

# Petra Cepková

## We Must Feel the Earth Beneath Our Feet with a Bare Foot

### Abstract

The portfolio of the Slovak visual artist Petra Cepková presents a selection of her artwork, which has been realised since the early 2000s in the fields of photography, installation and painting. The presented selection of the author's works, from her university studies to her current pedagogical activity, is aimed at illuminating the author's way of thinking about various visual possibilities of the medium of photography, as well as its different genres. Mainly, however, it is supposed to be a reflection on topics that gradually crystallize into intertwined parallel lines of emotions and thoughts that always de facto regard human relationships. Within the key topics in the concepts of her work, we could include terms such as transience, time, family, loneliness, love, violence, etc. Photography thus allows her to see and grasp the world in a different way, anew, more whole, and to see herself and others without masks of pretence, which might bring with it sadness but also a deep human understanding for others. In the context of this main idea that extends across her whole

work, behind the various topics and photographic or visual art genres, we are able to read and observe metamorphoses of her entering our secret worlds, places where we would usually rather be alone, where we heal our painful spots. In the critical situation of the state of Western culture, her themes become topical and photography here is presented as a source of empathic thinking. The author in her work brings a different and new outlook on male and female aspects of partnerships, their social impact, building mainly on the significance of a functioning family. What, however, remains essential is her attempt to explain how very important it is to amend years-ingrained stereotypes. The author has a gift to sensitively grasp a fine fabric of underlying threads in places where our common perception scratches the delusive shell of the surface. She very clearly convinces us of a thoughtful and sensible study of the relationship between an author and the portrayed individuals, leading us to a sensitive perception of the even subtlest quiver of human souls. From the view of

European photography, her work can be a great contribution, as it confirms that a perfect theoretical preparation is the basis of success in every art work.

### Key words

13th Chamber. Altruism. Analgetic. Archaeology of Time. Art. Asexual. Catharsis. Childhood. Communication. Conceptual Document. Consume. Divorce. Ego. Empathy. European Culture. Expressionists. Family. Fiction. Finiteness. Generations. Gender. Genius Loci. Home. Human Being. Humanism. Identity. Impressionism. Inner Worlds. Intercultural Dialogue. Interpersonal Relationships. Kingdom. Landscape. Loneliness. Massmedia. Metanarration. Monastery. Narration. Orphanage. Otherness. Painless. Painting. Photography. Postmodern. Rationality. Reality. Reborn. Rural. Sadness. Sociology. Soul. Stereotypes. Stranger's Eyes. Tabula Rasa. Time. Transcendence. Water. Windlessness. Wishes.

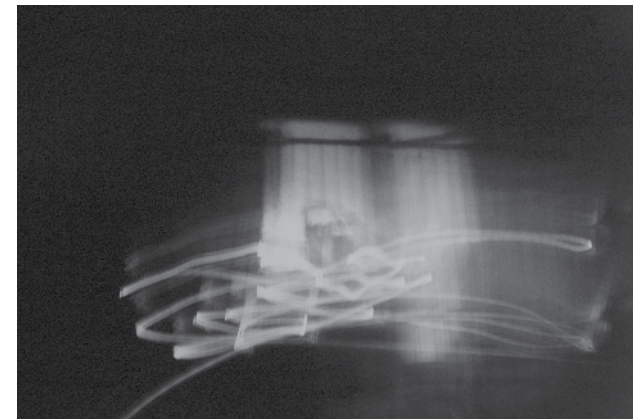
from the series *Untitled*, 1999 – 2000







from the series *Look at Me*, 2001





from the series **TABULA RASA/So Alien – So Close, 2002**

*“...one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star...”* (Friedrich Nietzsche)

A human being – too close and yet so alien. Each one of us. A book – always clean and yet written in. We are being reborn. Us and our stories. Completely common beings, each one unique.

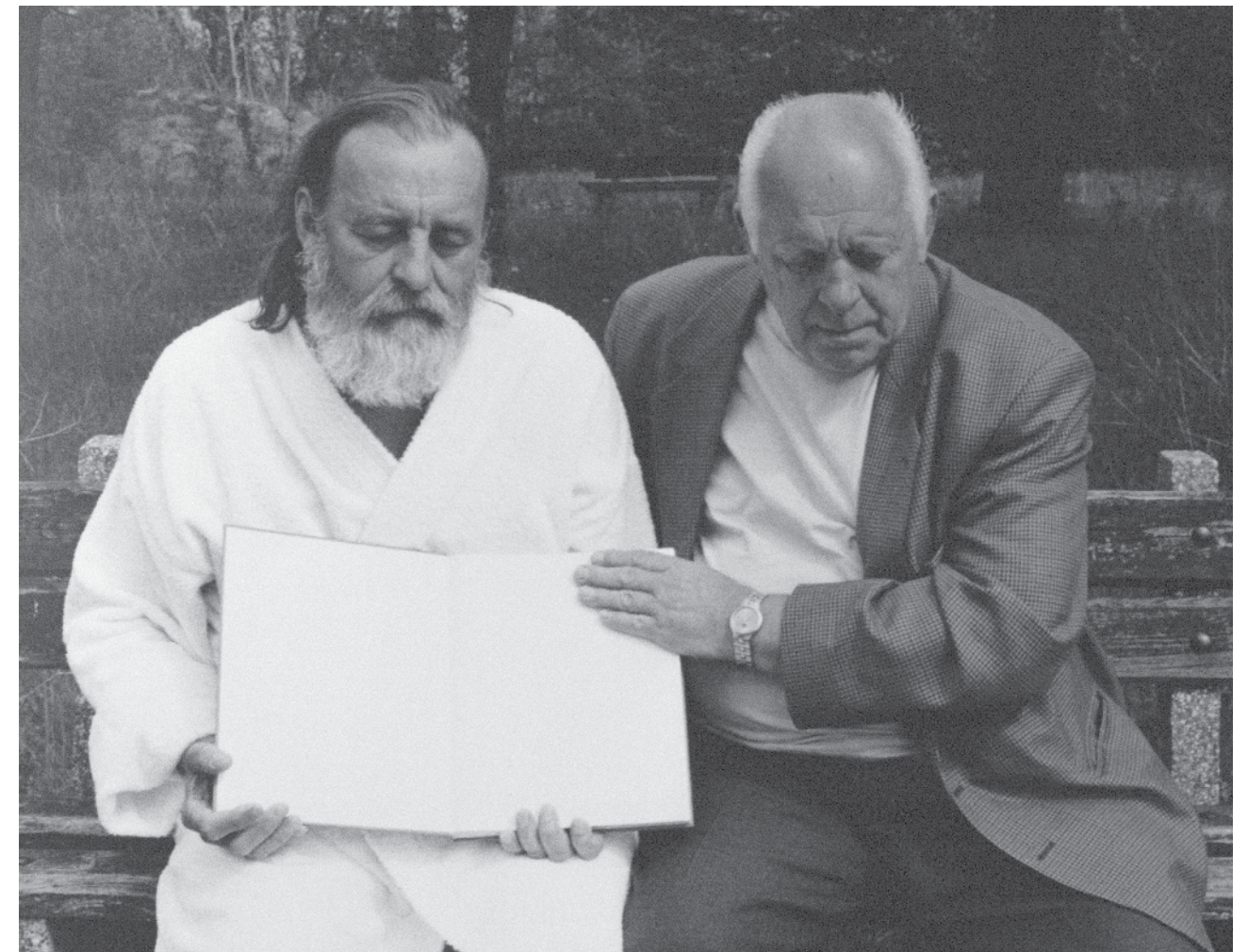
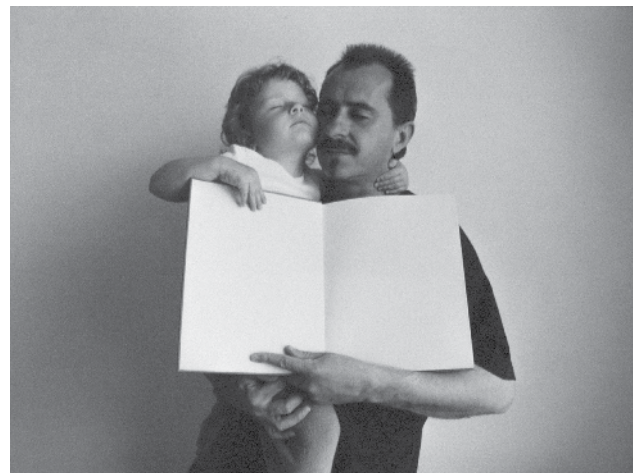
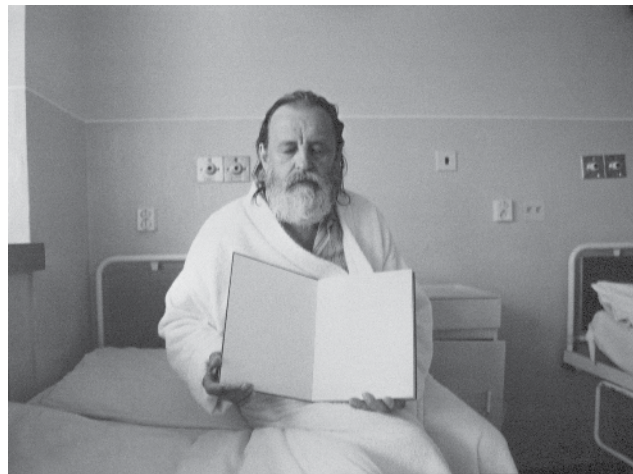
Warmth of our beds cools more slowly than our exhalations, while

