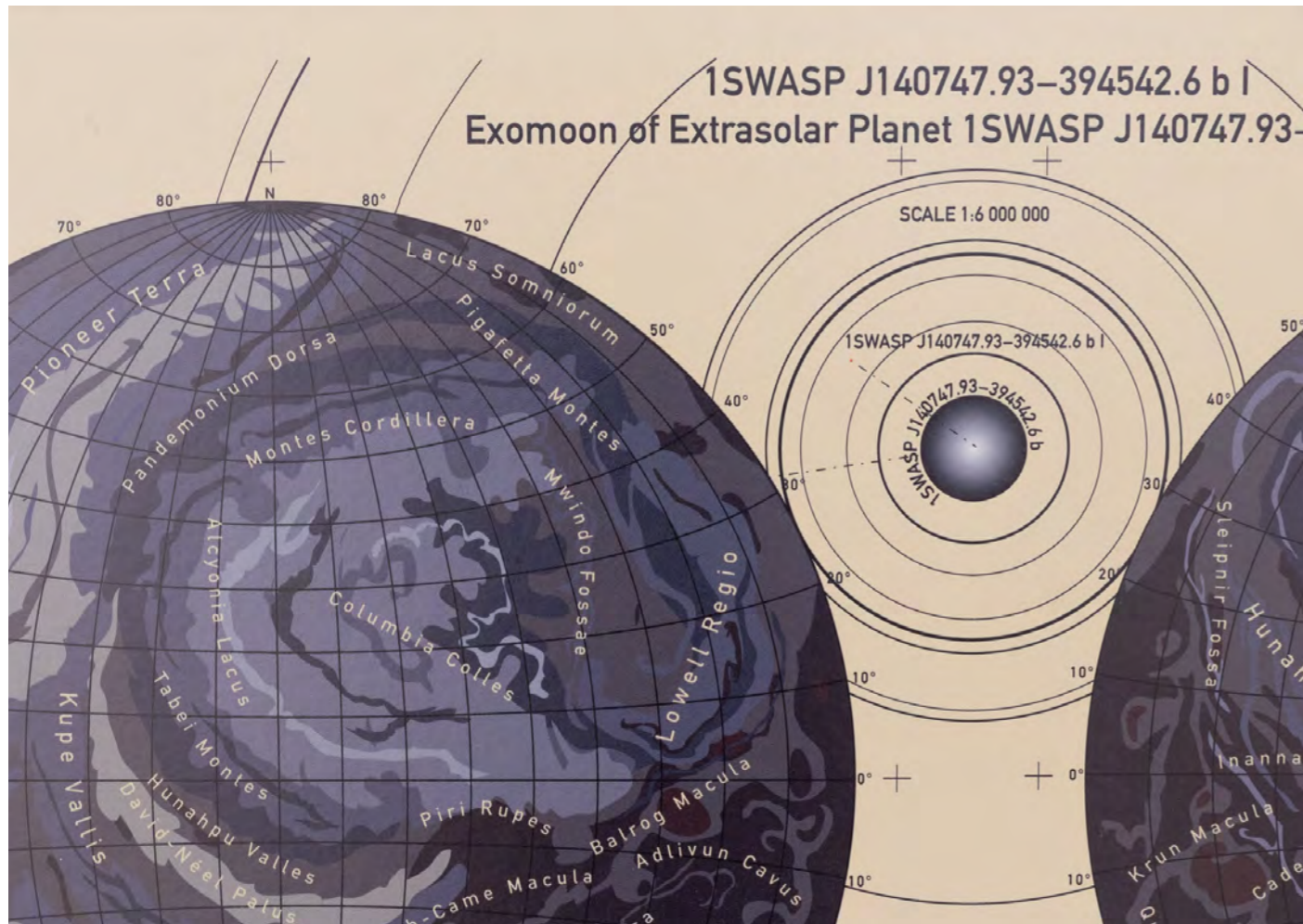
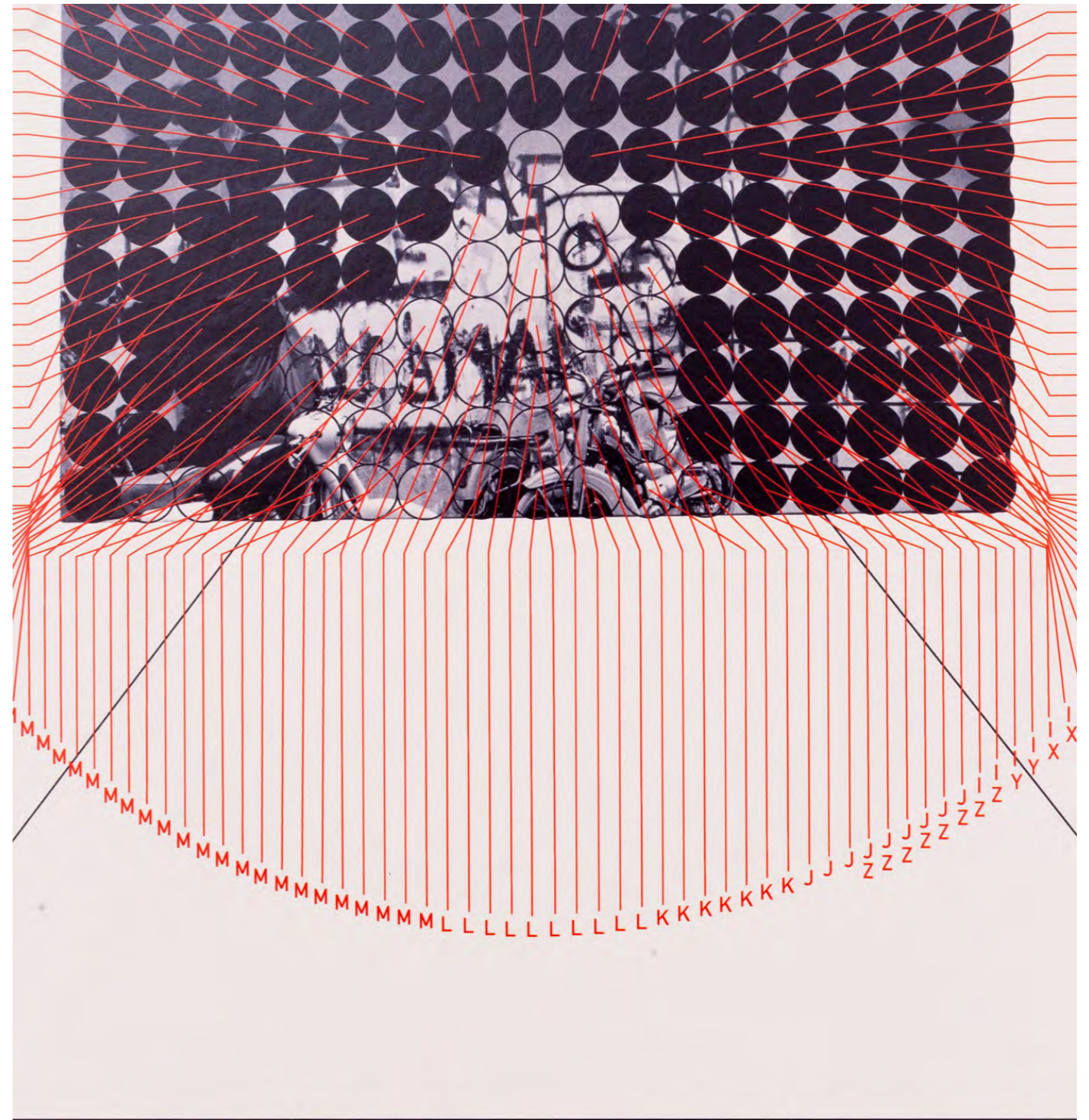
In the Trieste exhibition Zbyněk Baladrán presents the Bone Setting, the Question of Control and the Atlas of Exomoons series: digital prints made during the two quarantines of 2020 and 2021.

As to an “out of control” situation, it is clear that not everything is in our hands: the old worldviews have disappeared and new ones are going to be born, and it is impossible to rely on previous certainty. To understand what it means not to be in control and to adapt to previously unthinkable and unimaginable things, what remains is the capability to learn and listen. For the Trieste installation, the artist weaves a set of critical interventions as an artistic way of thinking. He does it to contribute to the discussion on current problems and threats and on possible search for solutions. Investigating the territories occupied by that part of civilization we call Western and using methodologies similar to those employed by the ethnographer, the anthropologist and the sociologist, Zbyněk Baladrán, this post-humanist “archaeologist” digs up the remains of a not so distant past, looking in particular at societal systems in relation to the heritage of politics.

Zbyněk Baladrán (b. 1973, Prague, Czechoslovakia) is an author, a visual artist, a curator and an exhibition architect. He lives and works in Prague, where he studied art history at the Charles University and new media at the Academy of Fine Arts. He is a curator from Display, association for research and collective practice that he co-founded in 2001. He exhibited internationally (i.e. Manifesta 5 in San Sebastián, 2004; the 11th Lyon Biennial; the 56th Biennale Arte in Venezia, 2013; and at MoMA in New York, 2015). He is represented by the Jocelyn Wolff Gallery in Paris, Gandy Gallery in Bratislava, Hunt Kastner in Prague and cooperative Salvator Rosa.

Source : Press release





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ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

WHAT A FABULOUS PLACE WE ARE IN

March 18 - May 15, 2022

Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland
Group Show

Curated by Anna Łazar

“What a fabulous place we are in” are the words repeatedly spoken by Andrzej Mitan and Cezary Staniszewski during their performance in 1992. The title, with its message, is ironic. It signals, on the one hand, the distance from the spoken, and on the other, the artists’ aspirations to be elevated above everyday life. Geopolitical conditions are not without their relevance either—in the performance, the artists used a photograph showing the “architects” of the 1945 Yalta conference, who established what would be the global spheres of influence after World War II, an issue that is coming back to us with all its impact now.

The exhibition is composed of artworks donated to the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź between 2008 and 2021. This institution itself was established nearly a hundred years ago thanks to the dedication of international avant-garde artists and activists. The crises of the then world, when empires were collapsing and an alternative to exploitative economic relations was urgently sought after, was accompanied by a belief in progress and universal emancipation. The manifestation of this faith was reflected in avant-garde art. The works donated to the collection represent an artistic expression, constitute a historical record, and are also a reflection of exhibitions and projects run by the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź. The image by Tamás Kaszás «We don’t ask nor demand, but we take and occupy» shown at the exhibition reminds us, however, of the anger at the unequal distribution of goods, even if public institutions, such as a museum, were originally established to mitigate this inequality.

[...]

The second theme of the exhibition, indicated by the literal reading of the title, is a exploration of the beauty of distant worlds, which produces an impulse to get to know them. It refers to the relationship between museums and cabinets of curiosities. The wing of an exotic bird in Zbigniew Rogalski’s work refers to the dream of distant lands, to flying, but also to this bird’s death. Joanna Malinowska, in the sculpture «Mammoth Tusk», made mainly of polystyrene, asks a question about the imitative possibilities of art and the ancient principle of mimesis. A museum may also be a place where differences and strangeness are negotiated. Wiktor Gutt and Waldemar Raniszewski painted the faces of people participating in the Rockowisko rock music festival in Łódź in 1981 with unique patterns. The photos documenting this artistic action show the collective desire for otherness, as well as the individualism of contemporary people at a specific historical moment. While Gutt and Raniszewski engaged in capturing the uniqueness of their interlocutors, in the film by Zbyněk Baladrán we come across a story about the impossibility of engaging in dialogue. The artist, in a distant reference to Stanisław Lem’s novel Eden, focuses on procedures created in a neutral language, leading to the shoot-ing of a creature that entered an oil rig on a distant planet. The story unrolls with conjectural competition for resources taking place in the background. The question of how many conditions must be met in order for the Other to be an enemy has been asked in an extremely subtle way in this work. The protagonists of the film abandon the attempt to understand the Other in favor of conquest.

Artists

Zbyněk Baladrán, Jan Bulhak, James Lee Byars, Jasmina Cibic, Céline Condorelli, Dom Mody Limanka, Assaf Gruber, Wiktor Gutt i Waldemar Raniszewski, Servie Janssen, Tamás Kaszás, Agnieszka Kalinowska, Leszek Knaflewski, Igor Kopystiansky, Svetlana Kopystiansky, Piotr C. Kowalski, Natalia LL, Joanna Malinowska, Andrzej Mitan i Cezary Staniszewski, Magdalena Moskwa, Włodzisław Pawlak, Zbigniew Rogalski, Gerhard Rühm, Teresa Tyszkiewicz, Zbigniew Warpechowski, Anna Zagrodzka i Karolina Wojtas, Włodzimierz Jan Zakrzewski

Source : Press release



Photo by Piotr Tomczyk

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

February 22 - March 25, 2020

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Press Release:

«One step forward, two steps back», of course, is the title of a text written by V.I.Lenin, in which discusses the split of Russian Social Democratic Labor Party politics in 1904. And is also used in the title of the video film, which deals with Angela Davis's visit to former Czechoslovakia in 1971. It repeats here like exhibition title, because it represents the contradictions of political thought and social acting. We are faced with similar issues today, but without being better qualified to deal with them. History teaches us, but action is not subject to simple schemes of evolutionary logic. We are not acting better. Short videos at the exhibition are mental experiments dealing with the contradictions of contemporary life, testing their ability to be articulated them verbally and visually. It is not only about the contradictions of political thought mentioned at the beginning, but also about the legitimacy of violence and ways of dealing with it in everyday life. Linked to this is the issue of anxiety, which is triggered by open and symbolic violence provoked by unregulated profit-generating structures. The particular films seem to be distinguished only by their different forms, but it is nothing more than a way of «defamiliarization», as Viktor Shklovsky would call it. It is therefore a question of seeking artistic testimony, which should lead to a new reflection or rethinking of the contradictions. Of course when we resolve them, we will be confronted with other contradictions that necessarily emerge from the solutions.

Zbyněk Baladrán



While the film was originally intended to reflect the topic of war, it eventually resulted in the topic of symbolic violence, embodied by the medium of film. The children's acting is absolutely nonviolent, but it is obvious that it was enforced by the film crew. "How do we organise our lives? In the first place we need appreciation. We are not acknowledged by anyone. We must be acknowledged and perceived, it is not possible to be unheard," says one of the children.

Zbyněk Baladrán
To be Framed, 2016
full HD video, 8 min. 11 sec.
ed. 1/3 + 1 A.P.

Barbora Kleinhamplová & Zbyněk Baladrán

Work of Eye, 2014
full HD, 7 min. 18 sec.
ed. of 3 + 1 A.P.



"Work of Eye" is inspired by a research of Jan Evangelista Purkyně, who dedicated his research to eyesight and its relation to experience and very essence of vertigo feelings brought about by rotating movements. The vertigo theme is framed by an experience of corporate sector. The camera is rotating inside an open office, it evokes a sense of heaviness and confusion. Whispering voices that accompany the camera's movement tell a story of bemused clerk who, frustrated and lost all alone with his feelings, wanders around the office.

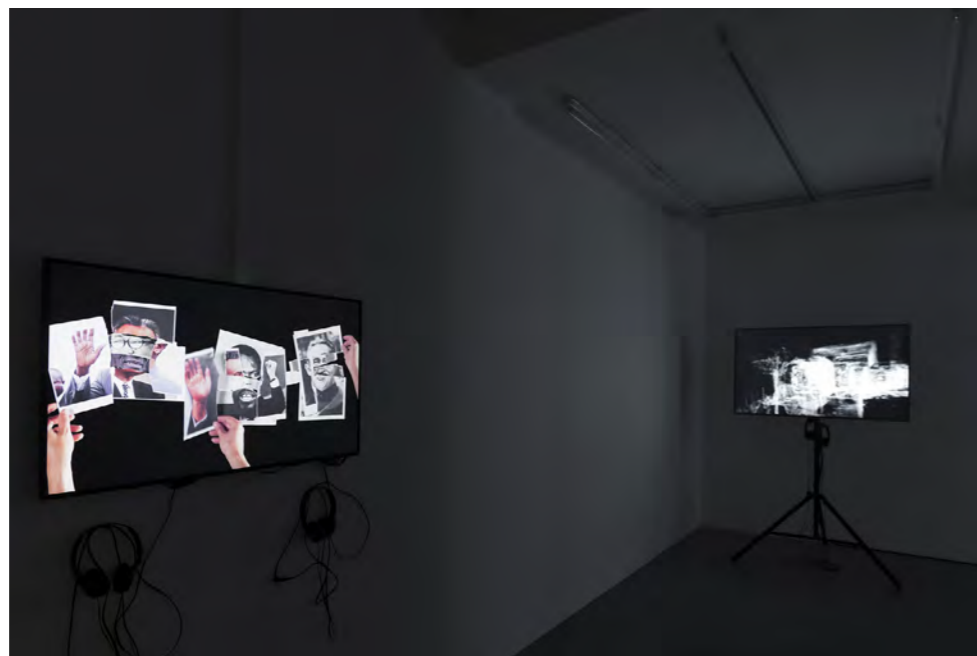


Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: One step forward, two steps back, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2020

Zbyněk Baladrán
One step forward, two steps back, 2019
4k video, 9 min. 55 sec.
ed. of 3 + 1 A.P.

The video – named after a quote by Lenin – aims to delve into our collective memory. This is represented by our 3D model of an IKEA store. As a flawless sales model, but also as a metaphor for the process of forgetting, it shows us that the dilemmas are the same and keep repeating. Only the environment changes over time, continually creating new types of traps that are all too easy to fall into.



Tereza Stejskalová &
Zbyněk Baladrán
Autoignition, 2016
full HD, 3 min. 56 sec.
ed. of 3 + 1 A.P.

The phrase “Biafra of Spirit” was coined by Louis Aragon to refer to the effect of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, namely, the crackdown of Czechoslovak intellectuals.

The word “spirit” in the phrase can be understood to refer not only to the catastrophe of the defeat and a new sense of despair but also something we could call internationalism, solidarity that surpasses geographical, cultural and political differences. It is in this spirit the project wishes to actualise – bring to the present – the often uneasy interaction with cultural otherness



Zbyněk Baladrán
Powerless Source of All Power, 2018
full HD video, 8 min. 04 sec.
ed. 1/3 + 1 A.P.

What does the vast area of the non-human unconscious look like? Similarly unreadable as the human one. The narrative is based on various distortions of only two images, as well as the emergence of fragments of unconscious speeches that show the impossibility of full consciousness.

The video is based on ten compositions, using algorithms with the purpose to simulate a 2D picture so that it resembles a photograph. These “photographs” are a construction. They try to state that they depict reality, that they’re objective to some point. The digital seam on the edges of the picture refers to the belief that this kind of imagery is close to the truth.

A crime depicted in the movie can be just a distraction, a strategy to divert your attention from real problems.

Zbyněk Baladrán
Catastrophe, 2019
full HD video, 6 min.
ed. of 3 + 1 A.P.



ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

THINGS FALL APART (INTERIM REPORT)

January 12 - March 28, 2020

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Press release:

In *Things Fall Apart*, a novel written by Chinua Achebe in the late 1950s, the author describes the incursion of expansive European colonialism into the thousand-year-old agricultural civilisation of the Niger River basin. In a few striking sentences, he creates an image of the violent replacement of the dominant logic of power by another logic – more aggressive and even more powerful. The old world collapsed very quickly. Seen from the vantage point of the new hegemony, the old was labelled primitive, childish, and backward. Over the course of a few decades, this imperialist expansion reached almost the entirety of the so-called Third World, preventing its autonomous development.

