



## **“GALLERY”**

### **Lukáš Jasanský and Martin Polák present Jan Merta**

**2 November 2016 – 12 March 2017**

**Municipal Library of Prague, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

**Mariánské Square 1, Prague 1**

**Open daily except for Mondays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., on Thursdays to 8 p.m.**

**Exhibition Curator: Hana Larvová**

**Exhibition Concept and Design: Lenka Mertová**

With slight exaggeration, the painter Jan Merta (born 1952) calls his current exhibition at Prague City Gallery his first baccalaureate. He is not exhibiting here for the first time; this is his second one-man show in this gallery. The first one was a small exhibition of paintings which took place 23 years ago in 1993 at the Old Town Hall. He attracted attention by his specific creative thinking, which he has developed in his paintings and, more recently, also objects. In 2005, together with Petr Nikl, Tomáš Císařovský and Antonín Střížek, he participated in a group exhibition in the Municipal Library of Prague entitled “And what are you thinking about?”. Its curator Marek Pokorný had conceived it as a “thematic exhibition” which highlighted, among other things, certain common aspects of their painterly expression. Merta is one of the artists whom we associate with “New Painting” represented by the generation emerging in the 1980s, whose artistic views were formed by the then upcoming Postmodernism. Their more or less consistent break with the principles of Modernism generated peculiar creative individualities with a broad range of ideas about painting and painting styles. From today’s perspective it is apparent that Merta, focusing his art on his personal memories, is a prominent representative of such artists.

At the current exhibition on the premises of the Municipal Library Merta presents an extensive set of visually and semantically consistent paintings, which are accompanied by small-scale drawings, sculptures and installations. Over the years he has not changed the nature of his works, but only elaborated on some of the themes or expressed them more specifically. The decisive criterion for their selection has always been his specific relationship to the actual process of painting. Merta transforms the space of the painting with an unusual structure of the represented image into a mental projection of experienced events. He creates his personal iconography, in which fragments, in some places enlarged, represent several levels of meaning of the artist’s memory in the otherwise vacated space. Each of his paintings arises from the need for communication – and so each of them has its fundamental reason. The seemingly austere painterly expression is counterbalanced by the maximally concise content. This also applies to other means of expression, connected with the medium of painting by their content.

**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 – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bílek, Troja Château and František Bílek’s House in Chýnov.

The exhibition for the premises of the Municipal Library has been conceived as a site specific project. In it, Merta interconnects his latest works in progress with his existing works of an older date, which acquire other meanings in the new context. He is continuing the dialogue with his audience, begun several years ago, and puts together fragments of his personal story. An integral part of the exhibition is his “biography” in the form of a set of black-and-white photos made by Merta’s personal artistic friends, Lukáš Jasanský and Martin Polák. The entire comprehensive series, entitled *Jan Merta*, has already 142 items. Exhibited for the first time in 2009 in the Wannieck Gallery in Brno, the series of selected photographs maps crucial points of Merta’s life, including his exhibition “traces” across various European cities, completing the exhibition as a whole.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with reproductions of the exhibited works, selected photographs from the series *Jan Merta* by Lukáš Jasanský and Martin Polák and photographs from the exhibition. The text of the catalogue consists of an interview with Jan Merta by Hana Larvová and texts by Oldřich Král, Lenka Mertová, Martin Dostál and Pavel Vančát. The catalogue will be published on 3 December 2016, when there will be a “Cultural Night in the Gallery” with a concert and an inauguration of the exhibition catalogue. Clarinet and saxophone will be played by the leading Czech improviser and composer Pavel Zlámal.