we leaf through our books, book by book. We have been standing in this place for centuries. All our history has been written, since the beginning until now. Our skin is waiting for calligraphic brush strokes, letters written directly by life, while stars are falling second after second, just like the letters in our stories are flowing. At the end, we stand bare, just like at the beginning.

I always mistakenly assume that I know the essence of each one of us. However, in the end, everything

is different. At the end, there are always blank, white pages flying somewhere in space, and we are trying to find ourselves. We want to understand ourselves and record it into the parchment of our souls, into our body maps. To be closed in temporal consciousness forever and relentlessly. Our children – clean, first melodies. We are going through life, heading towards the end.

Every situation in life that faces a human being with revaluation of the essence of being, the bare and



the purest existence, is enriching. The infinite feeling of loneliness, enclosing the burning inside by cold walls. We are in a shell, we wander dreamt up countries, immensely tired of life, longing for love. We are constantly learning from our mistakes and are separated by millions of years. If we could only be close to everyone... Family, father, mother, sister, our children, and loves, everything is concluded by victorious touches of our hands. Us and the symbols inside us.

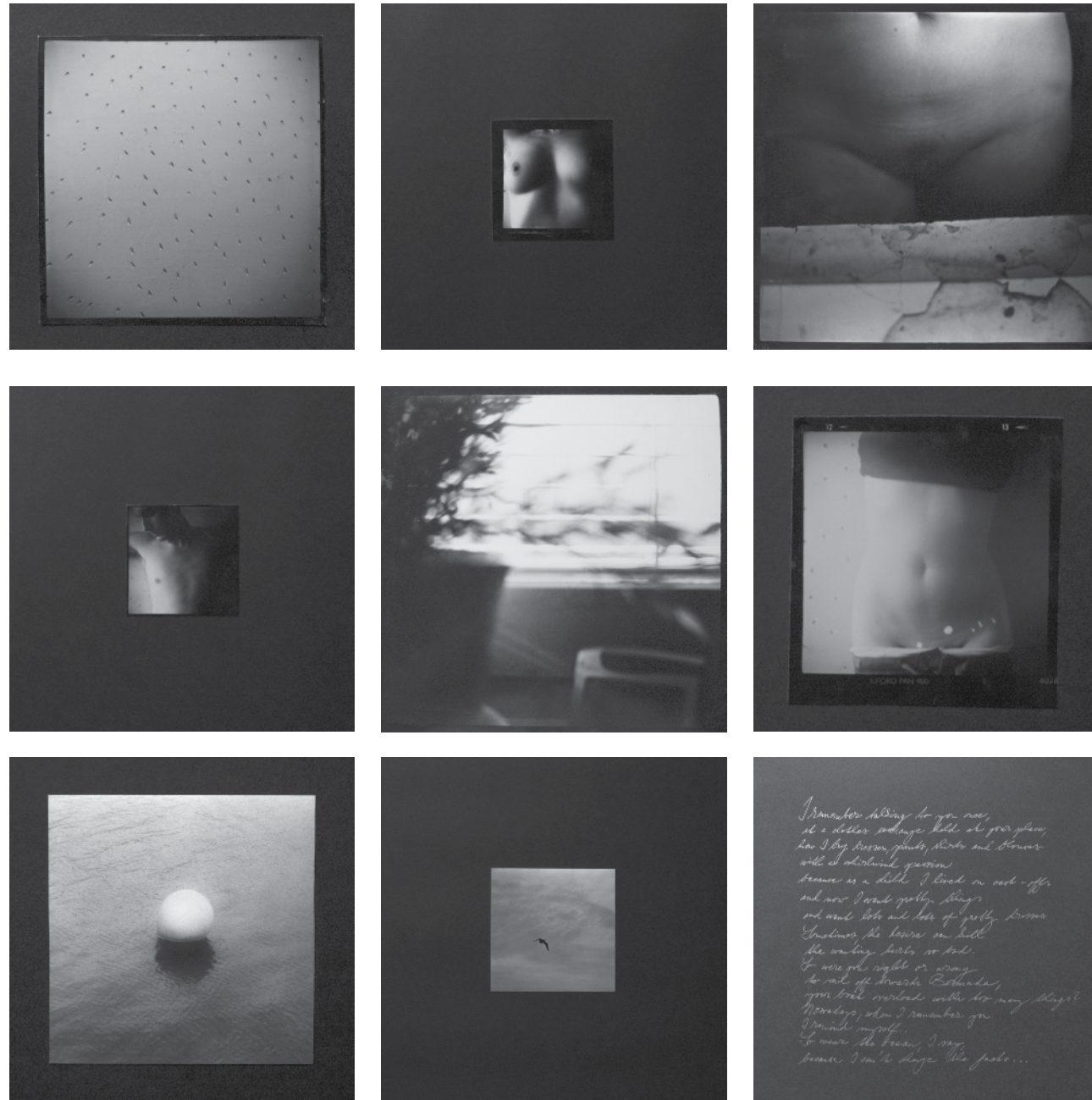
Beautiful, pure people, absolutely precise lines on the pages, and yet so alien. As if everything left behind us had already been before. We write our first and last steps, while desires grow disproportionately fast. We are standing like hundreds of menhirs made of stone and the sun is writing stories at our surfaces with its shadows. And then comes the cleansing, as a ghost from mysterious seas, from hundreds of lacustrine countries, and the scent of a human being can be smelled

behind apple-laden trees. Here lies knowing each other, knowledge that forever remains open, guarded by secrets. We are waiting for a page to be turned, but who will do it...

**Petra Cepková**



from the series *Sad Sailor*, 2003 (text by Paula Jup *Lost in the Bermuda Triangle*)



### Installation *Too Little Time and the Water Level is Rising*, 2003

This installation is one of my first university photographic projects and also one of the most personal, because, through it, I return to early childhood; it is a testimony of my parents' relationship, but also a child's desire for wholeness. The actual title, inspired by a 1997 film essay by Dežo Ursiny and Ivo Brachtl about the fundamental topics of human existence, has become a significant metaphor for me. Installation consists of various attributes and visual symbolic elements. Adjusted on a wooden board in the frame of a hospital bed from a psychiatric ward, there is a large photograph of my parents depicted naked, lying on a bed in an intimate gesture of waiting for my return as a child back to their embrace "to the

place we have all come from; to the place where the author wants to see them – together, naked, fragile, and united. In a certain sense, it is a reconstruction of memories. The past collides with the present, dreams are falling down slowly like flakes to the hard ground. Petra Cepková's installation pulls the spectator in through subjective references to the objective topics of relationship breakdown, the need for the fundamental feeling of safety, and the desire for wholeness" (Laura Belišová). Two aquariums are placed on the photograph, each of them containing a "golden" fish – a symbol for fulfilling wishes. However, the transparent connecting wall between the aquariums inexorably divides the two fish and, therefore, they can never get to each other, just as that wish is unfulfillable.