Thirty years ago, another chapter of the same story began, this time focusing on the Second World. The Eastern bloc collapsed, and with it the modernist alternative in the form of socialist state capitalism – an attempt to change the flow of history. Over the course of the years that followed, this part of the world also capitulated to the irresistible economic power and expansion of the consumerist world. A softer form of colonial dominion spread, creating a global hegemony. Today, it seems that there is nowhere left for exploitation to expand into. What remains are the countries of the former First World with their democratic institutions – considered until recently to be necessary conditions for capitalism. The neoliberal hydra, risen from the expansive logic of capital, as described by Achebe, has replaced the logic of Enlightenment modernity, calling it outdated and childish, inappropriate for the ideology of uncontrolled growth of power through accumulated capital. Just like Africa in the past, the eastern part of the European continent can be considered the “avant-garde” of changes that now probably also await Western Europe.

Economic colonisation, the dismantling of the welfare state, the stabilisation of the job market, social and salary dumping, an acceleration of the “race to the bottom”, and the oligarchisation of politics and economics are phenomena that have already been successfully realised on the eastern periphery or are currently coming into being there.

The Eastern Europeans, having toppled their governments and rejected the story of the socialist alternative to the modern world, force themselves to even greater performances under the never-ending torment of self-criticism. With the stubbornness of children, and with feelings of insufficiency, inferiority, and dependency, they strive to become part of the “adult” world.

They probably never will. The foundations of capitalism are based on the imperative that core countries develop more dynamically than peripheral ones, while the underdevelopment of the periphery is an essential condition for the success of the core.

Today, however, the “adult” world of the developed countries is also afflicted by infantility and helplessness. The neoliberal establishments of these countries compete to see which will be the first to lose control and give itself over to the sovereign power of unregulated private ownership. The “adult” world is increasingly paralysed by the shock of this new paradigm of threat.

Perry Anderson describes the current European community as an order based on the restriction and privatisation of public services, the dissolution of democratic control and representation, and a deregulation of production processes. Is there still a shared, joyful perspective on the future, or are we only an impotent object colonised by a new hegemony of ownership? The world is falling apart; in some places, people haven't noticed, and where they have noticed, they still do not realise how great the threat really is.

What function can art serve in such a world? If it is a tool for accumulating capital or artwashing taxes, then it is fully in the grip of the new order and has therefore perished. However, if it is still possible to be critical within this social institution, to create space for self-reflection, or at least to attempt realistic observations of what goes on around us, then there is still hope.

The artistic research presented in this exhibition is the result of several years' work dedicated to social and other changes observed from the position of the global European semi-periphery, which – for various reasons – defines itself as Central Europe. However, the captured explorations have universal validity and are comprehensible to anyone; in the end, all of us on this planet are part of the same system.

As the Serbian philosopher Miško Šuvaković has written on the ideology of exhibitions, it doesn't matter what is written in the text that accompanies the exhibition; what matters is the difference between what was intended by the exhibition and what wasn't, between the acceptable and the unacceptable. Between the conscious and the unconscious, the literal and the fictitious. The ideology of the exhibition isn't what should be accepted by public opinion; it's what creates public opinion and presents its opinions through shared social values and movements.

This threatening new hegemony is based not on public control but on a small minority's acquiring total ownership of the world. Achebe's novel ends with a reflection by a member of the colonial government on the title of the book he wants to write: “The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger”. The author thus perfectly captures how every exploiting power sees the world – an inferior local deviation that must be suppressed. This is what the current struggle for a better world is about: not allowing these things to happen.

text by Zbyněk Baladrán



Zbyněk Baladrán
History is Possible, 2018
print on plexiglass, aluminum rod
500 x 41 cm
unique

Zbyněk Baladrán
The Continuity of Imagination in Retail Business
and the Art of Making Collages, 2019
300 collages on paper (format A4), plastic fence,
nails, lath structure

Zbyněk Baladrán
Apparatus as a Goal of History, 2019
PVC cylinder, electromotor, 6 LCD monitors,
6 full HD videos,
300 x 130 x 130 cm



Exhibition views: Things fall apart (Interim report), Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2020



Zbyněk Baladrán
Automated Subject, 2016
plexiglass, color prints on paper, nylon, iron bars
400 x 300 cm,
ed. of 1 + 1 A.P.

Zbyněk Baladrán
Observation, 2017
color print on cardboard
21 x 29.7 cm,
ed. of 1/3 + 1 A.P.



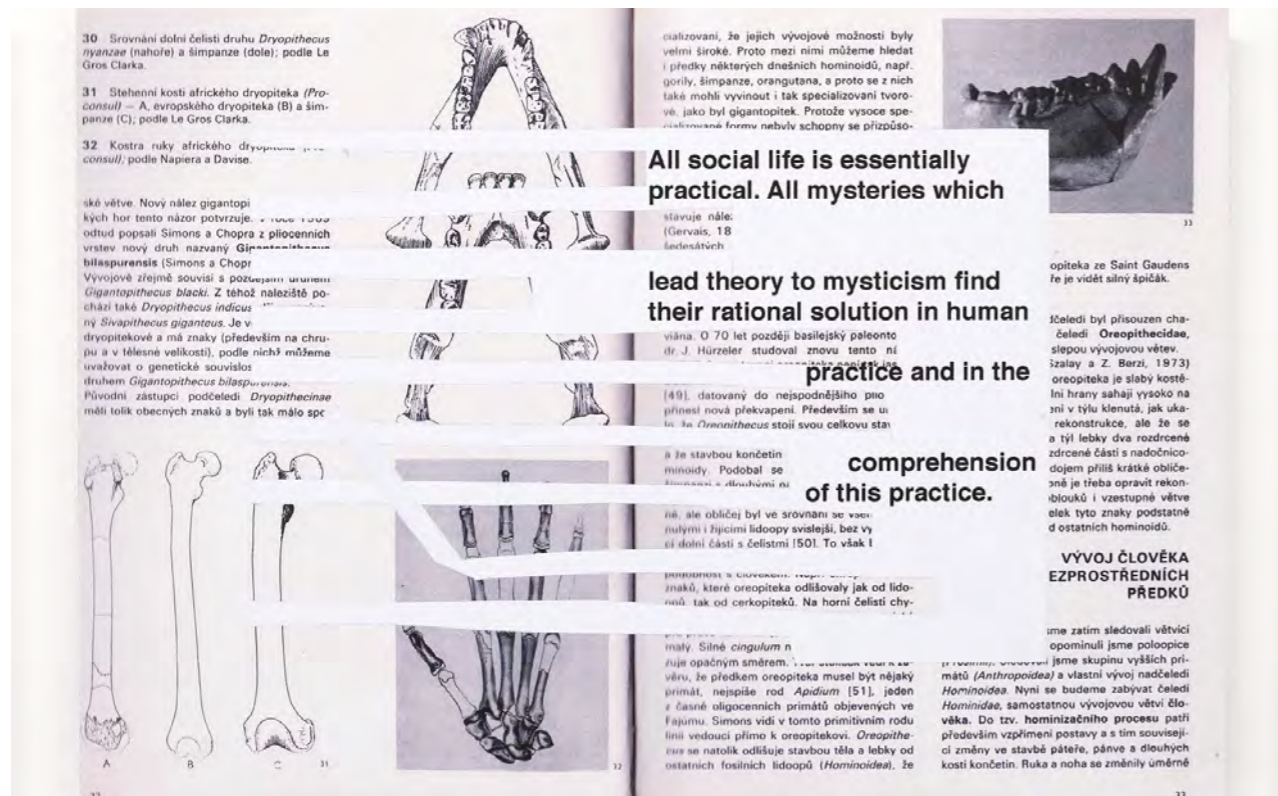
Exhibition view: Things fall apart (Interim report), Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2020

Exhibition view: Things fall apart (Interim report), Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2020



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: Things fall apart (Interim report), Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2020



Zbyněk Baladrán
Theses on Feuerbach again, 2017
colour print on cardboard
11 elements: 21 x 30 cm
ed. of 1/3 + 1 A.P.

Zbyněk Baladrán
From the New Theological Jokes, 2017
print on PVC
5 elements: 42 x 36 cm
ed. 1/3 + 1 A.P.



GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING YET TO BE DETERMINED

August 31 - November 11, 2019

Hunt Kastner gallery, Prague, Czech Republic

We are very pleased to present our third solo exhibition of Zbyněk Baladrán (b. 1973, Prague, Czechoslovakia), an artist and curator who has exhibited and worked widely on the international stage for many years now. Much of Baladrán's practice comes from the inner doubts and resistance experienced by his generation who so viscerally experienced the post-1989 historical, political and social upheavals and transformation. A feeling of inadequacy and dislocation provoked by a highly paradoxical freedom, offered by a so-called new democratic world, produced a kind of profound helplessness that took hold of the everyday life of this generation, which oscillated between the desire to adapt to a new liberal, individualistic environment and the search of a new sense of the common. The exhibition presents installation works ranging from 2008 to 2019, which attempt to reflect a contemporary world that seems to function on the residuals of organized modernity from the last century, but is at the same time profoundly changing.

Can we build political meaning from an imagination yet to come? Is it possible to write the history of something that has not yet happened? Baladrán shows us that history is an alchemy of time, whose magic is still to be disputed between creative entanglements of life and the algorithmic determinations of capital. In a moment where human agency is lost amidst the annihilatory void of capital, the task of an imaginative-material history is more relevant than ever, as Baladrán reminds us.

Marxist spirits from the future populate Baladrán's research impulse, but don't get me wrong: history as progress is not his theoretical refugee, but one of his targets. Communism as a political project was indeed defeated, and the current liberal abstraction of the world represents a loop of human labor as a never-ending present.

Discourse (2008) – a light box containing a mapping of post-communist economic reforms in Czechoslovakia in 1990, opens the exhibition with what came to be a set of events that somehow shaped the country's current state of affairs. Baladrán's subversive potential relies in the fact that what he does is invert the practice of ethnography as the privileged tool of colonial anthropology, directing it instead to the power structures and their system of decision-making while showing the underlying dynamics, which the artist calls "the socio-political apparatus." Bureaucracy is shown here as evidence of the supra-human algorithmic nature of history.

What we find in these traces of history are whispers of a future that has already arrived, one portrayed with subtlety in the video installation *The Apparatus as Goal of History* (2019), which shows how the mechanical production of value is built upon the alienation of human labor, depicted as interconnected pieces of quotidian workspaces in the country. The automation and exhaustion of the body, and the wild loneliness of factories and call centers, seem to represent the human dimension of a present explored by Baladrán in this docu-fiction, which builds upon a narrative that by taking distance from the exploitation of social reality - a recurrent idea within the documentary genre - it builds upon a fiction that feels rather eerily intimate.

There's a deeply materialist sense of Baladrán's research projects and creative process. In his work, the future is not to be determined exclusively by subjectivity, but by the materiality and form of history. The collages of *Contingent Propositions* (2015) are perhaps the ones that show this spirit in the most visceral manner – the visually oriented exploration of the effects of late capitalism and its potential futures are somehow synthesized in collages from the Communist daily *Rudé právo* (1971-1989) and the post-revolutionary liberal daily *Lidové noviny* (1989-2008), as two ideological ghosts from our recent modern past. Maybe on those traces, we can find some hidden code that can

help us decipher the grammar of a future yet to come.

History is the history of things and its representation, and in this sense, it is far from being exclusively human. Our attempts to claim it as a social construct may simply be hiding the symptoms of our current political impotence. What Baladrán seems to prove through endemic political ethnography, obsessive research strategies, and a ferocious visual imagination, is that neither static nostalgia nor liberal hope can inform the beginning of something yet to be determined.

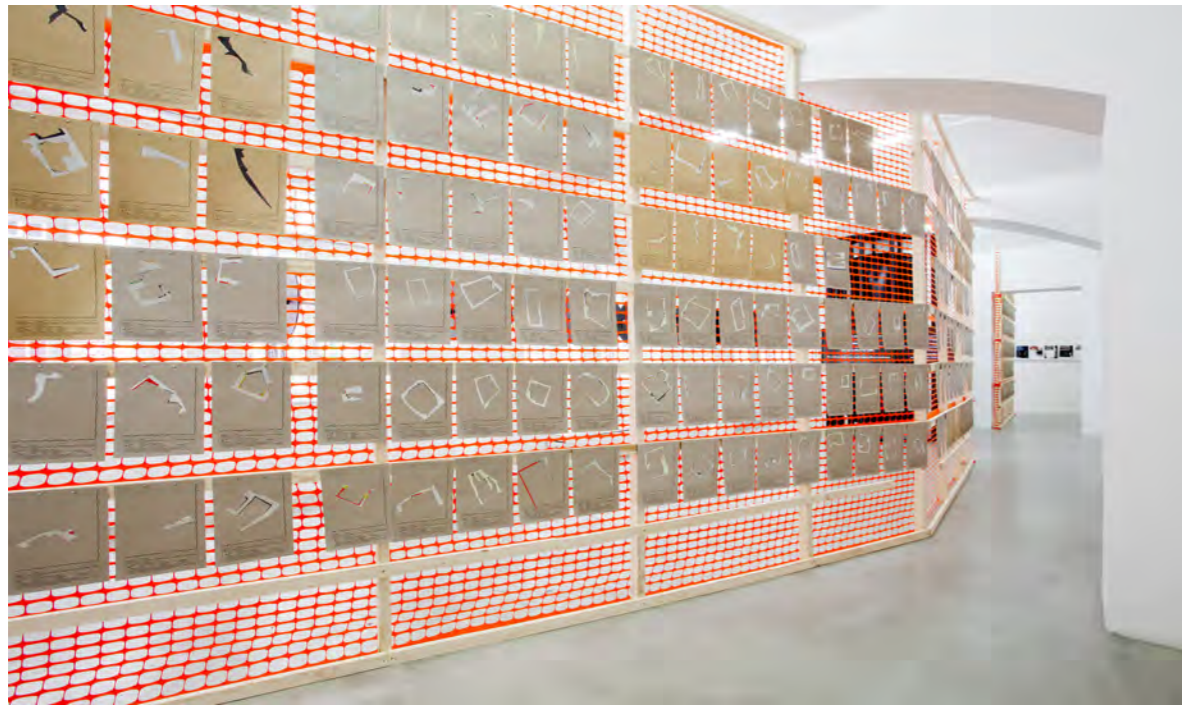
To question how we came to be what we are seems not to be as relevant as to consider how is it that we are what we will come to be.

PRESS RELEASE : text by Pablo José Ramirez, August 2019



Zbyněk Baladrán
History is Possible, 2018
print on plexiglass, aluminum rod,
500 x 41 cm
unique

Exhibition views and details:
*The Beginning of Something
Yet to be Determined*, Hunt
Kastner gallery, Prague, 2019,



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: The Beginning of Something Yet to be Determined, Hunt Kastner gallery, Prague, 2019,



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: The Beginning of Something Yet to be Determined, Hunt Kastner gallery, Prague, 2019,



ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

CIRCULAR DEFENSE

May 17 - July 25, 2018

Galeria CarrerasMugica, Bilbao, Spain
curator: Beatriz Herraiez

Press release:

This exhibition came about from an invitation issued by Galeria CarrerasMugica and brings together works (in video, photography, sculpture and text) by Anna Daucikova (Bratislava, 1950) and Zbynek Baladran (Prague, 1973) 1*. Given the title Circular Defense 2*, and taking as its starting point 1989 (a year marked by, among other events, the fall of the Berlin Wall) the works on show deploy a series of images that intersect and overlap to construct a polyphonic narrative against a backdrop of the socio-political transformations in Eastern Europe and their effects.

The exhibition opens with a series of photographic works produced by Anna Daucikova during the years when she lived and worked in Moscow, the city she moved to in the late seventies and where she remained until 1991. The series Moscow, Women, Sunday and Celebration reflect the sense of exhaustion and collapse of the Soviet system through images portraying scenes and situations of extreme poverty in which many women lived in the context of so-called real socialism. Almost as if it were showing the dismal double of the figure of the Stakhanovite, Daucikova's images document these women wandering the streets every Sunday, contrasting with the practically complete absence of men in the same spaces: «Their unrelenting energy, as well as the survival mechanisms that enabled them to combine their jobs as well housework, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, became the leitmotiv of this series of portraits and a tribute to women as a representation of the disappearance of a style of life and an historical era on the point of vanishing.» 3*. It creates a counter-image of the regime's glorification of work and physical labour, in which the sole presence of these bodies represents the evident failure of socialist pretensions to construct a superior productive man. Far from remaining in a past already assigned to official History from a Western ideological perspective, these images are subtended by a capacity to forge unexpected connections in relation to the habits of the collective.

1989 was also the year when the Czech communist newspaper Rude Prdvo folded, coinciding with the appearance of the liberal post-revolutionary daily newspaper Lidovri noviny. The two publications are the documentary sources for Contingent Propositions (2015), Zbynek Baladran's collage that expands over 70 metres on the gallery walls, confronting the historical consequences of late capitalism in the Czech Republic and the current moment: «Taking these two local Czech newspapers as my source I map the legacy of the ideological monsters of the twentieth century, summarising the coordinates of a global future still in the making. Recycling documents from the past provides clues that lead to the Great Recession of 2008 and is perhaps a reflection of the new form of the post-capitalist world.»

This thesis and hypotheses on what happened and is happening is further contribute the narratives proposed by the characters in Three Curtains (2014), a film in which Daucikova addresses, from an autobiographical perspective, the spaces of enclosure and noncommunication that characterized the regime of the former USSR through different cases studies that document the progressive closing of boundaries. To this end, the artist focuses on three historical moments -1920s, 50s and 80s- through the experiences of different lives affected by the country's strict regulation with regards the outside world.

Following this «testimonial» methodology, in On Allomorphing (2017) Daucikova explores what she calls «the mental body» as a space of negotiation, examining different forms of learning and construction of political subjectivity. Once again, they are the lives of various individuals that build a weave or network of statements which includes the voices of a transgender activist and a woman who speaks about Valery Lamakh (1925-1978), a Ukrainian painter who trave-

ling in the sixties from Kiev to the Lenin Library in Moscow after being told that, fifty years earlier another artist called Piet Mondrian had already done the formal research he was developing. In one of the stories one can also hear the artist while she manipulates various objects built with glass: «When I was eight years old, I thought that if I lied down every night in a certain way that my body would grow as if it were inside a cast. I believed that with time that my body would recognise it and adopt the form I wanted. I dreamt of having a strong and chiselled body.»

As Simone Weil declared in her posthumous text «What is Sacred in Every Human Being?», in which she attacks the ways in which twentieth-century political thinking erroneously understood the relationship between the individual and the collective, especially with regards Western democracies; «the biggest danger is not the tendency of the collective to compress the individual, but the tendency of the individual to throw himself into, to be swallowed up in the collective.» Shot in a former military base, To Be Framed (2017), one of Zbynek Baladran's most recent films, also poses a reflection on these invisible boundaries that shape our bodies without allowing us to «speak or organize our lives».

