

TOMÁŠ RULLER: PERFORM-MADE – SUSTAINABLE FLASHBACKS

27 June – 14 Oct. 2018

Prague City Gallery

Municipal Library, 2nd floor

Mariánské náměstí 1, Prague 1

Open daily except Mondays, 10am to 6pm, Thursdays to 8pm

curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

The exhibition at Prague City Gallery is part of a joint exhibition project with the Brno House of Arts, which hosted the first part of the project in the autumn of 2017. Like the exhibition in Brno, the aim of the Prague exhibition is to provide a comprehensive overview of Ruller's work, though with a different emphasis. It focuses more on his work in the area of moving images, with the aim of presenting two fundamental areas of his work. On the one hand, it aims to show the original action in the original context; on the other, it shows Ruller's typical approach to recording and archiving as a living material for a new and constantly updated work of art.

Nevertheless, the exhibition's main focus remains the medium of performance art, which forms the main foundation of Ruller's work. His first documented performance, *By the Way* (1974), reflected the just 17-year-old artist's clear embrace of the non-material art of the conceptualists of the 1960s and 1970s. His work shows influences from the artists associated with Allan Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, and James Lee Byars, or – within the Czech art scene – the action art of Milan Knížák or the body artists Karel Miler, Jan Mlčoch, and Petr Štembera. Ruller, however, continued to develop the concept of performance, constantly in search of new and hybrid forms of expression on the margins of artistic production. In the space between performance art on the one hand and sculpture, painting, theater and video art on the other, an artist can freely become a living sculpture, can create processual objects, images, scenic designs and texts, and can transform his or her work over and over again, reproducing it into new forms, media, and contexts.

Ruller's study of sculpture in the 1970s had little influence on him, but he was all the more shaped by the rise of new technologies and the new reflexive language of postmodernism. In the mid-1980s, Ruller was one of the co-founders of the School of Attention and Black Market, two international movements with a focus on action art. In line with the ideas of these movements, he created his own range of symbolic elements and techniques with the aim of establishing new and socially engaged rituals related to the present day and applicable in the new era. In combining classical media with performance art, he created a new concept in which the performer's body becomes a sculpture in motion, a three-dimensional object that changes in time and becomes a part of the action. All that remains is the imprint (or rather, the afterglow) of the work through carefully planned and preserved documentation and via "perform-made" objects.

The exhibition at Prague City Gallery is divided into forty chapters whose titles form an overview of the basic ideas that Tomáš Ruller works with. The texts accompanying the exhibition were written in collaboration with philosopher **Miroslav Petříček**.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Kant Publishers is planning a comprehensive monograph of Ruller's work containing numerous historical as well as contemporary texts by leading art theorists, including František Šmejkal, Igor Zhoř, Ludvík Hlaváček, Vlasta Čiháková-Noshiro, Antonín Dufek, Petr Nedoma, Pavlína Morganová, Edith Jeřábková, and Jan Zálešák. The monograph also includes authentic writings by legendary performance artists Boris Nieslony and Zygmunt Piotrowski.

Jitka Hlaváčková

Tomáš Ruller (*1957, Brno) is active primarily in the fields of action art and new media. He is also an organizer of numerous cultural events and a university teacher. In 1976–82, Ruller studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. His first artistic performances date to the first half of the 1970s, and in the early 1980s he became one of the first Czech artists to systematically work with new media and video art. Today, Ruller consciously combines these two modern artistic disciplines, which he also confronts with classical working methods – sculpture, object art, installation art, painting, and photography – in order to create original hybrid forms of artistic presentation.

