

Pavel Pecha

Photographs like from another World

Abstract

The portfolio presents the life of a photographer, and notable member of a group known as the Slovak new wave, Pavel Pecha in two worlds, while the first one is real and the second one is an alternative created from the negative of bad qualities of the real world. By the author's words, the second one is of higher value for him, since it became his mirror or picture, and also because this world is more perfect and pragmatic than the real one. His existency becomes a motion between these two worlds, and the same could be said of motion between sky and earth. His portfolio, which here consists of two cycles of photographs titled *Painting with Camera* and *My Intuitive Theater*, is accompanied by professional texts by various important art theorists and art critics. In his works, as well as in texts about them, we learn about many possible contexts and narratives, such as similarities to the works of Peter Greenway, or Italian realistic cinematography, or Fellini's film "La Strada", also they refer to the tradition of wandering circuses and Gypsy life under the

open sky with the strong blast of freedom, and on the other hand to surrealism and expressionism. The photographs of Pavel Pecha are filled by fantasy, absurd situations and play, but on other hand they are determined by the real world, where also violence and evil can appear. Thanks to his photographs, viewers can experience an exciting adventure, which could be also a metaphor for transcendence through images, which are more like from another world. Like all great artists, Pecha intuitively feels, that he does not belong in the real world anymore, and that is the essence of art. The main cycle *My Intuitive Theater* is his most important cycle, which is full of incredible, surreal and absurd imagination. Scenes from his imagination becomes mystical in the autumn and empty field, where the author becomes part of the universe. Pecha creates an illusion of the infinite, rituals and the mythical period of mankind into the world of collective memory. So, come on a journey with us to enter the mind of this famous photographer, who lives somewhere between heaven and earth.

Key words

Abstract Photography. Analog Photography. Black and White Photography. Digital colour Photography. Existency. Fantasy. Intuitive Theater. Minimalism. Pataphysical Field. Real and Unreal word. Relationship. Sacrificial table. Slavic soul. Somebody alone. Staged photography. Surreal matrix.

I live in two worlds. One is real and the second one is an alternative created from the negative of bad qualities of the real world. The second one is of higher value for me. It is my mirror or my picture. It is changing by the incessant self-control, it is developing. I am closing myself into this world little by little, maybe voluntarily, maybe as necessity, because this world is better and more perfect than the real one. It is not pragmatic, logical, nor intolerant or superficial. There is nothing to explain, it is filled by fantasy, absurd situations and play. Sometimes it is determined by the real world, then also violence and evil can appear in it. I use it as a mirror of the real world. I discover my world slowly, it is impossible to discover it all at once. And when I find something, soon it is changed. It is an exciting adventure. It is a touch of transcendent. I discover strange situations, surreal pictures, unexpected relationships. Sometimes it is just an idea, a sudden gleam, other time just a feeling. Sometimes it is built up as a mosaic into the inexplicable picture, that can be perceived only by subconsciousness. Sometimes I mediate something from it, but the most beautiful picture I



Portrait of Pavel Pecha, from the Exhibition *Two Worlds* (september 2007, Trnava, Jan Koniarek Gallery)

have in my head. This world has been developing continuously, something from it remains forever, something changes all the time. It shows me the way. My existency becomes a motion between my world and the real world. It is the motion between sky and earth. More and more often I find myself just in my own world feeling intuitively that I do not belong in the real world anymore. I do not know whether I shall ever return...

Pavel Pecha

"The cycle My Intuitive Theater is my most important cycle. Best of all it reflects my feelings, moods, imaginations... It gives me the most of freedom. Empty and silent place of autumn field is mystical - far away from civilization and with the smell of the ground and wind in my hair only... I become a part of nature and universe. I feel that I can fly and retreat and suddenly everything somewhere down seems insignificant..."

Pavel Pecha intensively creates an

illusion of the infinite, august space, rituals, rites evoking associations with remote historical times, the mythical period of mankind. However, into the world of collective memory Pecha deposits instants of individual horror, dismay, instants when we find ourselves buried to the waist in the ground, or are persecuted by unknown beings. Pecha's theatre opens the door to the subconscious, sends on to the stage some deeply experienced anxiety. And all the time he constantly poses the question about the existence or nonexistence of a collective, tragic or optimistic myth. Pecha's radical subjectivity does not follow the road toward ignorance of history, does not speak of death, but of what has still remained of them for us, how much support we may seek in them, whether we can merge with them or not. The great majority of authors or staged photography realized their figural compositions in studios, or in interiors. Miro Švolík and Pavel Pecha also included the

outdoors. And Pavel Pecha was the only one to alter the landscape with a low horizon and illusion into a stage overcrowded with visions and dreams anxiously experienced by modern man.

