

Absence versus Presence in the Space of Art

(press release)

Kunsthalle Bratislava begins its 2017 exhibition year with an experimental international project titled INTO THE MU. To attend the exhibition space of Kunsthalle LAB, the curator of the project Elisa Rusca invited four artists active abroad. Opening of the exhibition will take place on Thursday, 16th February 2017, from 18.00 – 20.00. The exhibition will be open to viewers till 9th April 2017.

The exhibition concept of **Elisa Rusca**, the Berlin-based curator, raises questions on the relationship between the absence and presence of a three-dimensional artwork, emptiness and its material expression within a gallery space. „The core concept „Mu“ in the eastern philosophy designates absence that fills up the volume. „Mu“ is presence through emptiness and it literally means „nothing“, „non-existence“, or also some kind of state between the activity and inactivity. The exhibition *Into the MU* studies this concept of emptiness and its relevance today when we are constantly attacked by the ballast of information, signs, objects, pictures etc.

The works of **Nathan Baker, Myriam El Haïk, Ciarán Walsh and Dušan Zahoranský** create a heterogeneous space where sculpture, video and photography, but also literature and music connect. They jointly point out the importance of staying still, reflecting on the imperceptible links holding together what we believe is meaningful. With



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the help of their artworks the artists study the topic of representation of the “emptiness” within the three-dimensional space.

The Irish artist **Carián Walsh** has used Kunsthalle Lab as a place for his minimalist wooden installation. It represents materialization of the first chapter of his book *The Sickness, Book One*. The work and the publication offer visitors two possibilities: to „absorb“ the *emptiness* of the object and create his/her own associations, or to saturate it with a meaning by reading a literal fragment of the book. During the exhibition the publication (as a kind of addition or rather a constituent part of the artwork) will be available for purchase in the LIC bookstore right beside the gallery.

The Slovak, by origin, visual artist and curator, based in Prague **Dušan Zahoranský**, in his work often combines words, pictures or meanings, and intentionally engages interaction with the viewer. For the *Into the MU* exhibition he produced a new video film by shooting the surroundings of the Bratislava monument Slavín, concurrently playing with our ideas of the surface, light and object which basically represent a part of a scaling factor and which we use in perceiving the reality, but also the presence, or paradoxically, the *absence*.

The French-Moroccan artist, composer and performer **Myriam El Haïk** wrote a composition, which she transformed into a spatial object – round sculpture. Her artwork titled *Toy Toy III!* comprises four little toy pianos and a score hanging nearby on the wall. With her work the artist points out the absence of sound or music as the main element, using intentionally objects that refer to it, and through which it is created. The work of El

Haïk represents a reflection on the abstract and immaterial nature of sound, which in spite of being materialized by musical instruments or scores in the physical reality, the music as such is absent here.

Nathan Baker is an American artist whose abstract works represent a mixture of different media and approaches (a drawing, painting, photography etc.) and which manage to incite an activated feeling of solitude. The work titled *Excavated Inkjet* originated similarly. The artist presents it at the exhibition as a wall object through which he studies the surface and the way in which we process the procedure of creation and perception of paintings. The original ink print goes through several stages of manipulation, while each of them leaves behind an imprint, trace: more or less visibly, more or less recognizably.

In spite of the fact that the space of the gallery Kunsthalle LAB offers its visitors the possibility of viewing the artworks “from behind the window-case”, in this case it inevitably prompts to enter and invites one *Into the MU* exhibition.

INTO THE MU

Curator: Elisa Rusca

Artists: Nathan Baker, Myriam El Haïk, Ciarán Walsh, Dušan Zahoranský

Opening: February 16th at 6pm until 8pm

Duration of the exhibition: February 17th – April 9th 2017

Exhibition space: Kunsthalle LAB



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