Added to the patient health card – medical record with my photograph from childhood hung on the hospital bedhead, is a, to me absurd, text from a divorce paragraph about the marriage ceasing to fulfil its social function. In front of the bed, there is an old suitcase with my authentic drawings from that period of my childhood. The whole installation is complemented by an audio recording (placed under the bed) that captures my conversations (as a child) with my parents. There is so little time for each of us, and the water, as a symbol of fulfilment or flow, is also inexorably rising. Life is terribly fragile and is slipping through our fingers so fast.

**Petra Cepková**





from the series *MATRIX*, 2004



from the series *THE OBJECTS IN THE MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR*, 2005



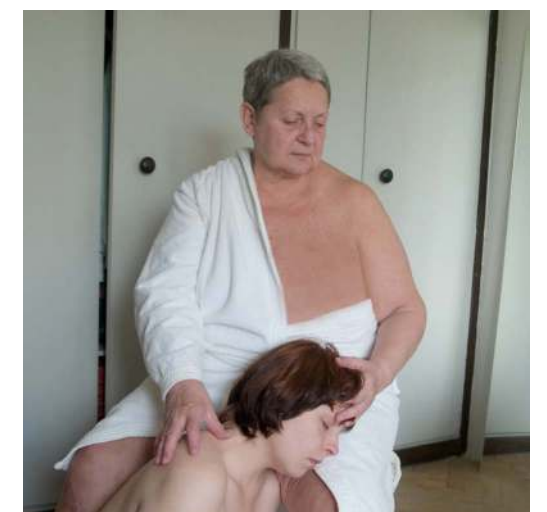
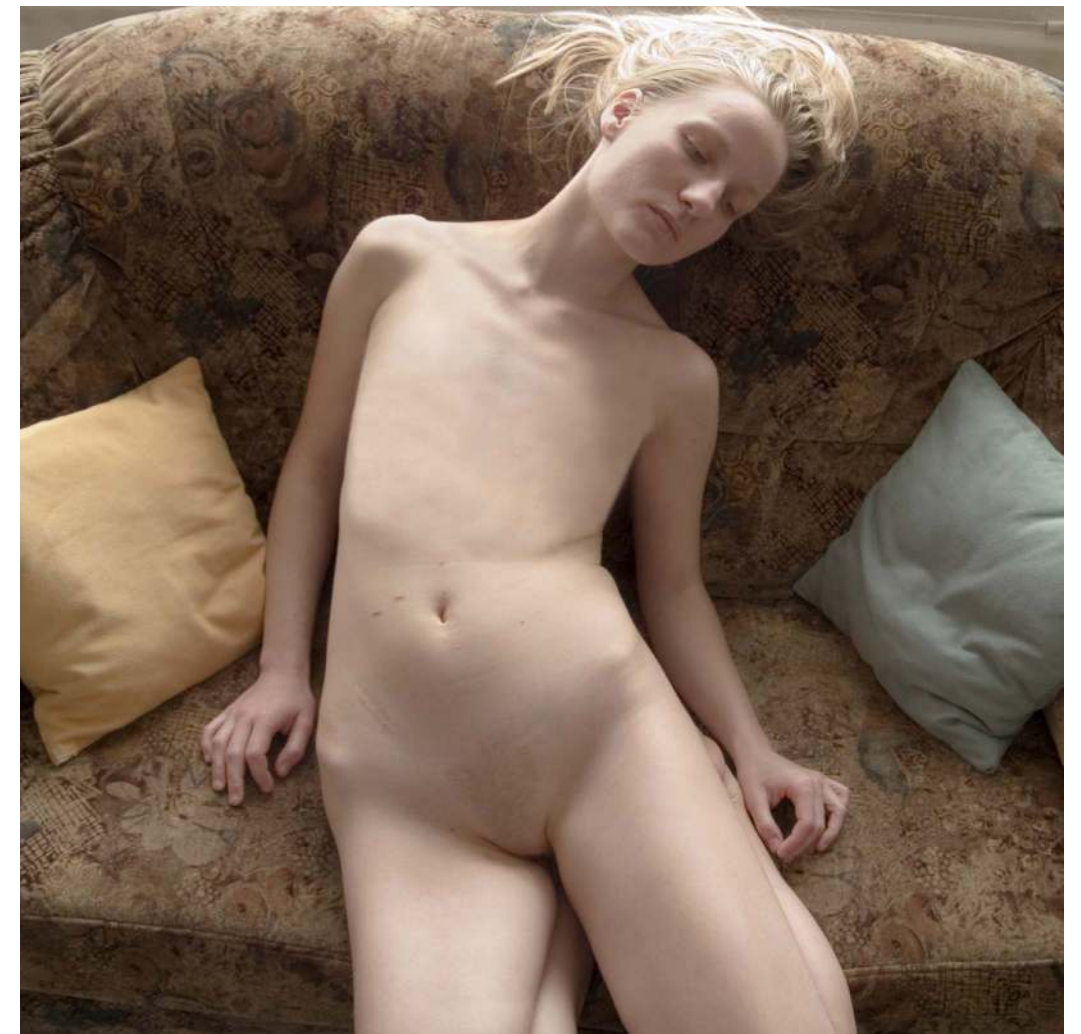


**from the series ANALGETICON/  
Kingdom of Painless – Kingdom of  
Asexual, 2006**

In the project *Analgeticon*, I address the important issue of identity and, particularly, gender as a social construct. By erasing sex characteristics, I speak about the fact that it is the human being that remains as the important one. I have created androgynous individuals, one identity that is genderless, undefinable. I am interested in what happens when these characteristics disappear from the body. What becomes important is neutrality, erasure of the much-discussed difference, creation of something distinct, soothing, and pain-alleviating, and a search for answers – i.e., the cure that means breaking out of animalism of being in a kingdom of painlessness. The title *Analgeticon* refers to a fundamental higher moral principle as a basis of the human existence. Evil, hate, love, everything that the search for answers – i.e., the cure, is based on. It is a search for sedatives at the level of solving human pains. It is an answer to fundamental questions of being, from religions to the most extravagant philosophical concepts. To have, own, dominate, decide about the life of others, regardless of the basic principle: live and let live, concerning the duality man – woman, individual – society, and confronting countries, civilizations, and religions. The ultimate consequence of this is the biblical: love your neighbour as yourself, regardless of gender, race, religiosity, or social status. In this context, Beethoven's procedure in the development of

the *Ninth Symphony*, also known as *Appassionata*, comes to mind. When analysing this process, we come to the primordial base which Beethoven drew on, and that was Schiller's poem *All Men Become Brothers*. This poem is Schiller's expression of his philosophical view of the world, his search for a solution – an analgesic for human pains. And the idea of this poem, its content, and the whole concept had followed Beethoven throughout his whole life as a powerful creative impulse. He was constantly trying to find a musical expression that would convey the depth of Schiller's thoughts. This led to a creation of one of the most humane musical works in history, and maybe thanks to the power of Schiller's thoughts. On another level of thought, we are finding similar expressions in the work of Austrian writer Johannes Simmel - *The Cain Conspiracy (All Men Will Be Brothers)*. Here, the expression of an idea used by Schiller is significantly different. This ambivalence of expressions differs in Schiller's use in the aspect of categorical imperative (i.e., a "rule of conduct" – Kant's expression for an absolute moral principle), while, for Simmel, this aspect is conditional on time, in the term "will", naturally, after some period of time that the society must overcome. Conditionality arises also in the view of the times and events (I mean the title of Simmel's work), happenings in the world and society in which the author lived and worked. I will leave this parallel, formed in relation to Schiller and Beethoven. I will try to express a similar content, determined by the state of knowledge and progress

of civilization, and will substitute this postulate with an expression "All people could be brothers". And thus, in the dimension of this triad, I am getting to the fundamental, i.e., the term can, which is a parallel to *Analgeticon*. It is a conditional form that is achievable after meeting certain conditions leading to fulfilment (here, I state this higher moral principle also as a philosophical term – categorical imperative, in a form of "must" used by T. G. Masaryk), in the spirit of a reflection that: "A man must hang on something. Either on to God, or on a nail." Human beings choose between evil and good, right and wrong, valuable – human and animal. In their doings, they put an "equals sign" between God and the aforementioned higher moral principle; meaning that they don't see God only as the supreme religious authority but also as the basis of existence. By curing the diseases of human kind over time, philosophers have become doctors of the dying time. I have built a symbol, a conditional form, and here I stand on the ground of explaining my work dealing with human kind, a kind much more complex than it might seem. The triad of the 19th, 20th, and 21st century presents a shift in knowledge, i.e., in the developmental line "are – will be – can". And, at the same time, human kind as mutual indifference, misunderstanding, perfunctory animalistic perception of the male-female relationship, as the cornerstones of society.

