**From my Country**

**Jakub Špaňhel**

**13. 2. – 12. 3. 2024**

DSC Gallery’s new season starts with the exhibition "From My Country" by Jakub Špaňhel. Under the telling title, the author presents themes that are particularly personal to him. "In the exhibition, I focus on my favourite themes, but because I've been working on them for so long, I decided to approach them with a special lightness this time. I try to capture the essence of what the countryside means to me. I do not illustrate, I simply convey my feelings about it,” Jakub Špaňhel explains.

This time, he depicts specific motifs in his signature gestural style, adding a sense of nostalgia. He employs a restrained palette to convey the tonality of the imagery, while the motifs themselves are simplified into minimalist hints. Everything else is lost and blurred into indeterminacy. Perhaps even this represents a moment of transition—after ten years, the artist is moving away from his central theme: butterflies.

In addition to butterflies, you can see his bouquets, church interiors, and chandeliers. The delicate shadow, silhouette of an outline, or fragility of a print reveal all of this. The artist emphasises the importance of pigmentation in depicting subtlety in addition to expressive lines. The materials' fragility and looseness contribute to the overall appearance. The artwork resembles faded memories.

Jakub Špaňhel is one of the country's best-selling contemporary artists. He describes his work as expressive impressionism. His artistic expression maintains its internal integrity. Jakub's move from Prague to the countryside, near the village of Sv. Jana pod Skalou, proved critical to his success. The local studio, where he works during the summer months, has produced the most fruitful themes that occur naturally in the immediate surroundings — a series of flowers and butterflies — bringing Jakub's garden to life on canvas. The local Baroque church of the Nativity of St John the Baptist adds to Jakub's symbolism. After ten years in the countryside, the artist bids a symbolic farewell to his butterfly and flower themes and shifts his focus far beyond the Alps, to Venice, Italy. His new studio is primarily intended to provide a new source of inspiration while also drawing attention to sacred and palatial architecture.

The exhibition also features a return to the roller method, which intervenes within the gallery space. The butterfly motif can thus be seen not only in the paintings, but also on the walls. Gallery director Edmund Čučka describes the artist as "an enfant terrible of the Czech art scene,” adding that “Špaňhel’s work has been shaped by Milan Knižák, as his teacher, and Jiří Dokoupil, to whom Jakub was an assistant for a long time. His works are represented in the permanent exhibition of the National Gallery. His current work is based even more on pigments, and this evokes in me the touches of Adriena Šimotová.”

**Jakub Špaňhel** (\*1976), after leaving Karviná, studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Prague, under Milan Knížák and Jiří David. After finishing his studies, Špaňhel went on a six-month guest visit to the Berlin studio of Jiří Georg Dokoupil, who in the 1980s founded the German group Die Neue Wilden (The New Wild), which had captivated the painter in his early years. After a six-month internship, Špaňhel joined Dokoupil as his assistant in Prague, where they shared a studio on Wenceslas Square. The artist describes his work to date as Expressionist Impressionism. The influence of Dokoupil can still be seen in his work, but his artistic expression retains its originality and inner integrity.

**Selected solo exhibitions:**

2003 Jakub Špaňhel, 26 years old, GHMP - Old Town Hall, Prague

2005 Jakub Špaňhel, Jonáš Czesaný, NG Praha - Veletržní palác, Prague

2011 Jakub Špaňhel, House of Art, Ostrava, Ostrava

2013 Van Gogh in the Country, Kaple Gallery, Valašské Meziříčí

2015 Jakub Špaňhel, Adam Gallery, Brno

2015 Sacred and Profane, Czech Centre London, London, UK

2016 Paintings 1648 - 2016, Václav Špála Gallery, Prague

2016 Flowers, Cities, Butterflies, GASK - Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region, Kutná Hora

2020 In Gremio Matris, Church of St. Lawrence in Klatovy, Klatovy

2021 View into the window, Facade Gallery, Prague