**ANTICON**

MATOUŠ HÁŠA – NORBERT STEFAN

As illusion turns into reality, facts disappear. Time conceals and uncovers but also builds and destroys. Man perceives elapsed time and judges it as either a progression or degeneration. 'Time uncovers the truth,' wrote Roman philosopher Seneca: however, for the modern age, 'time uncovers perspectives' would be more apt. Artistic artefacts mirror their historical moment or generate fiction. Ever since Ancient Greece and Rome, humanity was incapable of self-conceptualisation through any metric other than the depiction of Man. Not even modern technologies can surpass this formal canon indelibly carved into the collective memory of humanity.

Contrast generates meaning. Juxtaposed here are the seemingly irreconcilable sculptural works of Matouš Háša, derived from the riches of our ancient heritage, and those of the experimental, Berlin-based painter Norbert Stefan, which make ample use of modern technologies. Together they erect a modern-day *musaeum*; the cosmological structure of Stefan's paintings and Háša's animated heroes generate in colour a tonally contemplative Greek temple.

A look from a distance blurs these structures and guides the viewer into perceiving them as a holographic recording as the exhibition space transforms itself into the ruins of an ancient temple. The viewer enters the parthenon and descends into a sacred shrine without the aid of virtual technologies. In it he finds the fragments of hallowed sculptures which the young artist Háša chisels with artisanal perfection from authentic carrara marble. With his tendency for mild irony, even parody, he imitates the centuries-old pantheon of gods, varies and contextualises the male and female torso, pays homage to the masters of sculpture but also dares to banalise the greatness of Michelangelo and Bernini. In his secular motifs he moves towards a modern impression of Auguste Rodin. Háša layers marble with polychromatic varnish and adds other materials as well. He struggles against the incorrect belief that all of our ancient heritage has been made in white monochrome. Háša rejects historical iconography and instead introduces new symbols which are far more comprehensible to the contemporary era.

The nostalgic walk through the temple at the acropolis accompanied by gods, demigods, philosophers and citizens is infused with historicity. In his atmospheric paintings Norbert Stefan uses blurry details and abstract fragments. The layers of paint evoke the surfaces of stone, soil and sand, unearthed by archeologists to unravel the shape of history. Stefan's paintings infuse with life blood the veins of Háša's fabled heroes of marble. Accents and clusters of colour are transported onto the canvas with the combination of print and layered oil painting. They resemble the compressed periodic tables of chemical reactions. Concurrently, Norbert Stefan draws from psychoanalysis and constructs a whole cosmos through his colour prints. His great sensitivity to the complementary nature of certain colours gradually crescendos from the first canvas to the last. In many ways the canvasses resemble the skeletal remains of archeological findings. This is enhanced by the symmetry of his compositions, which utilise x-ray and decal methods to build his distinct pictorial space. His morphology of shapes reveals is derived from cosmology and natural phenomena. While perceiving these associations, we join fragments into a whole to find the continuity of history reestablished.

To capture ideal proportions is in art equally important as the ability to evoke emotions. The sculptor of ancient icons Matouš Háša and the painter of chemical calligraphies Norbert Stefan enter a dialogue which offers the viewer copious space to apply his own imagination. The authors, through their respective artisanal expertise, descend into bare matter and conjure up a simulacrum of ancient monuments.

Exhibition curator:

Karolína Juřicová