**Petra Cepková**



The last quarter of the 20th century has also brought, together with postmodernist plurality and traditional values relativization, a new visual attitude to the body. This was mainly connected with the massive advent of female authors and their personal body experience, very often associated with painful feelings (menstruation, defloration, child birth, rape, breast amputation, anorexia and bulimia). Therefore women's art language is often, as far as the body is concerned, much more straightforward, harsher, more shocking and less aesthetic. Another scope of postmodernist themes developed by the feminist movement in the first place, concerns gender issues and the socially determined roles of a man and a woman, which postmodernism started to relativize. One manifestation of this questioning is also a type of androgynous (asexual or bisexual) mutant, suggesting the conventional nature of "gender". The series of digitally manipulated photos by the graduate of the VŠVU (Academy of Fine Arts and Design) Department of Photography and New Media **Petra Cepková** that portray naked figures with erased sexual characteristics, once the sacrosanct integrity of the body as well as the harmony of body and mind are broken. Analgeticon, or the realm of painless, is opening before us in domestic interiors, dominated by beds made for the night and soft plush sofas. Fragmentation of the body as one of the typical features

of postmodernist art situates the body beyond aesthetics and converts it into a tool of ideology. Through manipulating the human body the author unwillingly evokes another phenomenon of nowadays – that of plastic surgery, which has gradually worked its way from minor "retouching" of noses or lips to a complex change of gender and basic human identity. In Petra Cepková's images the female and male body ceases to function as a gender bearer, yet at the same time it frightens us by its morbid paleness and fragility. Human victories over nature tend to be ambiguous.

**prof. Václav Macek, CSc.  
& Mgr. Lucia L. Fišerová, Ph.D.**

The author deals with an issue of identity, gender as a social construct, through transformation. Metamorphosis of a man and a woman happens through retouching sex characteristics. Wiping away their differences, the author liberates them from the confinement of animalism (pain and sadness). They acquire neutrality through their passage to the Kingdom of Painless where the only identity is the humanity of the Human being. The author's inclination towards metaphor and transformation represents her desire parallel to a subject's existence in a world, in which, contrary to the Kingdom of Painless, a human being is inseparable from their corporality, as written by Merleau – Ponty: "*The*

*body is not an object. For the same reason, the consciousness that I have of it is not a thought, that is, I cannot decompose and recompose this consciousness in order to form a clear idea. It is always something other than what it is; always sexuality at the same time as freedom, always rooted in nature at the very moment it is transformed by culture; it is never self-enclosed but never transcended. Whether it is a question of other person's body or of my own, I have no other means of knowing the human body than by living it, that is, by taking up for myself the drama that moves through it and by merging with it."*

**PhDr. Klára Kubíková**



**from the series 13th Chamber  
/Conceptual Tendencies in  
Documentary Photography,  
2006 – 2009**

The 13th chamber is an expression often used and associated with secrets that each of us carefully protects locked inside, from the fear of exposure. It is a place of the paramount privacy; a place where people are really relaxed, authentic, themselves without masks and embellishments. I have tried to uncover moments of tension, loneliness, secret and vulnerable places and situations of different couples, families, and relationship models. During photographing, I have encountered many tense situations and real arguments, when I felt that I must stop photographing and just be a silent witness, because, in a way, I was an intruder. Many of the depicted couples are no longer together. I am fascinated by human relationships and through photography, I can get very close to the essence of a human being. But I have gradually realized that the most important thing while photographing is to listen to the others. However, I don't mean just words, but also nonverbal communication. On the one hand, it tells us a lot about ourselves, but, most importantly, it opens the door to the others. Each family is thus an image mosaic, where one larger, main photograph is always complemented by three to five smaller ones. For me, each family has thus become a story in itself, with its history, a kind of a macrocosm. I have found this form to be the most suitable in regards to narration, as I wanted to invite a spectator on a journey through secret

rooms within ourselves. Maybe we could find ourselves there too. The photographic cycle 13th Chamber is mainly my research and personal contribution to the issue of photographic depiction of the topic of family and relationships in the context of visual arts, but also a glimpse into sociological discourse that continuously redefines social conditioning and questions gender stereotypes. It is windlessness that is a symbolic expression for an illustration of the current state of relationships in society, a disease of feelings and alienation, and, primarily, their impact on the family structure. A human being is, unfortunately, influenced by predetermination, which results also in the fact that we always imagine happiness somewhere else than we currently are. We are careful, because right beyond the borders of a sunny, dancing fairy tale lurks the evil of the "normal" world. The title 13th Chamber served as a metaphorical illustration of the most personal moments of a relationship that take place behind closed doors of the households. My intention was not to seek out borderline life situations and conflicts, but, on the contrary, I tried to get insight of the relationships depicted in the moments when words are unnecessary and emotions get to the surface in a form of touches and looks. I have tried to point out those seemingly unimportant, but actually key moments, that "windlessness", i.e., the indescribable silence that is encoded in every relationship. I believe that we ourselves are also formed through our relationships with others. I am interested in "common"

stories from private environments of individual families reflecting their habits, moments when they are relaxed and experience personal touches and communication, but also individual's loneliness in proximity to another person. I find photographic depiction of couples, or families, important because it is a way to point out the significance of tolerance in our lives, the level of personal freedom and ability to overcome our ego, be unselfish, make a sacrifice for others and not lose ourselves on the way. As regards the formal aspect of shooting, I put the emphasis on intimate lighting, in order to reach the fragility of relationships, because I consider drawing attention to the sensitiveness of this topic very relevant not only because of the times we are living in, but mainly in the context of visual arts and photography. I think that family and relationships have a constantly growing influence on visual arts, which makes them an unceasing sphere of an issue that must undergo examination. From outside, many families appear "all right", but in the privacy of their homes, a different reality often takes place and brings with it alienation or loneliness. For me, it is a state "between reality and fiction", where fiction in this case represents the outside view of reality, while inside, it is much different. It is what lies behind the closed door of the thirteenth chamber. And it is also a gesture of a child hiding from view behind its hand expecting to be invisible; it is a place where we are caught between our rationality and desire.

**Petra Cepková**



The series *13th Chamber* (2009) was a doctoral work of Petra Cepková. It consists of several sets of photographs, of which one is always a large one – it is the main one – and there are 3 - 5 smaller pictures. Each set captures private moments of one family. The title *13th Chamber* suggests the author's point of view. Her goal was to capture the state of family intimacy, which occurs in an atmosphere of absolute relaxation among family members and which can hardly appear in the presence of a person from outside. The most difficult task was for the photographer in trying to suppress her presence in order to capture the essence of common living. She photographed her parents, friends and acquaintances where there was a chance for such spontaneous situations to occur in her presence. Petra Cepková is a photographer of “noncrucial” moments, which materialize true relations among people at the same time. First of all, she chooses relaxed moments when nothing seems to be happening. Her approach is the exact opposite to the first Magnum photographers, searching for a decisive moment. On the other hand, Petra deliberately selects compositions of her images, often playing with unusual views-through or reflections. Sometimes there is a detail in the first ground, standing between her camera and a scene, introducing dramatic quality in an image. A similar effect is achieved by capturing movement. Besides elements of composition with

dramatizing purpose, Petra works also with light, which introduces poetics into the photographs. They are mostly scenes in twilight from a natural source, giving soft light, that particularly create poetic atmospheres. So they are ordinary movements that are captured but with the help of certain tools, they gain the character of extraordinariness. Petra Cepková introduced herself on the international photographic scene earlier by her series *Analgeticon*. By means of digitally manipulated photography, she suggested tendencies of modern society towards sexless self reflection. So the author cannot be regarded as a documentarist. But she is definitely an artist, reacting to current social issues. With her series *13th Chamber*, she joined the stream of contemporary photography, conceptualizing her approach to documentary photography.

