

A FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN THE PUBLIC SPACES OF THE TOWN OF KLATOVY

EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY SELECTED GRADUATES OF THE ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS IN PRAGUE WHO AT SOME POINT DURING THEIR STUDIES OR THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREERS ATTENDED THE SCULPTURE SCHOOL THAT PROFESSOR HUGO DEMARTINI (1931–2010) LED BETWEEN 1990 AND 1995.

The latest installment of this popular project presents works by selected graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague who at some point during their studies or their professional careers attended the sculpture school that Professor Hugo Demartini (1931–2010) led between 1990 and 1995.

The participating artists are members of the generation that distinctively emerged onto the scene in the 1990s. Specific to this generation is that they still experienced the gray and oppressive atmosphere of the late communist era, but they fully matured and made their debut in a time of free creative endeavors. The Academy of Fine Arts was reformed and given a breath of fresh air with the arrival of inspiring professors and the organization of group exhibitions. All these factors naturally influenced the young beginning artists, and time has shown that this experience was a solid foundation that gave rise to distinctive artistic personalities.

The festival’s fourth edition thus presents yet another perspective on artistic work with public space, continuing the organizers’ long-standing objective of introducing the public to works by important Czech artists and teachers.

This year’s project also includes Jan Kadlec’s exhibition Copy in Klatovy’s Church of St. Lawrence, which opened in mid-March and will run until 8 June 2025.

Participating artists:  
Milan Cais · Hugo Demartini  
Jan Kadlec · Marius Kotrba  
Štěpán Málek · Vojtěch Miča  
Tomáš Polcar · Lukáš Rittstein  
Jan Turner

Curators:  
Zuzana Kantová a Petr Krátký

Graphic Design:  
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Exhibition:  
11 May – 31 October 2025

Exhibition opening:;  
10 May 2025 at 3pm  
in Klatovy’s Hostašovy Sady

Sources:  
artists’ archives, Lucie Šiklová, artist.cz, wikipedia.org, publicart.gavu.cz, and other publicly accessible sources

Milan Cais (1974)

Artist, performer, musician, co-founder and key figure of the band Tata Bojs. Studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in 1992–1999: sculpture under professors Hugo Demartini and Jindřich Zeithamml and visual communications under professor Jiří David. Cais works concurrently in the fields of music and the visual arts. In addition to projections, animations, music videos, and stage designs for concerts, he is also engaged in his own distinctive artistic production in the areas of sculpture, painting, watercolor, illustrations, and public installations. His well-known Night Watchman was installed on the roof of the Goethe-Institut in Prague in the year 2000. Since 1992, he has shown his art at numerous group exhibitions at home and abroad (his installations were exhibited at the Czech pavilion at Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan), and his works can be found in both public and private collections. He lives and works in Prague.

Consisting of a set of giant aesthetically arranged books with strange titles, the sculpture seeks to hold up a mirror to society and its cyclical evolution. The natural process of corrosion erases the differences between past, present, and future and accentuates the symbolic nature of the book as a vessel of knowledge and wisdom while also leaving us unsure as to whether the titles are real or not. The sculpture’s meaning is further underscored and expanded by its placement in the courtyard of the Jesuit College’s refectory right next to the municipal library..

1 Booktherapy, 2023  
corten steel

Hugo Demartini (1931–2010)

Demartini attended Prague’s Academy of Fine Arts in 1949–1954, where he studied sculpture with Jan Lauda, who influenced his early work in particular. By the late 1950s, he managed to break away from the era’s widespread informal painting and began to create geometric collages and red monochrome structures on paper. In the early 1960s, these metamorphosed into red patinated plaster reliefs of cubes, squares, and lines. More than anything else, his works “randomly organized” surfaces resembled structures from “second nature,” meaning civilization. Towards the end of the decade, he was a leading figure of neo-constructivism, which embraced the ideas of a new nature and a new sensitivity. He went out into the landscape, where he created his now-legendary land-art actions and installations. In the 1970s and ’80s, he produced minimalist works that hinted at a new meditative position inspired by man’s “sojourn” in the world and that were characterized by unsettling references to ephemerality and the destruction and ruin of all that is human. In the second half of the 1980s, Demartini joined with three other creative personalities – Pavel Nešleha (1937–2003), Bedřich Dlouhý (1932), and Zdeněk Beran (1937–2014) – to form the Zaostalí group, whose provocative and self-ironic name (zaostalí = the backward ones, those behind the times) was chosen in part because of the artists’ stance against the current trends of the era. In 1990, Demartini was made a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and was awarded a Medal of Merit. He spent the final fifteen years of his life living and working in the village of Sumrakov in the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, where he died in the year 2010.

