

Kabinet T., Zlín

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Over the five years of its existence, Kabinet T. has profiled itself into a referential contemporary art gallery what is quite a unique phenomenon among regional exhibition sites. Its founder Lenka Tutschová really had something to follow: Kabinet T., which has in its title an embedded monogram of Karel Tutsch – an art collector, is a fluent continuation of his legendary Brno Gallery Na bidýlku (On a Perch).

'Bidýlko' (Perch) was one of a few private galleries in the pre-revolutionary period. It was opened in 1986 by Karel Tutsch, a secondary school teacher of Mathematics and Chemistry and an enthusiastic art collector, in the attic premises of a block of flats on Václavská Street in Brno by an exhibition of Jiří Načeradský, accompanied by a catalogue with a text by Jindřich Chalupecký. Lenka, at that time a student of Faculty of Education and married to Tutsch's nephew, did not only visit the exhibitions of the members of the groups such as 12:15 or Tvrdohlaví but also of solitaires such as Vladimír Kokolia, Antonín Střížek or Jan Merta that belonged to the regular authors of the gallery. Through painting Karel Tutsch worked his way up to more distinct conceptual tendencies, for example he prepared an entire series of exhibitions for Jiří Kovanda and subsequently presented younger and younger artists, emerging at that time, such as Ján Mančuška, Eva Kořátková, Jan Šerých and Josef Bolf.

Zlín Branch

Two years before his death Karel Tutsch had urged Lenka, who was not only a regular visitor of his exhibitions but also a partner for discussions and a colleague from the same domain (she is a secondary school Art History teacher), to consider establishing a gallery branch in Zlín. His concept was to have both of the premises functioning concurrently under his control and later on Lenka should have taken over completely and move the gallery focus to Zlín, in this way the concept of 'Bidýlko' would have been prolonged on the basis of a family tradition.

On the top of it, at that time the town hall in Zlín offered gallery premises for rent at symbolic price. 'I did not apply for it. I had a little child, work at school, I could not imagine being in charge of a gallery on top of that. However, when Karel died, the opening of a follow-up gallery stopped being a matter of choice. It became for me, without doubt, the only possible solution of the given situation. Almost as if he had transferred all his energy into me. Even though the entire 'information system' disappeared with him, the positive reactions of the first addressed artists including Luboš Jarcovják, Jiří Kovanda and Milan

Houser convinced me that they believed in me. At his funeral I already announced the German artists Astrid Sourkova and Markus Selg that I was going to organise their exhibition at new premises in a short time. I was very pleased to learn that Karel had spoken to them about this option and they were just waiting for my reaction,' describes the gallerist.

Factory Building No. 12

'Even though I placed an advertisement into all Zlín newspapers asking to rent non-residential premises, it was resultless. I remembered visiting the old Bata factory together and Karel saying that there must have been a lot of available exhibition space. So I turned to the director of Cream Real Estate company, the owner of the property. He viewed my project as a good business prospectus but I had known since the beginning that it would never be a commercial art gallery. I just wanted to continue Karel's concept and it had no chance of becoming commercially successful in Zlín.' Kabinet T. was opened in November 2008 in the factory building no. 12 with only 55 square meters, nine months after Karel's death.

The factory district in Zlín is not remote on the outskirts of the city, as a matter of fact it is the city's second centre. Offices move into gradually renovated factory buildings, the parterre house numerous restaurants, Zlín Youth Salon took place here and in 2013 The Regional Gallery of Fine Arts in Zlín established itself in the functionalist building number 14. So in terms of its position within the municipal complex it has the best strategic position. On the top of it the character of the buildings offers an ideal background for exhibition activities of the 'white cube' approach.

'At the beginning I had to hire a construction company to rebuild the original offices with all the carpeting, soffits and doors according to my concept into a clean exhibition space. I paid for it from our family budget,' remembers her very beginnings at the gallery Lenka Tutschová. 'To launch the gallery the city of Zlín subsidised me and even though the amount was not high it had the value of a psychological support – it relieved me of the feeling of nothingness.' Since then the city has been supporting the gallery regularly. Other subventions come from The Ministry of Culture and The National Cultural Fund while the gallery operation has to be financed by Lenka. The most expensive were the construction works because Kabinet T. has already moved three times. The first gallery lasted only one year. It had to be moved because of the overall renovation of the building into the building no. 32 and in 2013 it came back to the newly refurbished ground-floor space of 180 square meters in the building no. 12.

No Compromises

The gallery started its operation by an exhibition of Lubomír Jarcovják who belongs to the Zlín art scene. 'It seemed only logical to me to start with a Zlín author in order to get through into the local environment and to establish contact with people that would get attached to

the gallery. Jarcovják was the most interesting one for my concept. I felt an expectation appeared that Kabinet T. would be a gallery for regional artists. However that was not my intention,' explains the gallerist, who intensively surveys the art scene at big contemporary shows and also in small private galleries in Prague, Brno or in Berlín. She seeks the authors directly in their studios and recently also at exhibitions of final and diploma works.

The title Kabinet T., which contains the monogram of Karel Tutsch, has become an obligation of a kind to continue Tutsch's conception without only automatically repeating his exhibition programme. It profiles itself as a gallery of contemporary art that Lenka Tutschová paraphrases not as 'art living in the present – otherwise all art would be contemporary -, but only as the one that is the most conscious of the present in its content.' That predetermines the set-up of the gallery to a conceptual note which is rather courageous in a regional city. From the authors exhibiting at 'Bidýlko' the newly established gallerist took over Jiří Kovanda, Eva Kořátková, Andrew Gilbert and Jan Šerých. However she has radically enlarged the artistic circle with young authors such as Pavel Bařinka or Jakub Matuška or by foreign artists such as Matej Fabian a Slovaque artist or a German artist Carola Ernst.

There have emerged four distinctive trends in over five years of Kabinet T. existence. The centre line is the expressive-naive production where artists such as Václav Girsá and the British artist Andrew Gilbert belong. The second domain is defined by object sculptures overlapping with installation where artists such as Milan Houser or Astrid Sourková belong. The third domain can be defined as 'memory networking' represented by Eva Kořátková and Dominik Lang. Step by step a fourth line generated itself 'large painting with a mistake' represented by Igor Korpaczewski and Zbyněk Sedlecký.

I am not the gallery's curator. I set up the programme according to my beliefs but to every exhibition I invite a curator to guarantee it expertly,' adds the gallerist, who cooperates with art theoreticians such as Edith Jeřábková, Jiří Ptáček, Viktor Čech or Jan Zálešák. Their position should be confirmed by the new gallery programme that plans for purely curator projects.

As one of the few regional private exhibition sites Kabinet T. has become a gallery that serves the exhibiting artists as a reference of their quality and strengthens their position on the art scene. This was only managed thanks to Lenka Tutschová strictly refusing to make compromises and because of her not conforming to the market requirements. Such a consistency can be exercised only at the cost of ceaseless filling of grant applications and major private investments.

KABINET T.

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