#### Mgr. Zuzana Lapitková

The cycle explores the topic of family and relationships on a documentary and experimental level. The title itself is marked by mystique. The author does not analyse conflict or dramatic situations; there are already too many of those in the media. She depicts unforgettable moments of silence, when emotions in looks and touches speak instead of words. As she says herself, she has been intrigued by “windlessness” – the indescribable silence. These are “fragile” stories of close

people that have arisen from her fundamental need. Another valuable thing is her view of female and male aspects of partnerships, of the significance of a functioning family with an attempt to overcome obsolete stereotypes in seeing a man and a woman. As Professor Vojtěchovský aptly says: *“She convinces us that otherness is neither an advantage nor a handicap, and she encourages us to throw away our prejudices and see those “others” as human beings, who, more than anything else, need our open arms and our patient heart to understand the aforesaid otherness and to have a sensitive dialogue with it.”*

#### PhDr. Klára Kubíková

How am I to play a role of an opponent, when everything, starting with the topic selection – in a critical situation of the state of western culture a highly topical issue of family and partner relationships, as well as the range of authors through which Petra Cepková decided to illustrate and support her opinions, absolutely convinces me and confirms my belief that, with a few small and tiny exceptions, I would address a thesis with the selected theme if not in an identical, then very similar way?

In the project, photography is presented as a source of empathic thinking. In the key parts of her thesis, Petra attempts – and very successfully – to show a different, novel, or innovative look at male and female aspects of partnerships, social importance and especially

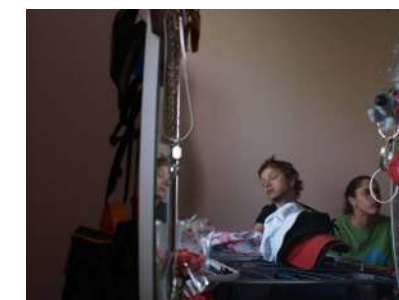
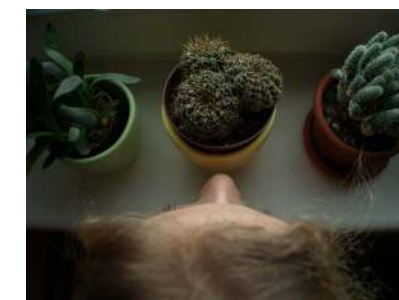
significance of a functioning family, or she tries to explain to herself and us how to amend years-ingrained stereotypes in seeing the position of a man and a woman. A reader thus necessarily comes to realize that Petra has a gift to sensitively grasp a fine fabric of underlying threads in places where our common perception scratches the delusive shell of the surface. She also maintains her thoughtful and sensitive approach, warning us of the danger of convenience in observation, in judgments, and of the necessity to choose a different, prejudice-free value scale. Her approach to evaluation and perception of fundamental issues of relationships, which constitute the pillars of family as the smallest distinguishable full-fledged unit of the society, as well as to the evaluation and perception of authors depicting family and partnerships, is also not quite easy. It is difficult, because it is deeper and, therefore, requires careful study and methods freed from all clichés and stereotypes. In the analysis of “her” authors, she very aptly convinces us of the exact opposite, as she sees their works as stepping stones to a thoughtful and sensible perception of the even subtlest quiver of human souls.

I am certain that from the view of the Czech or European photography, her submitted theoretical dissertation thesis (but also its practical part *13th Chamber*) could be a great contribution. There is no doubt that it has met and greatly exceeded the targets set by the

author. It confirms that a perfect theoretical or composed work is the cornerstone of success in every art work, including photography. (Excerpt from the opponent's review by prof. Mgr. Miroslav Vojtěchovský to the dissertation

thesis by Petra Cepková entitled *Windlessness / Family and Partner Relationships and Their Depiction in Photography of the Second Half of the 20th Century*. Academy of Fine Arts and Design, Bratislava.)

#### Prof. Mgr. Miroslav Vojtěchovský





from the series **CUENTOS/STORIES/PRÍBEHY** (from the project **SETSE/Seeing European Culture Through a Stranger's Eyes, Spain**), 2009 - 2010

I have also photographed people in their family environment abroad. I have created conceptual stories about families and their lives. Families and people throughout the world are very much alike. This project was very similar to the *13th Chamber*; it was, however, specific for the fact that it was supposed to bring understanding of a given culture, mainly through the symbolism of food, their cuisine, their eating and communication habits, but mostly through a mythical and desired hearth and home. Through details of still-lives from their households and communication moments by the table, I wanted to express ungraspable lines of their living, with an emphasis on the cultural background and differences given by their origins, economic, social, and religious conditions. Intercultural and intergenerational dialogue takes place right there at the table, where a family builds its identity; family that in the 21st century undergoes an era of great changes caused by the pressure of social stereotypes and mass-media culture. To understand cultural differences should be important for us, because this shapes our whole communication. The objective of the project was to create a report about the given country, its culture, but mainly the human relationships within family. Spanish families spend more time

together that Slovaks do. I have noticed traditional family and a strong matriarchal model in many families, which is admirable, as these families really stick together very strongly, generations live together, the younger ones take care of their elders during their final years, and their overall life is much calmer than our Slovak life. They enjoy their meals just as intensively as they experience their relationships. Their world-renowned afternoon siesta allows them to spend much more time together at home, to have lengthy conversations about life or just about nothing, but primarily, to be together. I was able to enter traditional and harmonious families with a large number of members, but also markedly patriarchal families where it was quite sparkly at times. I have visited many mixed couples of various cultures, nationalities, and religions, a single homosexual, but mainly I was able to enter different social classes, where values significantly differ. From my point of view, the postmodern family faces a tough situation and crisis, as its formerly solid pillars haven't been so solid for quite a long time. In my opinion, it is swaying on the unstable quicksand of intolerance, egoism, and the boundless desire for everything we could have today. In my photographs, I often work with depth of field, which has allowed me, through blurriness and vagueness, to point out diverse corners of human homes and, thus, also objects that are or used to be important form them. For Spaniards, family and time spent together represent their intimate sphere. I was a stranger entering

their homes, constantly looking at them through a camera viewfinder. Over time, they let me join their family atmosphere and I let myself be swept along by warm embraces and laughter, as well as emotional outbursts, arguments, and tears. For me, Spain is a country of emotions, flamenco, bullfighting, good food and even better wine, admiration for unbound men and beautiful women, but mainly a country where people realize the preciousness of the time we have.

#### Petra Cepková

This cycle originated as a result of the author's stay in Valencia (Spain) within the project SETSE. This time, she has created photographs of diverse types of families - from the classic Spanish family to the Romanian family of immigrants with an accent on a reflexion of social, cultural, religious, and anthropological aspects of the society. Another interesting thing is her work with light and depth of field that has brought out unique corners of human dwellings, which refer to thoughtful compositions of a still-life of an ordinary day. Petra Cepková's works build upon each other on the thematic level. She elaborates unique stories of our peers, always finding a new outlook. They are connected by that something human that we lack - tolerance, willingness to sacrifice ourselves for the others, and respect for another human being.