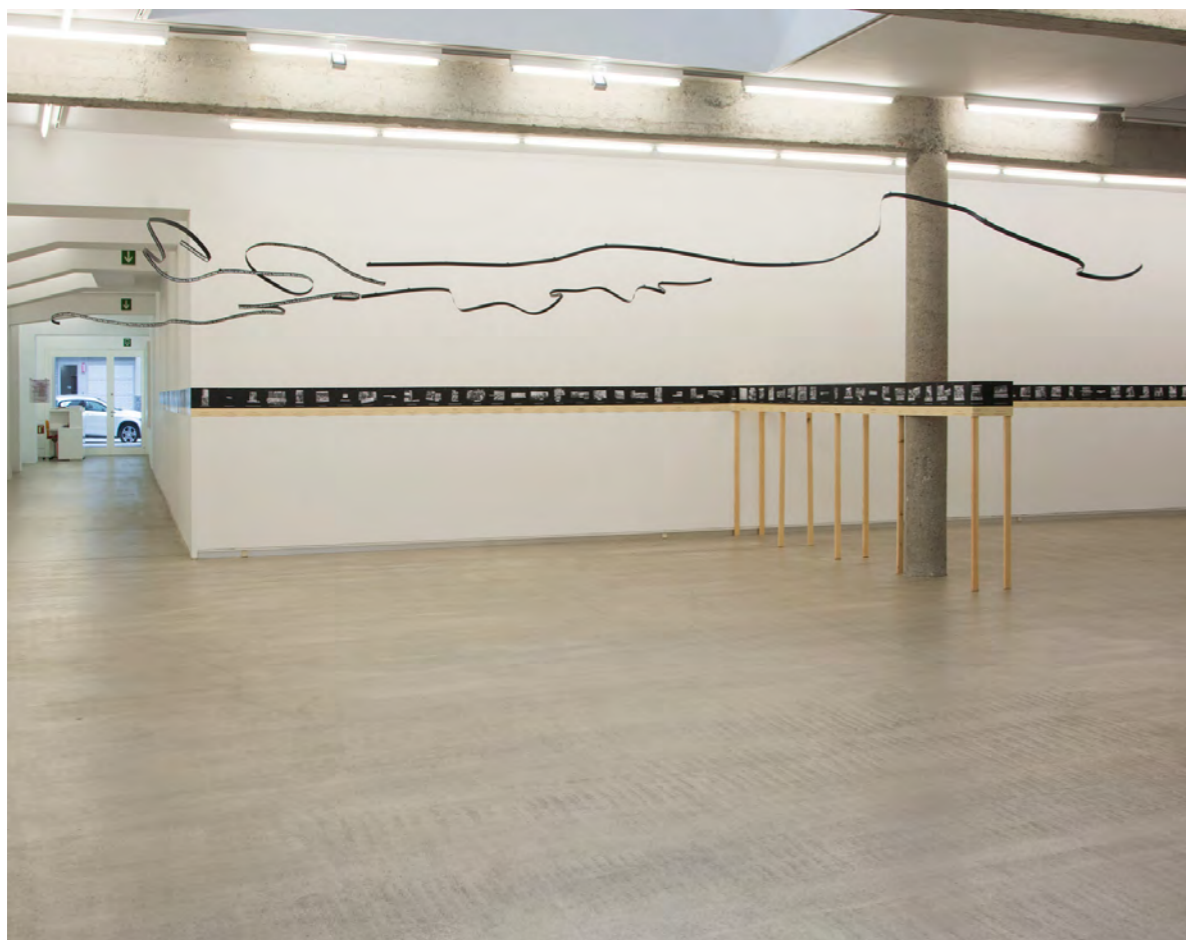
The film, accompanied by a voice over, pays attention to invisible forms of violence that propagate and order our relationships through a group of children playing in front of the camera.

Many of Baladran's works are underpinned by a reflection on the construction of alternatives following the disillusionment in the wake of the collapse of the grand narratives of the twentieth century. Taking specific forms that speak of systems and diagrams, there are many associations and hypotheses in his works that share features with the structures of the science fiction genre. In the work Automated Subject (2016), a suspended sculpture in which Baladran uses his own texts and texts loosely based on writings of Stanislaw Lem and Andrei Platonov to question the processes of construction of subjectivity: «Taking the idea of the automatic/automatism to the place of individual conscience facilitates including absolutely everyone in those privileged places that end up forging an idea of the universal, in which 'all of us' are included.»

1 From the beginning this project sought to strike up a dialogue with practices that, while not belonging to the same context, did respond to ways of doing that appeared «close». Thus, after several conversations held initially with Zbynek Baladran, an artist who has exhibited his works previously in the Basque Country, we decided to extend the invitation to Anna Daucikova.

2 Kruhova Obana (Circular Defense) is the title of a book of essays published by the historian Milan Simecka (1930-1990) in 1984, which describes the contradictions of the experience of real socialism during so called «Normalisation» in 70 · and 80· in Czechoslovakia.

3. Texts in inverted commas are quotes from the artists.



Zbyněk Baladrán
Contingent Propositions, 2017
283 collages, dimensions variable

(also previous page) exhibition views: Circular Defense, Galeria CarrerasMugica, Bilbao, 2018

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

DIFFICULTIES TO DESCRIBE THE TRUTH

November 16, 2017 - January 20, 2018

State of Concept, Athens, Greece

State of Concept is happy to present Zbyněk Baladrán's first solo exhibition in Greece entitled «Difficulties to describe the truth» that opens on the 15th of November at 19:00.

The exhibition is a culmination of twenty years of artistic practice of Baladrán. The artist works text and image as his main tools. For this exhibition, he presents a new body of work produced by State of Concept and ARE. His new film entitled «String Figures / Peer to peer Protocol / 1st Episode», is the first of a trilogy of films that the artist will be working on the coming period. The video will be presented together with a new sculptural installation of photo-diagrams as well as previous works.

Through film, text, drawings and diagrams Baladrán has been for years reconfiguring narrations of knowledge representation. His films, often described as «visual essays», move from rhetorical questions to factual scientific statements, presenting concepts and ideas that emerge through philosophical texts and research.

For the exhibition at State of Concept, the starting point is a short text of Bertol Brecht, entitled «Five difficulties to writing the truth». Brecht's text resonates strongly today, in an era of post-truth and alternative facts, where politics are reinventing the modus operandi of propaganda and are creating parallel realities.

The five main points of the author are the following:

- 1 The Courage to Write the Truth.
- 2 The Keenness to Recognize the Truth.
- 3 The Skill to Manipulate the Truth as a Weapon.
- 4 The Judgment to Select Those in Whose Hands the Truth Will Be.
- 5 The Cunning to Spread the Truth Among the Many.

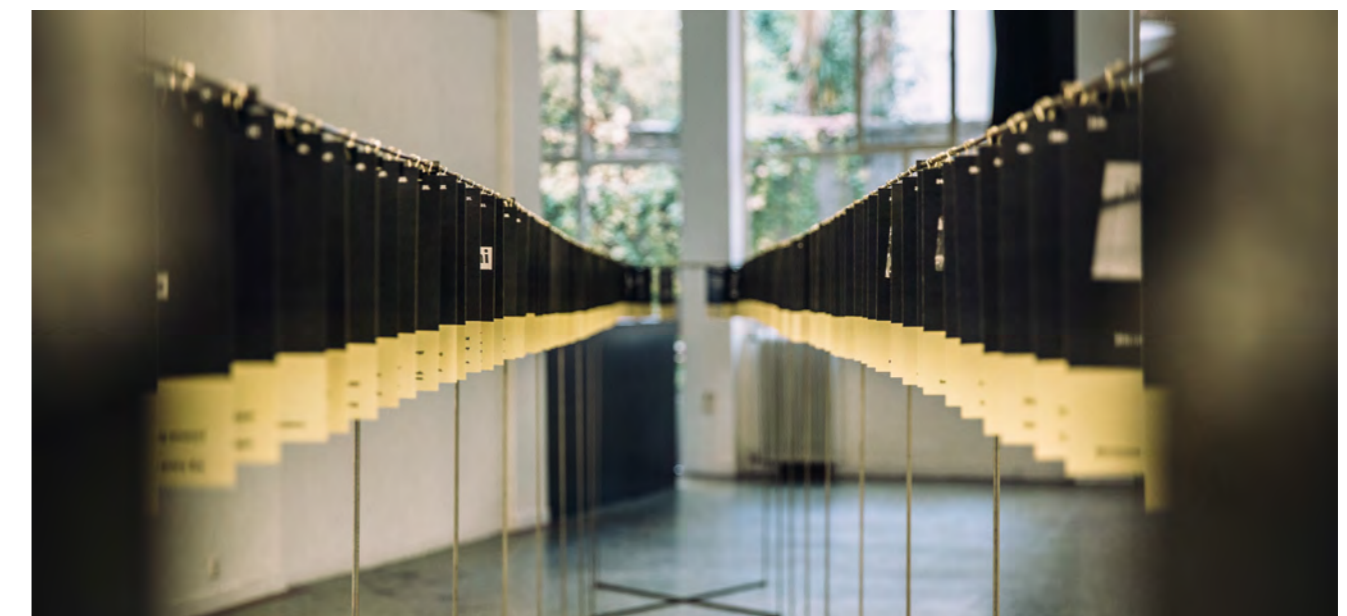
Brecht's text could today operate as a manifesto of real politik, in a world where facts and phenomena run with different speeds in parallel political and social realities. But also it could act as an opportunity to revisit the notion of truth today. What truth is worth telling? What truth needs to come out? And what truth manages to surface? In light of the current worldwide developments in politics and finance, not only for the so-called Western world but the globe as a whole, the value of truth is once again re-examined.

The artist, belongs to a generation that has lived doubts, resistance and constant questioning already. The collapse of the former Soviet bloc after 1989, created a new narration of truth for Central and Eastern Europe, formed by new governments and nation-states. A supposed direct and sudden democracy that brought with it privatisation and the surge of capitalism, offered in abundance by a Western ideology of «freedom», gave birth to feelings of confusion, distrust and dislocation that are existent until today. The disenchantment that followed the desire to adapt to a new liberal and consumerist model, has resulted for one part of that generation to find shelter in ultra-nationalism, that now flourishes in the region. Contra to that, stands the notion of the commons and how they could be now contoured, after being proposed and enforced by the previous ideologies and regimes of the region.

Through his newly commissioned film the artist looks into the role of the modern citizen, within a society of automation and rapid accumulation of data. He asks whether the extreme influx of information, in which we immerse ourselves daily through thousands of images stored as temporary data in our brain, can actually create or distort the value of truth. In the face of the current socio-political landscape of the world, the artist hints that sometimes the best thing to do is remind ourselves that truth is not contingent upon us finding it. «Seeing an image is useless, all you need is data» his film states. He aims to transport onto the works the methodology and thinking of Brecht's text. By appropriating it and transporting it to an era of cybernetics, Baladrán questions what he names «the future of

techno optimism», an idea of a new form of automation, of copying and peer-to peer production, that can offer a new imaginary for what the commons might become.

The way the works of this exhibition are displayed, demand an active audience, one that follows the narration of the text and the image that create lines in the space, from diagrams, to installations to films. It is as if we are directly following the trail of thought of the artist that supposes the future morphologies of truth.

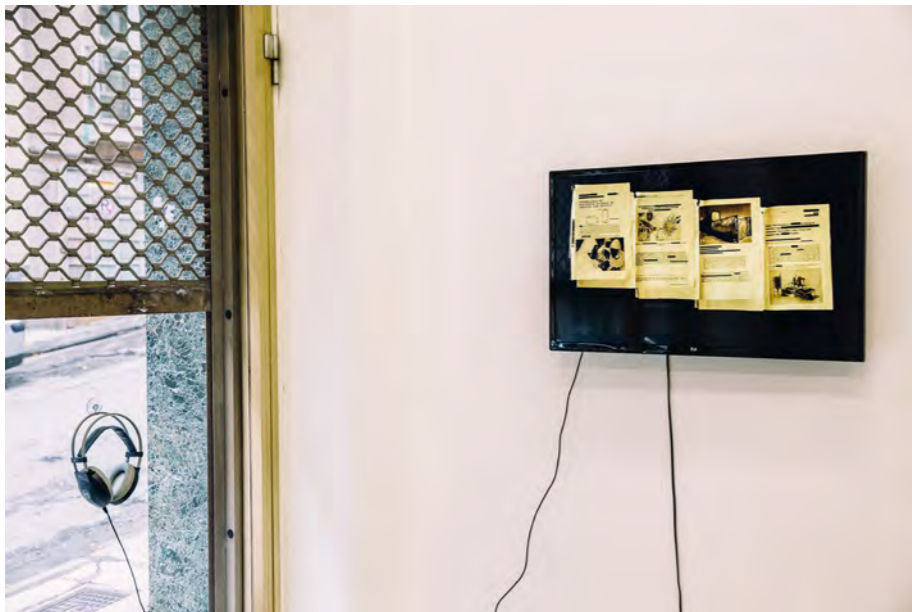


Zbyněk Baladrán
Contingent Propositions, 2017
283 collages, dimensions variable



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Story of a Raped Sentence in Several Pictures, 2016
 blue and white print on plexiglass, color print on paper
 ed. of 3 + 1 A.P.

Exhibition view: Difficulties to Describe the Truth, State of Concept, Athens, 2017-2018



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Approximation of Infinite Sequences, 2015
 full HD video, 12 min.
 ed. of 3 + 1 A.P.

Exhibition view: Difficulties to Describe the Truth, State of Concept, Athens, 2017-2018



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition view: Difficulties to Describe the Truth, State of Concept, Athens, 2017-2018

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

STRANGE DAYS

January 1 - April 16, 2017

Frac-île de France, Le Plateau, Paris, France

Curated by Xavier Franceschi

Artists: Xavier Antin, Pierre-Olivier Arnaud, Zbyněk Baladrán, Erica Baum, Maurice Blaussyld, Daniel Gustav Cramer, David Douard, Francesco Gennari, Ian Kiaer, Melvin Moti, Nashashibi/Skaer, Gyan Panchal, Paul Sietsema

communiqué de presse par Xavier Franceschi:

Il est des œuvres qui semblent nous dire beaucoup sur le monde dans lequel nous vivons, sur l'époque qui est la nôtre, sans pour autant désigner expressément certains événements auxquels nous pourrions nous rattacher de façon sûre et certaine.

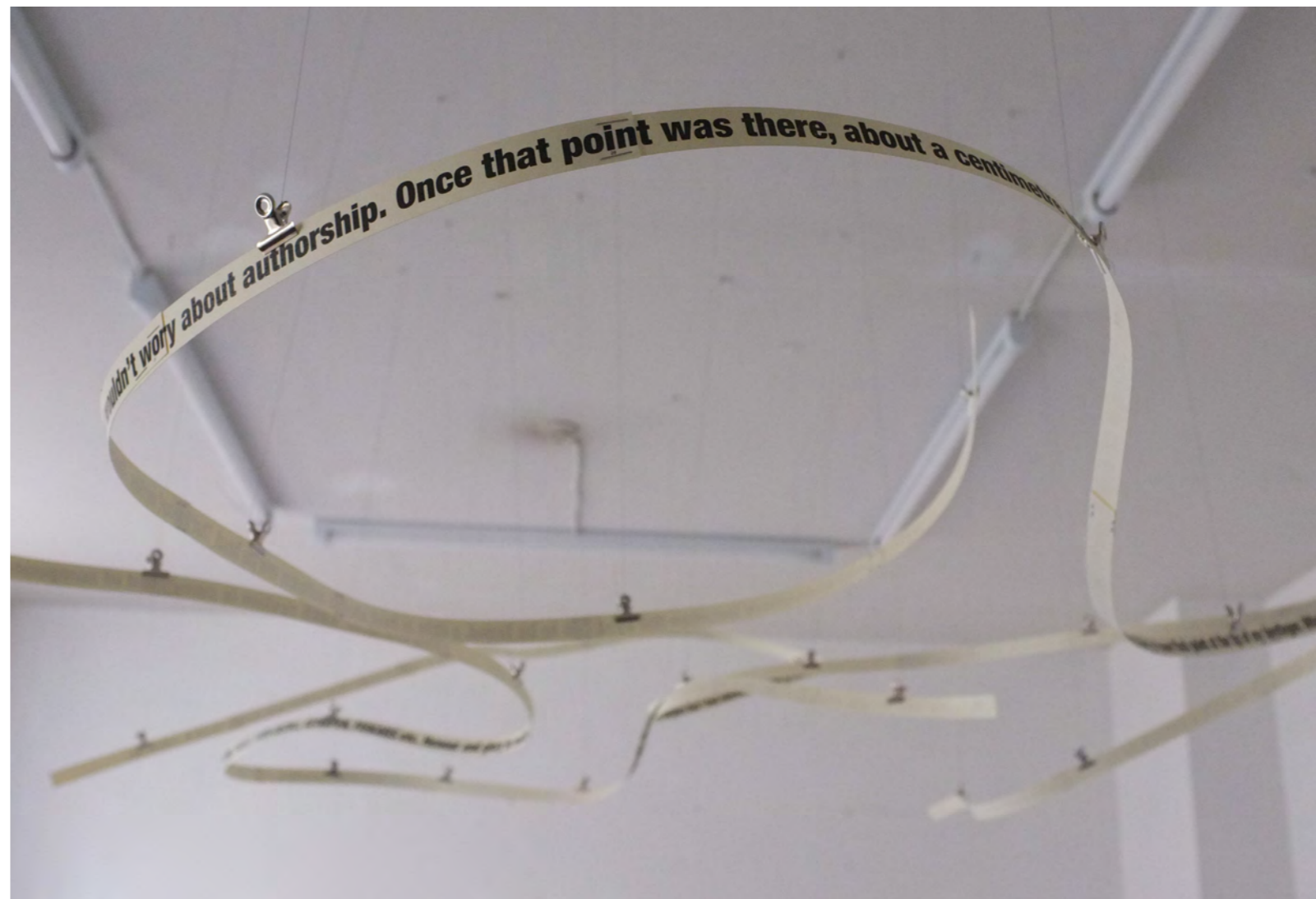
L'art prend toujours sa source dans le réel et, quelle que soit la démarche des artistes, il est par principe l'expression d'une réalité vécue. Mais certaines œuvres plus que d'autres, sans que ce soit explicite ou volontaire, se font l'écho de l'évolution du monde, de ses dangers et de ses multiples dérèglements. Elles tirent leur force de cette façon d'être totalement en phase avec une certaine forme d'actualité, d'être profondément contemporaines.

L'exposition Strange Days, réalisée à partir de certaines des dernières acquisitions du frac île-de-france, en présente un certain nombre.

Disséminées dans les espaces du plateau, elles se distinguent par un ensemble de caractéristiques – tension, incertitude, absence, désagrégation, violence... – qui résonnent en nous de façon étrange au regard de nos connaissances – qu'il s'agisse de (géo)politique, d'économie, d'écologie, etc – du monde actuel.

La perception de chacune de ces œuvres ne saurait cependant se limiter à ce seul point de vue. Celles-ci sont loin de pointer de façon directe tel ou tel phénomène d'actualité – ou si elles le font, ce n'est pas dans la perspective d'un art dit « engagé » –, et elles s'inscrivent dans des démarches aux enjeux divers excédant largement ce seul propos.

Réunies au sein de l'exposition selon une présentation aux partis pris affirmés – obscurité, dispersion, avec un éclairage ne provenant que des pièces elles-mêmes – et privilégiant avant tout un langage formel, elles dessinent un paysage particulièrement emblématique du monde tel qu'il va, de ce monde qui ne cesse de nous annoncer d'étranges, d'inquiétants lendemains.



