



Publikace byla vydána za finanční podpory Plzeňského kraje.

2013 Pilsen
European Capital of Culture



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Plzeň 2015 – Evropské hlavní město kultury
Fakulta designu a umění Ladislava Sutnara
Západočeské univerzity v Plzni

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Ateliér profesora Jiřího Beránka

The distant plans Professor Jiří Beránek and I dreamed up in around 2005 have now been implemented in the land art projects of students and professors from Professor Beránek's studio. When he and I met up while he was still teaching at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague (UMPRUM) and spoke about his future work at the faculty I was establishing in Pilsen, he planned on shifting the focus of the future studio more towards landscape interventions, interventions into the environment in which we live. I went to see him at his studio in Prague's Florence district and visited him in Prague – Koloděje, where he lives and works. In the pubs of Prague or in the garden of his house/studio, art projects and plans were formulated that he and his students – the Beránek School – are now executing here in Pilsen and in the Pilsen Region. Relatively speaking, the term "Land Art" is perhaps the most precise, and yet still a very confusing name for describing what it actually is; it is no more misleading than the name "Disappearing Churches". Jiří has already created truly extensive, monumental interventions into the landscape and thought – nay, dreamed about staging projects in Northern Bohemia, where mine dumps were being created from the overburden and tailings removed from surface mines. He also wanted his studio at UMPRUM to be focused in this direction, but things did not completely turn out as he had wished and the Prague studio's work took a different course. In Pilsen and Pilsen Region, Professor Beránek primarily saw a countryside damaged by growing industry, a city with numerous empty lots that were the gaping wounds and scars left by World War II, a city speckled with the past fame of an industrial empire (the factory architecture of Škoda Works), a city hacked into segments by the totalitarian regime's brutal urban planning.

I knew that here he would find what he was looking for, a place that needed him, and I knew it would appeal to him. The Pilsen Region has a distinctive character. The large swathes of the Sudetenland, where volunteer seedlings have covered the tracks of years past, the forest has consumed entire villages, trees have knocked down houses and root systems have taken apart stone walls. A strange sort of vegetation has come to flourish here: suddenly among the pines and spruces one can find enormous fruit trees, branches broadly outstretched, which humans have long stopped climbing to collect their red and yellow apples, pears and cherries. Instead of dried brown pine cones, the nostalgic dark woods harbour fruits, strangely out of place and glowing like red, orange and yellow decorations. In the autumn, red beads of rowanberries hint at the places where there were once gardens and orchards in the villages' backyards. Gardens and orchards can no longer be found here, and flower beds have been replaced with pillows of moss with birch boletes, porcini and chanterelles, with parasols growing in dry areas. But watch out, there is one thing that remains intact even with the passage of time. Like traps amidst the thickets are deep, round pits, half-buried wells whose walls are carefully reinforced with stone. Absurdity and mystery grip and entice us, whispering forgotten stories we do not want to hear. But the strongest experience is to suddenly, in the middle of the forest, encounter a church, chapel or whatever is left behind – the torsos of pilgrimage sites whose paths have long since disappeared. You walk through woods that look like an old fairy tale, through the beautiful countryside, and suddenly you come across a dark place. The stone you are standing on is the top of a tombstone from the local Jewish cemetery. You look around and find more and

more, and in the thicket you find other wonderfully preserved tombstones. You nibble on raspberries and strawberries in the middle of an overgrown cemetery that people had destroyed years ago. The people who destroyed the Jewish cemetery were then expelled from the region their ancestors had inhabited for centuries, and their houses were looted and often levelled to the ground. Deep in the forest you suddenly see the traces of the people who once lived here: a crossroads, a dilapidated mill, a little chapel, a filled well, a church that has caved in or was intentionally destroyed at a time when people thought destroying churches was the right thing to do. Traces of work and the spirit of those who were here before us, who had given blood, sweat and tears to earn their daily bread from the poor soil of the foothills; traces of the evil that begot evil. You see them at places where two nations live together, at places where people built an impermeable border (once upon a time a mere concept) of barbed-wire barricades so they could lock themselves in with their consciences, covered over by layers of unforgiveness, so their old wounds and scars would never be able to heal and as a result, neither people nor animals could freely move or wander through the woods. A landscape logically built over the millennia, a structure of fields, meadows, gardens, woods and ponds, a network of streams, rivers, millraces, ways, footpaths and roads all suddenly lost all meaning and reason. In the end, traces of systematic, tireless building and traces of intensive, manic and idiotic destruction were gradually blanketed in vegetation. It is as if nature healed and covered with scars the injuries and old wounds the landscape had suffered. But there are other wounds here that will take more time to heal. Wounded hearts and poisoned souls. Totalitarian regimes use power

to divide people, pit people against each other, turn friends and good neighbours into enemies who fear and hate each other. The wounds and poison of the prewar, wartime and postwar periods were then carefully fed, nurtured and preserved so that fear of one's own neighbours would distract people from real threats, so that this seemingly inherited abstract hatred would obscure the real enemy. Professor Beránek and I talked about all this back during my visits and he described how it would be enough to find and somehow mark these places, and the landscape, the composition of the landscape, would suddenly get back the reason, purpose and logic that those who had come before us had imparted here long ago. Professor Beránek and I pledged to set about doing this work, and he came from Prague to help me build the art faculty in Pilsen. Several years later, when we started to outline themes for the European Capital of Culture, it was obvious that we would deal with "Land Art" or later "Disappearing Churches". The ECOC team accepted these projects and the City of Pilsen, in conjunction with Pilsen Region, helped provide funding. As a result, a unique series of sculptures and this book, a document about clashes, about artists' fights and battles in support of people against brutal, ruthless history, could see the light of day. The artists mentioned are students and professors at the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. This young, ambitious faculty was born out of the transformation of its predecessor, the Institute of Art and Design. The original two departments, Media & Didactic Illustration and Industrial Design, were later joined by additional fields and majors, creating an institute with nearly 20 studios and a student body of over 600. Construction of the faculty's modern building was completed in

2012 and the Institute was transformed into the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art, named after the brilliant Czech-American designer. A summer art school was established in 2004. ArtCamp has been attended by several thousand students from the Czech Republic and nearly every corner of the globe; instructors have also come from dozens of different countries. Another important international activity in which the faculty is engaged is the annual Ladislav Sutnar Award. Although the award has been in existence only a short time, it has already garnered much prestige. Laureates include a number of major international figures and institutions, such as Steven Heller (USA), Professor Gyula Ernyey (Hungary), William E. Lobkowitz (USA), Lech Majewski (Poland), Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum (USA), J. P. Getty Trust (USA), Art Institute of Chicago (USA), American Institute of Graphic Arts (USA), R. Roger Remington (USA), Museum of Modern Art in New York and others. In the area of education, the faculty supports potential secondary school applicants (it has established the Teendesign competition) as well as lifelong learning, opening numerous courses every year. The main focus of its education programme is to prepare art and design students. Over 600 students attend the faculty's special studios: Animation & Interactive Art; Metal & Jewellery Design; Shoe & Fashion Accessory Design; Fashion Design; Graphic Design; Illustration Graphics; Intermedia; Ceramics; Book Design & Paper Shaping; Comics & Illustration for Children; Painting; Media & Didactic Illustration; Multimedia; New Media; Product Design; Industrial Design; Applied Photography; Visual Communication ... and Professor Jiří Beránek in the Sculpture & Space Studio. Our book is about the unique work of the professors and students at this studio.

“The church as a place where man encounters God, his teacher of morality, is a place that I believe is primarily made to foster the good within people. The fact that these buildings are now empty and dilapidating is reflected in the state of people today, who are also spiritually dilapidating and subsequently falling apart. I wanted to bring attention to this problem and force coincidental observers to think about just how important the place where they are standing is.”

Jakub Hadrava, artist’s statement on “The Faithful” at St. George’s Church in Luková, 2012

This publication charts “Disappearing and Endangered Churches”, an important project that has been organised since 2012 as part of an enlightened collaborative effort between Pilsen 2015 European Capital of Culture and the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art (LS FDA) at the University of Western Bohemia in Pilsen. The aim of the project is based on a current reflection on churches, now deserted, which once represented living “centres” of human and spiritual life. Students of Professor Jiří Beránek’s Sculpture Studio at LS FDA worked in close dialogue with the sacred landmarks of western Bohemia, where they created works that revive the nature and memory of each site. Instead of enjoying the comfort of a well-heated studio and sitting before the virtual word in front of a computer screen, these students set out to the unprotected terrain, where in the chilly draughts of real cultural contexts they worked out their own creative answers to their chosen places. In so doing they symbolically highlight the devastation, visible and invisible, that took place here in the past. Immersing themselves into the issue of real sociocultural contexts, they grapple with conditions that in many senses could be called “difficult” and subsequently execute works that raise the places where they were created up from the darkness of the forgotten and towards the light of rehabilitative thoughts – I believe this may be the most beneficial thing young artists can do when forming their own principles and methods. Clearly this is not a mere formal assignment, but valuable knowledge and even more valuable self-knowledge. I had the honour of delivering the opening speeches at the launches of the projects by Jakub Hadrava, Veronika Konturová, Vojtěch Soukup and Kristýna Kužvartová. The atmosphere at each launch was always absolutely unforgettable. “Disappearing and Endangered Churches” primarily (but not only!) follows the varied modern tradition of land art. Land art arose in the United

States in the late 1960s as a part of artists' interest in art that was completely intellectually and physically dependent on the place where it was created – and especially outside the traditional space of an art museum. Since then, works that are created inseparably from the context of such places have been called "site specific". This represented not only a shift towards the "great space" of nature, but also in the use of materials that have historically been considered non-artistic, such as soil, dirt, asphalt, concrete and snow. Artists thus entered into a new stimulating relationship with the "wild" landscape, but also with the landscape of the contemporary city; as a result, a new way of artistically perceiving the civilisational contexts of man was created. As leading land artist Robert Smithson once explained, "Pavements, holes, trenches, mounds, heaps, paths, ditches, roads, terraces, etc., all have an aesthetic potential." As opposed to a transportable work of classic sculpture, in land art a work may be created that is expressed as an intervention directly into the terrain, for example. The result is that instead of viewers walking around the sculpture, often they are surrounded by the work of land art and invited to perceive the broader space around them more sensitively. In the Czech context, art created in a direct dialogue with the landscape is especially connected with the 1970s generation. In the Czech Republic, the land art phenomenon is associated not only with contemporary expressions on the international scene, but also with the fact that as repressive normalization set in, a number of artists were forcibly "pushed out" of the official scene and had to seek out alternative places to work on their art and confront each other outside ideologically-protected cultural centres. In his work Jiří Beránek, a key figure in Czech land art, impressively uncovers the point where forces of nature and human destiny intersect, symbolically illustrating the fact that man is a mere (though rare) fragment in the great flow of time and

nature. The principle behind Beránek's work is captured well in his statement, "One can use a machined beam to humanise an empty space. One can come and coalesce. It is possible to leave." As can be excellently seen in Beránek's words, using the typical language of architecturally sensed monumentality and "ancient" geometric shapes, land art tells us about the constant processes and movements in nature, the civilisational memory of humanity and, in recent years, environmental issues that are particularly pressing for the contemporary world. Following the above historical summary it is important to add that land art is not only a historical chapter in the development of modern art, but a living and current way to think about the landscape of which we are all a part – whether the natural or civilisational landscape. The work of Jiří Beránek's students shows that the cultural and environmental rehabilitation of the landscape in expressions of land art is of increasingly greater importance for contemporary society. At the same time their projects indicate that the chance has not yet been lost to resurrect the better aspects of man in terms of finding and reviving roots. Historical roots of course, but in today's context also community, natural and spiritual roots. After many decades of forgetting and apathy, here we have a valuable appeal for people to remember and become aware of the ground under their feet, figuratively and literally. I consider it especially fortunate that that this appeal is coming from young people. Everywhere where LS FDA students executed their work as part of "Disappearing and Endangered Churches", the fundamental questions arose: What have we lost? What of our core selves have we still kept? Besides Christian faith, this fundamentally concerns humanist faith, without which not only churches, but the entire civilisational landscape would be empty. So let's have faith...
Richard Drury Chief Curator, GASK – Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region