#### PhDr. Klára Kubíková

SETSE *Seeing European Culture Through a Stranger's Eyes* was a two-year international project supported by the European Commission through the Culture programme 2007 - 2013. The programme involved eight European institutions - partners of the project: Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (ES), University of Jyväskylä (FIN), University of Arts in Poznań (PL), Les Rencontres d'Arles (FR), Hungarian National Museum (HU), Hellenic Centre for Photography Athens (GR), and House of Photography Liptovský Mikuláš (SK). The main objective of the project was to examine the topics of family and food in Europe through photography. Each institution sent an artist to a partner country to work in the given specific location on a photographic set that reacted to local conditions and was aimed at the main themes of the project. This led to intercultural dialogue represented by the resulting photographic art work. The artist as a foreigner observes social, cultural, religious, and anthropological aspects of the society in the given country through a different outlook. Afterwards, there was an interesting confrontation at the joint exhibition of the eight participating authors, where eight different views of modern European family life, characterized also by the specificity of meals and eating habits, were arranged in a kind of a mosaic. Besides the conference, several partial symposiums, which addressed the main topic of family and food in connection to regional artistic and theoretical practice, were a part of this long-term project.

#### Mgr. Lucia Benická





**from the series *There Are Places, And Places...* , 2007 – 2017**

There are places, and places... Where the time passes differently; where we have been. Places with a memory, where banal and serious events have taken place. But also empty places. Places that offer many interpretations. In them, I look for personal stories, which, through symbolism of the depicted objects and buildings, express my own fear of what is missing. But, at the same time, the fear of the place that is so full of emotions that it becomes unbearable, just as our reality is sometimes unbearable. It is a story not only of places but also of people – without people.

**Petra Cepková**

The cycle entitled *There Are Places, and Places...* is a selection of Petra Cepková's photographs from her travels with a common denominator – landscape and dwellings that live out their days on the periphery of interest and it is only a matter of time before they perish. The cycle of photographs had been created on an ongoing and long-term basis from 2007 to 2017 in Slovakia: Bratislava, Liptovská Teplička, Nižné Ružbachy, Hybe, and in Spain and Estonia; the author emphasising the importance of getting to know different countries and regions through understanding the continuity of the past and the present. Petra Cepková's work is primarily based on documentary photography, at the centre of which lies the human being in their

diverse shapes and situations. The selection of photographs proposes multiple interpretations: inevitable transformation of the present, criticism of society that neglects heritage restoration for the sake of megalomaniac building and knowingly disrupts genius loci and development continuity. The photographs should be perceived mostly emotionally – as nostalgia for the past when buildings used to be homes. At these deserted places, the photographer has found objects – thrown away, useless as a symbol of memory. Together with a deserted dwelling that has been changed into a house – construction, aptly compared to a person by poet Jules Michelet: *"House is the person, their form, and their most imminent effort; I might even say, their suffering."* Symbolism of objects and houses in their rigidity has become an impulse for



stories – of other people and one's own, in empty places, out of fear of emptiness. Photographs of trees constitute a parallel line in the cycle. Trees – verticals stripped of their leaves, accentuate the trunk and branches towering to the sky. They evoke lonely and defiant beings. Told in Milan Rúfus's words: *"Biological time makes a human being and a tree peers. The tree is even closer to eternity, as it spans further. This commands respect for the tree."* There is nothing pretentious in Petra Cepková's photographs with a distinctive motif of transformation and extinction. Their impact lies in the uniqueness of the moment with a timeless dimension. A document thus becomes a poetic image, which only the real artists can do.

**PhDr. Klára Kubíková**



**from the series *Hybe* (from the project *Inner Worlds*), 2013 – 2014**

It is not always easy to visually capture diverse fates of us people. We always stand at the beginning of a journey that leads us towards getting to know each other. It is a story that later develops even without us. I see Hybe as a place that is quiet and loud at the same

time. To be there somewhere, to intersect with the soil and walls of the deserted houses is something each one of us can do. For me, Hybe is both anonymous and close, deserted but also warm, grey and yet very colourful. Such are also its stories hidden in abstract, discovered shades of white trees and in nonconcrete landscape, where uneasy atmosphere hangs over

everything and the air barely moves. These photographs are about finding a way to others and to myself; they are about legacy of times that have left a mark on our country; they are about people who seem alien and yet so close. Alien because of the journey they have walked and close because of the openness they offer.

**Petra Cepková**



**from the series *By the Miracle of the Heart - Two Places of a Single Soul/Brehov/Rad* (from the project *The Archeology of Time, Life and Stories of People of South Zemplín*), 2015 – 2016**

The project of documentary photographs brings a report of lives of inhabitants of Brehov and Rad in Southern Zemplín, which follows up on a long-term programme of the photographers and university teachers Petra Cepková and Jozef Sedlák, aimed at mapping Slovak regions – Northern Spiš, Liptov, Záhorie, Gemer.

The photographs follow the lives of the villagers with a goal of creating an authentic life story. The approach to the depiction of a human being and a place integrates a sincere reflection on a human being and their attitudes towards life in diverse situations. Both artists, experienced documentarians, have chosen the most adequate method for realizing their project: from the studies of history to the present. The villages have been closely tied to the Christian spirit from the Slavs, through the Modern Age with order of minorites who wrote their history in the turbulent times of the 16th and 17th century, built the Baroque monastery and the Church of St Francis of Assisi in the 18th century, and faced difficult times after the Barbarian Night in 1950 – persecution, imprisonment, and prohibition of activities. Only after November 1989 have the minorites returned to Brehov and recommenced their mission. The history of Rad has been enriched

by archaeological excavations – the discovery of the monastery remains and skeletal findings of martyrs, including identified remains of novice – martyr István Iglódy. Another person who made their mark on the history of Rad was priest and photographer Petrik Béla, a chronicler of portraits and nature, as attested by 400 glass plates found during archaeological research in 2004.

The artists were impressed by the geographical location of the villages that provides a feast for the eyes with its natural scenery and constitutes unique symbiosis with the inhabitants of Hungarian and Slovak nationality, of Christian, Calvinist, Greek Catholic, and Orthodox denomination. What is the community of these people like? The answer lies in their own story, documented by photographs which record the passage of life in time, reflect the past and its transformations after the Velvet Revolution – preservation of traditions and piety, but also the ballast of consumerism with its bizarre ideas of beauty. This probe into the transformation of countryside highlights the contemporary icons and artefacts. The selection of documentary photographs was created within creative workshops in Brehov and Rad in the period from April 2015 to October 2016 and interprets the life of minorites in the monastery, Calvinist and Catholic services, archaeological excavations of martyrs, and everyday life of a human being – work and rest, children in kindergarten, folk

costumes, fishing, all of which make a tapestry of several generations' lives. This project concluded with the publication *The Archeology of Time*.

It resulted in an inimitable true story of human life, while applying all contemporary strategies of documentary photography. In this story, there are many questions that remain open for a perceptive spectator. This coexistence of people that we apprehend with awe and admiration is not staged; it is not a game of truth for one day, but real life that could only be lived with love, help and understanding for each other.

**PhDr. Klára Kubíková**

*Two places of a single soul/Brehov*

The very concept of “archeology of time” embodies multi-layered contexts. Speaking of the pictures in the book it comes down to the archeology of a place (i.e. genius loci), a time (both long gone and immediate), and a soul (those standing unmasked in front of the “violent” intrusion of a camera, as well as those who become exposed behind it).

The monastery in Brehov gives the impression of a unique and self-contained spiritual space, one feels awe the very moment one sets foot into its grounds. Surrounding the tower in the middle, both in the distance and on the elevated hill the massive walls act as a magical symbol of fortification everyone carries within themselves. A fortress inaccessible yet open to



everyone, they are like the walls and boundaries that grew over the years within us.

The very presence and palpable humility of brother Jan, priests Marek and Bogdan introduced each and every one of us into the world within us, a world where we remain always alone. That is until the moments we realize what is really important. The moments that teach us patience of time.

The environment and exteriors of the monastery in which we moved around were a painter's portrayal of never tranquil country full of symbols of faith. They were a different world, a world unlike anything from this century, hiding precious secrets and connected with land and nature with its gifts. Having spent a few days in the majesty of silence we were left somewhere in space-time, we have penetrated their daily activities, which survive in spirituality and are modelled on the life of St. Francis of Assisi. The sacredness of everyday life was the most precious things we have learned. But they also expressed a genuine interest in the daily lives of us all. Our cordial and dedicated guide brother Jan accompanied us all day with a smile, opening doors into the hearts and homes of people for us.