Zbyněk Baladrán
Another Five Exercises, 2014
Digital print on paper, clips, nylon

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

ÉCONOMIE DE LA TENSION

May 29 - August 28, 2016

Parc Saint Léger, Centre d’art contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France

Curated by: Emile Ouroumov and Catherine Pavlovic

Artists: Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Zbyněk Baladrán, Éric Baudelaire, Julien Bismuth, Maxime Bondu, Anetta Mona Chişa & Lucia Tkáčová, Nemanja Cvijanović, Loreto Martínez Troncoso, Roman Ondák, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Sébastien Rémy, Matthieu Saladin, Charlotte Seidel, Remco Torenbosch, Cyril Verde, Marie Voignier, Lois Weinberger, Carla Zaccagnini, And H.a. Schwartz, Eichstaedt, Kern, Dziurzynski, Ramones, Agrawal, Shah, Kosinski, Stillwell, Seligman, Ungar.

À travers les propositions d’une vingtaine d’artistes de divers pays et générations, ainsi que d’un groupe de scientifiques, l’exposition « Économie de la tension » vise à explorer des pratiques qui relèvent de la prise de position.

Le titre de l’exposition détourne la notion d’« économie de l’attention », récemment analysée par le chercheur Yves Citton dans les ouvrages Pour une écologie de l’attention et L’Économie de l’attention. Nouvel horizon du capitalisme ? (2014) Selon

cette théorie, dans un monde de surabondance d’information, nos régimes attentionnels sont désormais caractérisés par la disponibilité intellectuelle en tant que ressource rare au risque d’une transformation des esprits en capital marchand. Le phénomène observé, loin d’être récent, n’a fait que s’amplifier lors de l’ère industrielle, pour devenir progressivement hégémonique avec les avancées technologiques à l’heure des réseaux numériques. Il touche des sphères aussi diverses que l’économie, la publicité, les médias, l’éducation, la recherche et la culture, par une focalisation tendancieuse sur un choix restreint de paramètres et une obsession par la quantité plutôt que par la qualité de l’attention. « Plus largement, chaque fois que

se met en place une procédure d’évaluation (de l’administration publique, de l’hôpital, de l’école, etc.), cette procédure contribue à produire activement les valeurs qu’elle prétend se contenter d’observer objectivement, suscitant des boucles récursives

qui affolent nos boussoles.»

Comment se positionne l’art face à cette « course à l’attention », quels sont le rôle et le degré d’implication de l’artiste dans

la société ? En France, le printemps 2016 marque un désir de se réapproprier la chose politique. Redéfinissant le caractère participatif d’une démocratie, cette prise de conscience dépasse le cadre formel des mouvements sociaux traditionnels. Elle se cristallise notamment autour de l’initiative populaire « Nuit debout », qui a ouvert un nouveau type d’espace de débats et de propositions. La méfiance envers les discours des médias de masse y exprime l’envie de renégocier le champ d’attention de l’espace médiatique, de repenser les outils d’analyse de la société, voire d’en créer d’autres qui reflètent une pluralité de points de vue.

Il est intéressant de comparer ce désir sociétal nouveau avec ceux du champ de l’art. Non sans justesse, un récent article intitulé « Il se passe quelque chose... (sauf dans la culture) » critique l’engagement souvent superficiel et la distance confortable entretenus par le monde de l’art en général et ses institutions en particulier, véhiculés par des prises de parole restant lettre morte.

Le débat autour de la fonction et l’utilité sociales de l’art n’est aucunement inédit. En particulier, le XXe siècle a été témoin d’une divergence entre le modernisme, défendant la spécificité du domaine esthétique, et les avant-gardes, visant l’abolition

de la distinction entre art et vie. Dans le sillage de cette opposition, diverses pratiques ont vu le jour, à l’image de la critique

institutionnelle, l’art engagé ou encore participatif, dont l’efficacité et l’héritage se trouveront dilués sur un fond de marchandisation exponentielle de l’art contemporain. Depuis autre perspective historique, ironiquement le caractère transformationnel de l’art, sa capacité à accaparer les esprits et à retenir l’attention, ont été reconnus par le Bloc de l’Est à travers leur embrigadement au service de la propagande. Au sein d’un climat intellectuel riche et fébrile, l’exposition « Économie de la tension » souhaite réinvestir l’outil de production qu’est un centre d’art, en tant que terrain d’expérimentation et caisse de résonance de la pluralité de regards qui définit la communauté artistique. Ainsi, l’exposition envisage l’espace physique et symbolique du centre d’art et l’attention de son public comme dispositifs d’analyse et de mise en application des stratégies artistiques face à l’autorité des discours politiques, culturels ou médiatiques. Leur énumération non exhaustive – témoignage, examen, ironie, déconstruction, résistance, infiltration, perturbation, imposture, quête identitaire – implique une déchirure dans la hiérarchie des comportements, une tension introduite au sein du domaine artistique, citoyen et politique.

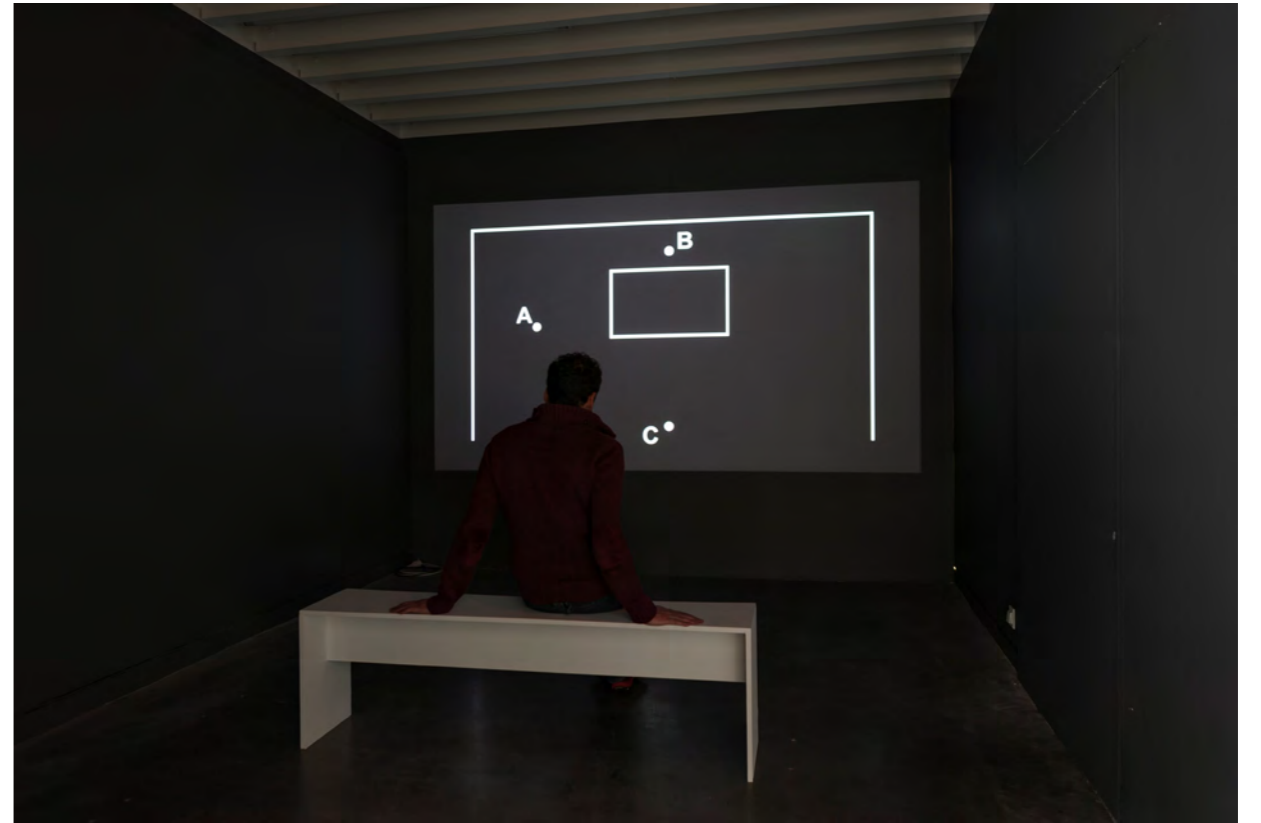
Émile Ouroumov



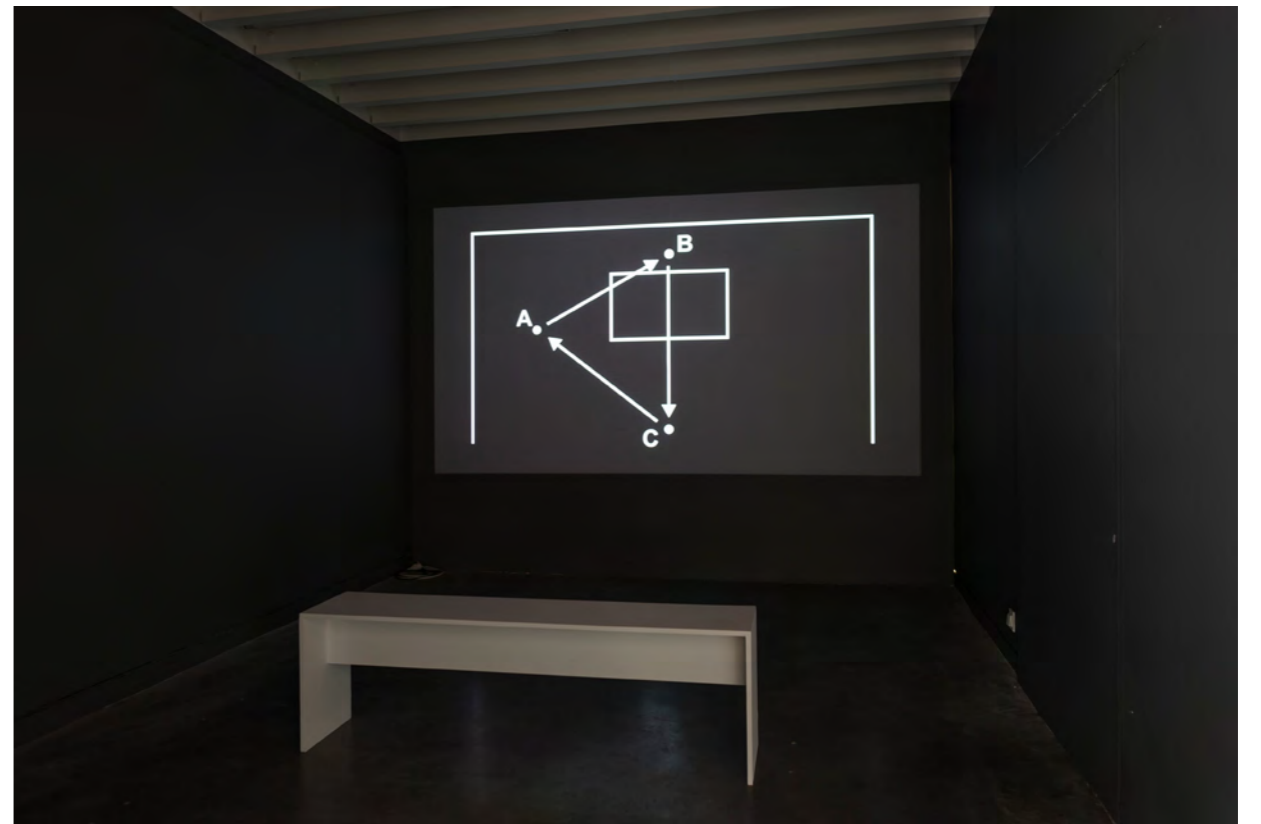
Exhibition views: Économie de la tension, Parc Saint Léger, Centre d'art contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France, 2016



Exhibition views: Économie de la tension, Parc Saint Léger, Centre d'art contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France, 2016



Zbyněk Baladrán
Theory of Work, 2007
HDV, color, sound, 15:47 min



Exhibition views: Économie de la tension, Parc Saint Léger, Centre d'art contemporain, Pougues-les-Eaux, France, 2016

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

BIAFRA OF SPIRIT

THIRD WORLD STUDENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

October 7 - November 26, 2016

Tranzit, Bratislava, Slovakia

Curated by Tereza Stejskalová
Collaboration: Zbyněk Baladrán

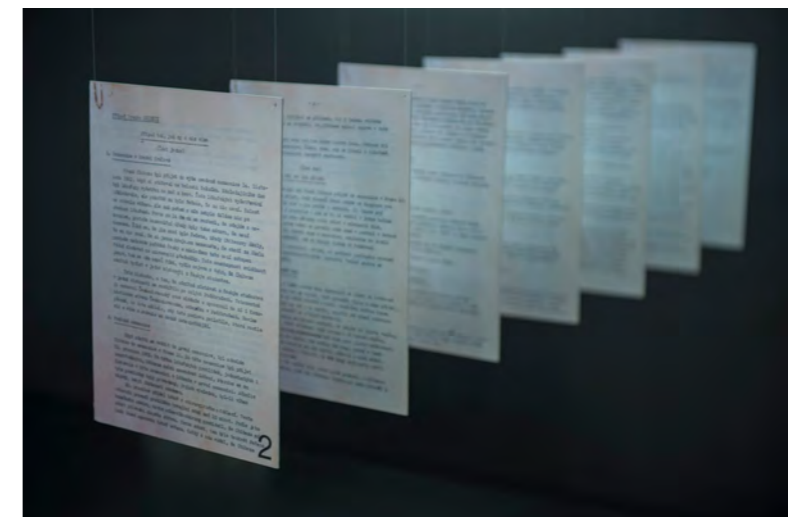
This exhibition project explores the neglected connection between the cultural and political renaissance in Czechoslovakia in the 1960's and the decolonization project. The temporary residence of Third World students in Czechoslovakia serves as a lens for reviewing events that are key to our cultural identity.

The exhibition showcases films, posters and photographs by Africans and Asians who studied in Czechoslovakia during 1960s and 1970s as images of internationalism and cultural exchange. It also portrays Czechoslovak art, namely the Czechoslovak New Wave, as being influenced by the presence of Third World students. The cultural avant-garde of the 1960s in Czechoslovakia can also be said to affect the approach of Third World students to art and culture and thus played a role in the cultural emancipation of post-colonial countries. The Czechoslovak New Wave appears for the first time in the context of the work of significant Third World filmmakers, who studied at Prague's FAMU, such as Nabil Maleh from Syria, Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina from Algeria, Nosratollah Karimi from Iran and others whose fate after they returned to their countries remains unknown.

The images are accompanied by archival documents such as the newspaper Forum which was published in 1968-1969 by the University of the 17th of November, the institution of higher education responsible for Third World students in Czechoslovakia. Forum was a platform where for the first time these students could write openly about their problematic experiences in Czechoslovakia and reflect on their studies and their encounters with the local customs and people. Until then, racism and xenophobia had been taboo in the socialist society and found no mention in the public media. However, the archival documents of the University of the 17th of November narrate stories of discrimination, misunderstanding and even physical abuse. It was out of solidarity with the anti-colonial movements that Czechoslovakia offered scholarships to Third World countries (albeit the Cold War power struggle also played a role). However, Czechoslovak citizens, who were not properly informed about why these students had been invited to Czechoslovakia, had a rather distorted picture of their cultural backgrounds.

Exhibition visitors are invited to learn about the political and cultural upheaval in Czechoslovakia through the perspective of Third World students, some of whom were directly involved in these events. The exhibition highlights the Prague Spring as a movement which strove for democratic communism and democratic culture, but also as an attempt to deal with the existing repression of racism and problems related to the coexistence of radically different cultures. It was during Prague Spring that these issues were discussed in the open for the first time.

It is also in this tradition that the project wishes to actualize - bring to the present - the uneasy interaction with cultural otherness. The exhibition is based on long-term research, yet it is not a historiographic exhibition. We think of it as an artistic-curatorial project, a political proposal to consider these links and exchanges as a significant legacy.



Exhibition views: Biafra of Spirit. Third World Students in Czechoslovakia, Tranzit, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2016

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

MUSEUM (SCIENCE) FICTIONS

May 18-23, 2016

Centre Pompidou / Espace Prospectif, Paris, France

Curated by: Elena Sorokina

Artists: Zbyněk Baladrán, Ekaterina Degot, Elitza Dulguerova, Vít Havránek, Myriam Lefkowitz, Jean-Claude Marcadé, Louisa Martin-Chevalier, Ioulia Podoroga, Julie Pellegrin, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Barbara Piwowska, Pauline Simon

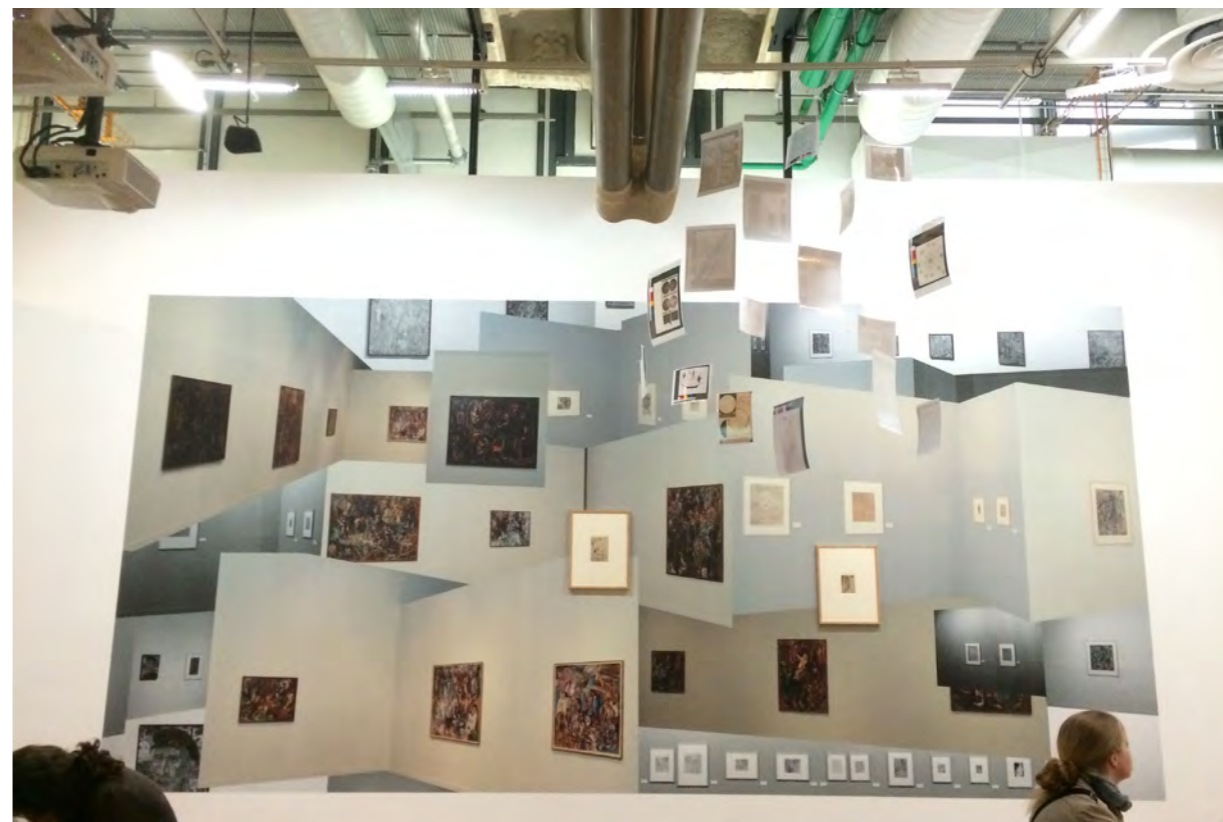
Aux premiers temps de la science-fiction russe, les musées sillonnent frénétiquement le temps et l'espace: sur Mars ou au trentième siècle, ils abondent en détails foisonnants. L'imagination fertile des auteurs, empreinte d'idéologie, oscille entre cosmo-écologie, cosmo-technologie et bien d'autres modèles, jusqu'à ce que le musée, se mêlant intimement avec la vie, disparaisse alors tout à fait. La démarche de ces musées n'est pas d'amasser des collections pléthoriques, mais de mener des recherches, d'éduquer, d'agir en véritables laboratoires: ils sont producteurs de futur, plutôt que taxinomistes du passé. Ce projet, à la croisée des chemins entre le musée et la science-fiction, appréhende ces textes historiques comme un prisme à travers lequel sont analysées les convergences actuelles entre la fiction spéculative radicale et le discours scientifique des musées.