Starting in the late 1960s, Demartini was one of several artists who radically altered the form of Czech sculpture. His reliefs, chrome-plated objects, art actions, and large-format plaster objects have had an indelible impact on post-war Czech art. Along with other Czech artists engaged in geometric art of varying levels of abstraction, he is considered a member of the “Czech constructivist school.”

In 1968, Demartini created a series of experimental works that included the actions he called Demonstrations in Space. During these, he tossed various objects (tubes, skewers, confetti, etc.) into the air and captured their random configuration both in mid-flight and after they fell to the ground. Both situations relate to the physical world and its structured space, and both reflect the inherent laws of nature. Finding a balance between randomness and order, between nature and civilization remained a central theme in his work throughout his life. The installation of four of the original twelve photographs on the tower of the former Telecom building returns these masterpieces to their original context of a free and open space.

2 Demonstrations in Space, 1968  
photographic documentation of art action – selection

photo: Jaroslav Franta  
Zdeněk Sklenář Gallery

Jan Kadlec (1976)

Visual artist, film architect, and stage designer Jan Kadlec studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where he attended the sculpture studios of professors Hugo Demartini and Jindřich Zeithamml before graduating from professor Jiří David’s Studio of Visual Communications. In the 1990s, he dazzled the Czech art scene with his visionary installations, and he subsequently worked as a film artist, stage designer, and production designer. He divides his time between Prague and Lugano, Switzerland. His works explore the expressive possibilities of contemporary art and tell symbolic stories about contemporary society in a slightly ironic yet easily understood language. A broader theme in his work is an attempt at formulating the currently lived and emerging visual identity of the world, based on his conviction that our thinking, perception, and decision-making are constantly being influenced primarily by media images – whose frequent banality he reveals and transforms into works that question whether art is still an active mirror of the present day. Jan Kadlec is a recent recipient of two Czech Lions, which he earned for his costumes and stage design for the Czech film Girl America (2024). The film also featured the monumental sculpture he is now showing at Klatovy’s Church of St. Lawrence as part of this year’s Sculptures in the Streets in event.

The monumental figure depicts the movie character Rocky Balboa in his iconic triumphant pose. Made of nearly 50,000 VHS cassettes, it is a reference to the cinematic boom in Czechoslovakia in the 1990s. As such, it is a nostalgic reminder of a time when Western heroes were idolized and popular movies were copied again and again, with each successive copy losing some of its star-studded Hollywood glow. As a whole, the used cassettes are reminiscent of the kinds of distorted images that resulted from the loss of quality caused by such repeated copying. In an age overflowing with audiovisual white noise, even today’s reality can look like this.

3 Copy, 2021 - 2022  
VHS cassettes, mixed media

Made with financial support from UniCredit Bank and the ČEZ Group.

From 8 June 2025, a smaller version (map 3.1) made using 3D printing technology will be installed in Klatovy’s information center at Videňská 66 (entrance from Náměstí Míru)

Marius Kotrba (1959 – 2011)

Czech sculptor, painter, draftsman, and teacher Marius Kotrba was a leading figure on the

Czech art scene. During his time at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1981–1987, he studied sculpture under professors Stanislav Hanzík and Miloš Axman. In 1990–1993, he worked at the Academy as an assistant to professor Hugo Demartini, after which he settled permanently in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm and focused completely on his art. Throughout Kotrba’s career, a central theme of his work was man. He drew inspiration from everyday life, personal experiences, and intimate subjects symbolizing interpersonal relationships, with a focus on the spiritual values that affect human existence. Kotrba’s work shows a clear evolution in terms of style and visual vocabulary, with a tendency towards simple, succinct forms, though without a loss of representational value. Tension and emotional force are inherent to all areas of his work, meaning his sculptures, reliefs, paintings, and drawings. By concentrating on what is essential and focusing on an intensity of expression, Kotrba produced works of universal validity and timeless values. In the mid-1990s, he contributed to the founding of a fine arts department at Ostrava University, where he headed the sculpture studio. He also taught at the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica and elsewhere in Europe. Marius Kotrba was an exceptional, one-of-a-kind representative of Czech sculpture from his university days onward, and his art can be found in numerous public and private collections at home and abroad.

For the Klatovy exhibition, we have chosen a sculpture that works loosely with Kotrba’s typical visual vocabulary. It represents a conscious effort at expanding the nuances and range of interpretations of the formal language that he used to communicate the themes he depicted..