Ruller initiated or participated in numerous important underground art exhibits and festivals such as *Malechov* (1980 and 1981), *Lesser Town Courtyards* (Prague, 1981), *A Meeting in the Courtyards* (Prague, 1982), and *Chmelnice* (Mutějovice, 1983). He co-founded the European movement for performance art *School of Attention / East-West Project* (1983) and the related *Black Market* (1986), and also organized the movement's Prague meetings (*Open Situation*, 1989 and 2007). After 1989, he exhibited and presented his performance pieces in most European countries and also in Israel, Canada, Japan, the USA (New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, etc.), Mexico, China, and elsewhere. Ruller's name and activities have long been associated with international figures of performance art such as Chris Burden, Marina Abramović, Stelarc, and ORLAN, as well as with representatives of the new media scene such as Steina and Woody Vasulka or Van Gogh TV. Since 1994, Tomáš Ruller has headed the Video-Multimedia-Performance Institute at Brno University of Technology's Faculty of Fine Arts, of which he was the dean from 1998 to 2000. He lives and works in Brno, Prague, and on the road.

www.ruller.cz

Curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

Graphic design: Studio Anymade

Exhibition partners: Ježek Brewery, Brno House of Arts, Town of Mikulov

Media partners: Art&Antiques, Art for Good, ArtMap, Artikl, Czech Radio, Flash Art, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, XANTYPA

Admission: CZK 120 adults / CZK 60 students / CZK 30 seniors

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Additional information: www.ghmp.cz, www.facebook.com/GHMP.cz

Accompanying program

Guided tour with Tomáš Ruller and curator Jitka Hlaváčková

26 July 2018, 6pm
16 Aug. 2018, 6pm
13 Sept. 2018, 6pm

Performance Train

11 July 2018, 6–8pm

This train traveling between European cities will bring dozens of artists to Prague. Some of them will join with Tomáš Ruller to present their interventions into PERFORM-MADE.

Symposium

12–13 Oct. 2018

Details to be announced

Saturday art workshops

Sat. 29 Sept. 2018, 1–6pm, Disappearance of Identity, Municipal Library

Sat. 13 Oct. 2018, 1–6pm, Illusion and New Media, Learning Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

During the art workshops, we will let ourselves be inspired by Tomáš Ruller's action art and video art. Working together with the other participants, we will create various situations based on the concept of original play. The resulting original actions will take place within the given place and time, with the use of ordinary objects in unusual ways. Working in the exhibition space, participants will come into direct contact with Ruller's personal archive and will have the chance to use these real items during their own action. We will find inspiration in Ruller's actions during which he hid his face with a black mask and hat (e.g., *No Body*, 2014; *Appearance*, 2015). Masks and hats will be available for participants to try out for themselves what it is like to have one's identity disappear into an anonymous form. Using digital still and video cameras, we will record moments of confrontation between the reveal form of a specific identity and the anonymous form of the human face – a more than topical subject today. During the workshops, we will be working on the basis of Ruller's installations (*Virtual Eye*, 1994; *Video Sky*, 1996; and *Chimera – Living Image*, 1997), using new media as a means for creating a visual illusion that we will project into various parts of the studio. These newly created situations will then be further transmitted into other rooms using a video camera and a data projector.

The Saturday workshops are intended for children, families, and any other interested persons of all ages, including seniors and socially disadvantaged members of the public. You may come and go at any time during the workshop hours.

Art studio for adults and seniors

Fri. 3 Aug. 2018, 3–6pm, Records, Symbols, and Gestures I, Learning Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Fri. 31 Aug. 2018, 3–6pm, Records, Symbols, and Gestures II, Learning Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Inspiration will come from the work of artist Tomáš Ruller. We will focus on the multiple and open meanings of a work of art and on Ruller's work in the area of the moving image (action art and video art). During the workshops, we will create real artifacts (such as imprints on variously sized pieces of paper) that we will

then record within the context of the historical interior of the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace. We will also record and transmit images using digital media. Participants will explore the possibilities of photographic documentation and video as ways of documenting an action, with an emphasis on the process, the moving image, and the element of time.

The interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools, age categories, and interest groups include the chance to respond to the exhibition by creating art of one's own. The program can be adapted in terms of length, subject matter, and level of difficulty to suit the specific demands of every school.

Reservations required.

Price: children up to age 10, art school students, teachers CZK 5; over 10 years of age CZK 20

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Besides the above events, there will also be other educational activities for other target groups such as socially disadvantaged individuals or parents on parental leave with their children.