Man must "rise" up above himself. Jiří Beránek

This past August, while I was travelling to various sites in several different corners of western Bohemia where students of the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art at Pilsen's University of West Bohemia had left behind traces of their own art work, I kept thinking of a line from one of President Václav Havel's speeches: "Our country is not flourishing." In a landscape that is beautiful and, from the perceptive traveller, no less thrilling than the fabled landscapes of Bohemia and Moravia, it was as if an air of mourning had set in, a heaviness that offers a testimony against us modern people of today and against the events of the historically not so distant past. That past appears violent and ruthless, but the present seems lackadaisical and blind. And though it is true that not all share today's consumer passivity in this utility-oriented world, it seemed to me that this group is still weak. Here in western Bohemia, students from the Sculpture & Space Studio led by Professor Jiří Beránek are demonstrating a high level of sensitivity for the call of the landscape and for the energy in places found and torn from the primordial immeasurable and incomprehensible nature of this world's space through centuries of human activity and responsiveness. He has undoubtedly understood that the landscape is far more than just a possible source of utility or something pleasing to the eye at times of rest, but rather a manifestation of nature itself as a power, as an order of all beings, as an order of which human beings are a part. The students and their professor seek out sites and buildings in the countryside, mainly churches devastated by human malice and incredible stupidity. In today's increasingly secular times, as we are losing awareness of the vertical dimension of human existence, confused value preferences are intensifying this destruction. "Land Art: Disappearing and Endangered Churches" represents a unique, long-term series of art interventions into devastated buildings of worship. Young artists involved in the project, which was formed in cooperation with the university and Pilsen European Capital of Culture 2015, apply their sensitivity and creativity to slowly disappearing religious buildings and the appearance of the landscape, which has been engaged in a centuries-long dialogue with man and made a significant impact on the course

of his life. What results are often surprisingly mature art space interventions. Their presence cautions the public about the condition of Czech landmarks – and the state of people’s minds and Czech society as a whole. A deep, sensitive relationship to the countryside, to a space that requires you constantly find your bearings, your coordinates and your own earthly and hidden spiritual dimensions, is an intrinsic part of the work of Jiří Beránek, who is unquestionably the central person in the project. Since the 1970s Jiří Beránek has been a leading figure in Czech art. Although his first solo exhibition (only drawings) was not held in Prague until the mid-80s, shortly after he graduated from the Academy in the early part of the 1970s it was clear that a unique talent with very original artistic ideas was entering the Czech art scene. He and his contemporaries, who rejected normalisation-era demands to “toe the line”, created the core of the 1970s generation, as represented by Volné seskupení 12/15 Pozdě, ale přece (12/15 Better Late Than Never art group) in the late 1980s. Beránek’s work did not develop along a straight line that could be described as “from traditional to avant-garde” or “from figurative to conceptual expressions”. It is absolutely clear that Beránek is not interested in formal integrity following an external linear construct, but rather internal, spiritual integrity. Through his work he has always expressed that for him, art – that thing transformed in the outside world into a mere daily practice and flow of experiences – is primarily the spiritual struggle of man versus man. And for this reason he may, at practically the very same moment, work directly with the landscape as if it were a sculpture, create an object as if he were a timeless carpenter, or model a figure which is now lightly described as “traditional”. As one of the first Czechs, if not the very first, he worked with the landscape, with land art. At first, in 1972, the year he graduated from the Academy, he worked on slagheaps in Nové Strašecí, where he created his own Landscape and Table from the foul waste of human industrial activity. In Sobotín, a small town in northern Moravia where he lived for a short time, he created the landscape installation Hallway in 1975. His ideas about the landscape as a work and as a place where humans spend time in were embodied in a number of drawings – projects as well as three-dimensional objects. Whereas the Hallway in

Sobotín is a place hidden away in the soil, a refuge through which the indivisibility of the Earth’s space and matter flows despite its being hidden away, his 1980s land art installation Layers projected up over the terrain like seemingly stable, cubic matter – though matter given over to the elements and chipped away by the wheels of time. Over time, the Earth inevitably takes it back, working with the landscape, soil and materials it offers up in later years as well. Jiří Beránek is unquestionably a teacher who does not merely impart skill and dexterity to his students, or even some sort of rhetoric of form that itself could define the character of the work. Instead at his school he fosters the ability to look and notice, because it is not just seeing and looking, but rather noticing that opens the way to understanding, arouses the artist’s ability to clear his or her mind and let the strength of the site and space flow freely. The artist must not approach a place already with a specific task in mind, but should allow the site to speak freely; after all, it was a Greek philosopher who knew that “nature is wont to hide herself”. Travelling through the disappearing churches of western Bohemia could be a pilgrimage, a journey to understand art, to understand the grounding of human life, or a journey in search of one’s self. It was not by chance that the churches selected for the art interventions were primarily pilgrimage sites. In our case, the journey or pilgrimage should probably start near the village of Srstice, at St. Vitus Church on the hill overlooking the village. Next to the church, in a depression probably left by stone quarrying, Jiří Beránek creates a circular “meditation site” embedded into the ground. In the distance up on another hillock, he has erected a granite monolith in a striking position, a menhir (peulvan in Breton) with a flat stone formed into a sort of shallow lavabo at its base. Here, where he also found enthusiastic collaborators, Jiří Beránek started to mark the comprehensible dimensions of the landscape, connecting to the line of force that he perceived in the landscape. It seems there will be a follow-up on landscape project in Srstice, which he has called Intergrowth. Next to St. Blaise pilgrimage church on the edge of a pond near Branišov, Vojtěch Soukup works with upright stones, which feature so often in the darkest history of European civilisation and can also be found in Bohemia. Slightly arching before the church

façade, the erect stones form Stations of the Cross, including three of Jesus' falls marked by stones lying on the ground. The arch of stones, a sort of prehistoric cromlech, seems to demarcate the protected area in front of the church. A place marked off this way invites pilgrims to engage in focused relaxation. Inside the church, in front of the altar communion table made of just slightly shaped stone, shaped, low stakes stand erect in an arch to demarcate the innermost sanctuary around the altar. Jakub Orava's installation next to St. Wenceslaus Church, a Gothic church in Hora sv. Václava (Drahotín), works with stone in an entirely different manner. The installation becomes clear only from the church hill, from the cemetery wall. A view opens up to show rows of stones suggesting some sort of fixed archaeological finding of a very complex settlement structure. Nevertheless, after a moment or two the observer realises that the stones do not represent the ground plans of homes that are remarkably interwoven and penetrate each other at several different elevations. Perhaps they are the remnants of a sacred place? Or a memory in material form, conserving various events at the site over the years up to the present day, is emerging right here before us? The objective behind František Dvořák's installation in a village that has completely disappeared, the once bustling village of Pořejov, met a special fate. In the recent past, half of the village was buried under a heap of waste now covered over by vegetation; the other half of the village was covered by woodland. The artist wanted to clear the foundations of St. Bartholomew's Church and build an installation made of shaped beams on these foundations. Due to a number of unfortunate circumstances, he could not complete his objective. However, the dismal-looking torso of the church foundations remain and vegetation is slowly taking it over again. How vegetation is taking back what man had once wrested from her appears in installations at several sites. If a proper dose of disinterest and apathy is added to this, the structure and installation may completely vanish before people's eyes. This happened, at least for me, with the chapel near Děpoltice, where Monika Hrachová built her installation. All of the entrances to the chapel are now overgrown, in places blocked by electric fences, and the locals we spoke with were not even aware of the chapel's existence.

St. Mary Magdalene Church is located on top of the ruins of Krasíkov Castle. It is entirely empty, but it does have a functioning roof. At the communion table at the altar in the relatively long church, Benedikt Tolar has placed a dark blue round object that the artist himself played down somewhat by comparing it to a satellite dish. But in contemporary art it is entirely legitimate when a radar dish combing through the depths of space becomes a work of art. It is worth noting that a point of light glows from the centre of Benedikt Tolar's deep blue dish when it is viewed from the entrance. Here in this still sacred place, would this be the light of the beginning, a sign of singularity? Perhaps the most visited church featuring an art intervention as part of the project is St. George's Church in Luková (Manětín). Three altars, though broken and barren of pictures, and functioning benches remain inside the destroyed, leaking interior. In Jakub Hadrava's installation *The Faithful*, thirty figures are seated and standing behind the pews, their non-existent faces covered by shrouds. It seems that those sitting, kneeling and standing here are not people, but rather the distant, intangible memories of their lives, which they brought to the church before the invisible face of God to pray – and which the sculptor has now made visible by applying his imagination. Several other student installations are also located only inside the destroyed structures, so visitors are surprised by and come into contact with the artistic gesture only as they enter the church. A distinctive aspect of church architecture is that even given its state of utter devastation, it remains lofty and majestic. Could this be said of any buildings from the recent past? In such a space, the artwork is supported and sustained by the structure – if it still has a reason and the strength to do so.

The Baroque space of a solitaire cruciform chapel, the former chateau chapel in Nový Čestín, is treated quietly and delicately by an installation whose lines of string and netting, emanating out from the altar communion table and rising up to the windows, draw the space. It is as if the whispers of pleas, promises and ideas of hundreds of predecessors remained here. The same artist, Štěpánka Kotková, placed an intangible drawing in space – or rather intangible strokes of a brush working with the light of a transparent watercolour – inside the Pilgrimage Church of the Virgin Mary in Otín, with its beautiful Gothic presbytery. The artist

seems to visualise what continues to endure, unseen, through the ages. Both of the artist's installations create a striking, emphatic meditative atmosphere in the church space. On the hill overlooking the village of Loreta, a tiny hamlet near Týnec (Klatovy), is a large Baroque church built in the early 18th century and consecrated to St. John of Nepomuk. Where there was once a cupola is now a circular view of the sky. This circle is copied on the ground by Kristýna Kužvartová's installation Droplet: The Surface of Depth. This pure, formally precise installation of carefully assembled bricks – essentially a minimalist sculpture – is based on the idea of the circles formed when a drop lands in a pool of water. Here this one drop of water has moved and rippled the earth before disappearing into the depths. This beautiful and well thought-out installation is now also subject to the forces of nature with vegetation (still small right now) slowly swallowing it up. Perhaps it was unintentional, but this is also part of the excitement in encountering a work of art and its transformations, which can open our view to each of our own situations. In the sunlight of day or as dusk sets in and the sun is low on the horizon, visitors to St. Barbara's Church on a hill overlooking Všekary may become aware of the unusual light relationships inside this church space. This is because Veronika Konturová's art intervention here is based on work with light. Several of the windows are set with polished minerals, which let colourful light into the space and create the atmosphere. It is important to emphasise that in European spiritual and cultural traditions, light is always holy in character. Unquestionably it is due to the hard work of Professor Jiří Beránek that this ensemble of installations in western Bohemian churches did not result in a mere formal exercise in skill, but a focused effort in understanding places that will always hold strong memories deep inside themselves. Understanding where the contemporary work has found itself, what it responds to and what it faces – in fact the results of the project thus far enter into a discussion with the depths of time, the depths of built-up human spirituality and the contemporary situation of man in the middle of the world. How else could we more authentically prove ourselves as a remarkable, special society among the other nations uniting Europe than through the intensity and authenticity of our cultural expressions?

