



© Liudvikas Buklys, *Blue Rainbow*, 2012

The Elba Benitez Gallery is pleased to announce the group show “*The Sky Is Blue in Some Other Way: A Diagram of a Possible Misreading*”, curated by Adam Budak, opening on April 25th.

“*The Sky is Blue in Some Other Way: A Diagram of a Possible Misreading*”, features a selection of artists, primarily from Central and Eastern Europe, spanning different generations yet grounded in the shared contemporary traditions of abstract, conceptual and minimal art. The work on view ranges across a variety of media -- including painting, drawing, photography, video and performance -- creating a multi-voiced dialogue between generations, media and local contexts. However, independent of their geographic origins or chosen medium, the artists in the exhibition share a critical position toward notions of history, identity and ideology, while at the same time engaging in a critical reevaluation of the contemporary conditions of displacement and discontinuity.

In the words of curator Adam Budak, the exhibition charts “how meaning is produced and subsequently deconstructed in a substitutive interplay of figures, images and voices, out of ruptures and folds of time and space or traps of ideological doctrine.”

Artists participating in the exhibition include Michał Budny (Poland, 1976), Liudvikas Buklys (Lithuania, 1984), Thea Djordjadze (Georgia, 1971), Mekhitar Garabedian (Syria, 1977), István B. Gellér (Hungary, 1946), Eva Kotátková (Czech Republic, 1982), Mangelos (Serbia, 1921 - 1987), Dóra Maurer (Hungary, 1937), Ewa Partum (Poland, 1945), Agnieszka Polska (Poland, 1985), Jiří Skála (Czech Republic, 1976), Natalia Załuska (Poland, 1984).

Adam Budak is an independent curator, art critic and writer, currently based in Washington DC. He has been International Curator for Contemporary Art at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and Curator for Contemporary Art at the Kunsthaus Graz Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz, Austria. Budak has curated the Estonian Pavilion of Venice Biennial of Art (2013) and co-curated Manifesta 7 (2008). He is one of the selectors of this year's prestigious Artes Mundi Award (2014).

During the opening on April 25th there will be a performance entitled *Confrontation Reading: Montage 7* by the Czech artist Jiří Skála , at 21.00 p.m.

“The Sky Is Blue In Some Other Way: A Diagram of a Possible Misreading”



By **Adam Budak**

Operating as a (nebulous) assemblage, the exhibition “The Sky Is Blue In Some Other Way: A Diagram of a Possible Misreading” focuses on a few significant, mainly conceptual, abstract and minimal positions of older and younger generations of artists from Central and Eastern Europe, put together according to a concept which derives from a rare work of Hungarian artist, Istvan B. Geller, “The Sky Is Blue In Some Other Way And Is Big In Some Other Way” (1972), a poetic manifesto of imagination and resistance, but also of defense and despair of ideological melancholia, an utterly liberating expression of isolation and difference.

Transgressing the geopolitically conditioned notions of history and identity and announcing the arrival of a new paradigm, freed of a burden of the ideological past and its trauma, the artists engage in a critical redefinition of an inherent, imaginary or empirical difference and sameness, as well as a reevaluation of both displacement and discontinuity, brought by sociopolitical changes and a sense of stylistic otherness and repression. Gathered together, they speculate possible relationships and provoke potential misreadings, exchanging glances of similitude and distancing, zooming in and out their own individual and communal fate. Harold Bloom’s intellectual revisionism, articulated in the literary theorist’s seminal “Anxiety of Influence” is taken up again by a curatorial-cum-detectivist perspective which investigates the primal scene of artistic eloquence as a landscape of shadowed meaning, reflected form and dubious reception. In particular, this exhibition as a diagram of a possible misreading follows Bloom’s sequel “A Map of Misreading”, charting how meaning is produced and subsequently deconstructed in a substitutive interplay of figures, images and voices, out of ruptures and folds of times and space or traps of ideological doctrine. Introjection and projection operate as dialogical devices that initiate imaginary conversations and deliberately ignorant statements thus grasping a „wandering significance“ at the core of each potential misprision. “The Sky Is Blue In Some Other Way: A Diagram of a Possible Misreading” constructs an active and responsive space of relationality and sublimation where interpretation conspires with translation in a common act of undoing the patterns of belonging and otherness, between memory and amnesia, trespassing appropriation and belatedness. Practicing forgetting (a liberating process), taming their own estrangement, through cuts and erasures, misspellings and silent gestures, disseminated words and corporeal commitments, the artists clear the sky of their own language and map their own “other way”, their blue sky above them.

