

Zdena Kolečková
Strange Botany and Other Stories
14 March – 17 June 2018
Prague City Gallery
Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, 3rd floor
Karlova 189/2, Prague 1
Exhibition Curator: Jiří Černický

In today's society, which is becoming increasingly globalized, "post-globalization" activities are naturally emerging, attempting to give emphasis to alternative approaches aimed at smaller, authentic, regional communities. For some protagonists of such non-mainstream activities, it is often characteristic that they focus on exploring detailed, sometimes almost hidden phenomena that define a specific space systematically and in depth. Zdena Kolečková is one of them.

Her artistic references reveal connections ingrained in a region that has been looted since the beginning of the Second World War, even though it is one of the most magnificent natural and landscape jewels of Central Europe. The Ústí Region belongs among the most disturbed social environments in Bohemia to this day, to a great extent. At the same time, it is a region with deep cultural roots that have been growing from prehistory to the period when it became the European center of Romanticism, which was literally bewildered by the beauty of its fantastic landscape.

Zdena Kolečková's exhibition *Strange Botany and Other Stories*, prepared for the exhibition space of Prague City Gallery's Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, combines the principles of a thematically-distinct, current project and a probe into the wider context of the direction of the artist's long-term creative calling. The basic axis of the exhibition consists of installations in which biological, vegetative elements, especially medicinal plants, play the role of a protagonist in a particular plot set by Zdena Kolečková over the course of 20th-century history, in our present and also in the near future. This "strange" botany reflects the characteristic dramatic, tragic, and sometimes obscure or absurd situations associated with the displacement of various people living in Central Europe.

This partially-retrospective exhibition can be seen as a thorough survey of Kolečková's art, which includes specific studies with environmental or sociological elements calling not just for the consolidation of the elements of community responsibility (i.e., sensitivity to the environment and society), but also referring to history as the only relevant civilizational continuum. In her solo exhibition, the artist presents "stories" about the search for cultural identity, the potential of authentic human "obsession and determination" despite the obstacles surrounding humanity, and humanity's fierce independence despite unfavorable social conditions.

The narrative line of Kolečková's exhibition in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, accompanied both by more objective comments and more subjective self-analyses, reflects in a broad but logically-structured perspective the experiences and memories of a child growing up in the raw, totalitarian atmosphere of the North Bohemian borderlands, the impressions of a young person euphorically accepting the change of the social paradigm after 1989, and the reflections of a mature woman looking back over the past and following current social developments with growing fear and concern.

Exhibition Curator: Jiří Černický
Coordinator on behalf of Prague City Gallery: Olga Malá
Graphic Design: Tomáš Trnobranský
Copy Editing and English Translation: Vladimíra Šefranka Žáková
Head of Installation and Production: Diana Brabcová
Head of Public Relations and Marketing: Michaela Vrchotová
Head of Educational Programs: Lucie Haškovcová

Venue: Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, 3rd floor, Karlova 189/2, Prague 1
Term: 14 March – 17 June 2018
Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

**Contact Person for Journalists: Michaela Vrchotová, +420 725 818 721,
vrchotova@ghmp.cz
More Information: www.ghmp.cz, www.facebook.com/GHMP.cz**

Accompanying Program

Guided tour with the artist Zdena Kolečková and the exhibition curator Jiří Černický
Thursday, 19 April 2018, 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, 7 June 2018, 6:00 p.m.

Discussion on “Sudetenland from Beneš to Zeman. A forgotten region where the real history of the Czech Republic is formed”
Moderated by Petr Honzejek, commentator of *Hospodářské noviny*
Thursday, 24 May 2018, 6:00 p.m.

Saturday art workshops

Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace
Saturday, 12 May 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Industrial Landscape
Saturday, 2 June 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Experimental Herbarium

During the art workshops, following the example of Zdena Kolečková we will focus on the theme of memories, stories and personal relationships to a place. In our artistic responses we will explore the artist's works dealing with the environmental and sociological issues of the Ústí Region that has been considerably looted in the past, but is still one of the most magnificent natural and landscape jewels of Central Europe. We will create paintings of industrial landscape applying the principles of classical landscape painting, juxtaposing two different aesthetic dimensions. Following the example of herbaria, we will create study drawings of medicinal herbs, to which we will attach handwritten texts related to

their effects. Traditional artistic approaches will be also complemented by experiential events, which will develop the artist's gardening experiments. We will plant samples of unknown seeds into the prepared soil. This small botanical experiment will then continue in the privacy of the participants' homes. We will also change the function of chemical product packaging and employ it in the aesthetic function of a vase. The contrast between these containers and the vegetation placed in them will enable us to better understand some of the artist's concepts.

Sunday art workshops for adults and senior citizens

Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Friday, 11 May 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Exploration of Organisms, Environment and Landscape I

Sunday, 13 May 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Exploration of Organisms, Environment and Landscape II

Friday, 25 May 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Industrial Environment as a Motif I

Sunday, 27 May 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Industrial Environment as a Motif II

Within the first series of art workshops we will respond to the botanical level of the exhibition. The material of the artwork will consist of biological samples of plants (various specimens from the interior or the exterior) and archive materials brought in by each participant. Using experimental approaches and art techniques (drawing, painting, collage, assemblage and non-traditional techniques), the participants will create artistic references to their living space. The follow-up series of interactive workshops will reflect Zdena Kolečková's sensitivity to the environment and the issue of harmful substances. During the art workshop, we will touch on topics such as the impact of industrial plants, the environment and undesirable substances. The industrial environment and its aspects will become a motif for drawings and paintings.

Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups with the possibility of subsequent creative response in the form of their own work. We adapt the events in terms of time, theme and performance levels according to the specific requirements of each school.

In addition to the above-mentioned events, there will be other educational activities for other groups of visitors, such as the disadvantaged and parents on maternity and/or parental leave and their children.

Reservation required

Price: Children under 10, students of art schools, teachers – CZK 5;

children over 10 years CZK 20

Contact Person: Lucie Haškovcová, lucie.haskovcova@ghmp.cz, 606 612 987, 608 216 418

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Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally processes art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the Prague City Gallery exhibits in seven buildings: The Stone Bell House, Municipal Library – 2nd floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bílek, Troja Château and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.