Durant une semaine, le projet propose un accrochage temporaire, des interventions chorégraphiques, une série de conférences-performances, des débats avec des artistes et des commissaires d'expositions, de la musique et des lectures de textes SF.

Ekaterina Degot évoquera la prodigieuse «magie de la recherche» et reviendra sur l'édition 2013 de la Bergen Assembly (co-organisée avec David Riff), construite autour du roman SF soviétique emblématique *Le lundi commence le samedi*. Vít Havránek et Zbyněk Baladrán dévoileront la façon dont ils ont détourné le vaisseau *Ikarie XB-1*, du film SF tchèque éponyme, pour l'élaboration de leur exposition organisée au New Museum à New-York en 2014. Julie Pellegrin présentera ses réflexions sur l'exposition comme machine à explorer le temps. Barbara Piwowska proposera une «apostille» expliquant comment Oskar Hansen n'a jamais construit son musée à Skopje, et a ainsi inspiré une fiction artistique.

Le fonctionnement muséal classique «présentation et accrochage» est ici remis en cause, et le projet révèle et introduit des usages nouveaux: les galeries du Centre Pompidou deviennent ainsi un espace de travail pour Pauline Simon et Myriam Lefkowitz. Pauline Simon expérimente ici sa dernière chorégraphie au milieu des collections permanentes du musée, en composant «les paysages du futur» avec les corps de ses danseurs. Quant à Myriam Lefkowitz, elle décline sa pratique de «l'incorporation» en une version associant ici le toucher et le son, à partir d'une sélection de tableaux de Pavel Filonov (1883-1941).

Le projet accorde une place toute particulière à une conférence revenant sur une page de l'histoire du Centre Pompidou: l'exposition Pavel Filonov (1990). C'était la première fois qu'une exposition personnelle des œuvres de cet artiste majeur du courant «organiciste» de l'avant-garde russe était organisée à l'étranger. Elle avait été conçue autour de l'idée de la «découverte» d'un génie inconnu, de cette personnalité «hors-canon» qui avait développé sa propre vision du modernisme. Nous évoquerons les retombées presque fictives qu'a connues cette exposition, mais aussi la vision qu'avait Filonov du musée, entre science et métaphysique.



Exhibition views: Museum (Science) Fictions, Centre Pompidou, Espace / Prospectif, Paris, France, 2016



Exhibition views: Museum (Science) Fictions, Centre Pompidou, Espace / Prospectif, Paris, France, 2016

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

SELECTIVE MEMORY

ARTISTS IN THE ARCHIVE

November 21, 2014 - March 15, 2015

Lewis Glucksman Gallery, University College Cork, Ireland

Curated by Chris Clarke and Orla Murphy

Artists: Zbyněk Baladrán, Paulien Barbas, David Raymond Conroy, Dani Gal, Ruth MacLennan, Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan, Lucy McKenzie, Marge Monko, Gavin Murphy, Alan Phelan, Anne Ramsden, Jasper Rigole, Valerie Snobeck, Sean Snyder, Miek Zwamborn.

The archive preserves the past, its remnants and records, within a repository of human knowledge. However, it also offers a space for critical engagement and creative invention, for challenging the archive's supposed objectivity with unorthodox histories, subversive interpretations and speculative ideas. Drawing on photographs, documents, film footage and texts, artists have used the archive to create new works from existing materials, to unsettle established readings of the past and to imagine alternative narratives. *Selective Memory: Artists in the archive* explores the ways in which Irish and international artists continually return to the archive, in order to imbue it with a new sense of subjectivity and individuality. The specific materials associated with the archive are revealed in the work of several artists. Miek Zwamborn's sculptural installation is inspired by her research into a 19th century herbarium or plant album found in the archives in which she works. Speculating upon the owner's inscribed dedication to an apparent lover, the artist re-traces the relationship between these two individuals through objects and texts displayed in horizontal drawers and trays. This process of drawing connections between disparate images and materials also informs Lucy McKenzie's *Quodlibet* series, a term referring to topics of theological or philosophical debate. While resembling billboards pinned with photographs, leaflets and writings around given subjects, these trompe l'oeil oil paintings play with the tension between the temporary, tangential relationship and the permanence of her chosen medium. The speculative associations that McKenzie forges from diverse source materials are forever fixed in her precisely detailed and illusionistic compositions (...).

The re-editing of found footage into new narratives is represented in video works by Zbyněk Baladrán and Marge Monko. In Baladrán's piece *Working Process*, he overlays grainy film sequences from Soviet Czechoslovakia with segments of text, while Monko's work sets still photographs of Estonian factory workers to an excerpt from a play by the Austrian Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek.



Exhibition views: *Selective memory, Artists in the archive*, Lewis Glucksman Gallery, University College Cork, Ireland, 2014-2015

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

THE MEASURES TAKEN

March 5-30 2014

Kunstraum München, Germany
in cooperation with the Czech Center Munich

Curated by Emily Barsi

Press release:

Zbyněk Baladrán (Prague, 1973) represented at the last Venice Biennale the Czech Republic and is currently one of her most recognized international artists. His first solo project in Germany, The Measures Taken, will be shown in Munich from March 3rd to 30th, 2014 at the Kunstraum München.

The exhibition focuses on the prospects of artistic production and methods as instruments of total renovation, a dramatic change of society, but also the possibility of its failure.

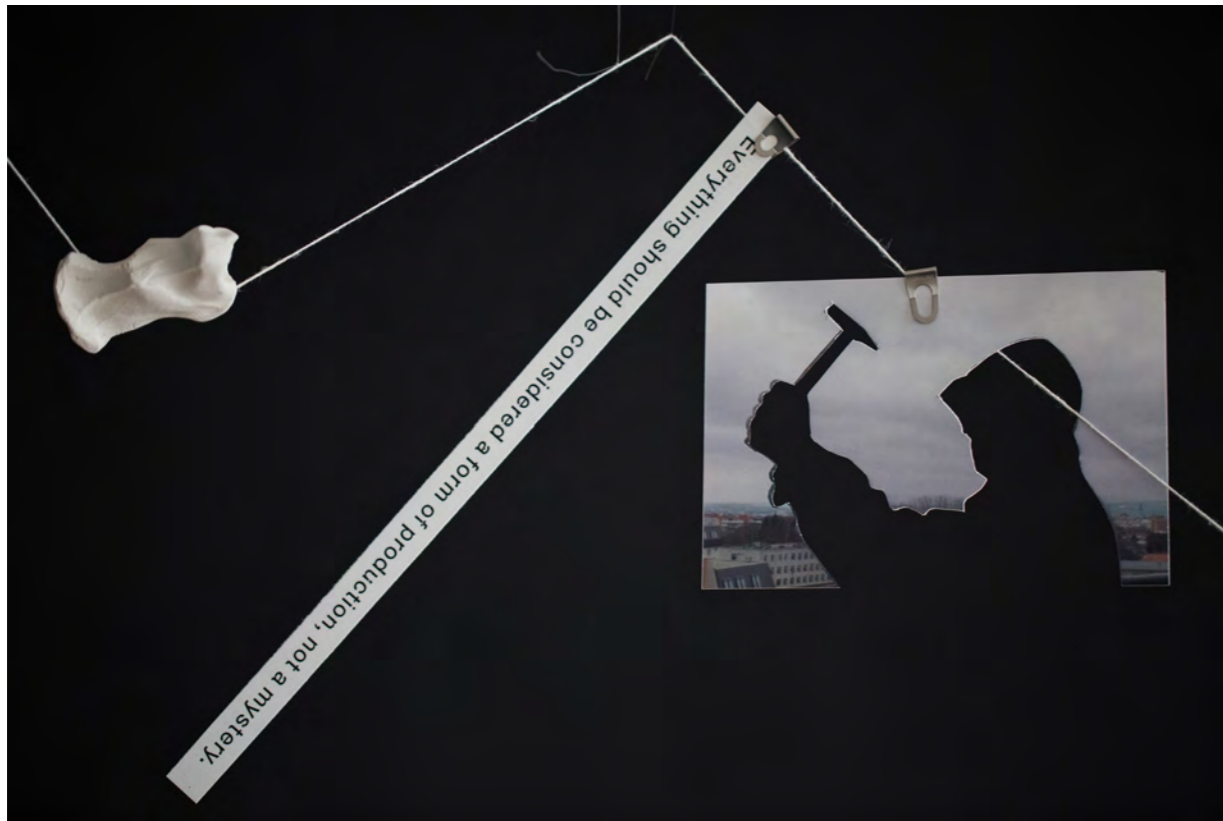
Irony and the issue of failure are already included in the title of the exhibition taken from Bertold Brecht's drama The Measures Taken (Die Maßnahme), a play that not only deals with the abolition of the traditional duality between stage and audience, but also with the radical change in a world that is teetering on the edge of accepting the protagonists of negotiation and compromise.

Starting point for the different methodological approaches used in the exhibition are texts and works of several authors such as Johann Peter Eckermann, Sigmund Freud, Bertold Brecht, and Dziga Vertov, which were in part re-edited by Zbyněk Baladrán.



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: The Measures Taken, Kunstraum München, Munich, Germany, 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: The Measures Taken, Kunstraum München, Munich, Germany, 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: The Measures Taken, Kunstraum München, Munich, Germany, 2014

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

AUDI ART AWARD FOR NEW POSITIONS / ART COLOGNE 2013

July 3 - August 23, 2014

Artothek, Raum für junge Kunst, Cologne, Germany

Text of the installation map-fire-word-end:

The streets are full of people. Something has drawn them out. Tomorrow they will be empty. Anxiety will remain; nothing much will change. The streets are full today, though.

The average person should drink several litres of liquid a day, eat vegetables and have a sufficient intake of protein. Most people are incapable of meeting the average. They feel guilty about it.

Toilets are crammed. The treatment plants can't keep up.

The future is not approaching, insisting on the present is a nuisance, the past is gone and is unpleasant.

Joy of life is marred by its statistical occurrence: 1:100 000.

Solidarity is the central motive of all that is human. The majority of activities, however, are burdened with guilt from invisible, non-solidaric behaviour.

Personal life and mass culture. Speaking to the point never means babbling without head or tail. Until it becomes clear that it is something else that is spoken about, which is shown by the manner of speech and its location. For example its inappropriateness. The tendency to be precise usually leads nowhere. Precision is often sharp, the ability to receive it impossible. When talk is of the local, point at the horizon.

Bureaucratized or privatized public space.

Broken comrades, no longer required; there are many of us. We mostly subsist in stinking layers without air. One day we will return from the scrapheaps and take revenge on the greed created by the market.

The life cycle is inherently dialectical. We used to be liquid mud, a living cell and a mechanical component, we were stone, farting and an instrument. We had and did not have consciousness, we lived in ignorance and in a terrible dream. Whenever you look at us, you cannot say what we are. We are the living and the dead. The eye and the thing.

Organism

In ancient times they believed that the universe could be mirrored in books and that mirroring was a tool for understanding. Except books create another universe, even bigger than the one they mirror. They become a labyrinth that can be endlessly walked, connected and divided. One of the methods of reading and navigating it is to shoot into it randomly with automatic weapons.

A kind of nuke that pierces through the shelves and explodes somewhere far away! You could feel the afterblasts even decades after the rocket was fired. Then, years later it happens that someone will stretch through the hole a hose full of thoughts and before you know it, you're knee-deep in them. Some links work, some are useless. You don't know who to thank. Try to launch a rocket and you'll see it's very risky. You could even go mad with regret. You don't know where you're shooting. Nevertheless, it is a method...

To begin with the same words, but give them a different meaning. Ideas are always born the same. They are wrapped around the bones of words. Figures built from such bones are like living corpses, burning with desire, without fear and without stopping. To bring them to life demands a revolutionary act that will change the status of bones and the flesh wrapped round them. The definition would begin with a description. Plunging into the abyss is a necessity, but everyone's abyss is different, only it is necessary not to forget the main task. To begin with the same words, but change their meaning.

The question remains as to why it is worthwhile mining for buried memories and confronting them with the current reality of aggressive capitalism, the form of which we participate in either consciously or unconsciously. And why in such a form? And why here in the context of the art world?

Because it's a matter of life and death?

Because it's about the collective imagination of the possible.

Because there are various channels of communication.

Because art is one of those channels.

Because even if art seems toothless, it still speaks to someone.

Because there is a possibility here that art can change something.

And also because the author is trained in art and cannot do anything else.

Recollection does not help anyone; it's not about evoking an idyll or nightmare of childhood. The buried memories here should expose a contradiction that we see in the present; that is, the dissolution of collective notions. The contradiction gets deeper and deeper. On the one hand, disillusionment, on the other hand, the impossibility of imagining a future that one can head towards gladly. It is not possible to come to terms with that; experiencing such a reality is filled with paranoid fear and paralysis. It's not just about the physical conditions that are exacerbated by legalized avarice, but also about the fascisizing of society and general conformity. A voluntary self-colonization by notions that we regard as the best of all possible bad ones...

Lucretius Carus once hypothesized that what we see are the skins of objects and shapes. They all separate from objective reality like layers of an onion and enter the eye. The surface of things always has sufficient material. Images float through the air, each of which is invisible independently, but together they are woven into a fine fabric. They form a continuum of images. A multiplicity of individual images is generated in moment, in a fleeting time. They combine together and fall apart. A new meaning emerges from their collisions. We could say that Carus' notion anticipated depiction by means of moving pictures. Even more interesting are his thoughts about the sound of a voice. He hypothesized that voices and sounds are material. Therefore, when the voice pours out through its narrow channel and when the words are in large numbers, the throat may easily be irritated by the onslaught. Voice and words are bodies made of matter, and therefore scratch. Carus continues: Everyone knows how much it taxes a man's strength and nerves when he has have to speak continuously until dark, especially when he is compelled to shout. He who talks a lot always loses part of his mass.

Let us regard the work of art as an instrument of torture, let us imagine how each image, sound, voice and word loses its original meaning. How seemingly certain assumptions disintegrate. In our era, nothing remains other than to dissect the original meaning, pulverize it and impose a new meaning on it. To divert the flow in an expected direction to an unexpected one. It's like the joke that no one understands, but everyone laughs because it's a joke. It is necessary to give the joke a new meaning.

How did it come about that the ideal of an egalitarian society has disappeared from the horizon of a possible future? How did it come about that so self-evident a collective imagination has faded away? That is what is impinges on the mind.

Every activity produces misunderstanding. This is true of all – of love, of sex and of art. The strongest driving force of new works is misunderstanding itself. Without misunderstanding there is no movement. Without misunderstanding, nothing new or unexpected will happen. Without misunderstanding there is no future.

Don't start from the good old things but from the new bad ones.
 When one finds pieces of bronze or iron among the rubble one asks: what kind of tools were those in olden days? What were they used for? From weapons, one deduces battles, from ornamentation, trade. One perceives all kinds of predicaments and possibilities. Why does one not do the same with the thoughts of olden times?
 Everything should be considered a form of production, not a mystery.
 The old distinction between form and content was abolished, form itself became political.
 Let's do it again.
 Say it better.

Observe with astonishment: Imitator never loses himself in his imitation.



Zbyněk Baladrán
 map-fire-word-end, 2014
 installation, 8x5m, black and white molton, plastic letters, digital print on paper, color photographs

Exhibition view: Audi Art Award for New Positions/
 Art Cologne 2013, Artothek, Raum für junge Kunst,
 Cologne, Germany
 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán
 map-fire-word-end, 2014
 installation, 8x5m, black and white molton, plastic letters, digital print on paper, color photographs

Exhibition views: Audi Art Award for New Positions/
 Art Cologne 2013, Artothek, Raum für junge Kunst,
 Cologne, Germany
 2014

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

DEAD RECKONING

July 10, 2014 - September 21, 2014

Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France

Through films, diagrams, drawings and texts, Zbyněk Baladrán offers various systems of knowledge representation. He uses these forms to convey concepts and ideas, but it is also a way of giving our senses more direct access to them, as well as a means of combining philosophical questions with poetical and visual modes of transmission.

The work that opens the exhibition consists of a serpentine sculpture made of pieces of paper that spread through the space at eye-level. Zbyněk Baladrán turns us into active readers, because one has to move, crane one's neck, step forward or step back in order to read and understand the meaning of the words printed on the ribbons. Like a line of thought that the artist would like to make tangible, the installation is something of a mental diagram, a labyrinthine cartography made up of superimpositions that intentionally splinter, fragment and put holes in discourse.

Many of the works of Zbyněk Baladrán (born in Prague in 1973) are infused with the inner doubts and resistance experienced by the generation that lived through the historical, political and social upheavals of the countries of the former Soviet bloc after 1989. The feeling of inadequacy and dislocation provoked by a highly paradoxical freedom, offered by a so-called democratic world, ended up producing what the artist calls "mental spasms". More than just disenchantment, it was a kind of profound helplessness that took hold of the everyday life of this generation, which oscillated between the desire to adapt to a new liberal, individualistic environment and the search of a new sense of the common.

In his most recent films, these questions are still central. Using minimal resources with a DIY spirit, Zbyněk Baladrán compiles a variety of images taken from the grey, apathetic media flow. He reconstructs these heterogeneous sources while lending them the rhythm of his own manipulation. There is no obvious correlation between the array of images and the voiceover text. The working method he uses involves continual misunderstanding and contradiction, as the exhibition title suggests.

In fact, Dead Reckoning is a technical term that designates the calculation of a vehicle's position based on the distance travelled from its point of departure. Alongside the data used (such as speed), dead reckoning incorporates more fluctuating parameters like wind and sea currents. Reflecting this paradoxical science, whose purported objectivity incorporates error and uncertainty, the installation and two films produced by Zbyněk Baladrán for the Synagogue de Delme stem from the same navigation method.