About "land art" If you could float up over the Czech landscape, you would not help but see the scars – you would not be able to avert your eyes. One of the most unique areas in the world (Central Bohemian Uplands) has pieces bitten out of its body and breathes thick, dense fumes like an injured animal on its last legs. A little bit further, the seams in the concrete slab motorways and roads lead from one Kaufland to another Hornbach and back again. The cheerless architecture of industrial parks and forced consumption sings of economic growth. Billboards, fireworks, the blinding colours of lights, circuses and games. What an awesome decoration for the race of running lives. Mass runs, mass marches, mass river runs, mass meat eating, mass migration. Whoever resists is vilified and forced to escape. But there are few places where one can hide. From the shrubs that have swallowed up the last remnants of villages, farms and churches near the border, I look on at this strange dance in horror. I am afraid and reach for my sword, but it falls apart in my hands. Going down the last alleys of century-old trees, these disappearing lines of man's spiritual values, I struggle through the heartless realisation that everything is moving towards rapid, irreversible disintegration. Crouching in thickets of thorns, rose hips, blackberries and nettles, I wander through the starry night. I keep stumbling into the ruins of our ancestors' tombs. The distant sounds of discotheques make my head throb. With a sudden burst of wind, the clouds open and it starts to pour. Torrents of water clear the air and from the hillock overlooking it all, in the flashes of lightning I see a landscape that is holding out — a landscape of windstorms and floods, a landscape of heat waves and droughts. A landscape of this fundamental "land art" — the art of transformation beyond our will. The land art of something above us. — It is with great humility that several of my students and I have set out to seek what goes beyond us, yet also forms us. — Behind the fallen walls of the temples is not a void! — The overgrown paths through the fields are not paths to "nowhere"!

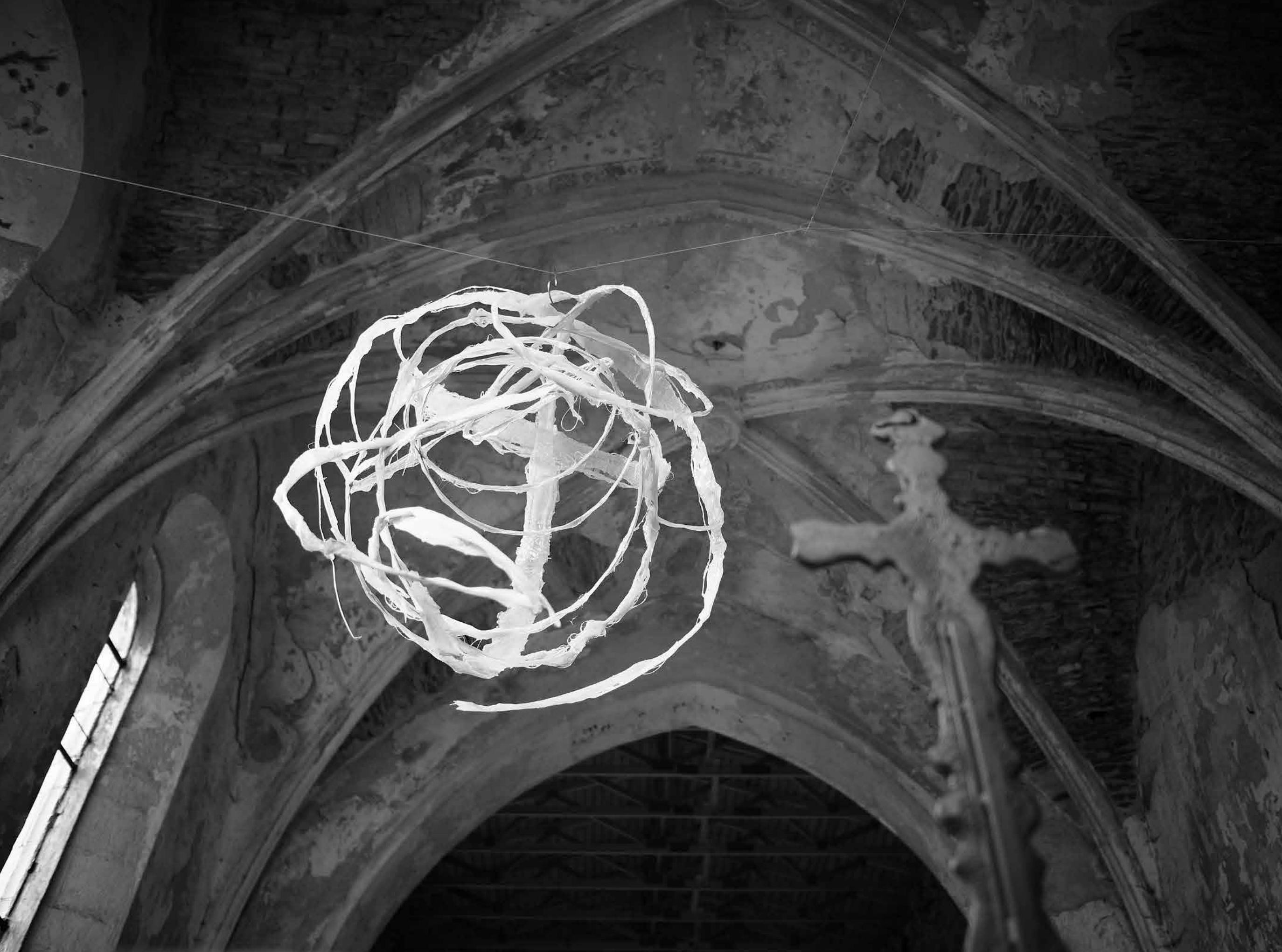


Otín (Ottenreuth) Pilgrimage Church of the Virgin Mary

Located in a village about four kilometres east of Planá, Otín's church is just off the main road. This is one of several churches in the Tachov district that has witnessed the passage of many centuries. It was apparently built in the latter half of the 13th century, but all that remained untouched after it was reconstructed in the mid-14th century was the side wall of the nave, which shows signs of fire damage sustained long ago. The polygon-shaped enclosed presbytery was newly constructed in an elegant style that nears the pinnacle of Gothic architecture. The Gothic stone baptismal font and sacristy with a stone lavabo recall the village's somewhat faded life. Other styles can also be found in the structure. The windows were changed and sacristy expanded in the Baroque style; the western section of the nave and Classicist tower were added to the church sometime after 1839. The neglected church fell into ruins in the latter half of the 20th century. During that time, the nearby manor house in the courtyard near the cemetery wall was almost completely destroyed, except for a small wall; as a result, the church ruins are the only surviving landmark in the village.







In connection with the church in Otín I used the fragile material of nylon fibres, which represent some lines of force emanating from the heart of the church – the altar. These lines of force radiate out in every cardinal direction and leave the church through its half-crumbled walls. I expressed the energy flowing between these lines of force by using fine netting, which are anchored to these fishing lines in the space and shaped in various ways.

Štěpánka Kotková

Prayers



Všekary (Schekarzen) St. Anne's Church

Standing all alone by the forest near Všekary, almost like a forgotten object, is St. Barbara's Church. Though the church was named in honour of the patron saint of miners, Všekary is no longer a tin and lead mining settlement. The church was built by the owner of the manor, Adam Trautsmannsdorf, between 1717 and 1724. According to legend, the church was supposed to be erected at a different site, but everything that the masons built during the day was moved to the site where the church now stands at night. The settlement disappeared in the 18th century, but the church became an important and popular pilgrimage site. Built as a single-nave structure with two striking side chapels, slight remnants of Rococo paintings by A. Kraus in 1756 are still visible on the vaulting. After 1945 the beautiful acanthus-motif main altar disappeared from the church; other furnishings were destroyed over time. As the pillaged church remained completely open, Soviet soldiers also carved their names into the church following the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968. Older maps indicate the church is a ruin, but in 1994 it was given a new roof (though it does have holes again). As a result, the church is somewhat protected against rain, but it remains exposed to the wind and snow. Without additional care, the church will again fall into ruin.









