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The Issue of Gallery as a Public and School Space

Abstract

Reconstructing events, reviving the vital or reminding of and remembering the past are the main functions of an archive. A picture archives not only what has happened, but also, from the perspective of preserving the future, it projects historical time that struggles with timelessness. Photography – an image in archive, thus, comes to life twice, three times, four times. The photographic archive of student works at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, after ten years of conceptual work with the medium of photography, stores rich archival and image material, which, in its scope of interpretation, visually maps not only the visible reality – public space, but also events, human stories, and urban or environmental space. Through authors' projects, it breaks the visible world – surface, and dives deeper into the personal space and philosophy of a young person – a student, who uses an image to analyse their identity (regarding themselves and others) and transports their experience

towards existential questions. It represents the significant progress of a young person when they are trying and are interested in expressing their opinion on social issues in any way (including the medium of photography) and to code and interpret public life according to their inner empirical knowledge.

Key words

Exhibition space. Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč. Medium of Photography. Student exhibitions.

About the Concept of University Gallery

The word *gallery* probably comes from the Old French word *galerie* used in the 15th century to describe a long colonnaded porch at the front entrance of a building, or the Medieval Latin *galeria* of an unknown origin¹. However, we can state with certainty that this term is closely connected to architecture. It describes a platform or mezzanine supported on columns or corbels that provides a view of the main interior area of a building, for instance a theatre. In theatres, the gallery is the highest balcony and generally contains the cheapest seats. A second story in a church opening towards an altar can also be considered a gallery. In various cultural institutions, a gallery is intended for seating different groups of people. A gallery also could be a long, open-sided column corridor on the upper level around the inside or outside of a building. Or any covered passage open on one side. In past, this term was also used for a long an arcaded connecting room, often on the upper floor of Renaissance houses and palaces that also served for leisure and entertainment. They were also utilized as promenades and their walls started to be used for exhibiting art collections. In England, such rooms were very often called “*long galleries*”. The most famous is the *Galéria des Glaces*

Versailles (1678), which influenced palace architecture and popularized this element beyond the borders of France. Using the term gallery for various shopping arcades originated in Italy². An example of this could be the famous Milan *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II* (1877), which is one of the oldest active shopping galleries. To summarize this brief etymological entry, the term gallery originally described a set of specific architectural solutions that were applied in the designing and consequent realization of various private but also public buildings. These solutions had their practical role, but they also added the aesthetical finishing touches to a building. In many cases, the gallery itself can be considered a work of art. Its aesthetic value had often been amplified by the fact that it was used as a place for various different collections of visual art. The gallery as a functional element of architecture has thus also become a functional space for exhibiting art. Through the combination of a specific space and visual art, we are, in some respect, approaching the term “art gallery”. This term is relatively aptly clarified in the *Dictionary of Contemporary Slovak A - G*, where, inter alia, gallery is defined as “*an institution that gathers, scientifically processes, and displays visual art works*”; it is “*a collection of visual art*”, and also

“*a room or building in which works of visual art are displayed*”³. The origins of public art galleries are often associated with the foundation of the University of Oxford Museum of Art and Archaeology *Ashmolean* (1683) or the opening of the *Grande Galerie* (1793) in the Louvre Palace. Since its foundation, the Ashmolean Museum was accessible to the public. The Louvre is noted for the fact that it was made publicly available only during the French Revolution and it symbolized the French people's claims to political sovereignty and national patrimony. The Ashmolean and the Louvre as public galleries represent important evolutionary milestones. It must, however, be noted that galleries and museums, as we know them today, have been developing for almost two millennia. Their evolution is a result of convergence of individuals' interests and constantly growing social demands. The development accelerated with the professionalization of gallery and museum work at the end of the nineteenth century. Through the initial institutionalization, galleries and museums acquired a kind of Platonic image full of idealized standards⁴. The 20th century dynamics brought new concepts to the gallery activity. Accumulation and display of art works was markedly influenced

¹ HOAD, T. F.: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 188.

