

Vít Havránek

Monument to Transformation 1989 –1968 – 2009

Installation Model – Fragment # 4

Index

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Artists & Authors Zbynek Baladrán /cz/, Willi Najvar /cz/, Fritz Quasthoff /swe/, Vangelis Vlahos /gr/

Monument to Transformation is a project focused on the topic of cultural, social and political “transformation”, primarily in the Czech Republic and in post-communistic Central-East Europe. Naturally, the process had to redefine the preliminary geopolitical delimitation in favour of a more existential experience with the process of transformation. Now the project is examining the experience of transformation with sometimes unforeseen proximity in such countries of the so-called former Eastern Block, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Uruguay and Southeast Asia, among others.

Monument to Transformation is an interdisciplinary environment comprising art, the humanities, economics and science. It is a permanent exhibition of art objects, archives, theoretical texts and spoken word, both live and archival, which is growing with time. It aims to be a subjective museum relating entirely to individual processes of transformation. It is important for us involved in the project to work by inductive means and to formulate general issues on the basis of individual testimonies and definitions. It is a permanent exhibition that constantly questions its formal appearance, which is based in Prague and has been expanding since 2006. The goal we envision is to expand, transform and reinstall *Monument to Transformation* until at least 2009.

When we speak of transformation, time is much more important than geography or geopolitics. Transformation in the passive sense is conducted within historical time (from-to) and this chronology generates historicity and sequential relationships. In our model of transformation, we relate traditional historicity to human time and based on this relationship we have derived a table, with the aid of which we are trying to reformulate the concept of past, present and future. From this permanent exhibition arises the idea of fragments, which we put into practise on the occasion of the exhibitions. Each fragment is a new addition to the growing installation of *Monument to Transformation* and after each exhibition becomes a part of it.

In *Installation Model - Fragment # 4*, which will be installed at Index within the framework of a long-term collaboration titled *Synonyma*, two completely different positions meet, thus indicating the range of the entire project. Vangelis Vlahos (Greece) is an artist with a long-standing interest in comparing and confronting the language of architecture with that of politics and economic power in his exhibitions. This installation by Vangelis Vlahos, conceived for *Monument to Transformation fragment# 4*, is

based on the funding of the renovation of the former Bosnian parliament building in Sarajevo by the Greek State and deals in general with Greece's role in the Balkans over the last 15 years. The parliament building in Sarajevo is a high-rise, built in 1974 in the American modernist style of the -60s & -70s. This building, which was badly damaged during the war in Yugoslavia in the early -90s and has been widely characterized as the last "war landmark", will house Bosnia and Herzegovina's government agencies.

Its renovation is predominantly funded (80.4%, that is 13.5 million euros) by the Greek government within the framework of the Greek Plan for Economic Reconstruction in the Balkans (ESOAV), a state project aiming to increase the influence of Greek foreign policy and economic diplomacy in South Eastern Europe. The building, which remained abandoned and in skeletal form for more than thirteen years, is currently under reconstruction and will be renamed the Building of Friendship Between Greece and Bosnia-Herzegovina and will reopen at the end of May 2007. The project itself consists of two architectural models and an archive focusing on the context of the specific renovation in relation to Greek policies in the Balkans from the time of the destruction of the building until today.

Both of the architectural models depict the parliament building in Sarajevo. The first model was constructed using nothing but images found on the internet (mostly depicting the building as having been destroyed in the war) while the construction of the second architectural model is based on the actual architectural drawings and illustrations presenting the building's future image (given to the artist by the construction companies responsible for the renovation of the building). The archive is displayed along with the two models and includes material from different sources (media, the internet, state archives, etc.). More specifically, it includes found images of the building, technical plans and images that record the progress of the reconstruction work, monthly progress reports, news and texts on the renovation agreement between Greece and Bosnia, and newspaper articles and texts on Greece's role in the Balkans recording - in parallel to the economic agreements - the activities of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the area from 1992 to now.

Zbynek Baladrán will exhibit a selection from the archive of Willi Najvar, an amateur photographer from Brno. Zbynek Baladrán's exploration of family and private photographic and film archives was one of *Monument to Transformation's* first investigations. In an advert he had published in the daily press, he called on anyone who might be interested to send him photographs from their family archives connected thematically with an unspecified "transformation". That was how he discovered the extensive photographic archive of Willi Najvar, consisting of several thousand black-and-white negatives which are exceptional not only in that they cover the last fifty years, but particularly in the singular photographic quality

of individual pictures and the surprisingly encyclopedic spectrum of his photographic interests (family life, friends, work-related photos from the construction school where he taught, official political demonstrations, photos taken in the streets during the Velvet Revolution, etc.).

Two key questions for Baladrán are why and, even more importantly, how such an archive should be exhibited. He created a system of diagrams and textual constructions to justify a classification system comprising photo series, selected themes and individual photographs. This construction was partially inspired by an autobiographic text titled *Song of Youth* by Josef Hiršal, a Czech experimental poet and translator. In this text, Hiršal comes up with a simple and at the same time radical form of writing an autobiography. The entire autobiography is in the form of one sentence, with notes provided above individual words in the sentence expanding on the information in the words; the notes themselves contain more notes which in turn make reference to another layer of notes, and so on. Thus, a several-layered texture was created, consisting of a text which progressively unfurls itself.

By exhibiting Willi Najvar's archive, Baladrán is formulating his methodology in a new form inspired on the one hand by an interest in the archaeology of subjective images of the past and on the other hand by a creative adoption and transformation of certain historical methods, in this case originating in the field of 1960s experimental literature.

The exhibition also contains works and structures by Fritz Quasthoff, a Swedish artist who works with a project without a defined time frame, where Index exhibition space and activities serves as a starting point for his analyses. Fritz Quasthoff's engagement consists of a series of interventions, oscillating between sculpture and design and for the Synonyma exhibitions Fritz Quasthoff has produced a set of walls and objects, formally relating to interior- or architectural details. These will be used by the artists exhibiting throughout the whole exhibition period.

Initiators of Monument to Transformation are Zbynek Baladrán, artist, and Vít Havránek, curator, both based in Prague, Czech Republic.

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