For several days we found ourselves beyond the walls of our hearts, full of expectations and hopefully fulfilling expectations. C.S. Lewis once said: *"It is those moments that one considers disruptive that are actually one's life."* And it is these words that best summarize the authentic and at the same time

compassionate meeting with every single person.

Every night an ink-thick darkness would descend to sweep the walls of the monastery, making it easy to see that as people we are sometimes destructive in our independence. Hours and days spent both behind and outside of these walls taught us much, for example, that sometimes silence speaks the loudest, and that instead of our needs we should take notice of others. Surrounded by rivers in southern Zemplín, we realized we are not alone on our journey, enabling us to learn how to dedicate ourselves to something greater than us, that transcends us.

#### *Two places of a single soul/Rad*

Sometimes sharing little of what little we have is more than to give everything. Why, how much we can learn from others. It is the openness and generosity on the part of father Roland and the locals of the village of Rad that is hard to get used to. The age of egocentrism and consumer lifestyle makes people behave differently. Too distant, too far away from the purity of the soul and the will to sacrifice for someone else, we get to experience neither completely heaven, nor hell.

Meeting father Roland at the parish was the epitome of the purest form of service to others. Regardless of religion or faith, his unspeakable humanity left all of us silent for several minutes. Every single one of us felt the softness of his soul and the air was suddenly as if full of

brightness. We felt safe as we took deep breaths of the fresh morning air.

For me, father Roland's address and a heartfelt and deeply personal explanation of both our interest in their lives and the magnitude of how important understanding each other is, was unforgettable. I remember the moment when almost a childlike shame and laugh overcame him during shooting, a scene that brought joy to everyone involved. His directness tore down barriers between us and his and their world, easily overcoming the boundaries of pride in his own soul. C.S. Lewis would say that *"his very being radiated love as if it were a liquid he had just bathed in"*, because love reminds us what we live for. To truly describe the feeling is an impossible task. Parables told by beautiful wrinkles and the grey years, the old hands of industrious women that touched the best dishes we were honoured with, all in the light more suited better for an impressionist painting. This is what stuck in my mind. Captivated by both the dead river of Tice and our own emotions, the quiet stream of which enticed ruminations over the flow and finality of time, intricacies of our nature, and even sadness as great as the river.

Everything the locals did for us was so emotionally and heart wrenchingly powerful. It was here that I made a renewed and deep realization that we were created for fellowship and involved in relationships that are at the core of who we are. The feelings that were

entived and left by the people of this mixed Slovak-Hungarian village are unforgettable. For one week we became a mirror to each other on our journey.

Coexistence and strong links between generations, the beginning and end of lives, overly sad fates reflected in the eyes of strong people, and colourful diversity of life is all that the sun

soaked land offered to us.

American novelist, poet and campaigner for human rights Maya Angelou said, *"I desire, like every human being, to feel at home wherever I find myself."* Thanks to everyone at Brehov and Rad we felt at home here.

**Petra Cepková**

Walking is essential for people. Life is a journey that must be walked day by day, towards a destination that is not always clearly in front of us and that we do not always look for. We usually figure this out too late, but to move is smarter than to stay in one place and contemplate the impossibility of encompassing the whole.

**P. Tomáš Lesňák OFMConv.**







**from the series *Village That Doesn't Sleep...* (from the project *Where Man and Water Spring Together*, Vyšné Ružbachy), 2016 – 2018**

*We are broken like branches of old trees. I lack patience more than ever before. Some things in life simply do not belong to us...*

Perhaps it is because we constantly ask ourselves what is important. Perhaps it is because we try to capture joy and sadness at the same time. Perhaps it is because via the contemporary visual language of the medium of photography we want to capture the fragrance of blossoming cherry trees and dandelions as well as the scent of human bodies. Perhaps it is because we come across absurd situations in the world that is normally so well-organized. Perhaps it is because we find ourselves in absurd emotional states. Perhaps it is because we aspire to step outside of our comfort zones. Perhaps it is because time flies terrifyingly fast and we just carry small boxes on our necks and we crave to uncover with our hands what is not entirely meant for us. Perhaps it is because photography is a story full of metaphors. Perhaps it is because this medium facilitates our desire to “own”. Perhaps it is because our collective photography is always carried out in silence. Perhaps it is because the silence is so loud that it is unbearable. Perhaps it is because we always leave the photographic

workshops somewhat solemn and silent. Perhaps it is because much later we still reminisce about the moments spent in the community. Perhaps it is because we travel together across the country with hope, which matters much more than to reach the end. Perhaps it is because it all happened in our imagination on that cold and foggy May morning. Perhaps it is because uncovering the unseen in different parts of our beautiful country is so magical. Perhaps it is because what concerns us is the fates of people in these regions that go usually unnoticed, yet are all the more important. Perhaps it is because it is immensely valuable to us over time. Perhaps it is because we find charm in everyday things. Perhaps it is because a group of young people/photographers and their teachers are so close to each other at human level that when they create together and talk about photography and life, they do not feel the need to sleep. Perhaps it is because in such moments sleep becomes a luxury that we cannot afford. Perhaps it is because we appreciate what it means to be “together”. Perhaps it is because the moments of ‘stealing’ reality within black boxes are always so absorbing and uniting for us that we forget about any bodily needs. Perhaps it is because to capture the “right” shot is such a riveting feeling that it cannot be replaced by any other delight. Perhaps it is because we are lucky to have met. And perhaps it is because for us Vyšné Ružbachy will remain the place that doesn't sleep...

Photographic capturing of life in a village that has maintained a lasting beauty of rural motifs despite influences of postmodern society, has allowed us to reach different layers of this spa town. The power of photography lies in its ability to create a certain kind of empathy with its subject; it is a cathartic attempt to materialize an illusion. Ľudovít Hlaváč in his book *Social Photography in Slovakia* describes the work of photographer Barbora Zsigmondiová, who documented life of the people in Ružbachy and its surroundings as well as other various areas of Slovakia, as “*alive in actions of the photographed, in the whole scene, and also in the air*”. This type of documentary photography tries to see a human being as a phenomenon in a particular historical situation connected to specific social and economic circumstances. It is an attempt at complexity that vibrates through the encounter with the present. Not only an idyll of festive folk costumes is what “needs to be seen” and recorded, but also the reality of the everyday living.<sup>1</sup> Sharp photographic and often also factual capturing of current society and the Slovak countryside should also, in various layers, bring a powerful humanistic message, preserve portraits of different people, their relationships, their yards and houses, all the little tender footprints in time that a human being leaves behind. This wandering around places could, perhaps, be compared to paintings in Altamira or Lascaux. I see the context in the desire to depict



and, consequently, revive or recall moments and images. These images gradually regroup into situations “afterwards”, into intangible fractals of a transitory world. Photography gives us an opportunity to speak in the sense of temporal order. In Lyotard’s perception of narration of whole stories, explanation of oneself and consequent understanding is key. We, however, find ourselves in a postmodern situation where metanarrations (metastories of our journey) lose their credibility. Photography is built on the philosophy of stories and events, when, according to Wilhelm Schapp, an individual and their place in the world of stories is structured; everything we find in ourselves, we have already found entwined in stories. And thus, our stories are the last and the first thing we encounter. This empirically experienceable existence is, according to Emmanuel Lévinas, a transcendence towards the other, opening up to the possible experiencing of the infinity. The relationship between I and the Other is a basis of ethics, which means that photography is, in a sense, a bridge between I and the Other that helps us share hope and despair<sup>2</sup>.

We do not throw away photographs and memories, because they are an extension of our being that transcends us in the line of infinity.

#### Petra Cepková

##### Notes:

1.) HLAVÁČ, L.: *Sociálna fotografia na Slovensku*. Bratislava : Pallas, 1974.