While Mangelos’s anti-art work constitutes an extremely important pillar of this show’s conceptual structure where the language and formal alphabet are vehicles of cognitive subversion and negation, Ewa Partum’s active poetry and her tautological cinema and Dora Maurer’s perceptive exercises of mathematical and geometric systems map territories of formal experimentation which includes proto-feminist manifestos, sociopolitical engagement and radical imagination and subjectivity. The younger generation of artists, such as Eva Kotatkova, Agnieszka Polska or Natalia Zaluska expand this vocabulary of pure reduced form and nostalgic return to a forgotten past and once rejected legacy. Thea Djordjadze’s work as well as that of Michal Budny and Liudvikas Buklys negotiate the passage between formal subjectivities, marking blurred lines of tradition and (national and historical) belonging, depicting new cartographies of a metaphor, capable of overcoming the imprisonment within local alphabets and styles. Jiri Skala’s on-going series of performances under the common title „Confrontation Reading“ investigate the relationships between systems and means of production, thus researching possibilities of communication in today’s cybernetic age while the work of Mekhitar Garabedian is an intimate quest for the individual’s own place and the (other) subject formation in a diasporic society

1 The exhibition “The Sky Is Blue In Some Other Way: A Diagram of a Possible Misreading” may be perceived as the curator’s self-revisionist act in regards to his exhibition “Anxiety of Influence. Bachelors, Brides and a Family Romance”, curated in 2004 in Kunstmuseum Bern and Stadtgalerie Bern with contributions from such artists as Denisa Lehocka, Barbora Klimova, Tim Lee, Boris Ondreicka, Katarzyna Kozyra, Dominik Lejman, Kris Vleeschouwer and Andrea Schneemeier. That show analysed the mechanism of the Duchampian “bachelor machine’s” perpetual motion and rotation as a never-ending discovery of a new, unreachable place. It was the curator’s first application of Bloom’s theory of misreading and misprision – a study of influence as an act of misreading that poets perform upon one another in order to clear imaginative space for themselves.

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And of all those who have contributed to this exhibition.

MICHAŁ BUDNY

Michał Budny (1976, Poland; lives and works in Warsaw and Prague) creates meticulously constructed, tiny objects and sculptures, as well as monumental installations and site-specific arrangements, made of “homely”, simple and impoverished materials such as paper, cardboard, aluminium foil or tape, often exposed to damage or deliberate destruction. With obsessive precision, Budny simplifies the architectural forms of everyday life (playgrounds, city maps, as well as anonymous interiors or sites of encounters), generating poetic expressions of extreme intimacy and strange familiarity. His are cartographies of mind, framed moments of transitory emotion, ephemeral signs of presence. Often rendered as negatives of real objects, Budny’s architectures are uncanny memories of past events and stories. They are, as if mute actors on an abandoned stage of humanity in doubt, patiently waiting for a script and a role. The void and nothingness constitute the essence of Budny’s objects whose vibrations between fragility and geometric rectitude, indeterminacy and verisimilitude may relate to Constructivism’s fascination with spirituality. Budny’s hermetic in its appearance work radiates with an enigmatic power of intriguing abstraction and uniqueness. Some of his recent work – *The Construction of Transparency*, *Apollo* series or *Mirror* paintings – radicalise the discourse on painting, fetishizing the paintings’ materiality, the surface and the mode of display. Simultaneously, sensual and undone, the painting is a dream of perfection, a desperate act of renewal and self-reflection.