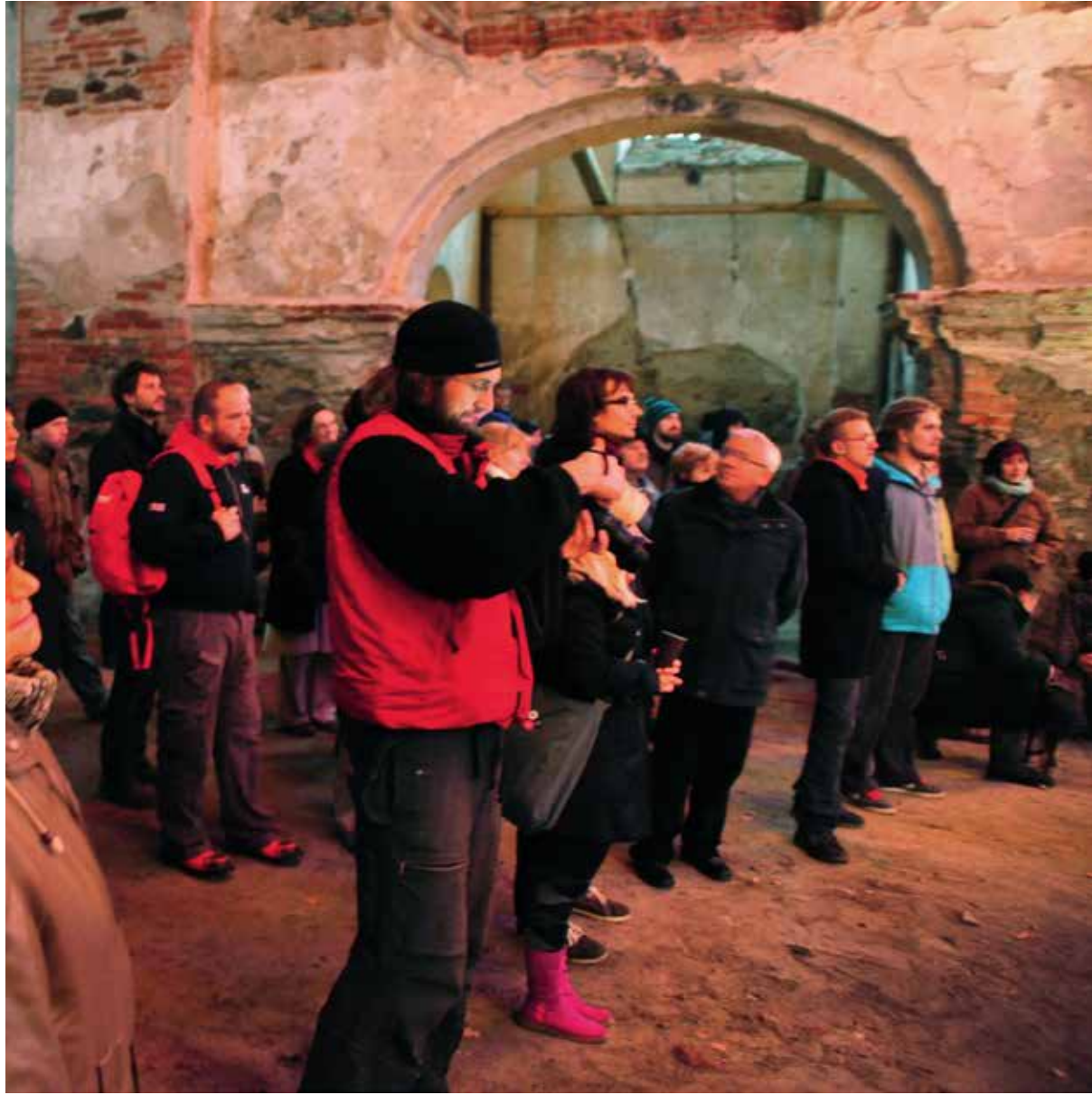




Standing alone on a little hill stretching slightly past the hamlet is St. Barbara's Chapel. It indicates its beauty to arriving pilgrims already from afar, but it does not show itself in its full glory until they are up close. The light of the rising sun pushes strongly through the gaping hollows in the walls where windows once were, passing through the ruins of the former altar and falling on the sandy ground that no longer recalls its once colourful tiles. Suddenly the pilgrim notices that the ray of light is not direct, but comes through a newly inserted window, creating a sort of fluttering formed from its passage through the agate stones in the vitrage. They remind him of bees. Dreamily he observes the light entering through the window into the chapel. It must have been beautiful before, he tells himself. Whatever happened to us? Suddenly a small bird flies through the broken side window, flutters through the chapel and, chirping gently, surprisingly flies out through the entrance. The pilgrim turns around to see another small precious stone by the entrance. The red glow of the western sun floods through a third small oval window by the entrance as if the entire day lasted just a minute. In its vitrage he sees nine agate stones. Upon leaving the pilgrim looks out from the gorgeous vantage point behind the chapel to the beautifully rippled landscape, refreshes himself at the long-forgotten well and like a small child, he he pushes off from the small rope swing tied to the strong branch of an old linden tree before he takes leave of this place. Veronika Konturová

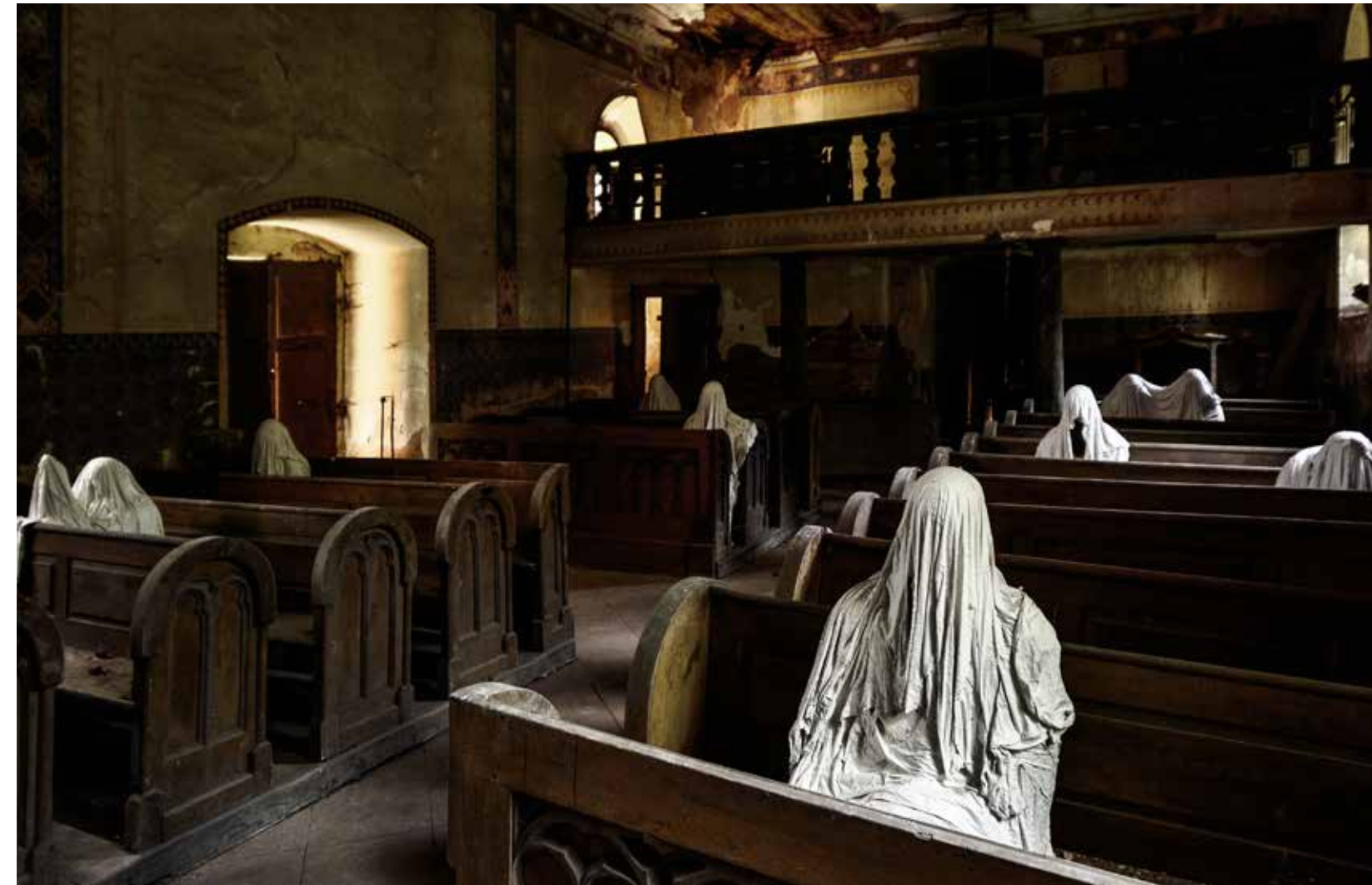
Light





Luková (Luckowa) Saint George's Church

The first written record of the village comes from 1115, when it was included in a list of property owned by the new monastery in Kladruby. The village and surrounding landscape are dominated by the church, whose oldest section (the sacristy) witnessed the beginnings of the 14th century. Damaged during the Hussite Wars, the church was repaired in the 16th century. After a fire in 1796, the church underwent repairs again and from 1854-1858 it was reconstructed in an eclectic mix of Romanesque and Gothic Revival, expanded, and adorned with a thin tower and elegant pyramidal spire. The presbytery is arched with Gothic cross vaulting, while the nave has a flat ceiling. Due to the poor condition of the church, the Baroque design below the destroyed Romanesque Revival façade is now exposed. The furnishings of the church are Romanesque Revival and though seriously damaged, the church has been regularly targeted by thieves. The arch in the presbytery is being held up by scaffolding. The roof of the church tower was repaired soon after 1989, but no further progress was made. The church is in disrepair and there are holes in the roof, causing water damage to the unrepaired roof frame. The façade is destroyed, windows smashed out – it is simply a church that lacks people and interest. Perhaps for this reason it has been occupied by sculptures of “The Faithful” by Jakub Hadrava.





Shrouded figures of the faithful in an abandoned church are an image that stir up questions within us. The covered bodies, just like the empty church, represent something that has now been cast aside and awaits a new breath of life.
Jakub Hadrava

The Faithful





Branišov (Branischau) Saint Blaise Church

One of the most well-known pilgrimage sites in Western Europe was undoubtedly Saint Blaise Church, the ruins of which are quaintly perched on the shore of Blažej (Blaise) Pond south of Toužim. A parish sanctuary for the greater area, first noted as early as in 1320, was probably located at the current site of the church. Nearby, where the pond now is, was the mediaeval hamlet of Janov, which was destroyed during the Thirty Years War. The Baroque church was constructed in 1732-1733 by the abbot of Teplá Abbey, Raimund III. The unknown architect created a single-nave hall with a polygon-shaped presbytery, which was well-lit and, despite the relatively small space, lofty and uplifting. The shingled hip roof and flèche are now long gone. The site was frequently visited by pilgrims, but its popularity left with the original inhabitants, who were expelled in 1946, and fully extinguished due to a fire started by a lightning strike in 1957. Since then the house of worship has been in ruins, but it remains a place for people who seek quiet and reconciliation with the beautiful countryside; the dramatic events of history seem to be covered by the sands of time, far, far away.







When I thought about how to return human spirit to this place, I had a clear idea – give people a reason to visit this site. The first reason may be because a new work of art was created that may attract attention and hence new visitors. I hope that they will still understand the main role of the church. Another logical reason may be the spiritual dimension of the new installation, which combines a work of land art with the Stations of the Cross. Along these lines I see an important aspect in the presence of the Trappist church, which is just a few kilometres away as the bird flies. The close presence of the church is primarily important in connection with the fact that the road that runs around Branišov is the main access road to the church from Pilsen. I think that these new Stations of the Cross may serve church visitors as an advance spiritual point along their path.

From an artistic perspective it is important that the installation connect the church with the open countryside, where it forms a new line along two levels: 1) The horizontal line is apparent from the human perspective, and adds to the relief of the landscape; 2) The second line is apparent only from a bird's eye view.

What may be even more interesting is what is drawn on the map, the line of the Stations of the Cross that surround the entire church, then enter and mark in a helix the area occupied by the former altar. This creates the effect of marking a new central point, but one that respects and symbolically refers to the former central point of the house of worship.
Vojtěch Soukup

Stations of the Cross





Týnec u Klatov (Teinitzl) Saint John of Nepomuk Church

Týnec is south of Klatovy, where the landscape begins to rise with hillocks great and small as it approaches the Šumava Mountains (Bohemian Forest). The almost park-like landscaping testifies to centuries of land cultivation. Small settlements are interspersed with single houses, imparting a sense of human settlement and a human scale to the landscape. The village of Týnec was settled in the early Middle Ages atop one of the area's more dominant hills. This location harks back to the times when Christianity was starting to spread and grow in strength in the region, when each church was a beacon for far-away settlements and a symbol of strength, fortitude and protection. Týnec experienced its golden age following the end of the Thirty Years War, when the parish church was expanded and became a pilgrimage site in 1661. At the beginning of the 18th century, a church consecrated to the newly canonised John of Nepomuk was built on the hill opposite the chateau. Artistically, the building was quite conservative, yet its design was original. The square, 14 x 14 metre floor plan was transformed into a cross inside. The central area was arched by flat vaulting in the shape of a spherical cap. But by 1899 the records show that most of the vaulting had already collapsed, which means that the abandoned structure has been fully exposed to rain and snow for at least 120 years.



