

Do your parents understand what you are doing? Ours do not.
We don't want to create "Art" which is understood only in our
artistic circle.

An interview with the authors of the Czech student exhibition of the Prague Quadrennial

Anna Chrtková and Andrea Dudková study scenography at JAMU Academy in Brno under the supervision of Jana Preková. They are members of the group *Interculturally* together with Jan Matýsek, a graduate of the same programme. Their project *Prague is Not the Czech Republic* won the competition organized by the Czech Theatre Institute and they became the independent curators of the Czech student exposition of this year's Prague Quadrennial. What do they mean by the slogan "Prague is not the Czech Republic"? How does this concept affect their work? How does their exposition react to this phenomenon?

Your exposition is not only an exhibition piece, but it is a conceptual project. How would you describe it?

Our project "Prague is Not the Czech Republic" works on two levels: we not only bring our favourite ice cream stand from Chlumec nad Cidlinou to the exhibition space, but it functions also as a travel agency booth. The agency organizes trips and excursions outside of Prague. The stand thus transfers non-Prague to Prague and, thanks to the trips, it also brings Prague (the visitors) to non-Prague. In other words, it is simultaneously an object in an exhibition space and also a live event.

How many excursions are going to be there? Will there also be trips outside of the comfort zone of the visitors?

There will be six trips. It depends on the visitors and the type of trips. I dare to say that at least one trip will go beyond the comfort zone.

Who are the authors/organizers of these trips?

It is a team of students from the Department of Alternative and Puppet Theatre DAMU, the Department of Visual Art Intermedia and Digital Art FaVU in Brno, an interdisciplinary team of students from JAMU, the Czechia team and Michal Pěchouček.

How did you choose the destinations?

The organizing principle is based on dramaturgical areas. We chose six general areas such as culture, nature, mythology, work/society relationship... The destinations were chosen by the individual authors who organize the trips.

The spectator is the enabler of the situation - the basis of the hyper-reality we are creating.

Do you see the Prague artistic world as enclosed? Do you consider it a “social bubble”?

It definitely is a social bubble, just as everywhere else. But it is not only a social bubble, but a cultural one as well – and this is the main problem in our view. Do your parents understand what you are doing? Ours don't. And it is the aim of our exposition and our trips – not to be satisfied with just creating “Art” which is understood only in our artistic circle. We are interested in interaction with other circles. In big cities, highly presentable culture is shown, but not so much in the smaller towns. In this context, the expansion of the Prague Quadrennial outside of Prague is essential. Meeting others is crucial for us.

Do I understand correctly that the aim of your trips is authenticity? Authentic Czech Republic? Authentic culture outside of established institutions and the cultural centre of Prague? Is authenticity in art crucial for you?

It is a very difficult question. We create hyper-realism more than authenticity. The situations that happen during these excursions are actually directed, staged, animated. The visitors are put in a specific situation and it is up to them and the local citizens how they react.

What is the role of the participants/spectators in your trips?

The participant/spectator goes on a trip. It is his or her main activity. The spectator is the enabler of the situation, the basis of the hyper-reality we are creating, because without the participants there will be nothing. At the same time, each participant is free. It is an excursion, but the participant is there as an individual. They can act freely.

What is the desired effect of your project?

We hope that we create situations that will inspire questions. Questions about the relationship between the individual and others, the centre and the regions, and the relationship to people who are not close to art. We would like to initiate a dialogue. To experience it “together”, not to feel separated. We do not know what will happen. It is not important who does what. We just go for a trip to meet somebody, experience something...

Scenography is a situation

What is the relation of your project to contemporary scenography?

We do not see our project as an intentional commentary or an attack on contemporary scenography. Scenography cannot be exhibited on its own. It is about a situation, relationship, atmosphere. Instead of showing an empty design, we prefer to create a situation.

A how do you and your team see scenography? Is there a definition you can agree on?

We all agree that scenography is a situation, a framework for a dialogue, a relationship. It is definitely not a mere material.

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