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2 SUSE WEBER: The Eagle, 1999, installation on the wall (600 cm red ribbon, 400 cm metal chain, 1 golden cord, 26 medals, 54 swing hooks), 250 x 300 cm, courtesy of the Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin, photo: archive of the artist

3 HENRIKE NAUMANN: Triangular Stories, 2012, two channel VHS video-installation with period bedroom furniture, 15,24 min., courtesy of the artist, photo: archive of the artist

4 IVANA ŠÁTEKOVÁ: What if... 2018, detail, installation (wall drawings, questionnaires), variable dimensions, courtesy of the artist, photo: archive of the artist

5 NASAN TUR: Once Upon a Time, 2011, view of the installation in Istanbul Modern - Museum of Modern Art (2013), variable dimensions, courtesy of Nasan Tur, Blain/Southern London-Berlin and Deweer Gallery Olegem, photo: Nasan Tur

6 ULF AMINDE: Europa, 2012, HD video, colour, sound, 17:05 min., courtesy of the Galerie Ianja Wagner, Berlin, photo: archive of the artist

KHB
Kunsthalle
Bratislava

OPEN
Mon: 12 - 7 p.m.
Tue: closed
Wed: 1 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Thu - Sun: 12 - 7 p.m.

Free entry

Kunsthalle Bratislava
Nám. SNP 12, 811 06 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
www.kunsthallebratislava.sk



With financial support



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Bratislavský informovaný deň



RADIO DEVIN

Мы (все) народ
Mi smo (Svi skupa) jedno
stanovništvo
My (wszyscy)
jesteśmy ludem
EM (HEMU) GEL IN
777 (7-77) 77
Biz (hepimiz) halkız

نحن (جميعنا) الشعب
Hne (всички) сме
населенето
WIR (ALLE) SIND
DAS VOLK
We (all) are the people
لا (مردم) متساوية
NOUS (TOUS)
SOMMES LE PEUPLE

HANS HAACKE: We (All) Are the People, 2003/2017, installation on the facade of the Kunsthalle Bratislava, 230 x 345 cm, courtesy of the artist, photo: archive of the artist

EAGLES & DOVES
ADLER & TAUBEN
ORLY & HOLUBICE

Ulf Aminde
Tomáš Džadoň
Hans Haacke
Monika & Bohuš Kubinski
Stano Masár
Jarmila Mitriková & Dávid Demjanovič
Henrike Naumann
Erik Sikora
Ivana Šáteková
Anna Tretter
Nasan Tur
Suse Weber
Uli Westphal
Anna Witt

Curators
Lenka Kukurová & Omar Mirza

OPENING
August 16th 2018 from 6 until 8 p.m.

DURATION
August 17th - October 28th 2018

KHB
Kunsthalle
Bratislava

Eagles & Doves

Exhibition curators: Lenka Kukurová and Omar Mirza

According to Homer Simpson, the cause of all life's problems and also their solution is alcohol. We may say the same thing about communication. With its help we can solve conflicts, but when it goes wrong it produces most of our misunderstandings. A national or local culture does not come about by domination: rather, it is founded upon interactions, absorptions, selections and transmissions, hence on functioning communication. Communication between different cultures is the main idea of the exhibition *Eagles & Doves*, which presents works by contemporary Slovak and German artists.

Cultural exchange is both celebrated and condemned. Ideas of a pure national identity clash with discussions about the positives and negatives of multicultural mixing. This highly-charged debate is as much present in Germany, which has long experience of the coexistence of different cultures, as in Slovakia, where this theme is relatively new. But then, does anyone still believe in the popular illusion about the more developed West and the immature young democracies of the East? Who is influencing whom? We are all part of a discussion that is seeking answers to similar questions. Contemporary art too can be a medium of intercultural communication: the encounter, not the clash, of cultures.

The theme of cultural exchange brings complicated questions of national identity and patriotism in its wake. What is the form of national identity today? What influence do various symbols exert upon it? Can we positively identify with a nation without nationalistic and xenophobic overlays? Is it necessary at all, in our times of globalised economy and migration, to pigeonhole people according to their national affiliation? Contemporary visual art can respond to these difficult questions with broad perspective and humour, in a playful and open manner. What the exhibition is attempting is to provide a space where these issues can be looked at freely.

