

Casual / Formal / Playful

Vaněk / Šerých / Kořátková

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Czech Center New York

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Prague and its art scene is the right size to generate a community spirit on one hand, and large enough to allow a rather large-scale diversity on the other hand. hunt kastner artworks has been honored to prove this in Czech Center in NYC. Three outstanding personalities will provide the NY public with fresh insight into Prague's atmosphere of plurality. Tomáš Vaněk and Jan Šerých stand for casual and formal principles respectively. Both have created their works in situ. Eva Kořátková, who represents a playful element, is presented by one of her recent works. The participating artists each represent three very different approaches and attitudes towards art, yet in the same way explore the age old question of what art is and should be about.

Tomáš Vaněk (b. 1966, lives and works in Prague)

Since mid-1990's, when he started to emerge on the local art scene, the 2001 laureate of the Jindřich Chalupský Award, Tomáš Vaněk, has grown into one of the most respected Czech artists across all generations. In 1998, he launched series of works which he called 'Particips', that are works (he often terms them situations) created specifically for a gallery, or public space. As the term suggests, they participate in these places by their very existence, at the same time they seem suspect in unexpected situations. Their strength lies in envisioning the whole situation in a given place. Vaněk also sees the spectators as participants, whose irreplaceable input is their own perception. This strategy switches the role of gallery visitors from passive recipients to active participants; art is not consumed but co-created without the need for direct physical interference. Visitors of the exhibition may also "participate" in Particip No. 123, Another Demonstration of The Method "Think Round, Act Square". Giant balloons are blown up, and then popped and stapled to the wall by the artist during the exhibition opening to demonstrate the method mentioned in the subtitle. As Particips are always connected to specific place, similar Particips become different in new places. Firstly performed as Particip No. 45 (2004) in the ETC gallery in Prague, this piece was repeated several times, most recently as Particip No. 111 at Manifesta 8 in [Murcia \(Spain, 2010\)](#).

Jan Šerých (b. 1972, lives and works in Prague)

Formal, abstract, geometric – those are perhaps the most repeated adjectives when speaking about works of Jan Šerých. The visible element in Šerých's works cannot be mistaken by having been made by anyone else. But when it comes to speak about the content of his work, we feel on less solid ground. Under the flat surface of cold geometry, there is something very personal and emotional. Lines recall diagrams of a hidden or unknown process. Sometimes we may hesitate whether it is the formal language itself that becomes a message, or even an empty message - language collapsing into itself. We repeatedly fail to decrypt the message however hard we may try. Jan Šerých's process of transforming [information](#) using a [cipher](#) to make it unreadable to anyone except those possessing a [key](#) (in this case only himself), is analogical to the cultural coding, which Šerých is referring to. The Best of Bad Solution consists of several sheets of paper with yellow felt tip marker schematic drawings placed on tables. Geometrically organized lines tend to be anti-esthetical, their esthetics is given by restricted possibilities of a computer program, but they are executed by artist's hand, this means a human dimension. Similarly, the wall painting I Promised Not to Tell Anyone What This Means, a row of identically spaced columns of varying heights, is a bar graph with no legend. Šerých has made two earlier editions of this work, each with a different message that has never been revealed implying the author's skepticism about the actual need for knowledge, as well as a certain ironic obeisance about the futility of even trying to make yourself understood.

Eva Kořátková (b. 1982, lives and works in Prague)

Although representing a playful element and in a seemingly light-hearted way, Eva Kořátková refers to very serious topics in her works. The work of this young promising artist (in 2007, she was the youngest artist ever to be awarded the prestigious Jindřich Chalupský Award), is a sophisticated examination of familiar social

institutions, such as the family or school, and their mechanisms, constraints and the impact these social structures have on the individual. Most recently, Eva has been focusing her work on educational structures, as in the mixed media installation Educational Model in the exhibition, and how they can influence the formation of a child or adolescent – a young individual undergoing formative changes that lead to finding one's own position within a community or social structure. This social structure becomes a platform for our everyday activities, which sometimes changes into rituals subordinated by rules, patterns and stereotypes shared by a certain community. The role of the individual seems to be questioned, but Eva does not fall into resignation, it is rather disagreement or fear of oppression that characterizes her approach to any structures based on hierarchy and fixed rules. Eva works with everyday situations, transforms, re-evaluates and re-locates them or their items - takes things out of their original environments and rearranges them into new functionless conglomerates. Installation has a key importance and determines the way of looking at things. The spectator is exposed to an impenetrable order with strong impact on his or her associative imagination.