4 A Pony-Tailed Dream, 2010  
Hořice sandstone

Štěpán Málek (1966)

Štěpán Málek is a Czech sculptor, musician, poet, teacher, curator, and organizer of cultural events. He studied sculpture in the 1990s under professors Stanislav Kolíbal, Hugo Demartini, and Jindřich Zeithamml at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. Most of his art involves work with reduced forms, sometimes with the added element of chance. He is interested in the tension between order and randomness that arises from the logic of geometry and that, in the chaos of the contemporary world, creates a space of rules and laws, a universe of right angles, circles, layered polygons, and cylinders created from absolutely ordinary materials and the combination thereof. In the world of geometry, he finds a utopia, and in a purity of forms he finds salvation and redemption as antitheses to all of the world’s mediocrity, commercialization, and spectacularity. He sees the creative process as a continuous game of rearranging familiar elements, some of which we have known since childhood. He is a member and president of the KK3 Club of Concretists and a founder of its east Bohemian section. In the 1980s, he played the saxophone and sang and wrote music and texts for the bands Kmitací adaptér and Ježkovy voči. After recently leaving the band N. V. Ů, he founded



another punk band, V. V. Ů, which on 2 August 2025 will hold a concert in Klatovy as part of the exhibition’s program of accompanying events. Klatovy audiences may remember his work from the 2017 exhibition Enchanted by Order at the Church of St. Lawrence.

11 May – 31 October 2025

The installation on the stairs of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and St. Ignatius on Klatovy’s Náměstí Míru consists of two concrete cylinders and two iron plates. The relationship between their shapes, principles, and qualities can be seen as a lifelong theme in the artist’s work.

5 Two Deviations in Color, 2022  
iron, concrete, acrylic paint

Vojtěch Miča (1966)

Vojtěch Miča attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in 1985–1992, where he studied sculpture under professor Hugo Demartini and monumental art under professor Aleš Veselý. Today, he teaches at his alma mater, where he has spent many years shaping the next generations of sculptors, first as an assistant to Demartini, then as an assistant to professor Jindřich Zeithamml, and since 2015 as head of the Studio of Figure Sculpture and Medal-making, which he took over from professor Jan Hendrych. From his point of view, the sculpture can be seen as an open situation that has been fixed in a physical material. His works can be understood as conscious “semantic associations” that open up new contextual horizons which are slowly transformed into reflections on his objects’ relationship to the viewer and the exhibition space. They are something like a two-way “formatting” that, for each viewer, is open to a different way of perceiving sculptural expression and its boundaries. Thanks in part to Miča, Czech sculptural heritage remains connected to contemporary artistic vocabulary. His work typically combines a systematic, serious, and deep interest in all forms of sculpture with a sense of lightness and playfulness. He has been exhibiting since 1989 and lives and works in Prague and Podlesín.

Miča frequently works with traditional materials, which he arranges in easily understood relationships, proportions, and stories that penetrate the rational structure of the given place. He has taken the same approach to the sculpture he made specifically for Náměstí Přemysla Otakara II, which sensitively works with the memory of this place. The 6.5-meter-tall figural column rests on three stones that differ not just in terms of size and material, but also in their history. The sandstone block originally served as a plinth for a sculpture, while the granite comes from a former monument to prewar journalist and politician Jan Šverma. Originally (1969–1999) located by the approach to Šverma (today Štefánek) Bridge in Prague, the monument was moved to the Olšany Cemetery in 2004. The third block comes from a monument to Czechoslovakia’s second communist president, Antonín Zápotocký, that stood on this very site. After 1989, the bronze sculpture was removed, taken to the gallery at Klenová, and ceremonially buried. The plinth was long left on the square, and at one point the gallery even considered using it for temporary sculptural installations, loosely inspired by a similar undertaking involving an empty plinth on London’s Trafalgar Square. Nevertheless, sometime around 2006 it, too, was taken to Klenová.

6 Landscape, 2025  
mixed media  
concrete, stone, iron

Tomáš Polcar (1973)

Tomáš Polcar studied at Prague’s Academy of Fine Arts under professors Hugo Demartini, Aleš Veselý, and Milan Knížák, graduating from Knížák’s Studio of Intermedia Art in 1998. From Demartini, he gained his sense for material and form; from Veselý his interest in content, energies, and proportions; and from Knížák his focus on reflection, communication, and ideas. Polcar’s works are characterized by a conceptual approach that informs his relationship to form, which he chooses intuitively and according to need. Over the course of his

career, he has settled on several characteristic approaches that he applies in long-term, open-ended cycles. At the outset of every such cycle stands an encounter with an expression of form as a physically manifested principle. His ideas, which flow from this starting point, are subsequently made visible and enclosed in the substance of his paintings and sculptures. In the 1990s, Polcar participated in all of his generation’s seminal actions and exhibitions. In addition to traditional artistic production, he was briefly captivated by new media as well. Especially noteworthy are his interventions in the public space of Prague, among them Portraits of Naked People and Advertising Campaign for Ordinary Items, the latter of which he organized in 1998 with his wife, the artist Ester Polcarová. Klatovy audiences may remember Advertising Campaign for Ordinary Items from the 2022 exhibition at the White Unicorn Gallery A Meeting in Střomovka, which showed works by graduates of Milan Knížák’s intermedia studio. Polcar has exhibited since 1992; he lives and works in Prague and in Slavětín nad Ohří.