² FLEMING, J., HONOUR, H., PEVSNER, N.: *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture*. London : Penguin Books, 1999, p. 213.

³ See: BUZÁSSYOVÁ, K., JAROŠOVÁ, A.: *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka A - G*. Bratislava : Slovenská akadémia vied, 2006.

⁴ MACDONALD, S.: *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 117.

by social changes, but also by the development of new technologies and art forms. Currently, galleries relatively successfully use new media and technologies as a means of popularization and modernization of some obsolete or old-fashioned institutional aspects. These institutions needed to adapt to new generations of visitors.

Abroad, the terms gallery and museum are often used as synonyms, in Slovakia, however, these terms are distinguished. Here, institutions defined as galleries present to the public visual art works. Museums display other kinds of artefacts, such as cultural, historical, or natural science collections. A museum is an institution with the main goal of presenting and making available human artefacts and the main objective of its visitors is to acquire knowledge⁵.

Galleries and museums are predominantly non-profit cultural institutions serving society and its development. They accumulate, preserve, and present to the public cultural, historical, natural, and artistic monuments. They are simultaneously scientific and educational institutions. Their socio-educational function is vital and very important from the view of the development of individuals' value orientation. Galleries and museums are those places where we find aesthetically original, but also scientifically processed, values that

correlate with all areas of education⁶. The functions and the size of the gallery institutions oriented on visual arts is what decides their classification. For example, *Museum of Art* is a type of institution that administers a depository, manages its cataloguing, carries out exhibition and educational activities, and also restoration and expertise activities. It preserves cultural heritage and, at the same time, purchases contemporary art⁷. This kind of gallery space in Slovakia is represented by, for example, the *Slovak National Gallery* (1948) in Bratislava and its branches, as well as regional galleries such as *Ján Koniarek Gallery* (1976) in Trnava, *Spiš Artists' Gallery* (1987) in Spišská Nová Ves, *East Slovak Gallery* (1951) in Košice, and others. Galleries without collection holdings are called "kunsthalle" and they primarily focus on contemporary art that they actively seek to develop. Kunsthalle Bratislava (2014) is one of its kind in Slovakia and was established only recently. Besides publicly institutionally covered galleries, there are also various commercial galleries, which are aimed at the long-term progress of the artists that they represent and are primarily funded from the sales of art works

6 GUILLAUME, M., KOVÁČOVÁ, B.: *Art vo vzdelávaní*. Trnava : Trnavská univerzita v Trnave, Pedagogická fakulta, 2010, pp. 69-71. ; ENGLER, M., TRNKA, A.: *Concept Art: The Essential Part of Visual Pre-production in the Entertainment Industry*. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 112-123.

7 ŠYKOROVÁ, L.: *Nezávislé kurátorství ve volném čase*. Ústí nad Labem : Fakulta umění a designu, 2016, p. 26.

and from private sources. For instance, the auction company SOGA (1996) that operates its own auction, exhibition, administrative, and depository spaces. Smaller gallery institutions also include "independent galleries" that are administered by independent curators and artists, often on various alternative premises, and it is primarily younger artists who present themselves here.

A peculiar example of an atypical exhibition space is the *Shop Window Gallery* (2016). It is a public art space located in old shop windows on the main strip in Trnava. The concept of this gallery incessantly reminds us that we are living a consumer lifestyle. The gallery presents site-specific exhibitions and performances by young Slovak and international artists, whose art works interpret major societal problems. The gallery's role, besides supporting the artists, is to illuminate complicated situations and phenomena from the past, present, and future to the city inhabitants⁸.

The wide spectrum of gallery typology is also made up of foundation galleries, but also galleries that are a part of various cultural and educational institutions, such as libraries, community centres, and, last but not least, universities. Student galleries are managed by artists who are often associated with academies of fine arts or art-oriented faculties as pedagogues. On the student ground, these galleries

8 ŠVECOVÁ, M.: *Výklady spoločnosti*. In LANČARIČ, P. a kol. (eds.): *Výklady 2021-2016*. Trnava : Bronco n.o., 2022, pp. 215-219.

present either well-established artists or the students and graduates themselves. These are usually social events, where exhibitions are supplemented by lectures or discussions⁹.