Hana Larvová

## **Jan Merta**

Born 4 December 1952 in Šumperk, Czech Republic

1968–1972 studies at the Secondary School of Art in Prague

1972–1981 various jobs – non-artistic work

1981–1987 studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague

1991–2002 represented by Galerie MXM in Prague

2003–2015 represented by Galerie Johnen + Schöttle in Cologne (later Johnen Gallery in Berlin)

Since 2004 represented by Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle in Munich

Since 2004 represented by Galerie Martin Janda in Vienna

Since 2014 represented by Galerie SVIT in Prague

In 2005 and 2009, Person of the Year in Art

Lives and works in Prague and České Lhotice

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**Exhibition Concept and Design:** Lenka Mertová

**Architectural Design:** Lenka Mertová, Jan Merta, Jonatan Merta

**Exhibition Curator:** Hana Larvová

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Galerie Závodný

COLLET Prague / Munich

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

private lenders

**Venue:** Municipal Library of Prague, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

**Term:** 2 November 2016 – 12 March 2017

**Opening Hours:** Tuesday – Sunday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Thursday: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

**Entrance Fee:** CZK 120 full (adults) / CZK 60 reduced (students) / CZK 30 (senior citizens)

**Contact Person for Journalists:** Michaela Vrchotová, +420 725 818 721, [vrchotova@ghmp.cz](mailto:vrchotova@ghmp.cz)

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## **ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMS**

### **Guided tours with the artist Jan Merta and the curator Hana Larvová:**

Thursday, 12 January 2017 at 6 p.m.

Sunday, 19 February 2017 at 4 p.m.

Thursday, 2 March 2016 at 6 p.m.

**A Cultural Night in the Gallery** with a concert and an inauguration of the exhibition catalogue. Clarinet and saxophone will be played by the leading Czech improviser and composer Pavel Zlámal.

Saturday, 3 December 2016, at 5:00 p.m.

### **Saturday Art Workshops:**

Saturday, 10 December 2016, 1 p.m. – 6 p.m. **Painting and the Body**, workshop with Jan Merta, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Saturday, 21 January 2017, 1 p.m. – 6 p.m. **Imprints and Traces of Color**, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Saturday, 25 February 2017, 1 p.m. – 6 p.m. **The Possibilities of Painting**, Municipal Library

In a series of art workshops we will explore the subjective and meditative nature of Jan Merta's art from various starting points. During our creative work we will operate on the border between the concrete and the abstract. Our art activities will focus on large-scale paintings, the reduction of forms, changes of the scale, playing with colors and shifts towards abstraction. We will also expand on the theme of an imprint, record and trace. Color prints of various materials, which we encounter in everyday life, will serve as a stimulus for the realization of large-scale paintings. We will achieve a simplicity and purity of the art form not only by using traditional techniques, but also by the non-traditional way of painting with tea and coffee in imitation of the artist, while in terms of the content we will focus on an important section of Merta's work, in which he defines the internal space, packaging, containers, shelters, corners and depths. We will also deal with this theme within the conceptual overlaps in the realization of minor variations, in which our means of communication will be a mailing envelope, which can be hiding anything put into it by its creator. The accompanying programs will also include a workshop led by Jan Merta and lecturers of Prague City Gallery.

Saturday workshops are intended for children, families with children and other interested parties of all ages, including the elderly and disadvantaged. The arrival and departure is optional – i.e., whenever within the scheduled time.

### **Art workshops for adults and senior citizens:**

Sunday, 15 January 2017, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. **Fragments and Hidden Stories in Images**, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sunday, 22 January 2017, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. **The Objective World as a Dialogue of Colors**, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

The interactive workshops will focus on the painting by Jan Merta, his artistic approaches and relationship to a painting as a concept. We will deal with construction of the space of the painting as a way out of the

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objective world and its small life-size fragments towards their enlargement in oversized dimensions, shifting into other planes, creating new stories and getting close to forms of abstraction. We will also concentrate on the artist's color scheme. We will mix colors, experiment with unusual shades and deal with relationships between colors.

**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.

Reservation required

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.

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](mailto:lucie.haskovcova@ghmp.cz), 606 612 987, 608 216 418

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