LIUDVIKAS BUKLYS

Liudvikas Buklys’s (1984, Lithuania; lives and works in Vilnius) conceptual practice is gestural and phenomenological. There is no hierarchy in Buklys’s work: sculptures and the studies leading towards them are considered equal agents in a simplified production system, the traces of artistic process and an act of thinking. Stages of thought’s development - a thought newly born or advanced, banal or sophisticated, accidental or thoroughly researched - constitute a substantial part of the artist’s performative and participatory work, challenging the viewer with the ambiguity of its status and provenience. There is a certain travesty at work too; functional objects under disguise, appropriated *images smuggled in, a would-be mimicry of established art and canons*. *Buklys’s focus is on support systems, secondary structures, alternative solutions, shadows of things, echoes of concepts*. Everything is different or subverted: the rainbow is blue, the eyebrow is a tear and a poster device is an uncanny dispositive of vision. The weather is hard to predict despite the artist’s profound interest in meteorology. Liudvikas's world is misguided by narrative forms into paradox, leading toward the primary forms of a (subjective) gestalt. With his heartbreaking naivete, Buklys asks for the form’s innocence and genesis, and subsequently for the essence of reality which surrounds and defines us. The sculpture is buried, the painting remains

unpacked, and the shelf holds an accidental object. The artist is as open (minded) as the open and unconstrained structures that inhabit his domestic, poetry-influenced work: thoughts, words, gestures float in the air of liberated knowledge, experimenting one with another, trying out identities and roles, unfolding life as an unexpected scenario of rejected habit and unwanted poetry.

THEA DJORDJADZE

“I have a feeling that I’m just a flaneur“, **Thea Djordjadze** (1971, Georgia; lives and works in Berlin) claims. „I look at all these sources but I don’t get stuck at them. Maybe I use them as a starting point and they pop out. It’s my memory somehow. But I avoid thinking things through to the end because I always come to the point where it makes no sense. I still wish for some kind of utopia. This world does not really make sense without utopia or without fantasy. I am powerless. The only thing I can do is to just continue. I don’t know what is there at the end. I know we are born and we will die, but I really don’t know what will happen“. A sculpture like a drawing in a space, a trace of a feeling, imprinted in a porous substance, a skeleton of an object, quite forgotten - Djordjadze’s universe is a poetic ruin of subjectivity, between unspoken confession and unfulfilled desire. The raw material of her work is memory—of past times, faraway places, and emotions. Of an „oxymoronic“ nature, it hovers between painting and sculpture, completeness and fragmentation, materiality and pure energy. Djordjadze’s art often looks towards Surrealist aesthetics, from which she draws her interest in dreamy, suspended atmospheres. These works are created by reusing and reassembling old and found objects, bearing the traces of a fossilized past. The dyed and cut out Orientalist carpets typically found in her hometown retain memories of her Georgian childhood. Geometric, steel benches that create a thin, dark structure, a kind of architectural grid echoing modernist design. Pale blocks of foam—looking like rationalist pillows or De Stijl seatbacks—are positioned on the sculptures; a few vertically installed benches give dynamism to the composition, which is primarily developed along a horizontal plane. Here, the memory of communist rationalist architecture is strong; once again, the artist brings together recollections of her past through a series of objects that reveal and transcend history simultaneously. She works with matter, energy, and movements, conceiving the artistic process as profoundly gestural and choreographic. Trained as a painter in Tbilisi, Djordjadze treats the gallery as a three-dimensional canvas, fiercely painting her folded rugs and the surface of her refined sculptures. They construct a narrative—one close to the intensity of poetry—that follows the course of the artist’s memories, feelings, and sensations. Djordjadze’s sculptures, indeed, seem to crystalize certain human moods—they punctuate the gallery space as objectivized emotions.