Vaclav Macek in “Slovak Photography 1925 - 2000” SNG Bratislava, 2001

Pavel Pecha by means of his Intuitive Theatre formed from the scenes constructed “en plain air” and made by him offers photographs with a motion-picture flavour. It is almost like preventive documentation about how the scene should be shot, it is the study of photographs through acts, through the fixed pictures of one theatre: intuitive theatre, which frame is going to be developed, but it also includes the first steps of several hypotheses of descriptive development. This entire operation mode is similar to the works of English director Peter Greenaway, who arising from painting studies often designs scenes with drawings and photographs, the effect is immobility (motionlessness) and alienation which is close to a dream. Such effect is caused by the spaciousness of the working field which is situated under the open sky and also by the composition which is not constructed in the first plan in American style, but it reaches the depth. Introduction of the groups of people – some of them dressed, some of them naked – on the stage, and also their disposition to symbolic poses creates afflictive and melancholic atmosphere which is very close to Italian realistic cinematography. I would dare to



say that at first sight it reminded me of Fellini's film “La Strada”. But these acts constructed like this, refer to the tradition of wandering circuses and Gypsy life under the open sky with a strong blast of freedom. The author invites us to fill by his own intuitive theatre in the complementing osmose, where you can insert fragrance or personalities or ask for completing the scenes, or might appear in them. The surreal matrix of these photographs informs us about the great “Slavic soul” which stands at the background of everything of it and which refers to a thin connection (photographs seems to be taken somewhere around Vienna) with Central Europe. The actual situation is supposed to be in the movement, and in great lines it hasn't been known to us, but with Pavel Pecha's presence we are starting to be familiar with it.

Boris Brollo (art critic), 1995

Pavel Pecha

To find the viewpoint of Pecha's photography work, we must look at his student years at the Photography Institute in Prague. Two elements dominated: minimalism, characterized by “triangles” for example – photos of geometrical structures, human creations in natural surroundings. The structures are not the essential. Rather, Pecha takes interest in the contrast, emphasizing the ongoing relationship between two worlds: the relationship of the natural to the artificial, the nature of the foreign; man's interference with nature; the tenacious signs he has left behind; subjective documentarism, which co-existed at first with his minimalism, later to dominate his work from his third year at the institute onward. This was the approach he took towards his graduation project, a series on lonely people in the city, for which he focused on the larger cities of the country, Prague, Brno,

Bratislava. The plot of the series is not clearly discernible. It is a work with a multifaceted plot perhaps, yet clearly depicting loneliness, inability to meet people, walls, emptiness. Somebody alone. The man-city relationship, which eventually overran the man-man relationship. The year 1989 showed a turn towards staged photography in Pecha's work, the first degree being three-dimensional spatial photo-objects. The third dimension is created by real elements, subjects, which Pecha attaches to the photography (nails, chains, fall leaves, which protrude from the frame, disrupting the borders of the photos). Photography in relationship to these subjects and augmented by the extra dimension widens the possibilities of expression. Autoportrait – forbidden thought, is one of the first staged photos, in which he exploited the possibilities of staging for a symbolic expression of opinion, at that time the only possible expression of opinion. During this period, he did his first hand-coloured photos. In 1990 the first so-called “field photography” made its appearance. Intuitive theater, as the official title says. The cycle of these photos is demonstrated on pataphysical grounds, flowing out of surrealism and dada, which enriched Pecha's work (who is a member of the pataphysical society in Trnava) by a further dimension – the Absurd. In an irrational connection, he places inexplicable objects next to each other, among several absurd things creating relationships that are frozen by the shutter. Pecha transfixes the moment, freezes the

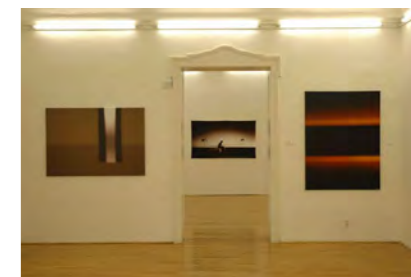
thought, creates an unreal world. Everything is calm, there is nothing that arouses aversion. Without using specific techniques he pauses any possible movement. His scene is placed in natural surroundings. To achieve the necessary atmosphere, he uses hand colouring. Characters are impersonal. Man is a sleeping figurine.