For example, *Medium Gallery* (1991) has been established as a part of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava. This exhibition space does not just serve as a traditional gallery but also functions as a communication space with a reach stretching beyond the school. The exhibition activities constitute a part and also extension of the concept of art-teaching. They focus on all forms of contemporary art in accordance with the wide spectrum of the school's study programmes. The gallery could be described as institutionally oriented. The gallery approaches the composition of the exhibition plan methodically and the presented projects are selected by the gallery board composed of three representatives of the school, the head of the gallery, and one external member. The main criterion of their acceptance and realization is their quality, while paying attention to balancing out the presentation of students, pedagogues of the school or affiliated schools, curatorial concepts, and exhibitions of the established local and international artists¹⁰.

9 ŠYKOROVÁ, L.: *Nezávislé kurátorství ve volném čase*. Ústí nad Labem : Fakulta umění a designu, 2016, pp. 27-28. ; See: ŠKRIPCOVÁ, L., MISTRÍK, M.: *Komunitné médiá*. Trnava : FMK UCM v Trnave, 2021.

10 O galérii. [online]. [2022-03-11]. Available at: <https://www.vsvu.sk/sk/galeria-medium/o-galerii/>.

The Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč (2010) was established by the Department of Artistic Communication at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius (FMK UCM) in Trnava with grant support from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic¹¹. The gallery space is named after the famous Slovak art theoretician Ľudovít Hlaváč, whose work addressed the history and theory of photography, specializing in the history of Slovak photography. The leading personality and the founder of this gallery is the internationally recognized photographer and pedagogue Jozef Sedlák. For several reasons, the gallery could be also classified as an independent gallery. This exhibition space was established as a result of deep interest and devotion to photography. It was not a demand or order of the university management but a voluntary initiative. Just as many other cultural projects, this was also born naturally from the so-called "cultural undergrowth". Another thing associating the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč with the concept of independent galleries is its spatial disposition. It is not a classic gallery hall built for exhibition purposes. This gallery came to life through the adoption - appropriation of a space that used to be a staircase and a hallway between classrooms (figure 1 - 3). These premises could be

11 O galérii. [online]. [2022-03-12]. Available at: <https://galeriiludovithlavaca.fmk.sk/o-galerii/>.

12 AUGÉ, M.: *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London : Verso, 1995, p. 95.

described as a "non-place"; a place created for a clearly defined purpose that, however, lacks identity¹². By transforming this staircase and hallway into a photographic gallery (figure 4 - 7), an unused school space has become a place for a lively community of people and art (figure. The exhibition place also qualifies as an independent gallery from the view of its organizational structure. The gallery is administered by pedagogues - photographers Petra Cepková, Eva Jonisová, Peter Lančarič, and Jozef Sedlák (figure 8), making it an "artist-run space", where a gallery is managed by artists for young artists. Roles within the gallery are fluid and its running is low-cost¹³. The Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč enables students to present and promote their photographic work on an academic ground (figure 9 - 11). The exhibition activity is mainly aimed at contemporary fine art, photographic trends, and individuality of the authors' visual expression. It is the expression of an author's individual vision that is the "key concept in modernism"¹⁴. Within the artistic-pedagogical process, the pedagogues, all simultaneously active photographers and intern curators of this gallery, shift the emphasis from the technical ability to manage the camera and the

13 LANČARIČ, P., MOLARI, P.: *Galéria Výklad. Jeden a pol roka*. Trnava : Bronco n.o., 2016, pp. 15-16.

14 BULL, S.: *Photography*. Abingdon : Routledge, 2010, p. 131.

5 GUILLAUME, M., KOVÁČOVÁ, B.: *Art vo vzdelávaní*. Trnava : Trnavská univerzita v Trnave, Pedagogická fakulta, 2010, p. 71.