MEKHITAR GARABEDIAN

"I am merely the place", claims **Mekhitar Garabedian** (1977, Syria; lives and works in Ghent) and adds along the lines of his neon work which quotes French filmmaker, Jean Eustache from his groundbreaking film, *Le Maman and la Putain* (1973): "Ne parler qu'avec les mots des autres, c'est ce que je voudrais. Ce doit être ça la liberté" ("Speaking with other people's words, that's what I desire. That must be a freedom"). Autobiographically driven, the work of Mekhitar Garabedian narrates a process of becoming and understanding oneself as an act which is relational towards the other(s). Identity, according to the artist, is always a borrowed identity, borrowed from other people: "We are made out of and by others" ("Nous ne sommes que les autres") concludes Garabedian after Alain Resnais while investigating a diasporic subject in his complex, conceptual practice which includes mainly photography and text based works, executed as drawings, listings or neons, and to a large extent based upon appropriations, found footage or reenactments. The artist becomes an ethnographer of subjectivity, torn by migration and exile and conditioned by the contingencies of displacement and dispossession. His work is an ongoing rehearsal of an identity on a crossway of historical and multicultural turmoil. It is a diary of a troubled sense of belonging and estrangement with the language constituting an essential role in Garabedian's quest for self-identification, origin and knowledge. "How does language, or the use of a mother-tongue, shape and form our understanding and sense of being in the world? How can speaking in another language present a form of estrangement from the self?" asks Garabedian. Born in Aleppo (Syria) where his father lived and later moving to Beirut where his mother was from, Garabedian spent his childhood between Syria and Lebanon, growing up in a family of Armenian roots thus living in a diaspora, lost in-between three languages, Armenian, Arabic and Dutch (as the family soon, at Garabedian's early age, relocated to Belgium). His *fig. a, a comme alphabet* (2009-2010) is a series of works based on exercises made while learning the Armenian alphabet. The repeated letters form patterns which, while recognisable as signs, remain incomprehensible to non-Armenian. Garabedian's work is haunted by the otherness, generated by the unfamiliarity of language and an imprisonment in foreign semantic structures of what paradoxically is called a "mother tongue". The language is turned into a meaningless ornament, a poetic fabric of incomprehension and lostness. The language pattern decorates the carpets, or, while applied directly on the wall, acts like graffiti or a kind of quasi-spiritual incantation – a labyrinthine alphabet of an alienated subject in despair. The series powerfully illustrates a dramatic act of impossibility to finding himself within familiar yet strange linguistic structures that determine basic communication and sense of identity. Garabedian's archival *1964-1992, Alep, Bourdj Hamound, Fresno* (2008) is an ongoing collection of reverse sides of photographs, chosen from the artist's family albums. Instead of focusing on the photographs' front side (which is withheld from the viewer,) the artist concentrates on the seemingly marginal, personal notes in Armenian, Arabic or English on the backsides, as if searching, like a detective, for hidden, intimate information on invisible subjects

and past events. This is yet another example of Garabedian's troubled memory (or rather at "postmemory" as the artist himself would call it) and his poignant personal past.

ISTVÁN B. GELLÉR

István B. Gellér (1946, Hungary; lives and works in Pecs), a representative of Hungarian conceptual art, is the author of rigid, geometric and abstract compositions and text-based works, as well as often absurd, neodadaesque intertextual collages and experiments with a medium of photography, that questioned both the medium's own confines as well as the dominating art-historical canons. Gellér is currently focused on developing a quasi-archeological, large-scale research project of the so-called *Growing City*. His 1972 screen-print *The Sky Is Blue In Some Other Way and Is Big In Some Other Way* is a reflection upon the political atmosphere in socialist Hungary – an articulation of suppressed desires and dreams, a metaphor of isolation and difference.