A bicycle fixed into a table, never moving on its axle. Those sitting around the table never eat. Expressions of the subconscious. His own world, space for its existence. Pecha is not concerned with effect. He is not trying to be exclusive. Lastly, from intuitive theatre through illustrations of surrealistic poetry of Pavel Řezníček, through to interior staging (“Sacrificial table”, “Sisters do it alone...”). His distinct signature stands alone without a double in the field of staged photography. With a few of his recent staged photography works at the end of 1992, we are close to a new wave in Slovak photography.

Simona Lábadýová, 1993

Photographs like Pictures from another World

While he was studying at the Institute he was concerned with a subjective document, which can be characterized like an expression of a photographer's view to surroundings and relationships. Already at that time random moments reflected by his camera impress like stage photographs. Pavel Pecha's ideas run their



own way, but like a miracle they impress on an objective reality – a photographer finds its hidden meanings, suddenly he becomes a director of scenes created by his imagination in which random passers – by becoming actors. Gradually he learns to perceive possible slides of a plot and he immediately reacts. Maybe the result is sometimes an interaction between objective and an object. In Trnava's pataphysical association Nine-speed cloudy bicycle, which he founded with his friends, Pavel Pecha started to be interested in artistic interventions into the photograph. The most important was just his interest in pataphysics, surrealism, and absurd theatre. With his camera he starts to look for an empty space where he can free create absurd scenes with reality, which are not connected to one another. Later there appear works which are more individual, internal, from his own subjective experience and philosophical opinions in which idealism resonates. His direction to a stage photography is absolutely natural. Another area of Pavel Pecha's interest is theatre photography. He started to concern with it, while he was studying at FAMU in Prague and he continues in Trnava's theatre or Trnava's DISK. Here he doesn't

show only the surface of events, he doesn't take only photos of actors, but he offers a complete picture of performance into which he adds another artistic value. He is concerned with creation of portraits, too. There is reflected his ability to feel inner connections very deeply. His portraits don't reflect only portraited persons, but himself, too. Permanent, impressive and softly unobtrusive expression about his own soul continues. I don't want to force anybody to explain a term stage photograph. But I want to know why did you choose this way of your expression? Maybe at first it was only a game. The first photos were absurd but later feelings penetrated them. They helped to express what cannot be expressed in any other way. In spite of the fact, that I took photos of real people and things in real space, pictures were absurd. They express only misty images, endless thoughts, maybe they express a process of thoughts. For me stage photo isn't anything strange. It is a way of expression, one of the artistic forms of a photo. The most exact are the words of the legendary Professor Smok from FAMU in Prague: "A photo is a communication". That's my aim, I want to tell something to somebody and I think that this sort of photo can tell something about the author. This way of expression is very difficult and you can't influence all conditions of its origin. It's true. All the year I was preparing for taking photos in September. If the conditions were ideal, I took at least fifteen pictures. So far I managed to take only one... I assembled people, brought props, created a scene on

an empty field and I waited. When the sun set, the release of the camera clicked only a few times and that was the end... I wanted to arrange an exhibition from these photos together with portraits. I still have this idea, but it hardly will be realised in the year 2000. Maybe I will find a suitable light until the end of this autumn, but I don't know, if I succeed in assembling people and props on the correct place in the same time. And who knows what is going to grow on this field in spring. In spite of it I appreciate what has arisen now. I think that I started a process of thoughts inside of me, from which new pictures will arise. I still walk the same way, I still speak the same language. What do you want to say with your photos to the watchers? My expression isn't concrete, I always leave for the watchers free space for their own interpretation. I don't want to explain anything, it isn't necessary. Maybe I myself don't know, what these photos are about, that's why I don't name them. They should become a mirror in which a retroaction with the watcher's subconscious appear a neverending process of repeating, but discovering, too. Maybe that's the reason why I like theatre, because my photos are theatre, too. But they are pictures and actions from another world... Actually, till now I didn't realize what charm is in a possibility of creating your own world, in which characters live their own life. It could be interesting to enter your mind. Would it possible and is there anybody who succeed it? Yes, a little. While I was preparing an exhibition in