Abandoned spaces are accompanied by sound. Although at first it may not seem that way, below the silence one can hear the whisper of wind and the droplets of time. Even the ruins of the Baroque four-sided chapel of St. John of Nepomuk, perched atop a wooded hillock near the hamlet of Loreto southwest of Klatovy, is falling into eternity under the cycle of droplets. What remains of the original chapel, exactly facing the axis of the chateau in nearby Týnec, are just four walls; in place of the cupola, a gaping round hole opens up to the heavens. It is enough for just a single droplet, which slightly interrupts the course of time and freezes the moment of impact. In the centre of the nave, this droplet penetrates deep below the surface, rippling the floor and causing waves. It cuts through the horizon of our current position and is reflected on the surface. At the same time, though, it forces us to look up, look to the question of "where have we come from and where are we going", and thus its effect copies the vertical axis of the church. The circular delineation is a symbol of infinite repetition, the cycle of water, life and death. Kristýna Kužvartová



Droplet: The Surface of Depth







2. 7. 2010
T.K.T.M. 2. 4.
O.S.R. J.O.H. J.S.

MALIROVO

1964 61

Hand-drawn heart with a cross inside, and some illegible graffiti below it.



Pořejov (Purschau) St Bartholomew's Church

The village of Pořejov is located six kilometres south of Tachov. The oldest mention of the settlement dates back to 1352. A chateau was also built in the village and served as the residence of the owners of the manor, such as the Wunschwitz family. From 1728 Pořejov Manor belonged to Tachov. In 1938 the village comprised 135 homesteads and had a population of six hundred. The village was never repopulated following the expulsion of ethnic Germans; completely pillaged, it fell into ruin. A household waste site that was established here later completely buried most of the village. St Bartholomew's Church, Gothic at its very core, was reconstructed at the behest of Sebastian Perglar, the owner of the manor, in 1587. The church was reconstructed more fundamentally in 1740. According to a preserved survey from the period, the church had a single nave, right-angle presbytery and a tower at the south side of the nave. The very long nave indicates that the church was gradually lengthened in stages. The church tower was Late Baroque in style, with a nicely shaped onion dome. It was knocked down in 1971, and its remnants are located underneath a layer of trash.





I wanted to use the history of Saint Bartholomew and create an adequate memorial to this church, which was blown up by the Communists in the past regime and a waste dump arose in its place. I think Pořejov should not be a forgotten place, which is why I wanted to return a spiritual atmosphere to this former place of worship and help reveal its past.
František Dvořák

Saint Bartholomew





Nový Čestín

Chapel of the Holy Trinity

The hamlet of Nový Čestín is so small, you don't even need to step on the brakes when you pass it. But you may notice the chateau, whose foundations include a 15th century Gothic fort. It was radically reconstructed when it was owned by the Běšín of Běšiny, who turned it into a Baroque chateau and built a chapel consecrated to the Holy Trinity. In the late 19th century, amateur heraldist Count Crivelli provided the chateau with a Romanesque Revival face. Two new tower additions added further dignity to an otherwise modest building. In the winter the chapel can be seen from the main road, hiding amongst the trees behind the chateau. The interesting little building features picturesque reliefs based on a cross-shaped layout, rising up to a little Baroque onion dome. The condition of the chapel is, like others in the area, dilapidated. The interior furnishings are damaged and right now there is no serious interest in restoring the building.









Hora Svatého Václava (Berg) St. Wenceslaus Church

The hill with St. Wenceslaus Church soars over the surrounding landscape to form a dominant feature of the landscape. The village was already in existence in the 13th century, and a church was definitely in place here in 1345. The area around the church was fortified and a fortress was also located at the site. The church itself, built in the last quarter of the 14th century, is fort-like and surprisingly monumental in scale, diverging greatly from the way village churches were usually built at the time. Within are early Baroque furnishings dating from the Baroque reconstruction of the church in the 17th century. In the 1990s the roof was repaired and concrete flooring was poured. The absence of gutters around the roof and the inability to air out the humid air are causing the walls to become extremely moist, which is the main problem with the church. Fortnightly services are keeping the church at least somewhat operational, but the building is potentially at risk.







The idea was to depict human learning, which is stored in the memory of the landscape. However, this knowledge is constantly moving and circling around imaginary axes. I would compare it to a lock in which the key can move all of the latches until it falls into the grooves, allowing the key to turn all of the latches at once. Likewise, individual pieces of our knowledge, which we continue to collect and reassess, fall into place once the one short moment comes.

I called the work I created at this location "The Flow of Time". The inspiration were the philosophical ideas of Aristotle and Saint Augustine, who in their writings contemplated the concept of time.

I would compare the work to the movement of a cogged wheel in a clockwork. The objective of the work is to somehow artistically grab hold of this train of gears and convey it to the landscape. I chose to do this using stone and earthen terraces that revolve around an imaginary spiritual axis. The disappearing St. Wenceslaus Church represents this axis for me. The second wheel in this train of gears is the earthly level. It has its own axis, facing northwards, which comprises a large stone. The spiritual and earthly train of gears functions on the principal of a blending of the relief line.

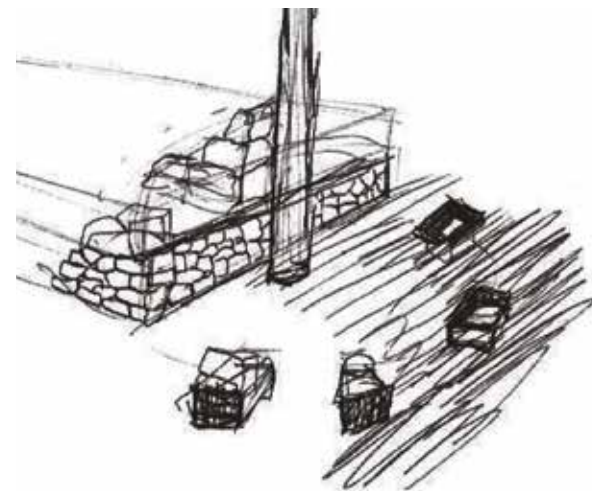
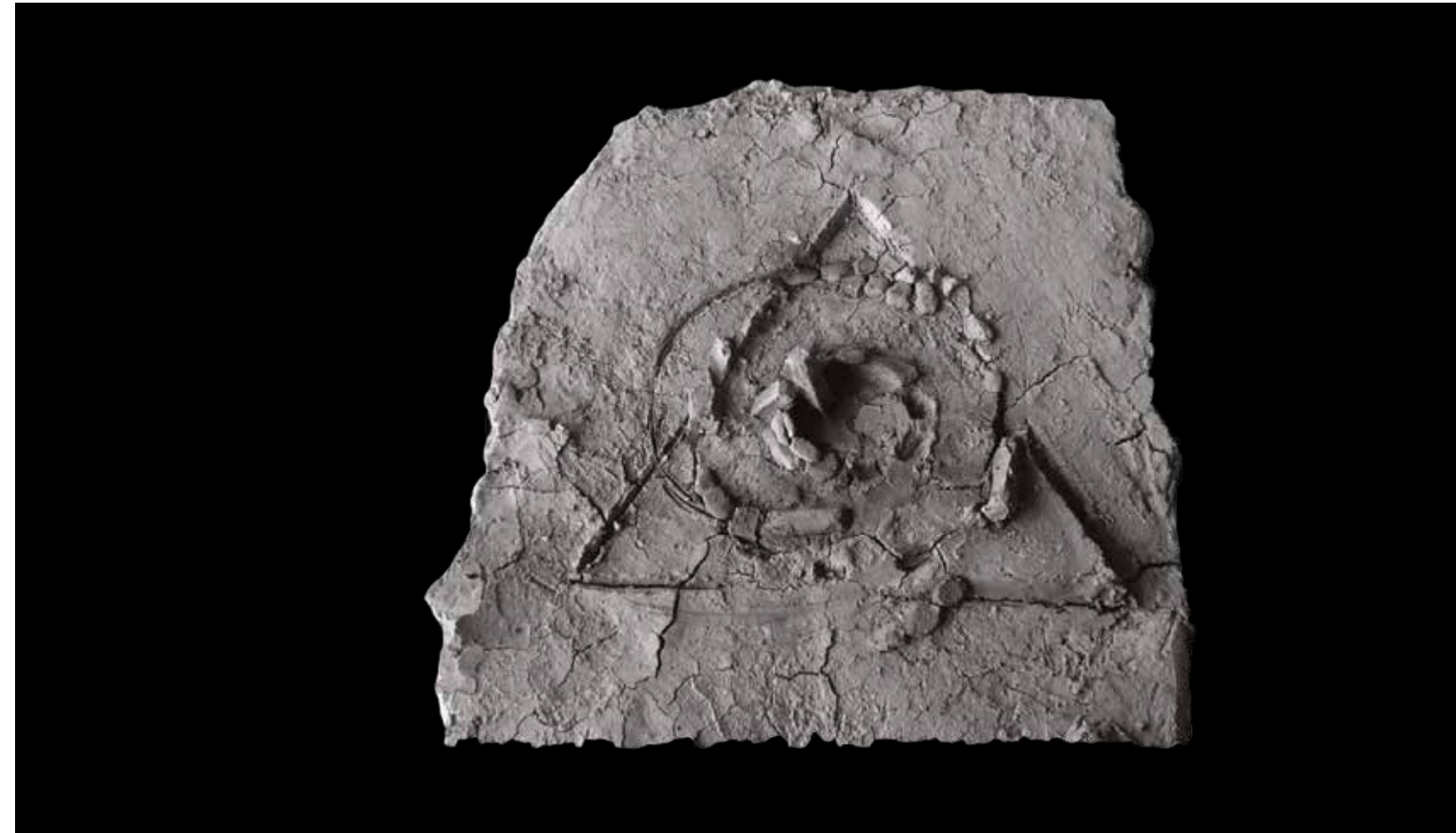
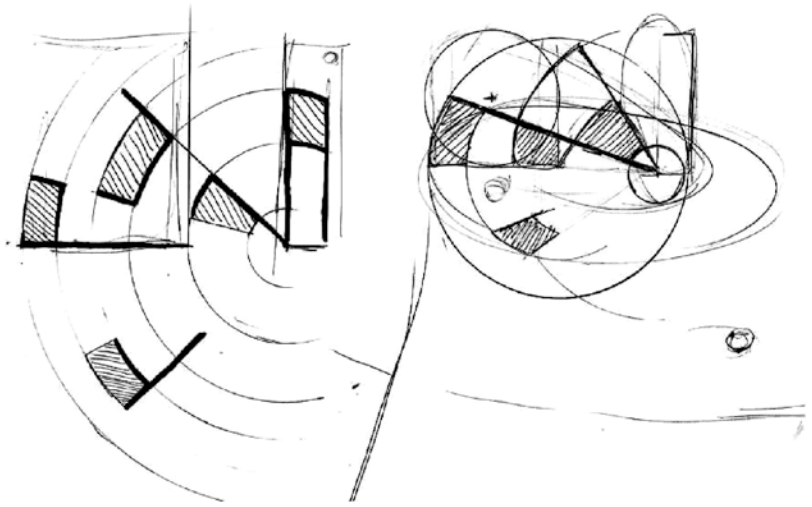
I only used natural material from the site for this work. I worked with a lot of stone and soil. To build the stone terraces I used a crisscrossing technique, allowing individual walls to intersect and thus prevent them from sliding downward.