The title *Eagles & Doves* is inspired by the influence of these birds on the creation of national symbols. As a personification of the Slovak nation the conciliatoriness and humility of the dove is found convenient at some times, the majesty and predatory drive of the eagle at others. In the German setting the heraldic symbol of the eagle, which is the state symbol of the German Federal Republic to this day, has been historically important and, alas, abused. National and state symbolism always emerges at a specific time and place, and its significance is not unchanging. The same symbols may in different circumstances be perceived as positive, neutral or negative. They can unite and also divide; they may give rise to various misinterpretations.

On the facade of the Kunsthalle Bratislava there are banners with the inscription "We (all) are the people". The inscription is in twelve languages, associated with visitors to the exhibition *documenta 14* (2017) in Kassel and migrants coming to Germany. With this slogan Hans Haacke touches on the theme of the nation or the people, which has been historically and remains to this day a cause of many controversies and conflicts. The people can be defined in multiple ways: by language, ethnic group, common history, affiliation to a state or a territorial whole, etc. This mutable concept has a consequence: a division into "us" and "them". Simply by inserting the word "all" Haacke changes a declaration that divides into a declaration that unites.

The exhibition gives visitors an opportunity to address the question of symbols playfully and creatively, instead of uncritically adopting the preserved meanings. This is the approach offered in Erik Sikora's video installation, which seeks to define the image of Slovakia. The artist's distinctive absurd humour is a parody on marketing strategies which try to sell abstract cultural values, whether in the form of kitsch souvenirs or artificially constructed national myths. At the same time, this work opens up the very important question of positive national or regional self-identification.

Anna Witt and Nasan Tur work with the theme of flags as state symbols. Witt examines the relationship with flags among holidaymakers, whom she draws into an innocent game of tug-of-war with this object – for some a piece of fabric, for others the untouchable symbol of statehood. Tur, in a seemingly abstract monumental installation comprising flags of no longer existing states, poses the question of what happens after the disappearance of state formations and how this situation bears upon the creation of a new symbolism.

Uli Westphal works with the historically loaded symbol of the eagle. The outlines of heraldic eagles appear in very quick succession in his video. Westphal strips this complicated symbol of its ideological deposits and directs our attention to the liquidity of shapes and meanings and their incessant transmutation. Suse Weber thematises the unification of East and West Germany. Her eagle made out of rib-



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1 ANNA TRETTER: On the Road – the Small Houses of Bus Stops, 2004/2018, installation (digital photo slide-show and a wall-drawing), variable dimensions, courtesy of the artist, photo: archive of the artist

2 DÁVID DEMJANOVIČ, JARMILA MITRIKOVÁ: Viva Automotive Industry!, 2018, detail, pyrography on plywood coloured with wood stain colour, 240 x 510 cm, courtesy of the artists, photo: archive of the artists

3 TOMÁŠ DŽADOŇ: Traditional Caravan, 2006/2017, object, 640 x 217 x 253 cm, courtesy of the artist, photo: Veronika Ruppert

"Contemporary art too can be a medium of intercultural communication: the encounter, not the clash, of cultures."

bons, chains and sporting medals from the former German Democratic Republic has its head turned to the left, in other words to the east: this is the opposite to the present-day state symbol of the German Federal Republic, where the eagle is "gazing" westwards.

In a monumental work by Monika and Bohuš Kubínský entitled *The Slovak Space Programme*, created specially for the exhibition, a dove is the bearer of meanings. Here, however, the bird is linked not, as expected, with the proclaimed peace-loving nature of the Slovaks, but rather with a pigeon-loft as a symbol of chaos. Simultaneously the multimedia installation points ironically at the Slovaks' desire to compete with countries that are more technically developed, even though, because of underfinanced schooling and research, they must often be satisfied with achievements such as the amateur handyman produces.