EVA KOTÁTKOVÁ

Executed in a variety of media (drawing, collage, photomontage, sculpture, installation, social intervention and most recently a performance and a video), the work of **Eva Kotátková** (born 1982, Czech Republic; lives and works in Prague) is focused on examining, reconstructing and reevaluating the (mainly socialist) past in order to understand the present. In her archaeologically rooted practice, the artist is interested in the relationship between the individual and the mechanisms of social, mainly hegemonic, structures -- their customs, rules, rituals and communication and power strategies. Kotátková's "archives" or "databases" are collections of traces of the recent past, composed of found photographic footage and the artist's own interventions that alter the original meaning and critically comment upon the historical truth. The artist is a passionate storyteller who narrates human beings' hidden traumas and anxieties, generated by ideological or institutional regimes and oppressive, educational systems of discipline and social control. Limitation and manipulation (mental as well as corporeal) appear as dominant strategies of correction and obedience, imposed on identities under pressure and confinement. Nostalgia and a fear of oblivion condition contribute to the subject's deviated and blurred sense of belonging, of history and of the past. "I am very much interested in learning the process and impact of education and the formation of an individual", claims Kotátková while portraying the construction of a selfhood's troubled, psychophysiological nature and investigating a borderline between the normal and the pathological, the trained and the authentic, the personal and the

collective. Hers is a rather tragic theatrics of the human condition, trapped within a memory of an infamous past and imprisoned within a corset (always too tight-fitting) of social and behavioral convenience and educational dogma. Here, in a classroom, in an asylum, on a street or within a domestic interior, we are in the ruins of subjectivity, tormented by a desire for emancipation and an unframed mind.

MANGELOS

Mangelos (fictitious name of Dimitrije Basiccevic, born in 1921 in Sid, Serbia; died in Zagreb, Croatia in 1987) was one of the founders of Gorgona – the preconceptual avant-garde group that was active in Zagreb between 1959 and 1966, where it published an anti-magazine and was focused on anti-art, anti-aestheticism and absurdism as vehicles of political and artistic resistance. Primarily art historian and curator, Mangelos described his activity as „noart“ and was the author of "anti-paintings" and black paintings such as *Death Landscapes* or *Tabula Rasa*. His most well-known works are monochromatic globes covered in calligraphically written manifestos that recall old exercise books or even illustrated manuscripts - shorter, condensed, pithy, “super-Wittgensteinian“, as he called them. From small patches of ink in his school exercise books, he developed monochrome surfaces – but these black surfaces also formed an empty space, a tabula rasa, which offered the opportunity to develop a new, strongly and rationally based line of thought. Reduction, withdrawal and denial were Mangelos’s philosophical principles, along with negation, perceived as „an attempt to think in a new mode“. His series *Negation of Painting* (1951-56, tempera on paper) consists of five parts and was described by Mangelos as follows: “The phase of denying painting started at the same time as the slates and the letters. I denied painting by painting over some reproductions with black and then writing underneath that this was negation of painting or anti-painting. Some of these negations had details left in which I then crossed out in red”. Similar experiments with a desire to move “beyond painting“ and to denote the disappearance of the visible are continued by Mangelos in his series of *Tabula Rasa* (1951-56, acrylic/hardboard) – a further, radical study of a monochrome and the medium’s own limitations – expressing a “state of oblivion and the setting for a new beginning”. Additionally, included exclusively in a show, Mangelos’s *When I thought I would die* (1957-63, tempera on hardboard) quotes the poem of the founder of modern Serbian lyric poetry, Aleksije “Branko“ Radicevic (1824-1853), his enchanting welcome to death in his twenty-ninth year, entitled *As I Thought of Dying...*

