

Harmonices Mundi – Johannes Kepler

Prague City Gallery

Troja Château, U Trojského zámku 1, Prague 7

28 March – 4 November 2018

Opening Hours: Tue–Thu, Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. / Fri 1–6 p.m., gardens until 7 p.m.

Exhibition Curator: Magdalena Juříková

Vladimír Škoda exhibits in Prague at two venues at the same time: Museum Kampa – The Jan and Meda Mládek Foundation, and with the opening of a new season also at Troja Château. The two projects are conceptually different and form an interesting synergy. While the Museum Kampa features an extensive retrospective of his work, Troja Château presents an interaction with the interior, which, according to our previous experience, smoothly combines with minimalist and geometric forms, making a strong contrast, thus creating a great environment for sculptural works of this kind.

Vladimír Škoda is a naturalized Frenchman. He left Czechoslovakia in 1968 in order to devote himself to art and free himself from bondage. But he could not free himself from a persistent memory of the *genius loci* that emanated from the French Crown House, a place where Johannes Kepler lived and worked. Kepler and other famous astronomers of the past have become Vladimír Škoda's lifelong inspiration.

He apprenticed as a turner and this "aristocratic" and mathematically accurate craft was a perfect preparation for his artistic career. His fateful encounter with the French sculptor César Baldaccini at the École National Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris soon completed his search for a sculptural expression.

Metal as a multifaceted material has dominated his work in various forms. Recently, Škoda has moved from forging it in fire and using hammers to more sophisticated techniques of metal processing, honing spherical shapes to perfection. His favorite materials are stainless steel, copper and bronze whose surface is further processed by sandblasting, adding patina and engraving. The themes of his works are still closely connected to Kepler's theories, and to the ideas of mathematicians and astronomers who fascinate him with their unceasing attempts to describe the laws of the functioning of the universe and our position within it. For this, Škoda uses the form of a sphere and a circle that we identify with the planetary system and which at the same time are symbols of infinity.

Harmonices Mundi is Kepler's major book of 1619, in which, in addition to congruence in music, astrology and other areas, in one of the five chapters he discusses harmony in the motion of planets. This title, borrowed from Škoda's favorite scholar, aptly summarizes Škoda's own lifelong efforts, aimed at the harmony and purity of forms and the precise definition of their mutual relationships. Mirror surfaces of spheres and ellipsoids then enter into an optical game with the surrounding space. The frescoes and stucco of the château ceilings are moving away and getting closer or disappearing depending on our point of view. This is an encounter of two otherwise unconnectable worlds, and the historical and mythical scenes of the ceiling paintings are carried away by the magical depth of the mirrors as a gravitational field.

Magdalena Juříková

Vladimír Škoda

- 1942 Born in Prague
- 1958–1960 Trained as turner-miller
- 1960–1967 Self-taught in drawing, he also became interested in painting
- 1968 Came to France and began working as a sculptor
- 1968–1969 Studied at the École des Arts Décoratifs in Grenoble
- 1970–1972 Studied in César's studio at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris
- 1973–1975 Sojourn at the Académie de France – Villa Medici in Rome, where he created a series of iron wire sculptures
- 1975 Began to forge his first works in fire, which in the late 1970s resulted in monumental sculptures
- 1975–1980 Residence at the Cité internationale des arts et Cité Norvins in Paris
- 1975–1977 His first solo exhibitions in the Primo Piano Gallery in Rome (1975) and the Ilanne Gallery in Paris (1977)
- 1979 Monumental work *Horizontal – Vertical for the symposium Situation 1* in Regensburg
- 1980–1985 Professor at the École Supérieur d'Art in Le Havre
- 1985–1994 Professor at the École Supérieur d'Arts et de Design in Marseille, Grand Luminy
- 1987 Solo exhibition *de l'intérieur* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
- 1988 A perfect sphere appeared in his work
- 1991 Created his first spherical sculptures with a mirror-finish surface, and a year later presented them at the Moulins Albigeois in Albi
- 1994 Inspired by the movement of the pendulum, he produced *Hommage à Foucault* presented in 1995 at the *Constellation* exhibition in the Galerie Rudolfinum
- 1994–2007 Professor at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg
- 1995–1996 Created seminal works *Kora* and *Untitled (Harmonices Mundi)*, in which he used a polished concave mirror for the first time
- 1999 His work *badria* was presented at the *Cosmos* exhibition at the Musée des Beaux-arts in Montreal and at the Palazzo Grasi in Venice
- Inspired by the vibration and rotating motion of the mirror, he created a series *Miroir du Temps* presented in 2006 at the *Sppechio del Tempo* exhibition in Spoleto, Italy, and in 2007 at the *Fourth Dimension* exhibition in the Trade Fair Palace of the National Gallery in Prague
- 2013 Launched a series of exhibitions in France, Germany and the Czech Republic, accompanied by the monograph *de l'intérieur* (from the inside), offering a cross-section of his oeuvre from the 1990s to the present

The exhibition is being held under the patronage of Mr. Luc Lévy, Director of the French Institute in Prague

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

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The exhibition MYSTERIUM COSMOGRAPHICUM – Johannes Kepler was opened on 19 March 2018 in Museum Kampa – The Jan and Meda Mládek Foundation and will run until 3 June 2018.

Accompanying Program to the Exhibition:

Saturday art workshops

Eco-studio in the orangery of Troja Château

30 June 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Playing with Reflections

14 July 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., From Atom to Whole Universe

22 September 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Mirroring the Space

Our artistic responses will be based on the artist's abstract forms, inspired mainly by cosmic bodies and the related theories and laws of Johannes Kepler. The perfect form of a sphere, mirroring the surrounding space, will become the main means for creating small-scale and large sculptures, objects and installations. We will also focus on Land Art and site-specific style of work. The resulting works will be temporarily installed during the workshops in selected locations in the garden. We will develop the materials most commonly used by the artist, namely stainless steel, copper and bronze. We will assemble objects from balls with golden and silver surfaces, allowing for the reflection of the surrounding environment. We will try to render micro and macro worlds – atoms, molecules and planets found not only in our solar system, but also unknown cosmic bodies and stars. In addition to creating real sculptures, using reproduced photographs of the interior and exterior of the château the participants will design spatial realizations for specific sites in the form of sketches. We will also pay attention to Baroque sculptures at the Tartar staircase, where many ancient deities bear names of planets (Jupiter, Mars, Pluto, Neptune and Mercury). During the exhibition, special haptic art workshops for the blind and visually impaired visitors and full-day art workshops for the general public will take place continuously during summer holidays.

Sunday art workshops for adults and senior citizens

Eco-studio in the orangery of Troja Château

13 July 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Created World in Object I

15 July 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Created World in Object II

24 August 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Abstract Forms versus Geometry I

26 August 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Abstract Forms versus Geometry II

24 June 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Garden Party I

22 July 2018, 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Garden Party II

Interactive workshops will respond to the principles of Vladimír Škoda's art. We will pay particular attention to his sources of inspiration, i.e., the universe, a sphere as a perfect form and geometric forms. During our creative work we will deal with the boundaries of abstraction and geometry, spatial plans and the inner vs. outer world. We will concentrate on the assembling of objects and working with perspective and image. Within the first series of workshops we will move along the lines of Object Art and Land Art. In the second series of workshops we will focus on artistic experiments with the surface and shape of the sphere. The theme of the final workshop will be a garden party that will be accompanied by live music. Art