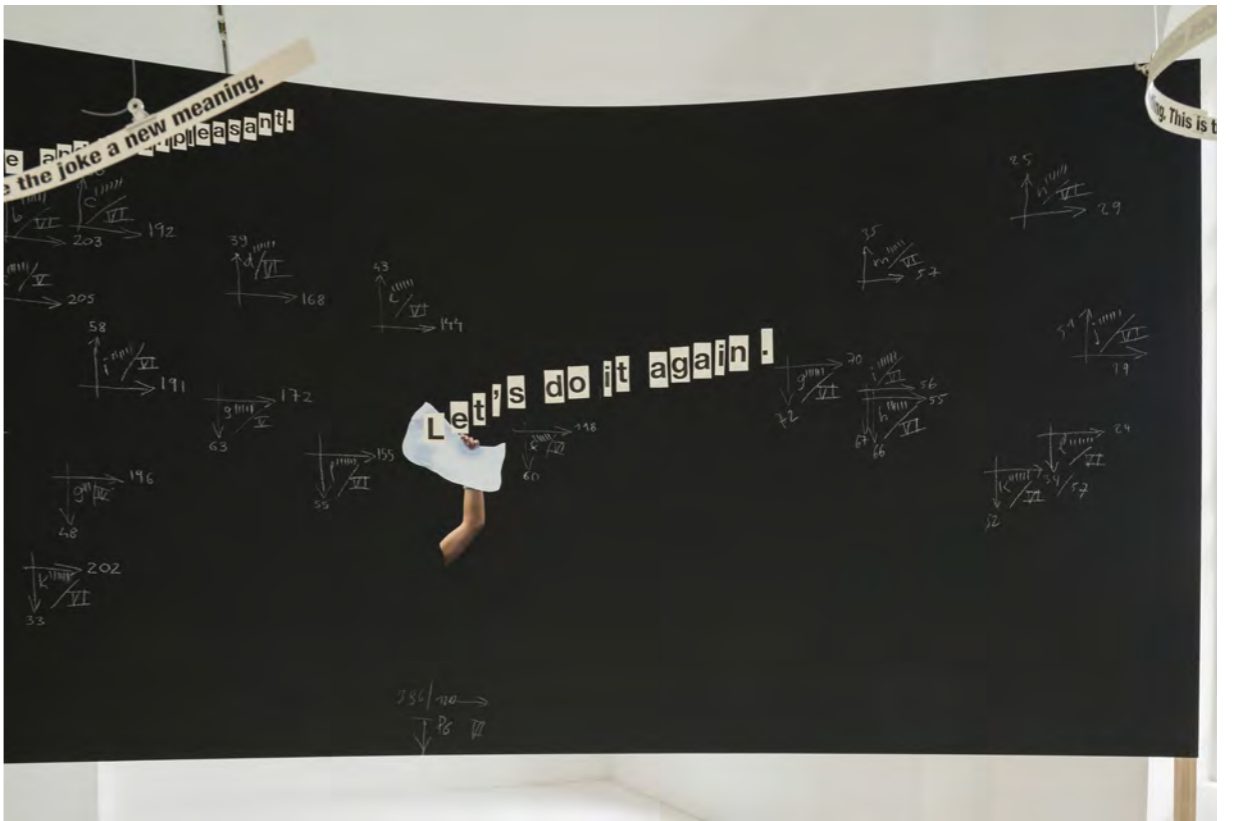
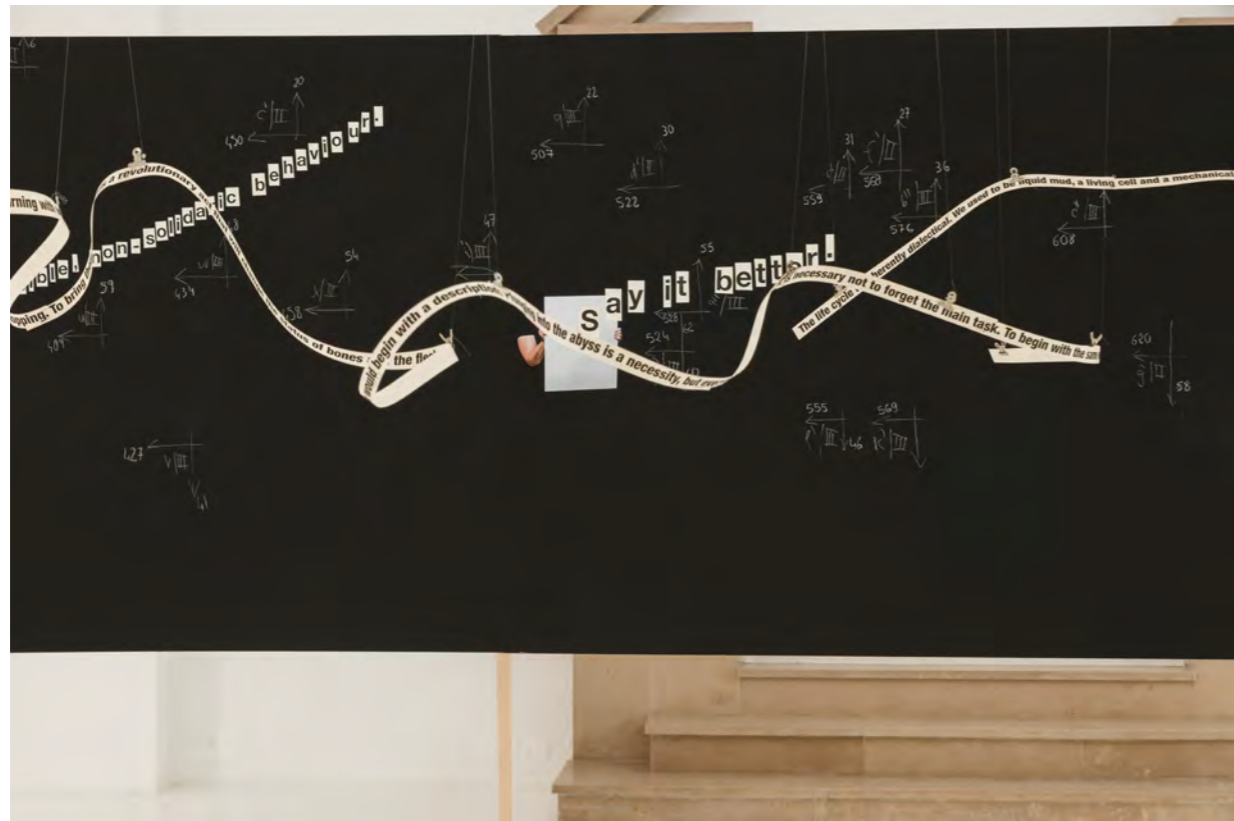
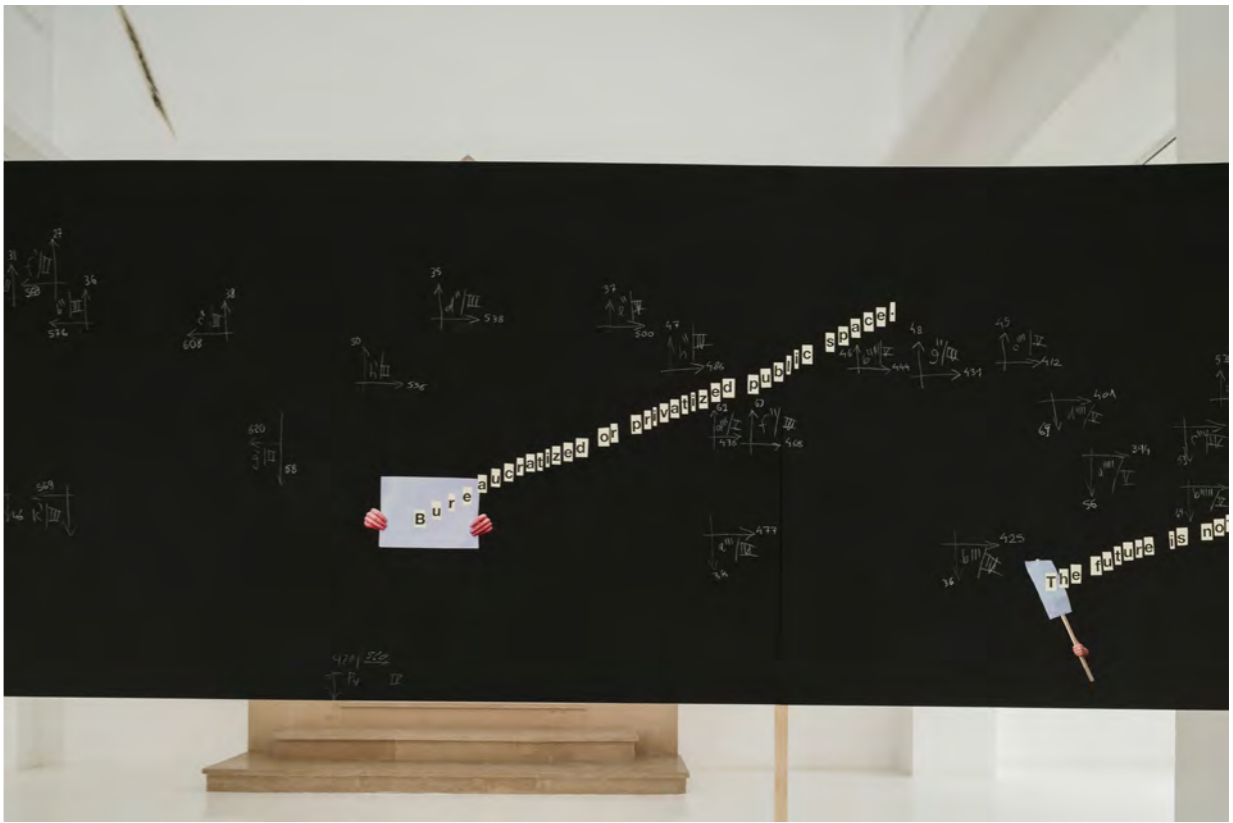
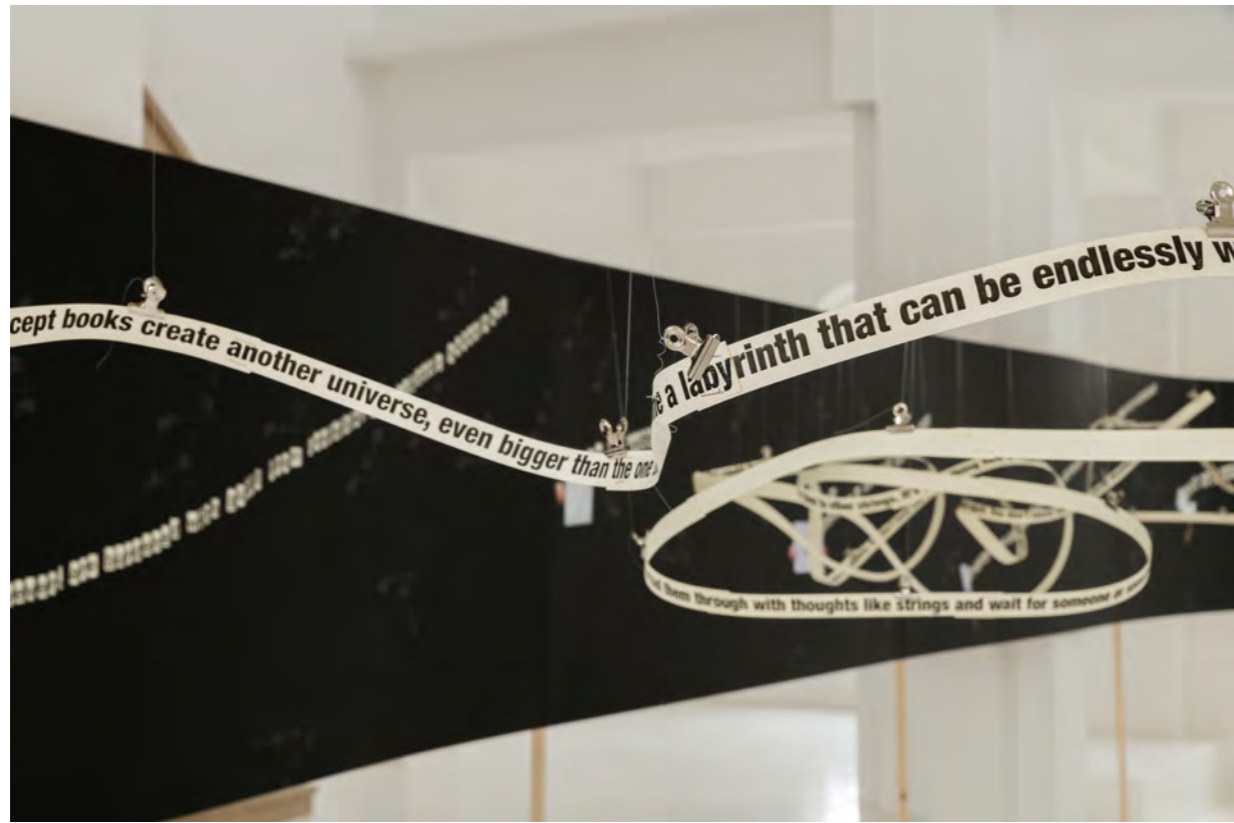
The films Dead Reckoning (produced for the exhibition) and The microscope and telescope of Time (2013) are products of the artist's research, which revolved around identifying the symptoms and contradictions that affect society as a whole. Paranoia, anxiety, hysteria and psychosis are the modern, internalised individual translations of a broader historical trauma in which class struggle, colonization and consumerism all clash.

Marie Cozette



Zbyněk Baladrán
Dead Reckoning, 2014
Cut-outs, nylon, clips, chalk, wooden panels

Exhibition views: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Dead Reckoning, 2014
 Cut-outs, nylon, clips, chalk, wooden panels

Exhibition views: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014

Zbyněk Baladrán
 Dead Reckoning, 2014
 Cut-outs, nylon, clips, chalk, wooden panels

Exhibition views: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Dead Reckoning, 2014
 Cut-outs, nylon, clips, chalk, wooden panels

Exhibition views: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Dead Reckoning, 2014
 Multi-channel synchronised video installation, HD video, sound, color, 12 min, loop

Exhibition view: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Dead Reckoning, 2014
 Multi-channel synchronised video installation, HD video, sound, color, 12 min, loop

Exhibition view: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014

GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Dead Reckoning, 2014
 Multi-channel synchronised video installation, HD video, sound, color, 12 min, loop

Exhibition view: Dead Reckoning, Centre d'art contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, France, 2014

GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

STILL THE SAME PLACE

June 1, 2013 - November 11, 2013

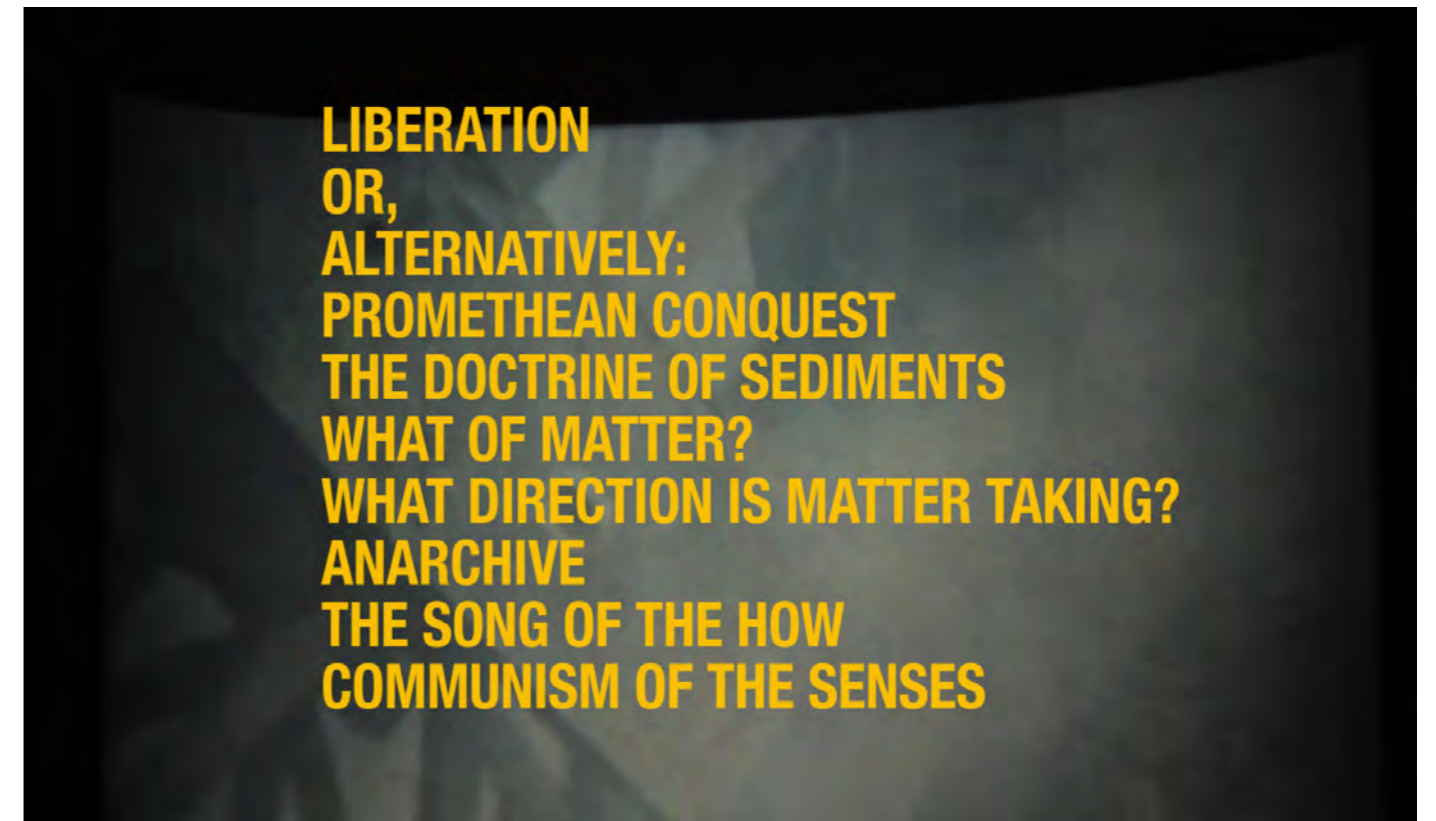
National Pavilion, Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, 55th Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy

The project "Still the Same Place" in the Czech and Slovak Pavilion at the Venice Biennial will showcase an installation by Petra Feriancová of a collection relating to Venice as a deep-rooted cultural phenomenon of human settlement and a video film by Zbyněk Baladrán that critically evaluates the effect of culturally exposed places such as Venice and frames them within an ontological, cheerless view of human existence.



Zbyněk Baladrán
Liberation or...
2013
HDV, color, sound, 11 min 42, English language

Exhibition view, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2013



Zbyněk Baladrán
Liberation or...
2013
HDV, color, sound, 11 min 42, English language

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

PRELIMINARY REPORT

May 4, 2013 - June 22, 2013

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

To reveal and to conceal, to create and then immediately destroy.

I write because we lived side-by-side, because I was one of them, a shadow surrounded by their shadows, a body in proximity to their bodies. The written word is a memorial to their deaths.

In a dream someone asked me:
What is matter gravitating towards?
Impulsively I replied:
To the communism of the senses.

Zbyněk Baladrán

Révéler et dissimuler, créer et détruire immédiatement.

J'écris parce que nous vivions côte à côte, parce que j'étais l'un d'eux, une ombre cernée par leurs ombres, un corps à proximité de leurs corps. L'écriture est un mémorial pour leurs morts.

