

DARINA ALSTER: TIMELESSNESS

12 Jul – 15 Oct 2023

Prague City Gallery

Troja Château

U Trojského zámku 1, Prague 7

Open Tue–Wed, Fri–Sun 10 am–6 pm, Fri 1 – 6 pm

Curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

The site-specific installation *Timelessness*, created for newly opened spaces of the Troja Château, is an intimate, emotionally alive tissue woven from many layers of time. Its building material is the artist's personal memories of her prematurely deceased mother, but also the time and place where we are at this moment – the moment of our physical presence.

At the core of the installation there is a memory medium consisting of a box of slides, which 30–40 years ago was used by Dr. Alena Alsterová (1950–2000) in her lectures on Baroque art at the Department of Art History of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, where she worked between 1981 and 1994. *Timelessness* is an endless sequence of overlapping projections of pictorial mosaics made up of motifs of altars, architectural sculptures and other works of Baroque sculpture, through which the time of Troja Château's inception seems to break into the present. The personal psychological level of the work, referred to, among other things, by the elements of the so-called Rorschach tests, corresponds with its placement in the Baroque underground, which represents a layer of the subconscious and buried memories. Through the dialogue of the abstract Baroque compositions with the artist's personal memories, a part of a forgotten professional archive comes to life again together with a moment of revelation in the juxtaposition of many layers of time.

The theme of *Timelessness* is further developed in a natural way by the installation *Sleeping Sculpture*, which materializes the moment of an altered state of consciousness and of the body: sleep. In this circular, golden-white object, viewers can rest or even fall asleep and perceive the change in the passage of time and the meaning of things in the space of imaginary worlds.

The exhibition is complemented by a series of video objects, consisting of intricately composed recordings of the artist's earlier performative projects. The video object *Pater Noster* is a dynamic recording of the group performance *Remembrance / Body of History*, which took place on 23 June 2021 in and around the National Technical Library in Prague. In addition to Darina Alster, this group performance involved about 25 Czech and foreign performers. Each of them, in one moment and one place and on the basis of their artistic inventiveness, portrayed one of the many motifs from the history of the surrounding places and their inhabitants. The projection *Theatrum Mundi* is a record of a collective performance that took place in three phases over the years 2016–2019: *The Agony of Creation and Extinction* (Karlín Studios 2016), *States of Mind* (GASK 2018) and *The Topography of Emotions* (Trade Fair Palace, NG 2019). In a collective performance, a group of several dozen dancers and performers represented one living organism as in a human anthill, to use the words of Comenius. In the last phase, the individual elements of the group performance were presented as interactive video installations. Created in response to the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, the *24h Performance* project is a hybrid mix between a group performance, real life in the city, a music festival, a collective survival experience, a temporary autonomous zone, a film shoot, a demonstration or a continuous online conference. The exhibition features this

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project in the form of a Zoom conference, consisting of a decentralized recording of a group performance that took place continuously for 24 hours in the Swim Club, the Ferdinand Baumann Gallery, the adjacent streets of Wenceslas Square and in the homes of the audience. In all these collective performative projects mentioned above, the artist collaborated with Michal Kindernay and Pavel Havrda, who designed their technical realization. They have developed an application that makes it possible to work with the video footage of the camera used for shooting the video and to compose the resulting recordings into mapped video objects.

The exhibition includes a large-scale immersive group performance *Liquid Queer Memory*, which will take place at Troja Château on 22 August 2023 from 4 to 8 pm. The event is a performative study of the possibility of the fluidity or transience of a monument with the theme of the history of queer culture. The concept of the performance was created by Darina Alster together with the artist Martin Kámen, and its realization will again be provided by Pavel Havrda and Michal Kindernay.

Darina Alster is an intermedia artist, performer and techno-wizard. Her work focuses on new forms of performance with staged elements, costumes and site-specific situational scenography. The themes of her performances range from personal mystical-bodily experiences of temporality and strong emotions to highly engaged commentaries on globally shared aspects of the contemporary world, which are often hushed up or tabooed. She works with the tension between the apparent rationality of contemporary technologies and the irrationality of archaic media such as astrology, tarot cards, myths and fairy tales, and other kinds of religious and secular archetypes. In doing so, she often engages with archives of personal and social and institutional memory, or the memory of a specific place, which she perceives in personal and political contexts. She approaches social themes through personal bodily experience, which, when viewed as generational testimony, acquires social and critical relevance. The personal thus becomes political. Since 2019, together with Kateřina Olivová, she has been the head of the New Media Studio 2 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague.

Curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

Graphic Design: Sofie Sorokina

Audio: Polina Revunencko

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Entrance fee: CZK 150 full (adults) / CZK 60 discounted (students) / CZK 20 seniors

The exhibition programme of the Prague City Gallery is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

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More information:



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, focusing its exhibition activities mainly on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Bílek's Villa, the Troja Chateau and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

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