photographic medium to the author, whose role is to find their own original, subjective, and recognizable visual expression. This modernistic perspective of the photographic medium is complemented by a postmodern approach, where the emphasis shifts beyond the frame of a photograph, i.e., to the cultural contexts of the photographic image. Serving as examples of this are socially engaged exhibitions, such as *antiGORILA* (2012), *Violence in the Media* (2014) or *A Personal/ Impersonal Message* (2018), and others¹⁵. Besides the collective photographic exhibitions of the students of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication in Trnava, the gallery also presented collaborative exhibitions with the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, the Faculty of Arts of the Technical University in Košice or the Private School Of Design in Bratislava. The Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč also organizes regular solo exhibitions of the graduates and doctoral students of the faculty. Besides the exhibition activities, the gallery also serves as a polyfunctional space for meetings and discussions with interesting personalities from the fields of art and culture.

Tenth Anniversary of the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč

The tenth anniversary of the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč at the

FMK UCM in Trnava constitutes an opportunity for a first retrospective look into the past – a reflection on the existence of the faculty space of the photographic gallery that has always been inconspicuous in its location but, as a transit area, always full of student activity. Thanks to the selfless work of a group of pedagogues from the Department of Artistic Communication and accompanying activities outside the gallery, more than fifty collective and authors' exhibitions have taken place under this brand (Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč has productionally covered one third of exhibitions outside its gallery space in, for example, Ján Palárik Theatre in Trnava (figure 12, 13), Central European House of Photography in Bratislava (figure 14, 15), monasteries in Brehov (figure 16) and Podolíneč or at the municipal offices in Vyšné Ružbachy, as well as in schools in Nižné Ružbachy (figure 17, 18), Hybe, and Rad). The gallery named after a renowned Slovak theoretician of history of photography has thus become a place with cult status for the students of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the UCM in Trnava at No.3 Skladová street.

In the curatorial text from the collective exhibition of students and pedagogues entitled *Stephen's Family* from 2014 is written: "One of the priority goals of the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the UCM in Trnava is to support and lead a creative dialogue between

the students and pedagogues"¹⁶. The citation very accurately defines the vision and function of the medium of photography as a communication language that should sensitively and professionally operate with connectivity in the pedagogical process.

In the decade of its activities, the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč has created collective material and immaterial memory; a deposit of the idea-image material that documents not only the "outside" causal world of social history of the university, the city of Trnava or wider contexts within the borders of the country or the global world. It has also left a cultural footprint of the inner thinking of a young person – student; its development, direction, its priority of interpretation – the essence of the outside world and recording of the existential relationship with oneself. The gallery has formed long-standing friendships between the pedagogues and graduates. In a certain sense, it is a community of communities that are still connected by their relationship to photography, creative discourse – in order to express and legitimize a lasting partnership not only at the traditional professional level – the exhibitions. The gallery's anniversary also means an emancipation of this relationship, breaking out of the intuitive – fleeing time horizons of studies (maturation), into a creatively stable Bergson's process of "non-substantial ontology" of relationships.

¹⁶ SEDLÁK, J.: *Obraz - Prelievane realít*. Trnava : Fakulta masmediálnej komunikácie, 2022, p. 7.

Students, now fellow pedagogues (Peter Lančarič, Lucia Škripcová, former doctoral students Andrea Boldišová, Jakub Kovalík, and current doctoral students Eva Jonisová, Kristián Pribila) constitute the attribute of authenticity of the exhibition activity process. All these people have, at a different time, participated in the running of the gallery and have shaped its image. Those who continue at the present time attribute new ideas, concepts, advice, professional communication or vision to the gallery. The most recent change in the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč are online exhibitions created under the professional guaranty of internal doctoral student Patrik Kolenčík.