Photogallery in Vienna, I unexpectedly met the photographer Anne Arden McDonald. She also thinks, that it is very important to acquaint other people with our feelings and our own world by means of pictures. Somewhere between heaven and earth there lives Pavel Pecha – a graduate of the famous FAMU in Prague. No everyone can meet him, but pictures of his world stay with us.

Elena Ursínyová, sometimes in the year 2000

Pavel Pecha

Born in Kremnica, Slovakia (8. 1. 1962). He studied in The Institute of Artistic Photography, Prague, Czech Republic (1984 – 1987) and FAMU, Department of Photography, Prague, Czech Republic (1989 – 1994).

Collective exhibitions

- 1989** *Nine-speed cloudy bicycle*, House of Culture, Trnava, SK (Exhibition of the pataphysic artistic group)
- 1991** *Slovak staged photography*, Museum of dance, Stockholm, SE
- 20 years of The Institute of artistic photography**, Silesia Museum, Opava, CZ
- 1992** *Contemporary Slovak photography*, Kiel, DE
- Slovak dozen*, Dortmund, DE
- International student photography "Blow Up"*, Gallery Medium, Bratislava, SK

- 1993** *Generation 60*, Tatra's Gallery, Horný Smokovec, SK
- Between Image and Vision*, Summerlee Heritage Trust, Coatbridge, GB
- Photographies of students of FAMU*, Prague, CZ
- 1994** *Exhibition of graduation works of students FAMU*, Berlin, DE
- 1995** *Communication*, Tatra's Gallery, Poprad, SK
- 1996** *Institute of artistic photography 25/5*, Centre of culture "Castle", Gallery of photography pf, Poznan, PL
- Spirit in the Flesh*, Stuart Levy Gallery, New York, USA
- 1997** *Contemporary photography from Prague*, *My Intuitive Theater*, Stuart Levy Gallery, New York, USA
- The art of contemporary photography in Eastern Europe*, Museo Ken Damy, Brescia, IT
- Slovak imagination photography*, Thessaloniki, GR
- 1998** *Altered worlds*, Fotofest, Houston, USA
- Intimacies*, Branch of the School of Fine Arts, Rethymno, GR
- 2000** *Meeting 03*, Slovak graduates of FAMU, Foyer of Slovak Radio, Bratislava, SK
- 2001** *Slovak Photography 1925 – 2000*, Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, SK
- 2002** *Czech and Slovak Photography of the 80' & 90'*, Olomouc, CZ
- 2003** *Staged fantasy*, Gallery Sink, Denver, USA

- 2005** *Slovak Face*, Tenerife/ Cran Canaria, ESP (Dorota Sadvská, Martin Kollár, Pavel Pecha)
- 2006** *4 for 4*, Galerija Turleja, Krakow, PL
- 2007** *Mirror of Nature*, Arsenal, Wroclaw, PL
- 2008** *Czech and Slovak Staged Photography*, Sol Melnick Gallery, Philadelphia, USA
- 2009** *Postmodern in slovak arts 1985-1992*, Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, SK
- 2010** *Restless Medium*, House of art, Bratislava, SK
- 2013** *Homage to Martin Martinček*, Liptov gallery, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK
- 2015** *From collection of Museum of photography*, Fecik Gallery, Bratislava, SK

Individual exhibitions

- 1992** *My Intuitive Theatre*, Artforum, Bratislava, SK
- 1993** *Photographies*, Slovak-America business fund, Bratislava, SK
- 1994** *Photographies*, Zvolen Castle, Zvolen, SK
- 1995** *Dream fields*, Gallery Profil, Bratislava, SK
- Gallery Crossing, Portogruaro, IT
- My Intuitive Theatre*, Fotogalerie, Wien, AT
- 2002** *Intuitive Theater*, Great Manezh, Moscow, RU
- 2002** *Intuitive Theater*, Slovak Institute, Wien, AT
- 2005** *Intuitive Theatre*, Gallery 4, Cheb, CZ