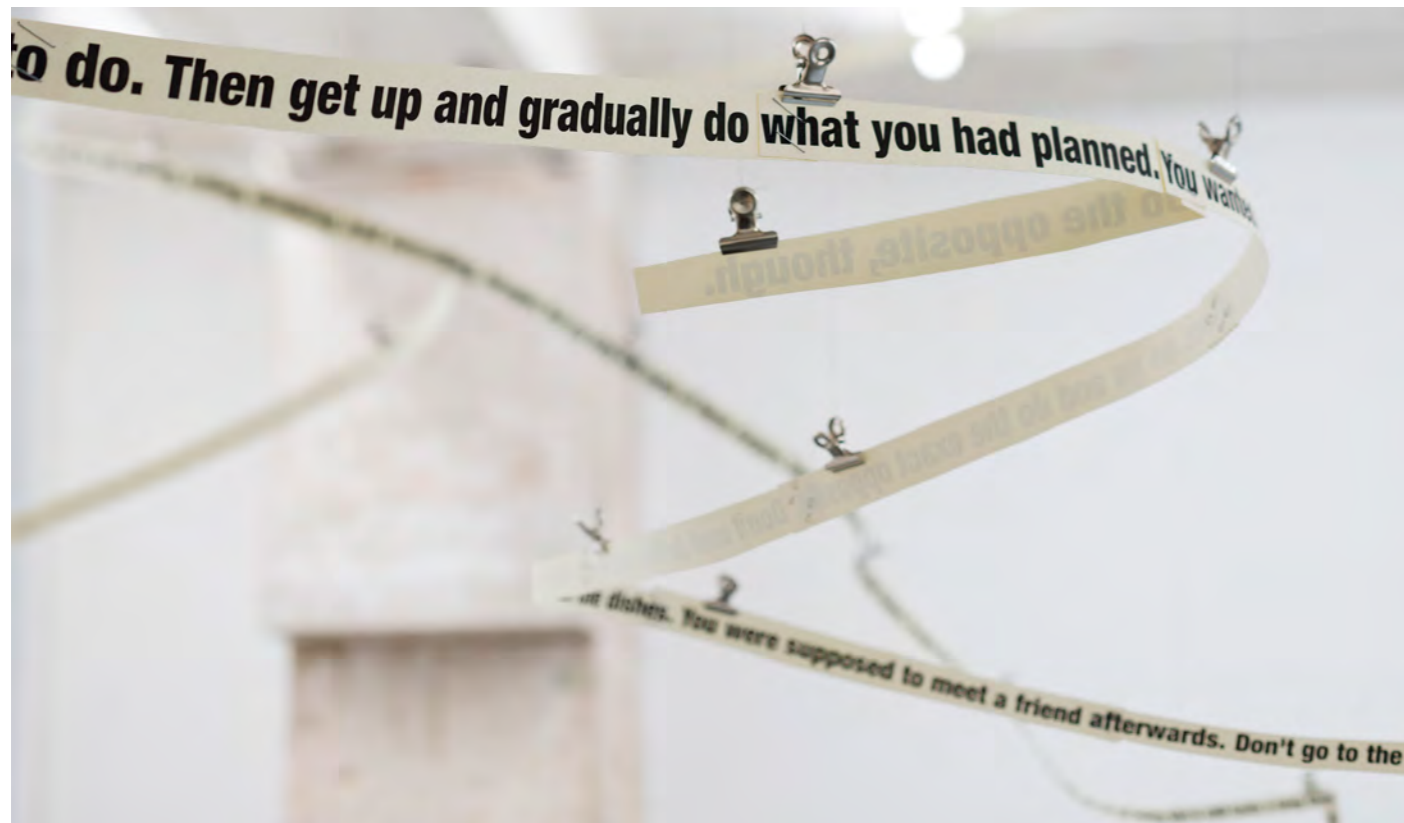
Dans un rêve quelqu'un m'a demandé:
Vers quoi cela convergera-t-il?
J'ai répondu impulsivement:
Vers le communisme des sens.

Zbyněk Baladrán



Zbyněk Baladrán
Three Exercises
2013
digital print on paper, clips, nylon, 120 x 300 x 200 cm

Exhibition views: Preliminary Report, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2013



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Three Exercises
 2013
 digital print on paper, clips, nylon, 120 x 300 x 200 cm

Exhibition views: Preliminary Report, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2013



Zbyněk Baladrán
 10 Anarcho-communist minutes
 2013
 digital print on paper, nylon, clips, plumb, 10 x 380 cm

Exhibition views: Preliminary Report, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2013



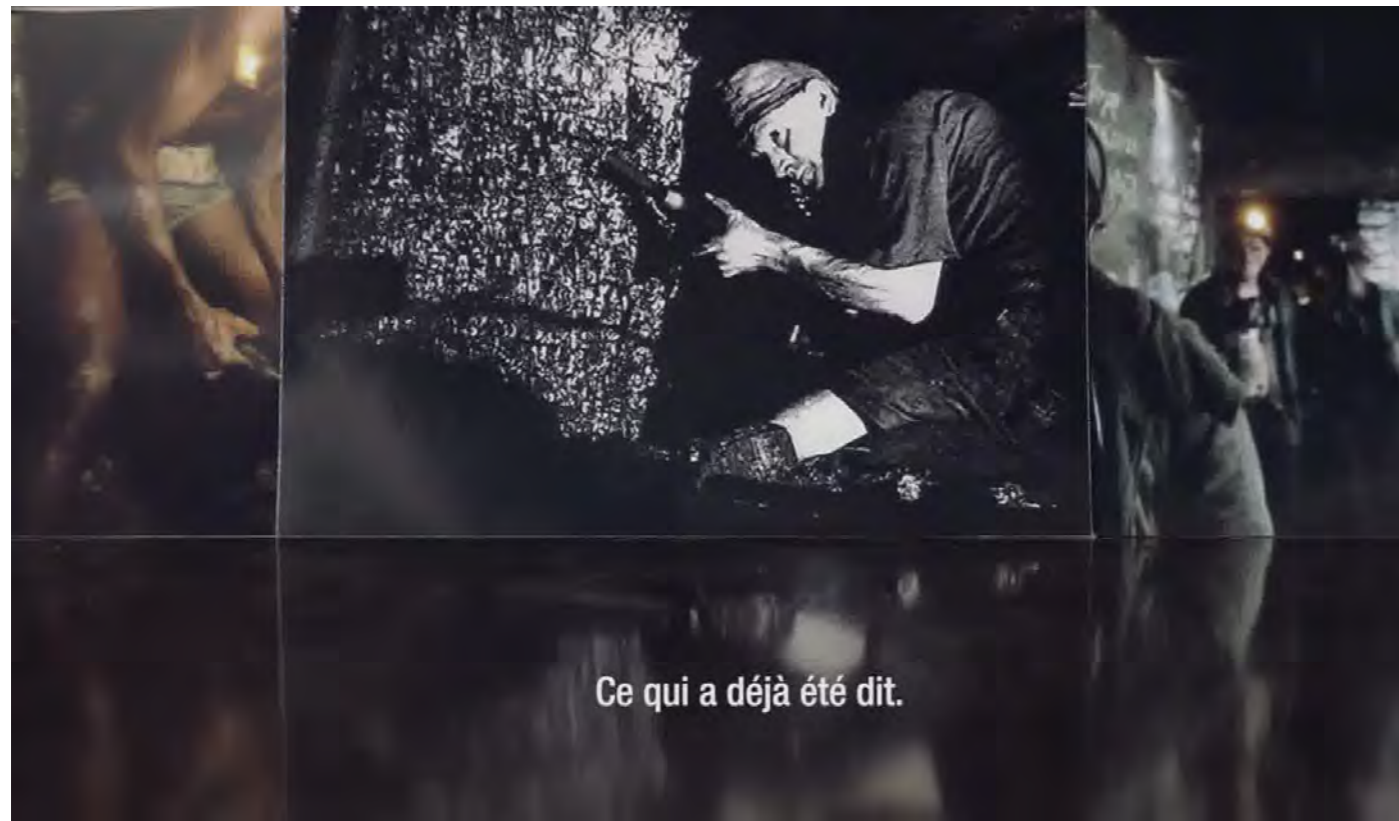
Zbyněk Baladrán
 10 Anarcho-communist minutes
 2013
 digital print on paper, nylon, clips, plumb, 10 x 380 cm

Exhibition views: Preliminary Report, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2013



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Black Hole, 2013
 digital print on paper, c-print, nylon, clip, 150 x 100 x 100 cm

Preliminary Report, 2013
 2 channels video installation, HDV, color, sound, in English with French subtitles, 10:53 min
 Exhibition view: Preliminary Report, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2013



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Preliminary Report, 2013
 2 channels video installation, HDV, color, sound, in English with French subtitles, 10:53 min



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Study for Liberation II, c-print, 10 x 15 cm
 Study for Liberation III, c-print, 10 x 15 cm
 Study for Liberation I, c-print, 10 x 15 cm

Exhibition views: Preliminary Report, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2013

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

LES PRAIRIES

September 15 - December 9, 2012

FRAC Bretagne, Les ateliers de Rennes, Biennale d'art contemporain, Newway Mabilais, Rennes, France



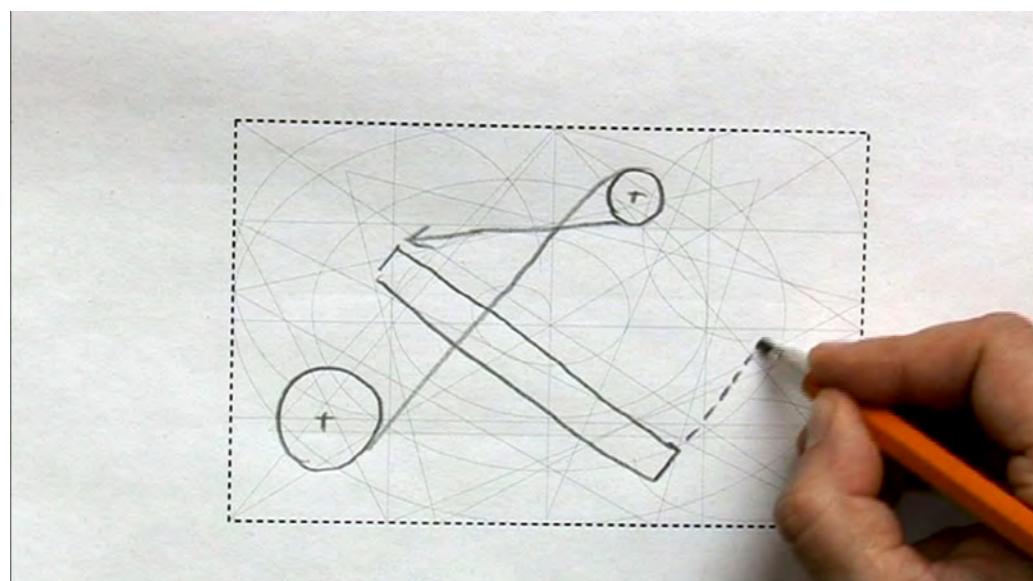
Zbyněk Baladrán
When in 1735
2011
photographs, metal rods, metal clips, nylon thread, 250 x 250 cm

Exhibition view: Les Prairies, FRAC Bretagne, Les ateliers de Rennes, Biennale d'art contemporain, Newway Mabilais, Rennes, France



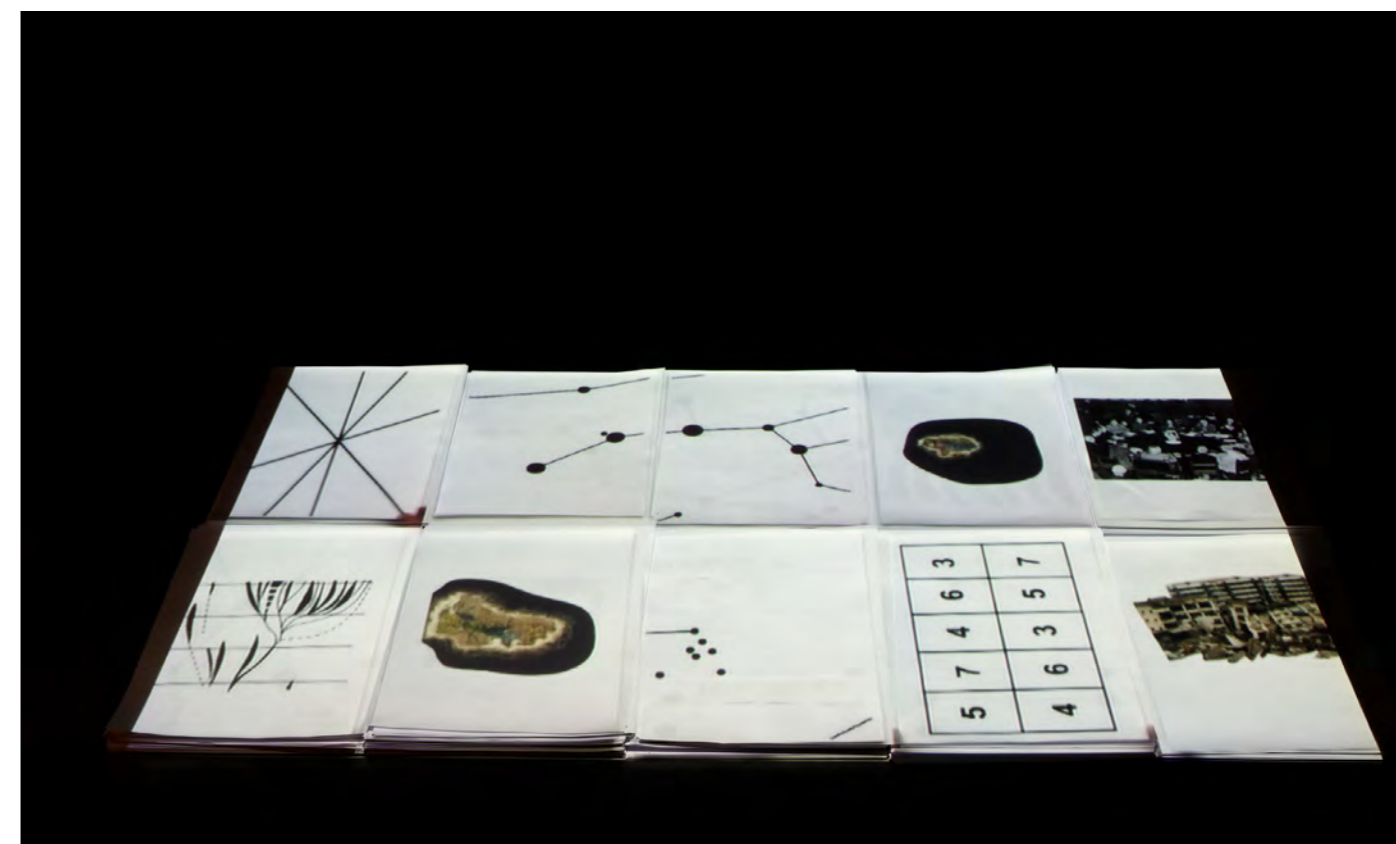
Zbyněk Baladrán
When in 1735
2011
photographs, metal rods, metal clips, nylon thread, 250 x 250 cm

Exhibition views: Les Prairies, FRAC Bretagne, Les ateliers de Rennes, Biennale d'art contemporain, Newway Mabilais, Rennes, France



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Model of the Universe
 2011
 video, color, sound, in English with French subtitles, 2:50 min approx.

Exhibition views: Les Prairies, FRAC Bretagne, Les ateliers de Rennes, Biennale d'art contemporain, Newway Mabilais, Rennes, France



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Assemblages Against Essences
 2009
 HD video projection, A3 white paper (1000 pcs)

Exhibition views: Les Prairies, FRAC Bretagne, Les ateliers de Rennes, Biennale d'art contemporain, Newway Mabilais, Rennes, France

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

WHAT I DON'T SEE

May 13 2013 - June 19, 2011

Tranzit workshops, Bratislava, Slovakia

tranzit.sk

vás pežýva na
invites you to the

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN CO NEVIDÍM WHAT I DO NOT SEE

V KURÁTORSKEJ KONCEPCII | CURATED BY BORIS ONDREIČKA

OTVORENIE | OPENING : ŠTVRTOK | THURSDAY

12. 05. 2011, 19:00

tranzit dielne | workshops, studená 12, bratislava, slovensko | slovakia, www.tranzit.org

13. 05. - 19. 06., 2011, otvorené | open:

štvrtok - piatok | thursday - friday: od | from 15:00 do | to 17:00

sobota - nedela | saturday - sunday: od | from 14:00 do | to 18:00

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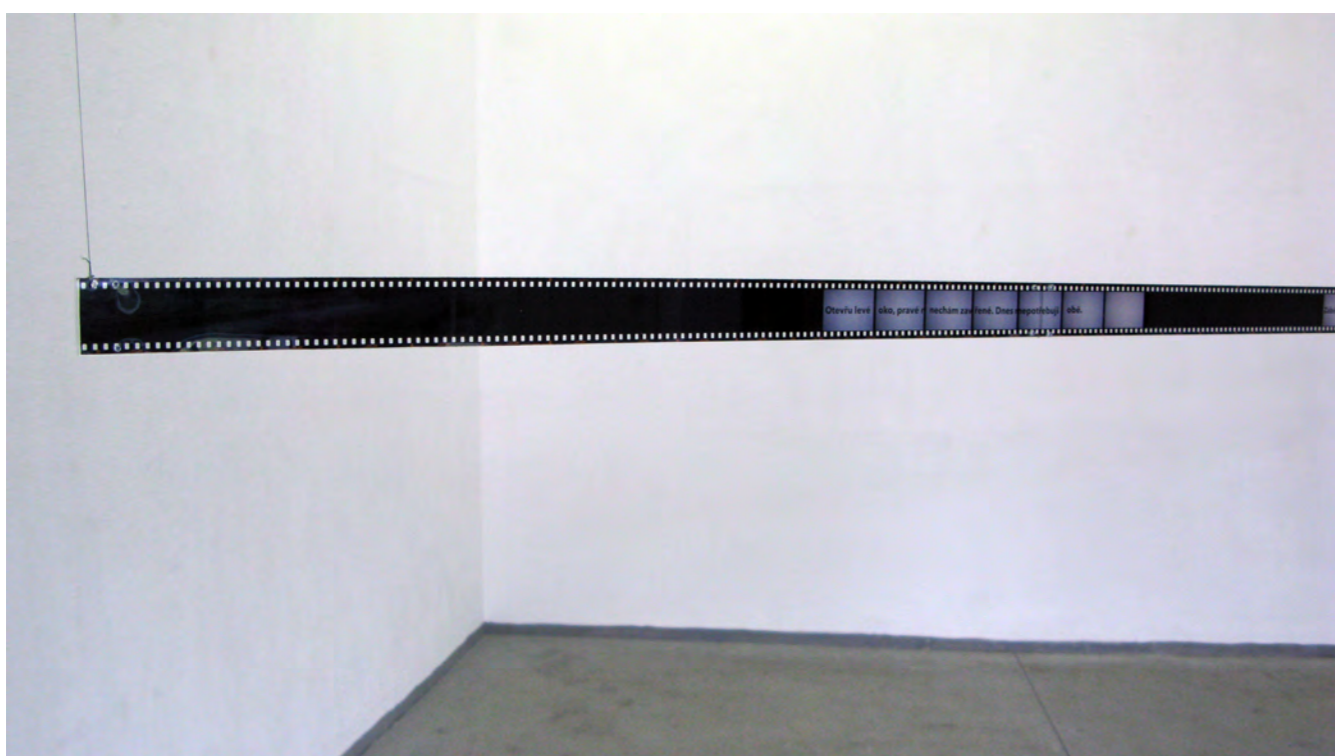
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SORAVIA
GROUP



SHOPPING
PALACE
TRUNK



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Not I, 2011 (details)
 Film strip, plexiglass, nylon thread
 2,5 x 600 cm

Exhibition views: What I Don't See, Tranzit workshops, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2011



Zbyněk Baladrán
 Singularity, a record, 2011
 SD video

Exhibition views: What I Don't See, Tranzit workshops, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2011

