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Touching Time that Stands Still
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Eva Kmentová, Eva Koťátková,
Alena Kotzmannová, Alena Kučerová,
Adéla Matasová, Tereza Štětinová
Curated by Pavlína Morganová
Exhibition design by David Fesl
Graphic design by Adéla Svobodová

hunt kastner is pleased to present the group exhibition *Touching Time that Stands Still* curated by Pavlína Morganová, art historian and pedagogue at the Academy of Fine Arts, Prague. Pavlína Morganová has long been focused in her curatorial practice on women's art and related issues. In addition to a number of other exhibition projects, she prepared in 2014 for the Moravian Gallery in Brno and the Prague City Gallery the exhibition *Někdy v sukni / Sometimes in a Skirt* which presented the art of the 1990s exclusively through the work of Czech women artists, responding to the emancipation of women on the Czech art scene at that time. For the exhibition at hunt kastner, she has selected six women artists (three older and three younger) whose work traces the transformation of their approach to materials and themes which are often associated with women's destinies.

Pavlína Morganová regularly publishes articles in professional journals and catalogues and is the author and editor of a number of books. Notably, this past year, she edited a monograph on Adéla Matasová, *Mezičas* (GASK 2022). She has also focussed her research on action art and published *Procházka akční Prahou / Action Walk through Prague* (VVP AVU 2014) and *Czech Action Art / Happenings, Actions, Events, Land Art, Body Art and Performance Art Behind the Iron Curtain* (Karolinum Press 2014). Recently, together with the team of the AVU Research Center, she conducted a comprehensive study on the history of exhibiting which resulted in the book *Pavlína Morganová – Terezie Nekvindová – Dagmar Svatošová, Výstava jako médium. České umění 1957–1999 / The Exhibition as Medium. Czech Art 1957–1999* (VVP AVU 2020).

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Time slips through our fingers, we try in vain to record it in our diaries and journals, to capture it in photographs but we never manage to stop it, to encapsulate the complexity of the moment, all the perceptions that make up the background of our lives: the smell of grass, the noise of a passing train, a pebble in a shoe.... Wintertime, when the birds are silent and the lack of light dampens the mood, often leads me to contemplate the course of my life, trying to recall moments I have lived but have forgotten. I have long wanted to put together an exhibition which could reflect the emotions associated with this fragility of existence and women's destinies.

The concept of the exhibition is based on my long-standing interest in artworks created by women and a recognition of the particular situations they have had to overcome as artists. It is based on an admiration for their incredible strength, patience, creativity and perseverance despite many personal and social obstacles. Indeed, it was not until the turn of the millennium that Czech women artists gained a firm place on the art scene. For this exhibition, I have selected six women artists of different generations. It is important for me not to move only with the current waves, but rather to delve into meaning in more depth. At the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, I have been lecturing on the history of Czech art in the second half of the 20th century for over twenty years and I regret that we often forget about the older generations of artists, those who are still living and working. With few exceptions, we do not find a generational connection in current exhibitions. This is why I decided to select for the exhibition not only the works of the late Eva Kmentová (1928–1980), whose work still resonates on the current scene, but also the last works of Alena Kučerová (*1935), who at almost ninety years old lives in seclusion and whose original prints from the 1960s and 1970s are admired by the younger generations. Adéla Matasová (*1940), on the other hand, is known primarily for her post-revolutionary work, in which she boldly ventured into the field of digital media. The exhibition starts with her video capturing an imaginary architecture created by the simple movements of the artist's hands. Matasová's kinetic multimedia objects and installations have been shown in numerous exhibitions but few people are familiar with her work pre-1989 which, with its experimental character and research into materials, is one of the more unique manifestations of Czech art of the 1970s and 80s. Indeed, Matasová's series, *Frozen Movement*, was the inspiration for the title of the exhibition. In this series of works, Matasová experimented with capturing the movements of her body in matter during the time of normalization, imprinting a moment of her life onto handmade paper, plaster or linen, literally materializing its ephemeral nature. This work is interestingly confronted with *Untitled (White Drawing)* (1977) by Eva Kmentová, which was part of the original *Album 77* (a presentation by artists of the unofficial scene in defiance of their inability to exhibit at the time) or with *Butterfly* (1979), which Kmentová created from paper a year before her death, when her illness no longer allowed her to realise works in more traditional sculptural materials. Alena Kučerová's latest works which are exhibited here, such as *Into Water* (2006), in which she combines drawing and assemblage from materials found in her rural seclusion, finds parallels with the work of the younger female artists.

I wanted to present the works of these three great, admirable and respected artists in combination with the works of contemporary artists. Here the choice was a difficult one for me, however, I decided to intuitively select artworks that resonate with those of the older

generation, whether through experimentation with materials, fragility or a desire to capture events that we only notice when we slow down. I have worked with Eva Kořátková (*1982) a number of times and I never cease to admire her imagination and the sensitivity with which she approaches the most fragile circumstances of our lives. For this exhibition, she created a new work entitled *A Dream of Multiple Skins*, which is a kind of costume for the body "beyond categories". Symbolically, it complements the monumental and complex installation at the National Gallery in Prague, *My Body is Not an Island* and is interestingly juxtaposed with Alena Kučerová's embroidery *What Do I See?* (2011). The work of Alena Kotzmannová (*1974), which I have also been following for a long time, brings a different technique to the exhibition, namely the photographic process, which she also enriches here with collages of colored sands. In the exhibited photographs entitled *Quartz* (2019), created during the covid time'lessness', Kotzmannová (*1974) took on as her subject matter, crystals – minerals that fascinate us with their beauty and purity, but also with the depths of time captured within. The work of the youngest artist in the exhibition, Tereza Štětínová (*1987), stands, at first sight, in contrast to the fragility of handmade paper, textile objects and embroidery. Her marble objects, however, are characterised by such lightness that it is hard to believe that they weigh a hundred kilos. Štětínová carves and chisels into them the ephemeral moments of life, such as a *Kiss* (2022-23) or *Waves* (2022) that perhaps sweep past our ankles on a seaside holiday. In contrast to the prevailing virtual reality of contemporary art, all six artists work with real matter. They entrust their timeless works to different materials as well as techniques, combining in them a moment of the ordinary and the extraordinary. They relate to the most essential moments of life, shaping, caressing, imprinting, communicating otherwise uncommunicable emotions.

Knowing how visually exceptional the works in the exhibition would be, I asked David Fesl, whose flair for exhibition installation I have long admired, to collaborate on the installation. In dialogue with him, an exhibition solution was found that is based on the effect which the artworks have on the physical body and its movement in space. Our aim was to present the exhibited works in a way which would highlight their unique qualities and at the same time allow for a dialogue of the works with one another. Each of the exhibited works required its own conditions of space, light and, in some cases, silence. David Fesl helped me make important decisions about the balance and amount of architectural interventions which would support the artworks and the curatorial intent. We also paid attention to the labels, their legibility and placement, which is why we invited Adéla Svobodová, whose graphic design contributed to the overall feel of the exhibition.

I would like to thank all of the exhibiting artists, the lenders of these unique works, David Fesl and Adéla Svobodová, without whom the exhibition would not look the way it does, and last but not least, the entire team at Hunt Kastner. For me, the exhibition *Touching Time that Stands Still* is a dream come true. Not only did it allow me to experience how a dialogue between younger artists and icons of Czech post-war art can work, and to reflect on how working with material and themes touching on the human condition have shifted over several decades, but most importantly, it offered me the opportunity to mount an exhibition that has been missing from the Czech art scene - an exhibition for pleasure, which I hope will please you too!

Pavína Morganová