Folk culture is the theme of a work by Tomáš Džadoň. He has turned a caravan into the perfect illusion of a traditional folk-style wooden house which visitors may enter. The work adverts to the deception of cultural identification based on a reality which has long ago ceased to exist; but it seeks at the same time to find new significance and use for historical references. Folk elements also appear in a newly-created large-format artwork by Jarmila Mitriková and Dávid Demjanovič. Here we see an allegorical procession celebrating the German car firm Volkswagen, which is one of the largest employers in Slovakia. The motif, which is both comical and strangely disquieting, contains questions which touch upon national themes in a global capitalist society.

Works by Stano Masár and Henrike Naumann respond to the transformation of society in the 1990s, which to a notable extent determine the contemporary form of political reality in Slovakia and Germany. Stano Masár exhibits a kiosk for the Postal Newspaper Service, a well-known feature of Slovak public space. The stand, offering the contemporary press from the pre- and post-revolutionary periods, is a metaphor of the transition between two social orders and the consequent chaos of values. Henrike Naumann's video installation is a reconstruction of home videos from the 1990s, which visitors may watch in an original contemporary interior. Two videos show the lives of teenagers in former eastern and western part of Germany. While one group devotes itself to drugs and technopartying, in the second group youthful rebellion issues in right-wing extremism. The work makes reference to the terrorist cell *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund*, which committed a number of racist murders in Germany. The author warns about a crisis of values which sets in where there is an absence of positive visions.

Ulf Aminde's video, where we see a tourist ship called Europe turning round on the spot, is also concerned with visions and direction. The work may be interpreted as a metaphor of the complicated situation in the European Union, which is made up of states with ever more varying ideas about common values and the future. Ivana Šátková produces a dystopian vision of Europe, taking up the question of what would have happened if World War II had ended with the victory of Nazi Germany.

A work by the German artist Anna Tretter, who worked for many years in Slovakia as a university lecturer, links both countries in the form of a travel record. On various routes in Germany and Slovakia she photographs bus stops as symbols of mobility. These "little houses", identical in purpose but differently made, in a humorous sense become national specificities.

Can culture be a mediator of solidarity and tolerance? Can contemporary art replace nationalist kitsch with positive self-identification? Is art in a position to offer a polarised society a space for communication? Seeking and finding traditions, clichés and parodies, this exhibition is a place for everyone who cares about what kind of society we live in.

Translation: John Minahane



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LENKA KUKUROVÁ (*1978, Košice, Slovak Republic) is a curator, art critic and activist. She is engaged in exploring political art and art activism, which was also the theme of her dissertation work (Charles University, 2012). She collaborates with non-profit organisations dealing with human rights and ecology. She has organised several international collective exhibitions focusing on current topics in society, e.g. the refugees, criticism of the practice of removing children from Roma families, the topic of national representation, bicycle transport etc. In 2017 she cooperated with the National Gallery in Prague on the program of the Ai Weiwei's exhibition *Law of the Journey*. Since 2013 she has been co-curator of the Prague Artwall Gallery located in a public space and specializing in political art. She publishes in Czech and Slovak art, as well as other non-art, periodicals. She lives in Leipzig.

OMAR MIRZA (*1981, Námestovo, Slovak Republic) studied Art History at the University of Vienna. Since 2006, he has been working as curator in the Nitra Gallery, where he has already prepared more than forty individual and collective exhibitions of contemporary artists from Slovakia and from abroad, which are in particular engaged in taking a new look at mundane themes (such as food, clothes, sports, hunting, universe, etc.). He has been active as a curator in other galleries in Slovakia as well as abroad and is also engaged in art criticism. He has worked in various media as an editor and host of art programs (*Topless* on tv.sme.sk, *Omar and Božena* on vju.sk) and also works as an external presenter on Rádio Devín (programs *Focus on Visual...* and *Evening on the Theme*). In his spare time, he plays drums in a punk band called Kotúče DM.

Translation: Anna Antalová

4 ERIK SIKORA: Three-Hillocked Heart of Europe, 2014/2018, classroom video-installation, 7 min., courtesy of the artist, photo: archive of the artist

5 ANNA WITT: Hohheitszeichen, 2012, HD video, colour, sound, 5:21 min., courtesy of the Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin, photo: archive of the artist