DÓRA MAURER

Dóra Maurer (1937, Hungary; lives and works in Budapest), one of the most prominent figures on the Hungarian conceptual art scene, who explores the problematics of forms, proportions and seriality in her graphic arts, photography, films and installations, often being engaged in action art and body art. Maurer was one of the members of the groundbreaking Bela Balasz Studio (1959) which experimented with state-funded film production. Cuts and folds belong to Maurer's formal vocabulary as ways to elaborate matter and deal with composition and perception (displacements, distortions, shiftings). In her film *Proportions* (1979) the artist uses the length of her body as a basic measurement, performing choreographed movements on the white strip of paper while her 16mm experimental structural film *Timing* (1973-80) shows a canvas being folded seven times. Maurer explains: "Time is measured by folding a piece of white linen in front of a black background: I fold it altogether seven times, one fold more each time, always starting a new. The proportions of the cloth correspond to the picture-size of a 16mm film, its length is that of my two outstretched arms... I have always felt a certain aversion to 'finished' artworks of our time; their durability strikes me as useless". Her installation *V-diagonal* (1975) is a study in perception and a reflection of her profound interest in mathematical, and complex system processes. A series of photographic and drawing-based collages *Studies of Minimal Movements* (1972) are gestural works, based upon simple actions, expressing artist's desire to view her works as "movement, not a photograph of movement".

EWA PARTUM

Ewa Partum (1945, Poland) is a forerunner of conceptual, political and feminist art in Central and Eastern Europe. Her groundbreaking practice has been developed within four fields: poetry, mail art, performances (including ephemeral actions, photography, videos and films) and installations. With her ideas of "visual poetry" and "poetry as art", Partum explores the power and corporeality of language as it relates to questions of female subjectivity. For several works in the iconic series *Poems by Ewa* (1971-74), she "drew" words by pressing her lipstick-stained mouth against white paper while pronouncing each letter, then marking the corresponding alphabetical characters beneath the impressions. Partum has long been preoccupied with questioning the autonomy and legality of public space, particularly concerning the role of the female artist in public discourse within the oppressive political system of a Communist regime. The use of her naked body was a radical and utterly provocative gesture in socialist Poland. Partum's quasi-documentary film *Active Poetry. Poem by Ewa* (1971), as well as her "Tautological Cinema" discuss the linguistics of film and deconstruct structuralist cinema. As Lukasz Ronduda observes: "The poetic work of Ewa

Partum consisted in scattering single alphabet letters into a non-artistic space: be it the open air, sea, or an underpass. This gesture led to the deconstruction of a language whereupon grammatical, syntactic and semantic structures were used to determine certain patterns of an artistic statement. Her poems were shaped by coincidence, which made their language more open and process-orientated. The confrontation with the elements associated with femininity (water, wind) made it possible to face the patriarchal patterns rooted in the language“. Partum’s *Partytura* (“Score“, 1984) -- one of her most personal series, and never previously exhibited before this show -- consists of 5 collages, composed of photography and drawing, coming together to form a powerful self-portrait which focuses on her art’s major and recurring theme: the representation of naked female body – its fragmentation, eroticisation and politicisation in the public domain – and the analysis of a male-dominant gaze and voyeuristic point-of-view.

AGNIESZKA POLSKA

Agnieszka Polska (1985, Poland; lives and works in Warsaw) exercises nostalgia as a vivid, critical means employed for articulating the past and the feeling of pastness, but also as a tool of seduction and allure, a lens to render an idealized version of time. Her video-animation work is based upon such a permanent return to the visual reservoir of the past: old (found) photographs, printed materials mainly from the interwar period, documents and forgotten image archives, and archaic techniques and practices are the primary sources of her contemplative video-narratives that leave the spectator with anxiety and bewilderment. Polska’s *Medical Gymnastics* (2008) is a study of a forthcoming catastrophe and destruction: mimicking the language of old-fashioned scientific material and referring to traditional practices, it uncovers a disguised vocabulary of discipline, authority and rigor. An ambient, psychedelic soundtrack of an otherwise uncannily silent and static film sets the spectator in a state of trance and hypnosis. Here, the quasi-erotic subversion corresponds with the sensual performance of a healed or trained body under pressure. We are in a delirious realm of ritual, somewhere in the passage between the animate and inanimate, where the regime of looking challenges the sense of transcendental, if not metaphysical, appearance. Her animated film, *The Forgetting of Proper Names* (2009) narrates with a didactic, authoritarian voice-off, Sigmund Freud’s essay of the same title (published in 1901 as chapter I of his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*) which serves the artist as a point of departure for her revisionist research. According to Freud, the temporary forgetting of names is a process by which the person does not merely forget, but also remembers the names incorrectly – a disturbed remembering process which eventually leads towards the displacements that generate substitutes or equivalents, thus causing a confusion in a chain of repressions and suppressions, between a defence mechanism (by which an unacceptable impulse or idea is rendered unconscious or unknowable) and a strategy of a conscious or voluntary inhibition of activity. The artist investigates

