

Exhibition press release



TRAFO
GALLERY

Jakub Janovský: Bird In a Cage

September 8, 2023 - October 29, 2023

Curator: Petr Vaňous

After seven years, the artist Jakub Janovský returns to Trafo Gallery in Prague with the exhibition *Bird In a Cage*, which develops, evaluates and updates the starting point of drawing in the media of painting, collage, enamel, sculpture, object, video and installation. The process of “updating” is linked to his perennially present themes, which include memory and its antithesis, i.e. forgetting (!), as a subset of personal and collective experience. Cyclical time is subtly and craftily intertwined with historical time, often creating absurd, desperate or nostalgic situations. The exhibition is curated by Petr Vaňous.

The opening of the exhibition will take place on Thursday, September 7, 2023 from 7:00 p.m. The exhibition is accompanied by an original artist's foldout picture book in a limited number, which will be launched on September 21 from 6:00 p.m. The guided tour will take place on October 10 at 6:00 p.m. You can find more information at trafogallery.cz.

The exhibition at Prague's Trafo Gallery is a continuation of Janovský's synoptic show last year entitled *THE CEMENT GARDEN* at the Ales South Bohemian Gallery. The almost fairytale-like title *BIRD IN A CAGE* refers to the contradictory state of immediate association – prison or freedom, depending on whether the cage is occupied or remains empty. However, this semantic certitude of polarity is problematised by the artist and his exhibition project. It remains an open question as to what exactly a “cage” for a “bird” may symbolise and whether it sometimes seduces precisely by setting clear boundaries to a boundless freedom. The door is open, but there is something present that prevents the bird from leaving the cage or, on the contrary, that it accepts as an immutable given. The exhibition will present the artist's new paintings, sculptures and moving image in an interconnected installation.

JAKUB JANOVSKÝ (1984, Jihlava) while still attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (2004–2010, drawing, prof. Jitka Svobodová), Janovský began to create temporary drawings in abandoned interiors and on the exteriors of condemned buildings, many of which have survived only in photographs or videos of these “actions.” He has created numerous distinctive visual interventions into public space. These sketches and notes on walls often contained motifs that he subsequently explored in more detail in his paintings. For Janovský, drawing is a universal form of expression that can be used liberally, meaning it can be both descriptive and experimental, or it can be developed in a number of different and unexpected ways. Nor is it limited to standardized paper formats. His subject matter, which often sublimates traces of violence or deformation, is inspired by the processes of child-rearing and socialization. Similarly, he is fascinated by the forms by which this sublimation is expressed in later life. His vision is more laconic, sometimes almost unbearably direct. The true identity and person of his “agents” is often hidden behind an anonymous mask. Janovský explores the dark side of human behavior through history and across cultures. His art is of a timeless, symbolic character, and his paintings present universal cautionary situations – hence also their generally black-and-white or deliriously intense color schemes. In 2016, Trafo Gallery published the catalogue to his exhibition (*Silicon Family*).

Interview of exhibition curator Petr Vaňous with Jakub Janovský:

You graduated from the Drawing studio at AVU (Academy of Fine Arts in Prague). Even then, objects were part of your diploma. You are also interested in moving images, ready mades

and realizations in public space. Where does the ever stronger and more evident need for expression and media expansion in relation to the topic that interests you come from?

Already during my studies, I was interested in the possibility of moving a static image. In the beginning, in parallel with the wall drawings, I also made some kind of body art videos, where the drawing on the skin slightly undulated with the help of the movement of the human body. Later, it functioned as a "parasite" when it got on various useful objects. That was also part of my diploma.

In your latest work, there is a growing emphasis on stepping into space. You increasingly emphasize ready-mades and material figures in gallery installations, as your last big exhibition at Alšova South Bohemian Gallery (Concrete Garden) showed. Why?

Currently, I work with space and object in a more complex way, not only in relation to drawing. I create sculptures that often communicate directly with the hanging picture. They develop stories or duplicate themes from earlier works. It is very exciting for me to watch how a gesture during body movement (eg face in hands) can have a different atmosphere in a painting and a sculpture.

You work long-term with the topic of memories and memory. What fascinates you about him?

I perceive memory as our inner fundus. Unique and unrepeatably thanks to what we went through, or were apparently indirectly influenced by it. Everyone can use the memories and environment that shaped us and shape us in their own way in their own work. This is to cope with certain circumstances or, on the contrary, to point out something. I actually do both.

Do you have any cultural and artistic resources that you return to repeatedly?

This type of question is always misleading. There are countless sources and those to which I regularly return, many. I will either choose several authors and naturally forget someone, or I will say one or two and it will mean that they are the only ones. Well...for all of them, I will mention the short stories and prose of Jaroslav Havlíček, who repeatedly never ceases to amaze me with "his ordinariness".

Why the name of the upcoming project Bird in a Cage?

The title is a paraphrase of Kafka's aphorism "I am a cage looking for a bird". At the same time, this is the name of my older wall drawing and collage. For me, Bird in a Cage is actually about the impossibility of reversing some of the circumstances that life has prepared for us. For example family, social origin.

What can we look forward to in September at Trafo Gallery?

The viewer can look forward to new paintings, sculptures and maybe even... :)

Why is the exhibition accompanied by the publication of an author's book, which this time replaces the catalog?

When we published the Silicon Family catalog for the exhibition of the same name in Trafo gallery in 2016, I already had the desire to create a somewhat non-standard format of an art publication. Since then, I have been attracted by the idea of a simple playful puzzle, where we return to our childhood years – but the content is in the present.

We thank our partners for supporting Trafo Gallery: Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, City Hall of Prague, Canadian Medical, Seznam.cz, ČEZ Group, Forst, Prague Public Transit Company, Jatka78, Art District 7, Radio Color, Radio 1 and Wine4You.

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