- 2005** *Intuitive Theater*, Photofestival Union, Lodz, PL
- 2005** *Intuitive Theater*, Slovak Embassy, Washington, USA
- 2005** *Intuitive Theater*, Brolo Centro d' Arte e Cultura, Mogliano, IT
- 2006** *FOFU Phot'art*, Parco Corsini, Fucechio, IT
- 2007** *My Intuitive Theater*, Mai fotofestival, Quimper, Douarnenez, FR
- 2007** *Two worlds*, Jan Koniarek Gallery, Trnava, SK
- 2008** *Staged Photographs*, Fine Arts Center Galleries at University of Rhode Island, USA
- 2008** *My Intuitive Theatre*, Galerie Fiducia, Ostrava, CZ
- 2009** *My Intuitive Theatre*, Galerie Bazilika, České Budějovice, CZ
- 2009** *Photography*, Slovak institute, Moscow, RU
- 2010** *My Intuitive Theatre*, Villa Onigo, Trevignano, IT
- 2010** *Photography*, Auditorium Monteverdi, Marghera-Venezia, IT
- 2013** *My Intuitive Theatre*, Angkor Wat Festival, KH

Collections

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA

Museet for Fotokunst, Odense, DK

Jan Koniarek Gallery, Trnava, SK

Private collections in Slovakia, Germany, Italy, Czech rep., USA

My Intuitive Theater, from 1990



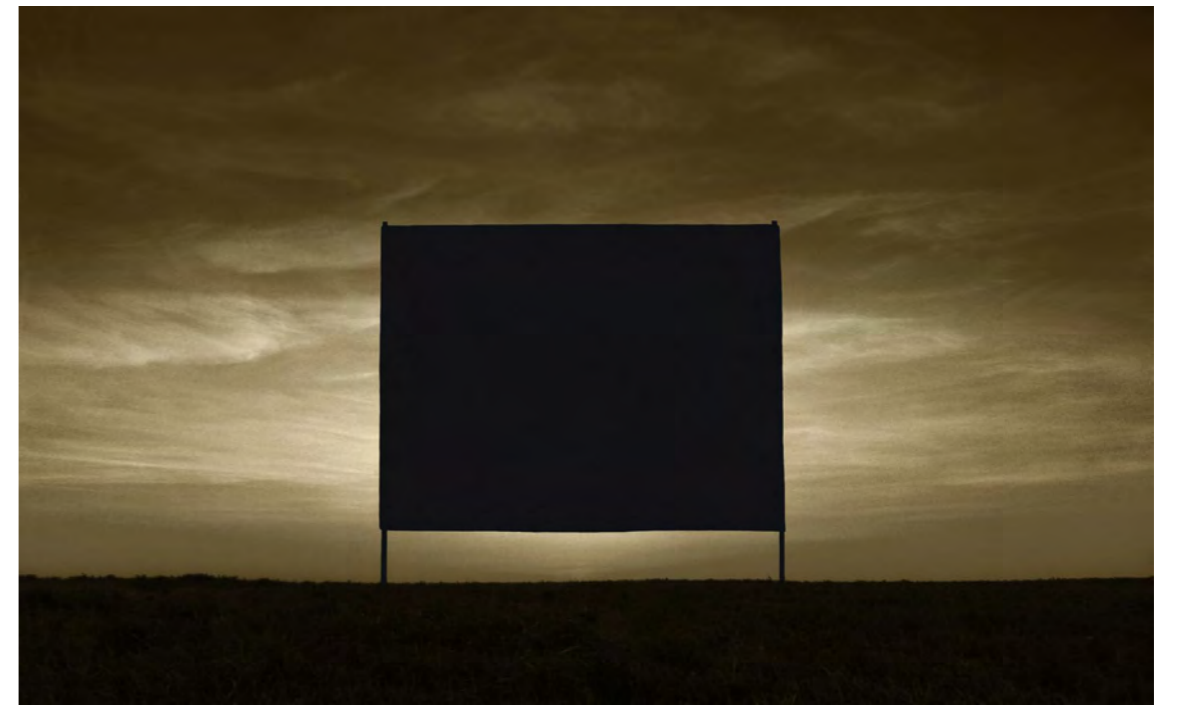
















Painting with Camera, 2005 - 2009