Jakub Orava

The Flow of Time







Děpoltice (Depoldowitz) Chapel

There are many beautiful, impressive landscapes around the world. Standing in such a landscape you can almost hear the first chords of a strong, powerful piece of music – only to soon find that it's a beautiful place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live there. A beautiful place where you would want to live is the foothills of the Šumava Mountains. Somewhere like the area around Děpoltice, located 650 metres above sea level, with quaint little farmhouses dotted around the village church consecrated to St. Isidore, patron saint of farmers and all who work the land. It is consecrated for the hard work of the people, their faith and sensibilities; the quiet beauty of its subdued tones was the framework and comfort of their lives. In the end, most people here succumbed to the gravity of history and they were forced to leave the countryside, their homes. This was a brutal gash into the fate of the village, and today we find reminders of a plentiful life and feel obliged to give them new meaning and perhaps even a new lease on life. The village has been here since the 14th century and its church, the spiritual centre of life, was built later, in the early 18th century, as an addition to a network of chapels around the village, whose patron saints were to protect those who lived there. Some are still preserved, while others are in ruins and wait to see if anyone will notice them, if they'll ever be needed again...









The chapel as a trace, a testimony and the expression of man in the landscape. Working with a chapel as a spiritual space, water as one of the basic needs for survival and glass, a material that underlines and supports transparency and purity. A temple full of water, full of life, a place where we go to connect our spirits. In Christianity, water is viewed as a symbol of baptism, purification. Jesus said, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."
Monika Hrachová

The Human Landscape



Krasíkov

(also known as Švamberk; Schwanberg)

St. Mary Magdalene Church

Krasíkov is an iconic hill in the countryside between Stříbro and Bezdrůžice. This basaltic tableau is visible for many kilometres around and attracts a number of wandering pilgrims. The castle was established in the 13th century by the founder of the Švamberk dynasty, Ratmír. During the Thirty Years War it burned due to carelessness by the residents of the castle; shortly thereafter, it was partly demolished by Swedish armies. Since then only the church, the successor to the burned-down castle chapel, which had been consecrated to the patron saint of knights, St. George, has been maintained. A tower was added during repairs in the late 19th century, but in the meantime, the castle fell to ruin. In 1960 a group of drunken youths demolished the furnishings inside the church, and shortly thereafter, unknown perpetrators pulled the remains of the members of the famous Švamberk dynasty from their graves and threw their bones about the area in front of the castle. The collapse of the wood panel ceiling in 1980, followed by the collapse of the rafters seven years later, brought the church even closer to absolute destruction. The church is in complete disrepair, even though rafters again protect the chapel. The destroyed façade and windows, like the demolished interiors, await rehabilitation.



On my journey to see the dilapidating temples, I could not miss St. Mary Magdalene Church at Krasíkov Castle. I used to ride by often and was always enchanted by this "outgrowth" emerging from the landscape, an important site since primeval times. When I first looked through the doors of the church, still open at the time, I soon noticed the sockets on the walls. I automatically thought of a rather pejorative name my Christian friends and fellow students at the Academy of Fine Arts and I had for churches. We called them "God's offices". Back then I thought that the office also needed some sort of receiver, a satellite dish – a shape that is essentially evocative of an egg, one of the attributes of St. Mary Magdalene. And it was one large satellite, to which I applied physical, focussed, trickling paint, that became the basis of the altarpiece/object for St. Mary Magdalene Church. It seemed apt for me to varnish "my" painting and thus also make use of the optical properties of the dish as a symbol of St. Mary Magdalene's life – of turning the image upside down, on its head, but this fact is not completely stated. If the viewer approaches the dish, suddenly his or her inverted reflection "disappears", and if s/he comes even closer, s/he starts to see their "feet are on the ground"...

The object created for St. Mary Magdalene Church in Krasíkov is a sort of fusion of my "gravity paintings" and Kapooreque optical magic.



Focus



Srbice and St. Vitus Church

In the relatively flat countryside between Staňkov and Koloveč, Srbice's church is a beacon atop a hill that is low, yet highly visible from kilometres around. This is a usual site for Romanesque churches – as they served the inhabitants of several nearby villages, it was advisable that they be in a visible location. The establishment of the church is connected with the ownership of the monastery in Doksany. Though the church is first documented in 1273, it seems that the preserved Romanesque building had a predecessor, possibly a wooden church. The entire hill is marked by long-term settlement: there are ramparts from a fortified settlement, and occasionally in the fields one can find ceramics from this period, the Middle Ages, or even prehistoric times. Today the small church, with a surprisingly massive tower and beautiful Romanesque and Early Gothic details, is all alone.





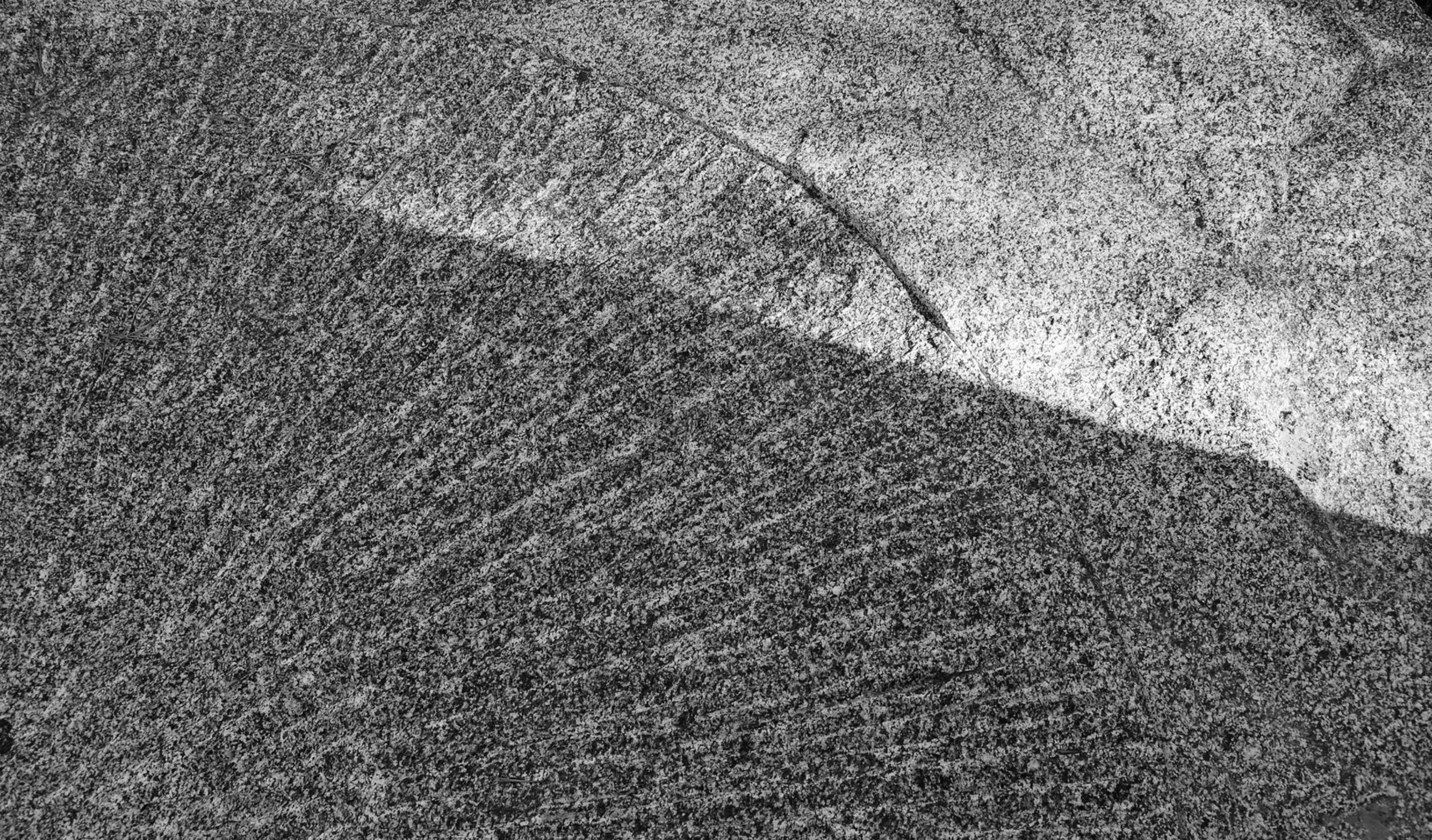


On the knoll behind the village of Srbice, a masoned granite monument has been erected. By locating it here, it logically communicates with the Romanesque church on the opposite hill. The area around this object is shrouded in legends about the ancient settlement. The name of the work should be understood in these regards, as it is “growing through” a layer of time to the present day.