Bloomian mechanisms of misreading and influence, stating: "Misunderstandings, misinterpretations - these are the factors which push culture forward, creating new qualities and posing new questions. The archive - as each and every living organism - lives and changes without ceasing, endlessly multiplying images of itself. Elements which have been negated and rejected in the process of archiving later emerge as the dark matter of our subconscious".

JIŘÍ SKÁLA

While attempting to describe his work, **Jiří Skála** (1976, Czech Republic; lives and works in Prague) introduces his favorite quote from *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) by Claude Levi-Strauss. "During the Neolithic age, Man put himself beyond the reach of cold and hunger; he acquired leisure to think [...] to say that writing is a double-edged weapon is not a mark of 'primitivism' [...] Writing might be regarded as a form of artificial memory...". With work based primarily in performance, Skála is interested in exploring the methods of narration, including both the content as well as the physical embodiment of a text and its form. In *Exchange of Handwriting* (2006), the performance's score instructs, "two participants (a man and a woman) remain in the same room, seated back to back in classroom chairs four hours a day, for thirty-six days, copying each other's handwriting". Systems of education and learning, as well as mechanisms of self-discipline and acquisition of knowledge have always been at the center of Skála's often playful and witty, subtle interventions into the life of objects and the political fabric of societies.

In his artist's book, *One Family of Objects* (JRP Ringier, 2010), Jiří Skála observes the social and economic transformations taking place in the Czech Republic during the past 20 years through the metamorphosing relationship of a worker and his/her machine. It is the artist's poetic take on serious topics such as new labor conditions, economics in the new Europe and globalization, and it follows Skála's project *Two Families of Objects* (2006-07), inspired by Umberto Eco's essay of the same title (published in 1970). *Two Families of Objects* features photographic representations of machine tools, acquired by Skála's father (as well as other workers) from a bankrupt former state owned factory in southwestern part of Czech Republic where the artist used to work and where his parents were employed for several decades.

Skála's on-going series of performative acts and participatory situations, introduced under a common title *Confrontation Readings* oscillate between theatre and performance and refer to the experimental ideas of Czech theatre and film director, co-founder of the Czech theatre avant-garde, theorist and pedagogist, Jindřich Honzl (1894-1953) who in the 1920s led the progressive group *Liberated Theater*, founded under the association "Devětsil" (the Communist Avant-garde of Art Workers). *Confrontation Readings* are the artist's further investigations of modes of production and communication, especially concerned with the virtual universe of Internet, its radical evolution and an impact on human relationships and social networks.

NATALIA ZAŁUSKA

Ascetic canvases of **Natalia Załuska** (1984, Poland; lives and works in Vienna) express the poetry of form and thoughtfulness of the artistic gesture. As studies of perception, they are inquiries into spatial and temporal qualities that define painting and guide the spectator's gaze. The artist disturbs the painting's monochromatic silence by a radical cut into the surface's fabric, thus activating the planes and generating a sensual polylogue between the layers. Simultaneously nonchalant and controlled, her work is both smooth and violent, still and conversational, minimal and neo-baroque. Masterfully choreographing geometry within the pictorial field, Załuska transcends the painting's illusionism, reaching levels of the sublime and a conceptual void. Her *Untitled* paintings of various formats, cut through and structured according to the artist's secret logic, are blank pages of re-written histories, erased and removed, and reassembled again through a tiresome, Sisyphean labour, unveiling a palimpsest of labyrinthine meaning in suspense. Here, broken mirror-like, shiny and reflective surfaces are portraits of a soul in ontological doubt and instability.