Another memorable event is the pilot exhibition entitled *Fashion as a Statement/Portraits of Citation* (2010). The narrative of the first exhibition is significant for its atypical time-space placement. The first exhibition did not only mean visual, pedagogical, and institutional correlations of the story, but was mainly the first constitutive cultural information. Despite its festive nature (a performance of a folk cimbalom musical group led by Marek Neumahr was a part of the vernissage), the exhibition opening was only attended by a few students, probably not even authors, who, as a by-product of a festive atmosphere, spontaneously danced on a folk note. The notion of the success rate of the pilot event, which "then and there" might have tasted like failure (sadness), in hindsight does not seem legitimate and reasonable. It has not remained as a numb

scar reduced to nostalgic grief – wound. The first exhibition formed an algorithm or concatenation generating a unique story of the secret of photography within the depth of surface manifestation. On the academic ground, the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč has become a piece of cultural evolutionary information and its attributes – the accessibility of cultural information, has allowed not only its targeted transmission, but also its unlimited recombination, evaluation, selection, and verification. Both the academic ground and the gallery were established as *spiritual* spaces, the contents and messages of which were only been inscribed in the individuals' (students') minds, but have, in specific forms, become a part of social memory. From the perspective of vision and philosophy of the gallery's art activities, they resembled Popper's "three worlds" that represent the physical, spiritual-cultural information (social consciousness), and mental and spiritual layer of reality¹⁷. At the start of the gallery's activities, there were only a few of us, two pedagogues and some students, and "through Barthes's mouth" we posed a legitimate question of how to make these "secrets of photography" available to the students and "...who could help me", is photography "mad or wise"? Barthes's desire to know

¹⁷ Popper's concept of three worlds is defined by a scheme: world 1 – physical objects or physical states; world 2 – state of consciousness, mental state; world 3 – the content of objective thinking, scientific ideas, artistic thinking, and works of art – products. See: POPPER, K. R.: *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 106.

the "secrets of photography" does not only stem from his memorable photograph of his dead mother, but "[...] from a construction of *metaimage life, evidence provided by technology and usage, and despite its tremendous contemporary expansion, he was not sure that Photography existed, that it had a 'genius' of its own, with a question of the mad and still wise story of photography and euphoria*"¹⁸. Our madness and wisdom in establishing a school gallery can only be tested by the aforementioned look into our history. History is never dead, if it is interpreted correctly and truthfully, and is also "wise" and that is why this anniversary paves the way for self-reflection and questions of how to continue. According to Henri Bergson, it is possible "[...] only through new philosophy of creative approach (and not self-deception), which doesn't stem from the intellect but rather intuition, more alike art in this context. Only new philosophy and art are able to capture the reality as it is, because they don't perceive it from the outside – the surface, but from the inside"¹⁹. According to Petříček, what Bergson considered important was the "radical" question of the duration of this relationship, when he speaks: "[...] of consciousness whose entirety starts to decompose in its mobility, which becomes duration, i.e., a change and identity

¹⁸ BARTHES, R.: *Světla komora*. Bratislava : Archa, 1994, p. 9.

¹⁹ BERGSON, H.: *Bergsonova filosofie komična a smíchu*. In MAJOR, L. (ed.): *Mýšlení o divadle*. Prague : Herrmann a synové, 1993, p. 94.

¹⁵ SEDLÁK, J.: *Obraz - Prelievane realít*. Trnava : Fakulta masmediálnej komunikácie, 2022, pp. 90-114.

at the same time. [...] consciousness is a memory; what persists in this transition is a process"²⁰. By this, Henri Bergson means "dureé" – pure duration, when: "[...] the pure essence of duration and movement is the fact that we are constantly on a path of creating; duration (of creating) is a form in which the posteriority of the state of our consciousness is acquired, when our self does not purposefully intervene in our life and does not distinguish between the present and the past states; it lets both processes flow"²¹.