The art of Tomáš Polcar relates to the circle in both form and content, and he has worked with it repeatedly as a shape, phenomenon, or chain of connections, always innovatively and from different perspective. His project titled Kyklos (from the Greek word for circle, wheel) consists of three cycles: Decay Engenders Life (2008) relates to the landscape and how it flows in an eternal cycle of change; Atomos (2010) explores the circle as a perfect Platonic shape and thus as a basic structure from which surrounding entities and relationships are derived; and Soma (2012–2013) works with the honeycomb as a starting point while focusing on the perfect nature of this shape, the network that it forms, and the relationship between whole and part, birth and decay, fullness and emptiness.

7 Kyklos 2019  
mixed media

8 Kyklos 2022  
concrete, iron

Lukáš Rittstein (1973)

Lukáš Rittstein attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague in 1991–1997, where he studied in professor Hugo Demartini’s Sculpture Studio and professor Aleš Veselý’s Studio of Monumental Art. In 1999, he completed his post-graduate studies in professor Marian Karel’s Glass in Architecture Studio at Prague’s Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design and was presented the Jindřich Chalupský Award. He creates monumental objects and sculptures of a narrative character whose visual form, though not always clearly legible, usually possesses a concrete meaning relating to his personal experience from the worlds of nature and technology. He is capable of convincingly combining antithetical materials into surprising organic shapes without equal in contemporary Czech sculpture. He also takes a critical stand on questions of the environment, globalization, and other issues faced by contemporary society. In this, he has been greatly influenced by his expeditions to the virgin rainforests of Papua New Guinea, where he has spent time with the country’s last remaining aboriginal inhabitants. These journeys were undertaken in 1997–2022 in the company of his partner, the painter, photographer, and experimental filmmaker Barbora Šlapetová. Together, they repeatedly visited the area inhabited by the Yali Mek tribe, where they used art to explore people’s jump forward in time into the twenty-first century. Over the years, these journeys have produced an extensive body of work in the form of photographs, experimental films, drawings, and sculptures depicting this encounter between two absolutely different worlds – aboriginal culture and modern civilization. Rittstein co-designed the interior of the Indonesian Jungle Pavilion at the Prague Zoo and also contributed to the

Czech exhibition for Expo 2010 in Shanghai in the form of a project presenting the symbiosis between nature and city. He taught sculpture at Prague’s Academy of Fine Arts in 2013–2023 and has exhibited since 1993. Lukáš Rittstein lives and works in Vrané nad Vltavou; his family has roots in the Klatovy region.

9 African Child, 2025  
bronze, steel

Jan Turner (1971)

Jan Turner, who primarily creates drawings, paintings, sculptures, and installations, studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague from 1993 to 1999. There, he focused on sculpture under Professor Hugo Demartini, graphics with Professor Vladimír Kokolia, and intermedia art with Professor Milan Knížák. His work explores the imagination of everyday events, reinterpreting the function of objects and materials in the tradition of conceptual art and post-minimalist sculpture. Turner’s objects act as analogies to ordinary items that have lost their function but not their meaning. Rather than offering clear proclamations, he engages the viewer’s everyday awareness, enriching it with a chance to see familiar things from new perspectives. He often explores the tension between articulation and representation and examines the space created by this conflict. Since 2002, during his doctoral studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague, he has also addressed the theme of the artist’s narcissism and its significance in relation to the viewer. Turner’s works are marked by their simplicity and accessibility, while maintaining depth and meaning. He has exhibited since 1994 and continues to live and work in Prague.

Ribbon (2024–2025, plastic, steel), installed near the Church of St. Lawrence, is divided into two parts—an upper and a lower ribbon—connected by a 2.8-meter-long steel pipe. To perceive the ribbon as a whole, as we typically understand the term, the viewer must mentally erase the distance between the two parts. Turner plays with the meaning of the word „ribbon,” hinting at it without depicting it literally. The object deliberately contains a „mistake,” which is central to its meaning: it offers the experience of an insurmountable distance, yet suggests that the two parts belong together and form a unified whole. Placed in front of a church, the work introduces another layer of interpretation. From ground level, the viewer can only intuit the ribbon and attempt to connect the two parts mentally through various sophisticated constructions. The distance between the two segments feels dichotomous from a human perspective, but from above, the ribbon appears whole, and the gap between the two parts becomes invisible. Ribbon thus challenges perception, distance, and the viewer’s role in completing the image..

10 Ribbon, 2024-2025  
plastic, steel