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

COGNITIVE MAPS

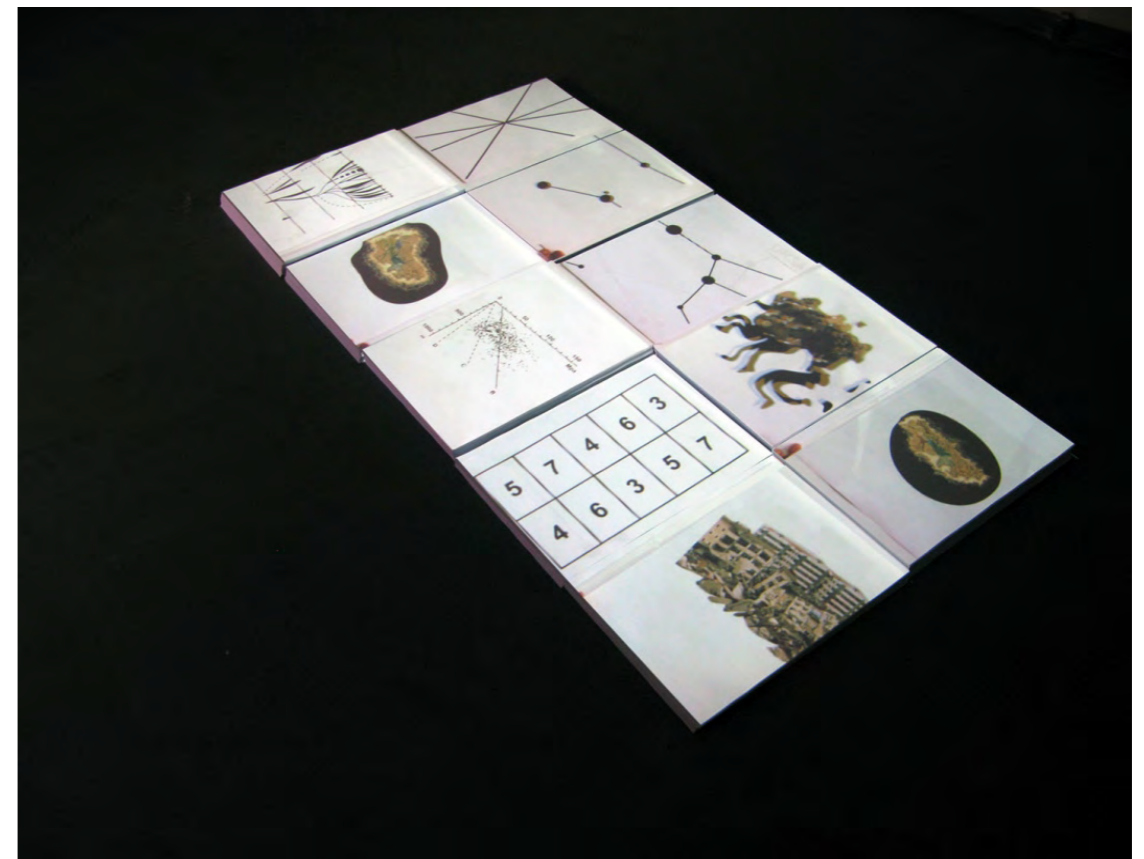
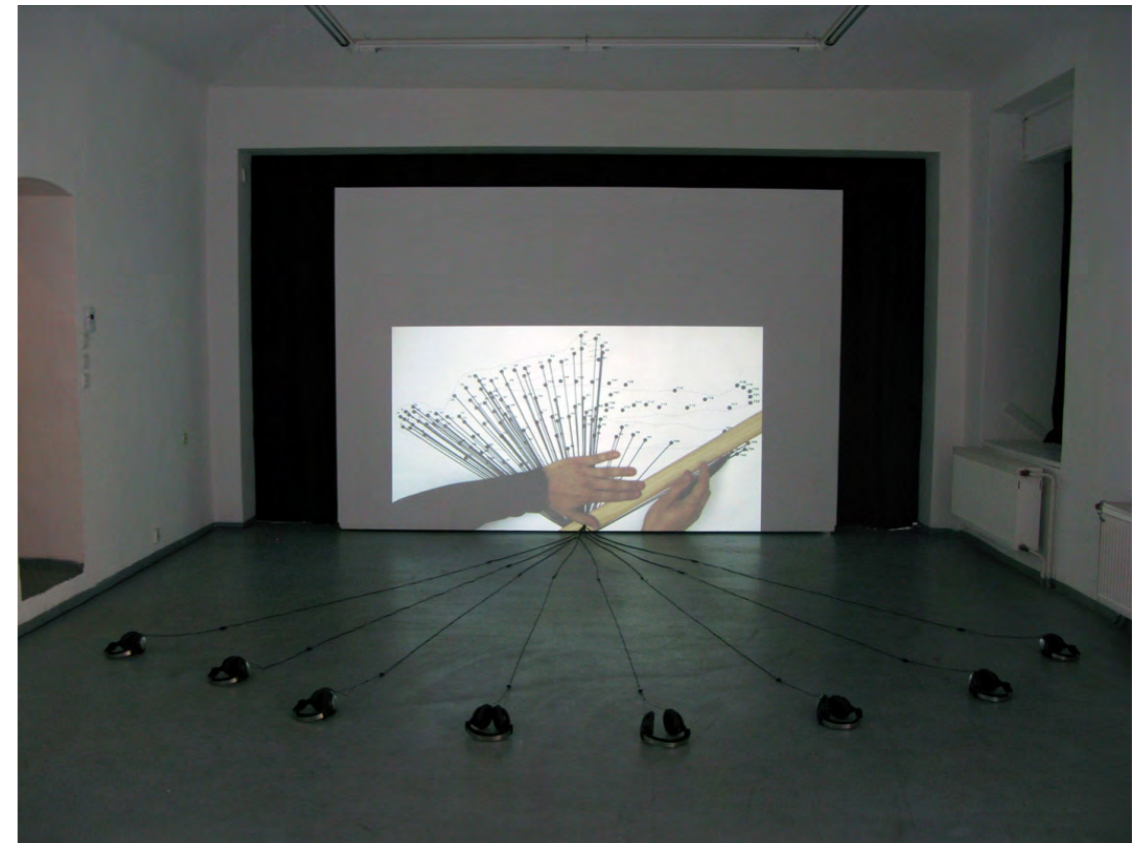
September 23 - November 21, 2009

Hunt Kastner Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic

In 2004, the Czech art historian, David Kulhánek, used a quotation by Gilles Deleuze in an introduction to an article about the artist's work in *Umělec* magazine: "In art, as in society and the individual, one can find specific maps. Some lines present something, others are abstract. Some are with segments, others without... We think that the lines are constitutional parts of the things and events. Therefore everything has its geography, its cartography, its diagram." (Gilles Deleuze, *An interview with thousand facets*, in: *Rokovania 1972 – 1990*, Archa, Bratislava, 1998). Even five years later, it would be difficult to find a more appropriate introduction to Baladrán's work.

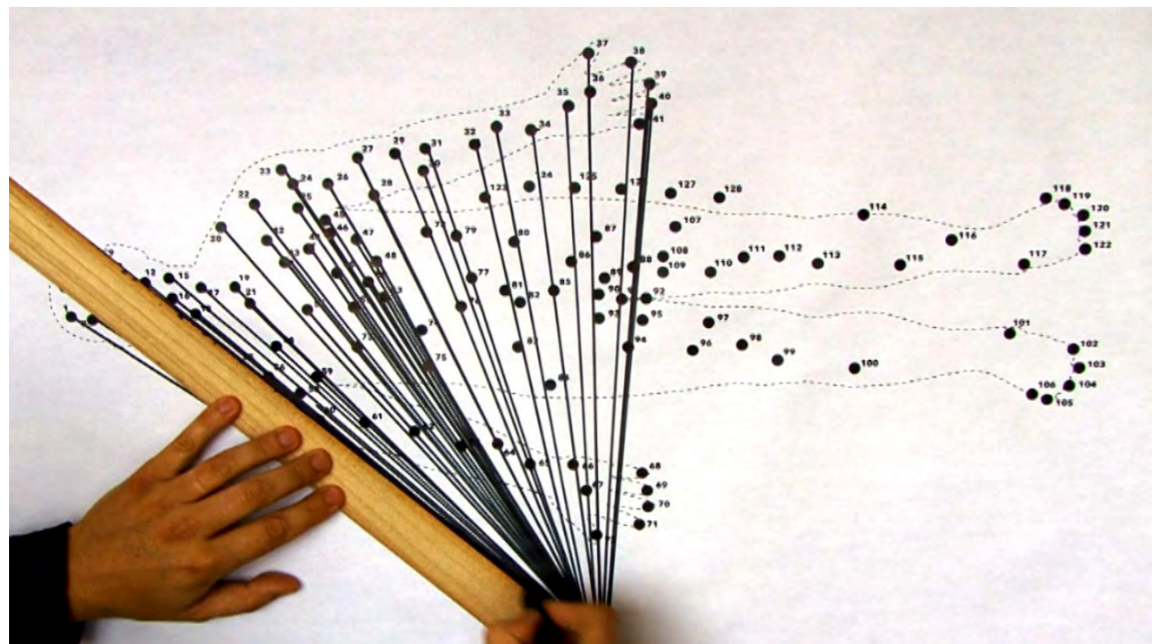
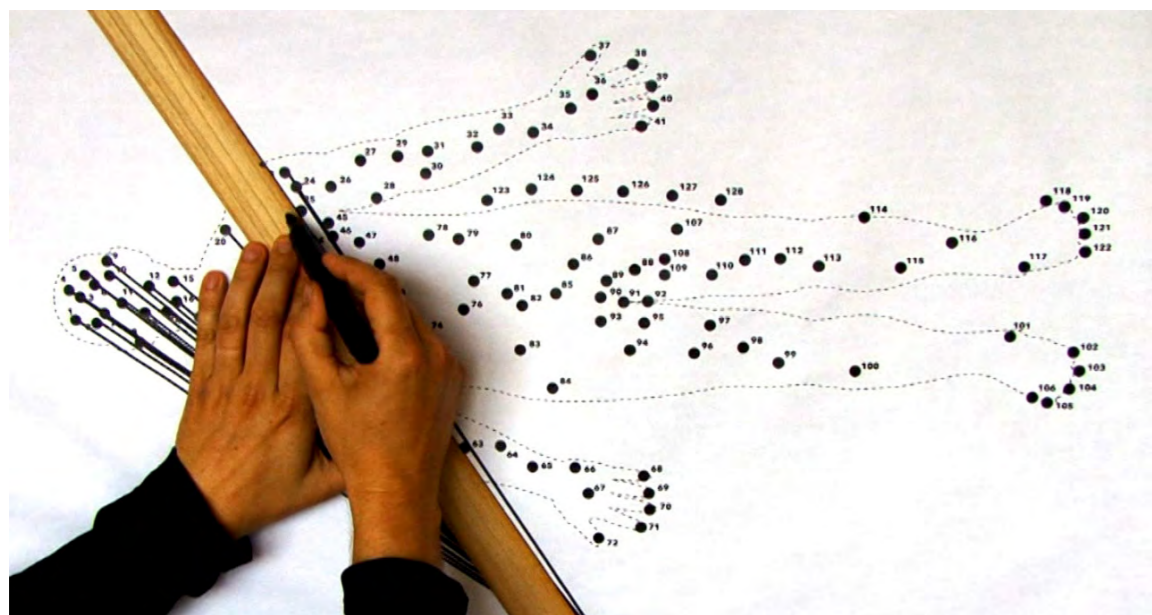
In this day and age of the ubiquitous GPS, the idea of creating and using cognitive maps – mental maps, guides or models – could almost be considered archaic. Cognitive maps are a method that we use to construct and store spatial knowledge in our memories, allowing the "mind's eye" to visualize, code and store information, and then recall, decode and make use of it at a later date, when needed. The term cognitive map was first used by the American psychologist Edward Tolman in his studies of spatial learning and cognitive behavior. His research, from 1948, showed that rats quickly learn their way through complex mazes by storing spatial maps of both the individual turns and passages, as well as the overall layout of the maze in their memory.

Zbyněk Baladrán has often been described as an archaeologist of knowledge and memory, and I think it is safe to say that he has always been fascinated by diagrams and maps, which he uses in his work as a representational means to visualize concepts, ideas and relations in a structured and clear way. The 3 video installations in the exhibition are themselves cognitive maps, made up of coded and stored fragments and ideas that are still connected through lines of association. Using recall and playback of the individual data, it is possible to build a bigger picture, as a key to understanding the interconnectivity between the past, the present and the future. This kind of introspection – we hope and pray – will never become out of date.

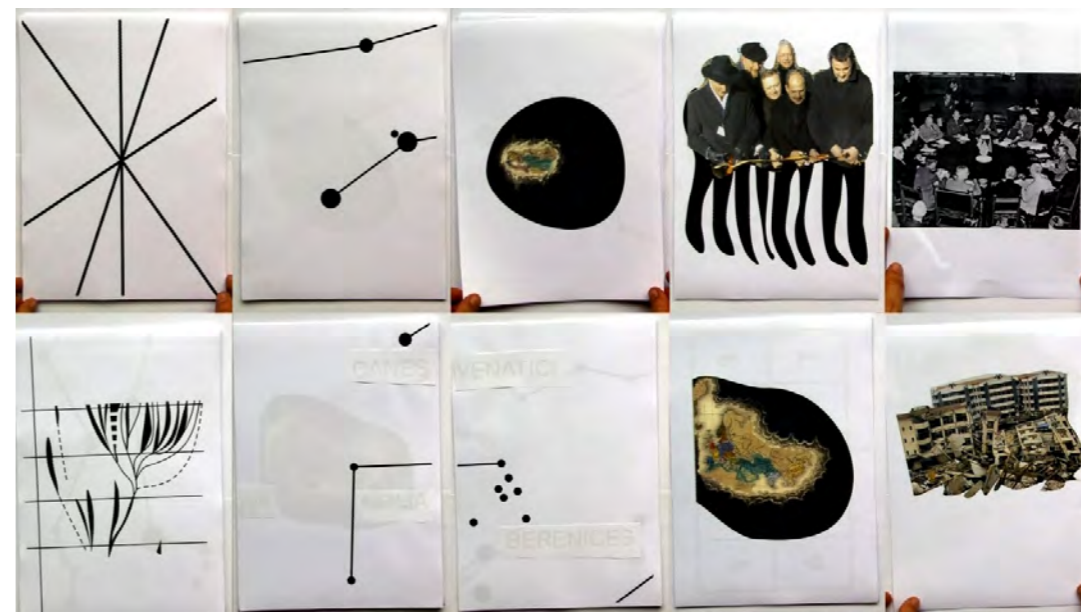


Zbyněk Baladrán
Boundaries of Autonomy, 2009
HD video installation

Assemblage Against Essences, 2009
HD video installation
Exhibition views: Cognitive Maps, Hunt Kastner Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic



Zbyněk Baladrán
Boundaries of Autonomy, 2009
Video stills



Zbyněk Baladrán
Assemblage Against Essences, 2009
Video stills

ZBYNĚK BALADRÁN

RENDEZ-VOUS NOWHERE

September 26, 2008 - January, 2009

Centro Cultural Montehermoso, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Araba, Spain

Curated by Beatriz Herráez

Artists: Zbyněk Baladrán, Kajsa Dahlberg, João Maria Gusmão & Pedro Paiva, Marcellvs L. David Maljković, Eva Morant Artazkoz, Silke Otto-Knapp, Oscar Tuazon.

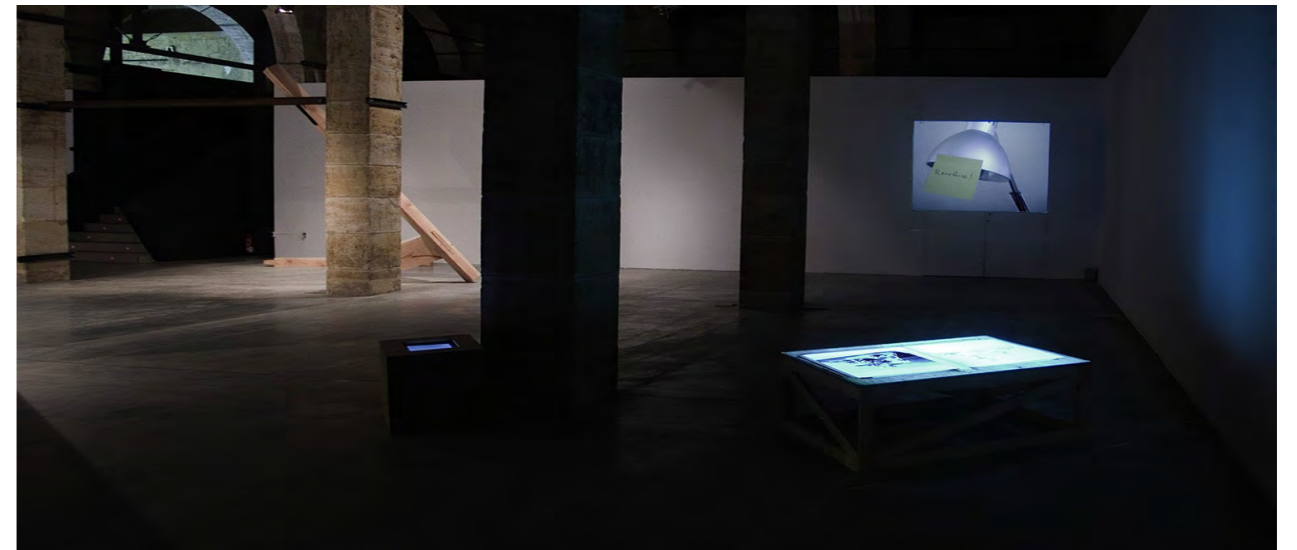
Press release:

Rendez-vous nowhere is a group show that takes as its starting point the description of an epoch given in the book *La Minéralisation de Dudley Craving MacAdam*, written by the French artist and poet Juliette Roche in 1918. The novel depicts the cultural translation into a new context—of the European Avant-garde in the USA during the interwar years. The central character is D.C.M.A., a composite of a number of the leading lights of the Dada movement in New York. “La Minéralisation” is a description of the artistic and political scene of the times that emerges from the impressions and details that are blended together in the book.

The works in the exhibition draw on accounts and events from a recent history, which are part of a collective memory, and are closely connected to literature and the Avant-garde movements of the 20th century. They are collages—assemblages of texts, images, architectures and objects—which establish personal codes and processes deliberately difficult to translate into a context other than their own. They are fragments of information transported “out of their space and time” that make use of an interrupted past to silently construct the present.

In David Maljkovic’s video installation “Scene for new heritage” “history is transformed into fiction and time engenders collective amnesia”; the watercolors by Silke Otto-Knapp represent groups of figures that vanish in transparent sets and blurred spaces; Oscar Tuazon’s paper sculptures are folded pages of a 1968 architecture essay by Steve Baer; Kajsa Dahlberg’s work compiles scribbles and notes that readers of Swedish public libraries left on the margins of Virginia Woolf’s novel *A Room of One’s Own*. Other works in the exhibition include the abstract spaces in Marcellvs L’videos; image production devices such as “The Projector of Solids (or the Dream of a Rock)”, a camera obscura by João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva; Zbyněk Baladrán’s examination of fragments of texts ranging from *The Communist Manifesto* to the writings of the Czech architect Karel Honzik; and sculptures by Eva Morant Artazkoz, an accumulation of traversable pieces as fragments of an object “that it is not expected to be revealed”.

Beatriz Herráez



Zbyněk Baladrán

Exhibition views: Rendez-vous Nowhere, Centro Cultural Montehermoso, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Araba, Spain, 2008



Zbyněk Baladrán

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