Conclusion

Although the historical magnitude of the tenth anniversary of the Gallery of Ľudovít Hlaváč is only small, this short experience does not diminish its historical valence, such as that of philosophy, specifically the philosophy of history that underlies human existence. We would like the exhibition activities of our gallery to continue – they could be a symbol, a time key to continuance of the movement of art work – a reflection of cultural memory on the university ground, but primarily a value of consciousness (Bergson's memory and freedom) – of the relationship between a pedagogue and a student, which should not remain dead but should constantly progress by "conquering" the potential immobility in moments of awakening and

evolution, to be a part of the history of "creative development"²². The anniversary of the gallery should not represent the "unimaginability" of continuance, a term belonging to the archaeology of philosophy terminology; it should not only look for hidden stigmatized stops in the current historical revival of the gallery activities. It should show the breaking of the borders – breakages, in which the idea of the "imaginable" and the "transcending" is born.

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²⁰ PETŘÍČEK, M.: *Myšlení obrazem*. Prague : Herrmann a synové, 2009, p. 50.

²¹ PETŘÍČEK, M.: *Myšlení obrazem*. Prague : Herrmann a synové, 2009, p. 51.

²² Ibidem, p. 53.

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Jozef Sedlák (Slovakia, Bratislava, 1958) Studied Art Photography program at the Film and TV Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (1979-1984). He is the Head of the "Communication in the Photography" Studio of the Department of Artistic Communication at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication



Figure 1: Unused school space has become a photographic gallery, 2010.

Source: archives of authors.



Figure 4: The current look of the gallery space, 2021.

Source: archives of authors.

at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (2006-), an external lecturer at the Department of Photography and New Media of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (2007-). Aside from pedagogical activities his work comprises staged, documentary and conceptual photography.

Peter Lančarič (Slovakia, Trnava, 1989) is an assistant professor at the Department of Artistic Communication of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. In research he mainly addresses various aspects of photographic portraiture. He considers photography a borderline phenomenon and thus addresses



Figure 2: Unused school space has become a photographic gallery, 2010.

Source: archives of authors.



Figure 5: The current look of the gallery space, 2021.

Source: archives of authors.

also various other intersections that form the current character of this medium.

Eva Jonisová (Slovakia, Tesárske Mlyňany, 1994) is a doctoral student at the Department of Artistic Communication of the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. Her main focus is the medium of photography. In research she mainly addresses the basic creative and communication elements of photography - symbolism and narration. She actively focuses on documentary and conceptual photography.



Figure 3: Unused school space has become a photographic gallery, 2010.

Source: archives of authors.



Figure 6: The current look of the gallery space, 2021.

Source: archives of authors.



Figure 7: The current look of the gallery space, 2021.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 9: Opening of the exhibition Fetish / Visual Analogy, curated by Peter Lančarič, October 2021.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 10: Opening of the exhibition Fetish / Visual Analogy, curated by Peter Lančarič, October 2021.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 11: Opening of the exhibition Fetish / Visual Analogy, curated by Peter Lančarič, October 2021.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 8: A team of photographers and educators who run the gallery. From left: Peter Lančarič, Petra Cepková and her daughter Matilda, Jozef Sedlák, Eva Jonisová, 22. 3. 2022.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 13: Discussion with Professor Gero Fischer from the University of Vienna, on the occasion of the exhibition of his photographic work at the Ján Palárik Theater, 2019.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 12: Author's exhibition of the doctoral student, Eva Jonisová, entitled Ecce Eva at the Ján Palárik Theater, curated by Petra Cepková, 2019.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 14: The exhibition entitled Image / Flow of Realities realized in cooperation with Central European House of Photography in Bratislava, curated by Petra Cepková, 2021.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 15: The exhibition entitled Image / Flow of Realities realized in cooperation with Central European House of Photography in Bratislava, curated by Petra Cepková, 2021.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 16: One of a series of exhibitions Archeology of time, 2016.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 17: Exhibition at the school in Nižné Ružbachy, 2017.
Source: archives of authors.



Figure 18: Exhibition at the school in Nižné Ružbachy, 2017.
Source: archives of authors.