



## START UP VII

### JIŘÍ ŽÁK / THE SHATTERED EPISTEMOLOGIST

Prague City Gallery

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, ground floor – Start Up

3 March – 7 May 2017, Tue–Sun 10am–6pm, admission free

Curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

“We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.” – Karl Rove (Ron Suskind, “Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 17 October 2004.)

In the exhibition spaces of City Gallery Prague dedicated to art by young artists, the gallery presents the latest work by Jiří Žák, a graduate of Tomáš Vaněk’s Studio of Intermedia Art at the Academy of Fine Arts and a winner of the 2015 Exit Award. Žák’s video entitled *The Shattered Epistemologist*, created during the artist’s time in Berlin, represents the climax of his two-year period of creating video essays, during which his approach to this genre has radically evolved – from the use, analysis, and re-contextualization of archival footage (*Second Person Singular*, 2015, and *Mother City*, 2015), he has moved towards the creation of autonomous experimental fiction films. A central point of reference in Žák’s most recent works is the legacy of well-known British experimental filmmaker John Akomfrah, the author of incisive documentary syntheses, converted into a specific poetically-founded artistic language.

In his latest video, *The Shattered Epistemologist*, Žák collaborates with the charismatic Berlin-based German-Beninese dancer Meïmouna Coffi. Working with a script by Žák, Coffi has created an improvised dance choreography based, among other things, on the physical gestures we use when we operate digital equipment. A collage of dance sequences and blurry, abstract footage – is a visual-poetic metaphor, accompanied by a subjective verbal and text-based commentary that places the fictitious situations within a real and specific context.

*The Shattered Epistemologist* is centered around the semantic properties of “truth” and “post-truth”, in the context of the modern era’s information smog and media manipulation. It refers to the current debate surrounding “post-truth,” a term whose usage increased by more than 2000% last year, earning it the title of Oxford Dictionary’s 2016 Word of the Year.

**City Gallery Prague** is one of the Czech Republic’s leading galleries, with a focus on modern and contemporary art. The gallery is responsible for the City of Prague’s art collections, including acquisition, preservation, and research activities. Currently, City Gallery Prague organizes exhibits at seven locations: the Stone Bell House, the 2nd floor of the Municipal Library, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Villa Bilek, Troja Palace, and the František Bilek House in Chýnov.

“The only thing that matters is what seems real to you. You have the right to exploit objective meaning for your own purposes,” says one of the figures in *The Shattered Epistemologist*. “From the position of a consumer of today’s information explosion, accelerated by social networks and by the altogether unclear role of gatekeepers, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find a solid footing. Whereas in the past, people searched for ways of recognizing the truth through reason or the senses, today we are faced by the problem of being alienated from the processes of perception. All sensory and partially also rational experience of the individual is increasingly mediated by fragmented virtual information. The senses are losing their relevance; reason has become overloaded. Since we generally cannot verify the truthfulness of information, we can only guess at which of its increasingly more numerous versions to adopt as our own. Just as the word ‘post-truth’ has become the word of the year, so too has the theory of knowledge (epistemology) become a more frequent subject of discourse. The subjectivization of reality is a good reason to engage in the difficult task of looking for new ways of formulating fundamental principles of knowledge that, despite their emphasis on the individual, do not lose sight of humankind,” says curator Jitka Hlaváčková.

**Curator:** Jitka Hlaváčková

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## ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

### **Guided tour with the artist**

6pm, Tue. 21 March 2017

### **Saturday art workshops**

1–6pm, Sat. 6 May 2017, **Post-Truth**, Education Center in the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

We will let Jiří Žák's videos inspire us to create our own works of art. The main theme will be the visual possibilities of manipulating the truth on the emotional level. Using color, composition, and text, we will shift and change the meaning of selected photographs to create different versions of the original digital image that evoke a range of emotions. In this way, we will explore the ways in which media manipulation distorts, alters, or deforms our perception of reality.

The Saturday workshops are intended for children, families, and other people of all ages, including seniors and socially disadvantaged citizens. Participants may come and go at any time during workshop.

**We offer interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools** and other age or interest groups, with the option of subsequently creating your own artworks. We can adjust the tour's duration, subject, and level of difficulty to meet the specific needs of every school.

Reservations required

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

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Besides the above described events, we can also organize other educational activities for specific target groups such as socially disadvantaged visitors or parents on maternity/paternity leave.

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