Prof. Jiří Beránek

Intergrowth





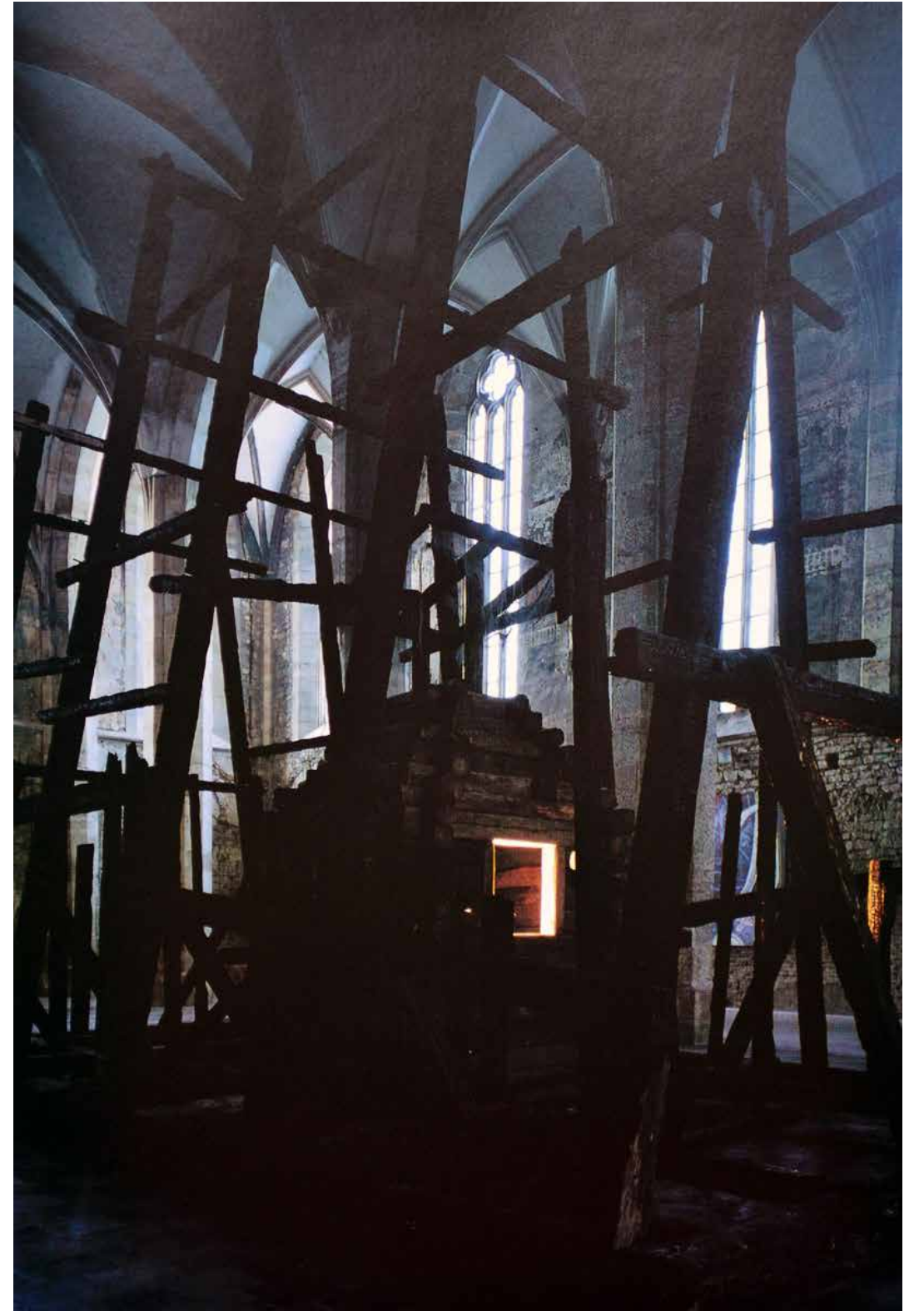






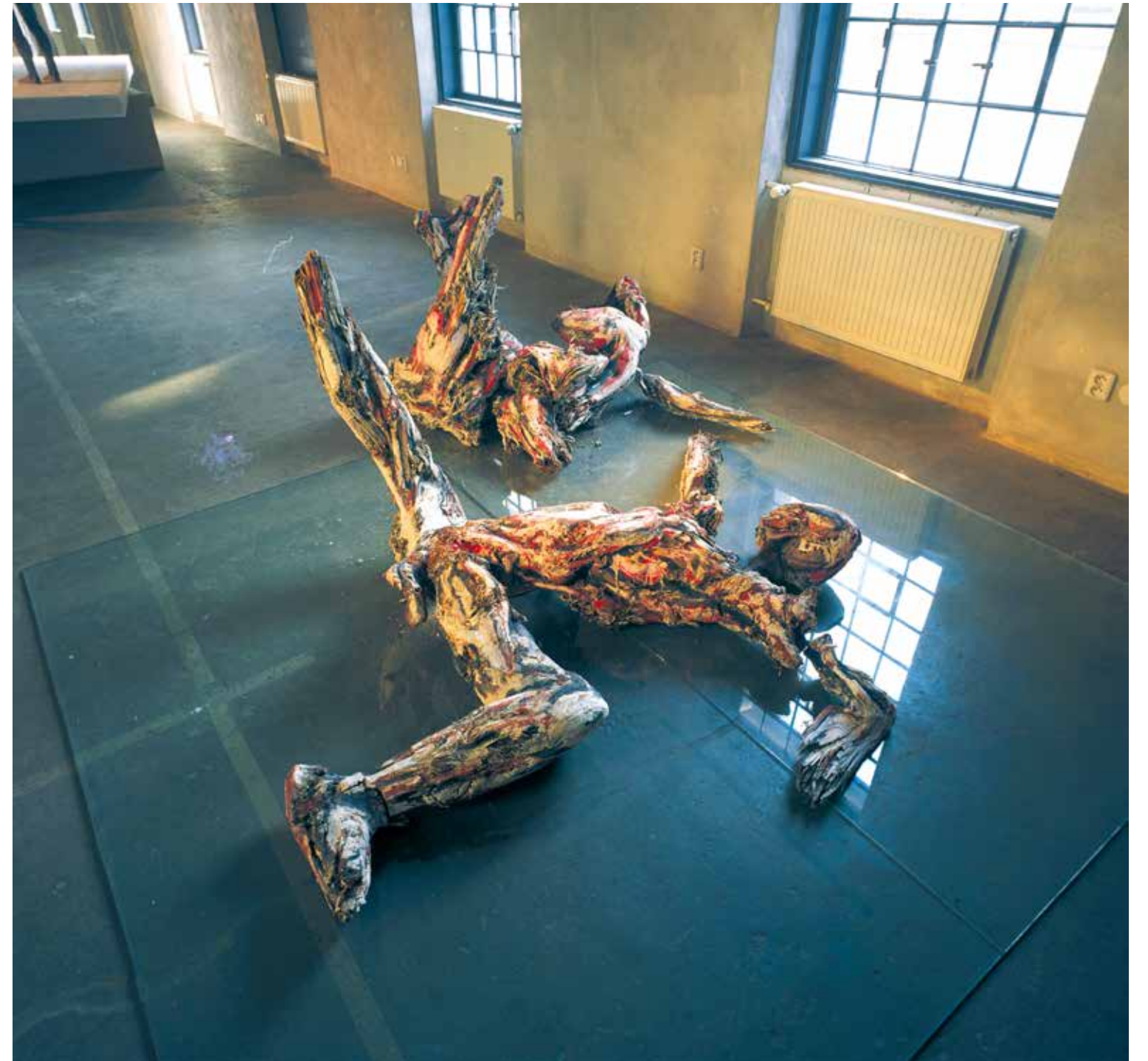


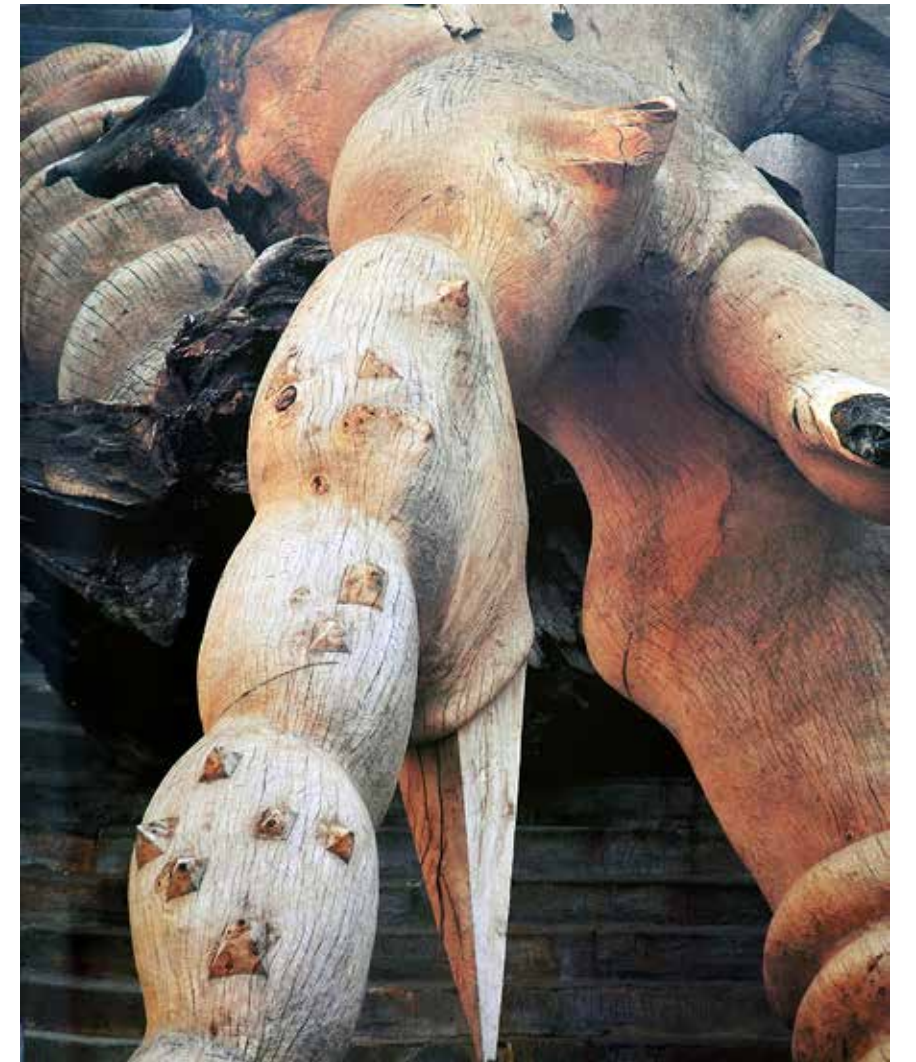


































Studentské práce

Ateliér socha a prostor

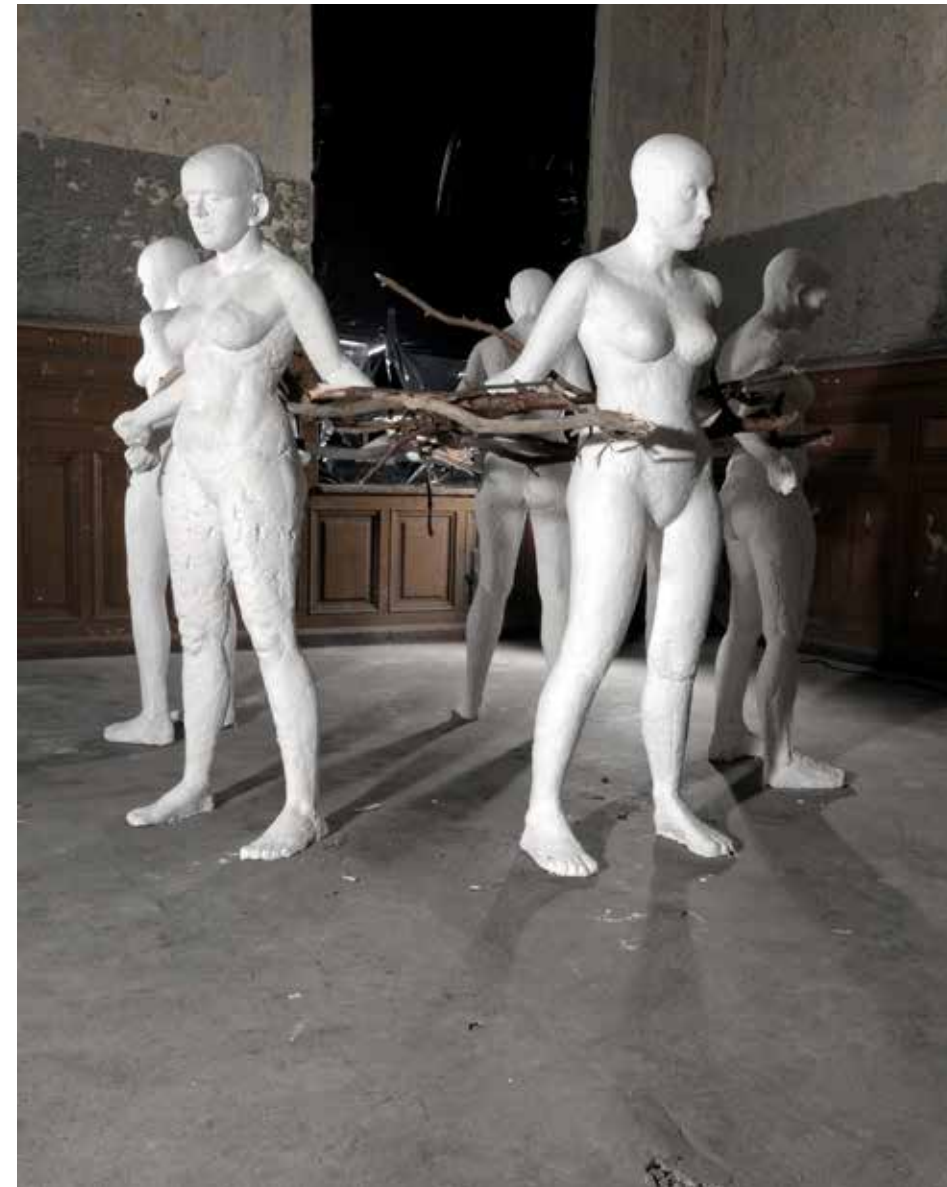


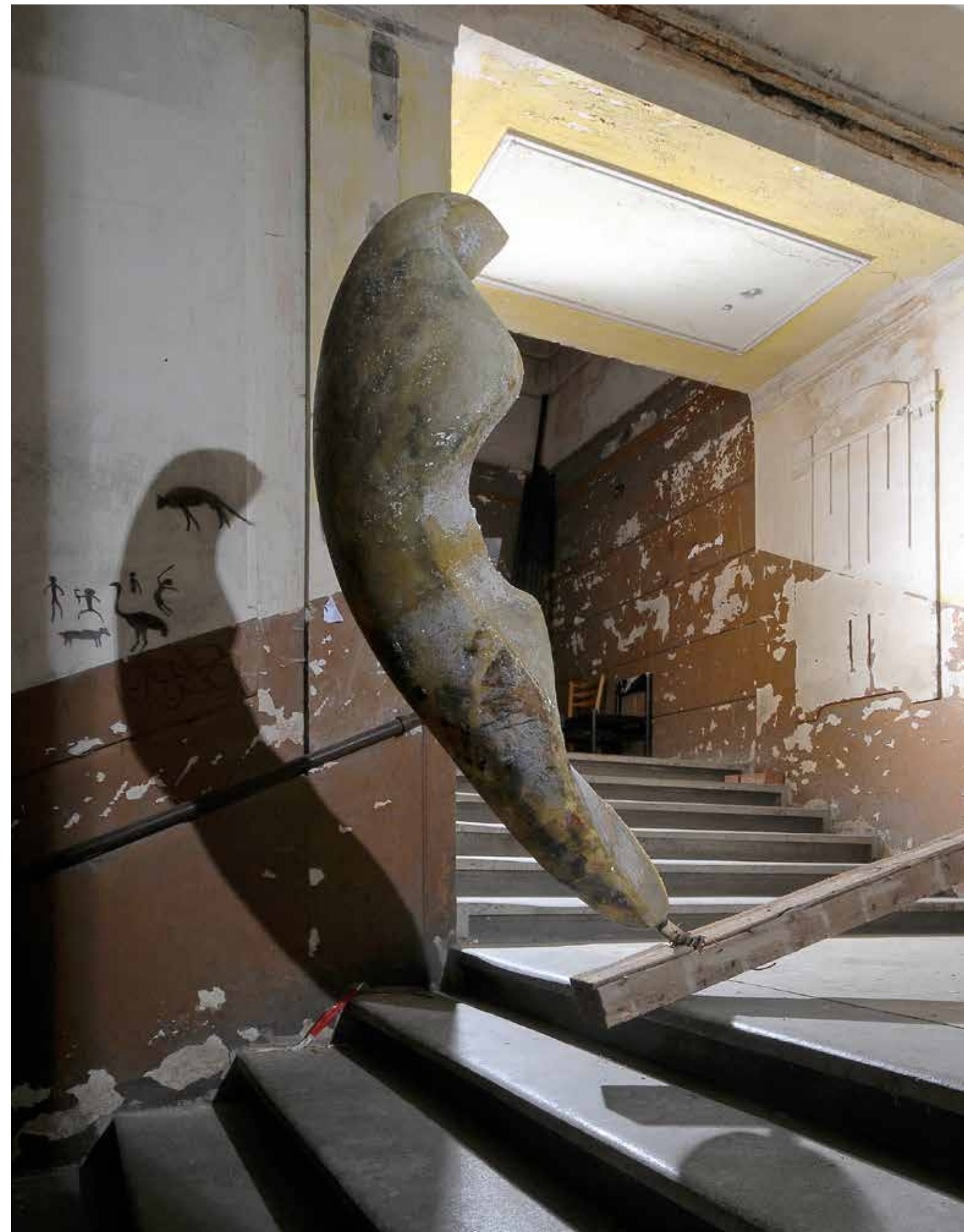




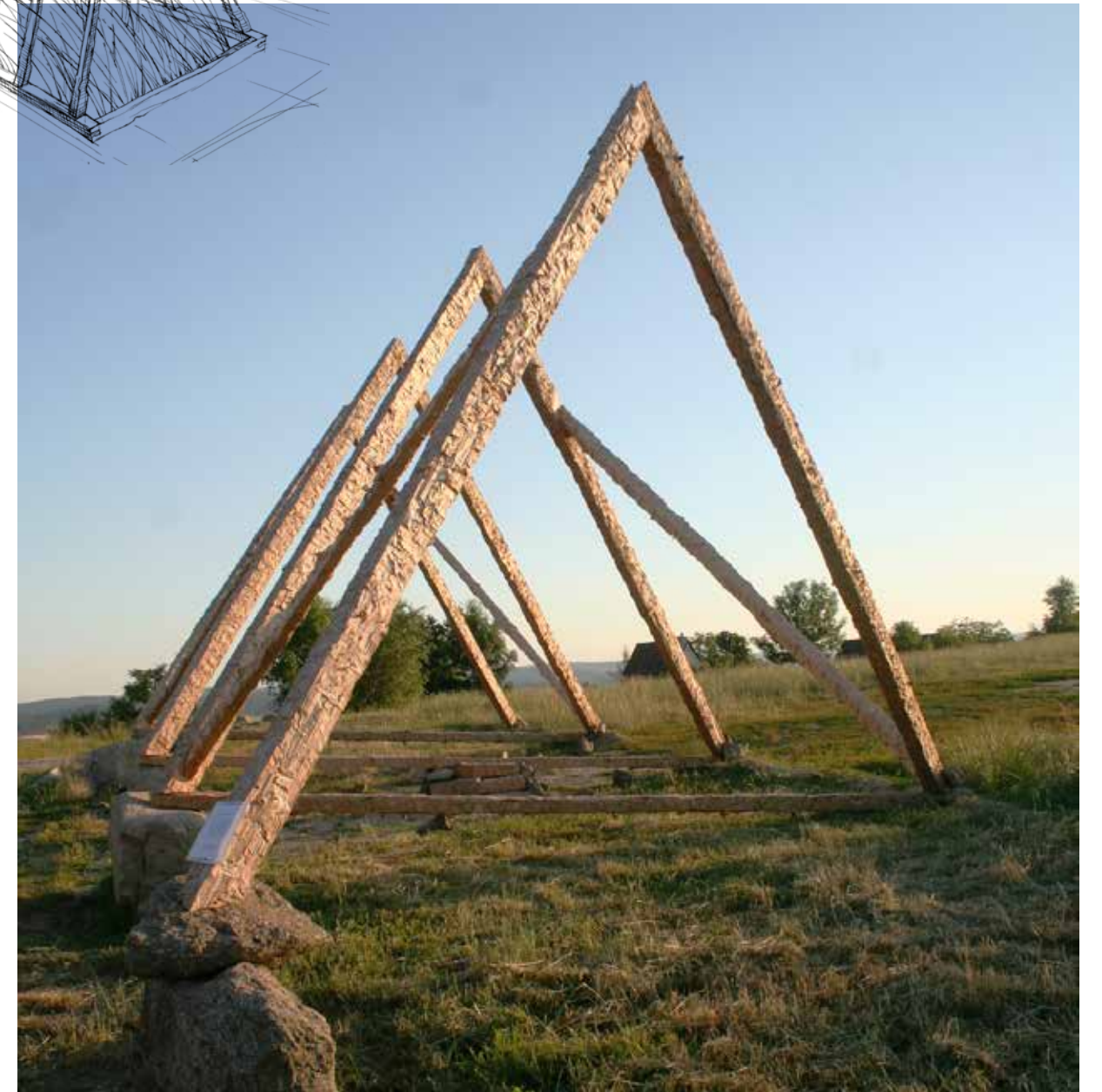
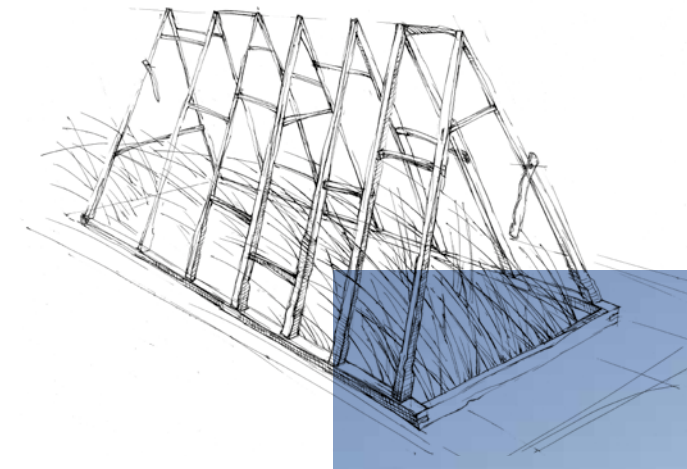














Josef Mištera
Richard Drury
Ivan Neumann
Jiří Beránek

Specific LandArt

Plzeň 2015 – Evropské hlavní město kultury
Fakulta designu a umění Ladislava Sutnara
Západočeské univerzity v Plzni

Ateliér profesora Jiřího Beránka

Kniha o specifickém projektu, který realizovali studenti ateliéru Socha a prostor Fakulty designu a umění Ladislava Sutnara, včetně vedoucího ateliéru prof. akad. soch. Jiřího Beránka a odborného asistenta MgA. Benedikta Tolara v Plzeňském kraji. Projekt byl součástí programové náplně Evropského hlavního města kultury Plzeň 2015.

Kniha prezentuje díla Jiřího Beránka, Benedikta Tolara, ... (vypsát jména zúčastněných studentů buď abecedně, nebo posloupně podle knihy).

Autoři textů: doc. ak. mal. Josef Mištera, Richard Drury, Ivan Neumann, prof. Jiří Beránek, Štěpánka Kotková, Veronika Konturová, Jakub Hadrava, Ing. arch. Vojtěch Soukup, Kristýna Kužvartová, František Dvořák, Jakub Orava, Monika Hrachová.

Popisy jednotlivých projektů jsou dílem autorů.

Autory fotografií jsou studenti ateliéru Užitá fotografie a v některých případech autoři projektů.

Grafický design doc. MgA. Kristina Fišerová

Typografie MgA. Tomáš Nedoma

Editoři: Vojtěch Aubrecht a doc. ak. mal. Josef Mištera, děkan Fakulty designu a umění Ladislava Sutnara

Vytiskl: ASTRON studio CZ, a. s.

Náklad: 1500 ks.

Vydala Západočeská univerzita v Plzni.

Plzeň 2015



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