2.) LYOTARD, J.-F.: *O postmodernismu*. Prague : Filosofia, 1993.

*Photo-essays/Message about Life in Vyšné Ružbachy*

“Only here, in this space and no other, we live our lives.” (J. Steichen)

Nature is like a witch with all its transformations. She entices not only with her beauty and repels the counterbalance brought on by man, but also with her constitution and structure. She practically forces a person to penetrate deeper below her surface, to the very essence of creation. The segments of nature create a harmony of silence and light – a place for meditation. An understanding of nature leads to an understanding of oneself. We can create a photo of a landscape at a given moment and in time it will bring back a memory. Portrait of a landscape is like a



portrait of a person. It is not just a visualisation but also a discovery. When documenting nature, one should not only perceive her visual appearance but feel the air, the rustling of leaves, sunbeams ... The eyes are important, but knowing the place and oneself is essential. Within the thematic context of nature, we observe two lines of representation that are mutually intertwined. The first leads to the humility of a pilgrim, the admiration of a natural segment and the restoration of a bond with it; the second translates reflections with an ecological and ethical message. A photo survey of life in Vyšné Ružbachy is not a sociological exploration, nor a critical perspective, but an expression of interest in people, filled with admiration and respect. Will readers perceive the photo-essays as current and contemporary or as timeless and universal?

PhDr. Klára Kubíková





from the series *Podolínec Is Also About Loneliness Within Ourselves* (from the project *Damnatio Memoriae*), 2017 – 2018

Everything is silent like when it snows. In the Orphanage of St. Clement Hofbauer in Podolínec, it is sometimes quiet. It is quiet like when an act of faith and altruism in the moment means everything but still hurts. To find oneself in an orphanage, where the walls of children's rooms are metaphorically colder than a January morning, is like waking up and realizing that we are alone. To find out that home and family, that feeling of belonging somewhere, to someone who alleviates all pains of childhood, is just too much. In that silence, and still now, it is hard to describe the anxiety and despair, when all you have left is to believe in something... However, what is the title in the analogy of the term loneliness supposed to mean? We could find symbiosis within the terms such as meaning, suffering, love, ideal, and passion in Freud, Nietzsche or Kierkegaard. It is Søren Kierkegaard who has laid the foundations of existentialism, but also the relationship between our lives and the faith in God. Not only did Kierkegaard's 19th century see a departure from humanness, from the great significance of subjectivity and human individuality, it is still notable today. Reason can often carry us away from important views on life, making us lose "enthusiasm" in our essentially rational present. Therefore, it is necessary to reach inwards and get to know

ourselves (with our fears and hopes), because only then we are able to get to know and understand the world around us. Being is not something predestined, finished, but it has a character of "dynamis", it is a mightiness, power, and to understand the world is the task, purpose, and meaning of life for each of us. A human being should form the most intimate relationship in accordance to the question "Who am I?" (to believe and to live in the spirit of this belief), because how else could we bear to look at the sadness in the eyes of abandoned children? It is like reaching for eternity...

The town of Podolínec and the area of the monastery that we have visited with our cameras are unique especially because of the concentration of religious and social messages of human society. A single area constitutes a common place for the spiritual life of the monks and a home for abandoned children. And thus, we photographed the lives of children during their everyday activities and their mutual relationships that literally pervade the walls of the monastery rooms. In the words of Jozef Sedlák: "Currently, especially young people need to be reminded of the spiritual dimension of communication, responsibility for the world around them, solidarity with disadvantaged people that are disadvantaged in any way." Bleak stories of anonymous people are aimed to humanize society through a spiritual dimension, which the medium of photography also attempts to do in a form of social documentary that, in



its layers, operates with the meaning of mutual dialogues, "listening", and sharing of personal stories. As a graduate of our university Magdaléna Tomalová expressed in her very personal statement: "Photographing Roma children is an experience. They are different. With different energy, passion for life, and different sadness in the eyes. But they are still children. And maybe their childhood is fast, harder, and life puts more pressure on them." And this is exactly one of those moments that probably all of us felt during our photographic visits to the Orphanage of St. Clement Hofbauer in Podolínec. To walk among the walls of such "almost homes" is like walking on a very thin layer of ice, as we could experience a fall into our own depths of despair. We live our lives and only retrospectively understand the feelings, events, and situations that we go through; it is us who form our lives and we always have an option to choose between the true and the untrue. And this is also what the medium of photography is like, as it allows us to uncover "the invisible (and often painful) moments."

Petra Cepková

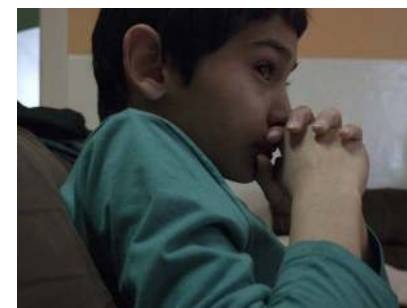
*Almost Home*

Documentary photographs from the workshops in Podolínec have a single goal – to reflect on lives of human beings that have been denied love. The photographs thus lead us to the specific environment of the monastery in Podolínec, which has been writing its history in the area of education and selfless help for those in need since the 17th century. The monastery had also gone through adverse times since the 1950s, when it served as a camp that housed monks for the purpose of their re-education – denial of their faith. Nowadays, the monastery's gates are open for those who need it the most –

orphans of living parents. And thus, children from adverse social environments live next to the Redemptorist monks, pedagogues, carers, and the necessary personnel, who are trying to substitute what they have been unjustly denied – family and home, in the Specialized School and Orphanage of St. Clement Hofbauer that started its activities in 2006. We cannot just pass by the photographs presented here, they are powerful by their fate and perspective. Let's look into their eyes that don't accuse, only grieve for love from those unknown close ones. To empathize with their life, we must be willing to reach inward and ask ourselves a question: Who is a human being and who am I in

this world? And to answer truthfully. We live in a time that is spewing information that overloads us and directs us far from what is important in life – to understand each other and express genuine love not only to our closest ones, but also to those who need it. It isn't difficult, a nice word is enough. Photographs of children abandoned not through their own fault interpret the reality of life. They have become a story of those that are unwanted, rejected, important only for statistical data. They are a heartfelt dialogue between the photographers and the object of photographing – a human being that is a gift of life.

PhDr. Klára Kubíková







### Paintings

The painting story of Petra Cepková develops alongside the medium of photography. Her paintings, similar to photographs, with intermedia overlap, complement one another. They are thematically focused on the inner world of a human being and a search for one's identity. In the painting world of Petra Cepková, colour has become the most reliable link to her inner world – a means of expressing thoughts. Intensity and tone of colour is of an emotional origin and acts as a live medium on the painting surface. The colour stems from the impulse to

record thoughts. Also from a hidden world of passions and atavisms from both the consciousness and subconsciousness. To formulate her thoughts, Petra looks for the most adequate way of conveying the most powerful expression through simple artistic means, similar to the Expressionists. Simplification and deformation of shapes are determined by the urgency of the statement. The colourful spot is almost charged with energy; it glows, vibrates, flows out to the space, transmits signals through rich structures, oversaturates us. The change in the colouring is an echo of the land of the soul – feelings,

thinking, and perception of the world. The expressive effect of the colour in her autonomous world of images is not only a tool, it has also become an object, just like the base surface of a canvas, and a dimension. Said Merleau-Ponty: *"...by herself and for herself, she creates identities, differences, texture, substance, simply something."* Colour is a story, a way of narration. In Petra Cepková's paintings, we sense freedom of interpretation. From these painted stories oozes a clear love for life that touches the viewer even before they "read" them.

**PhDr. Klára Kubíková**





**Petra CEPKOVÁ**

(Slovakia, Bojnice, 1979)

Is a fine art photographer, graduated in photography (2000-2009) at the Department of Photography and New Media at the Studio of Photography and Intermedia Overlaps of prof. Ľubo Stacho at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (AFAD) in Bratislava, where she completed doctoral studies in the field of study 2.2.1 Fine Arts in 2009. During her university studies, she took part in an exchange internship program at the Academy of Fine Arts, Poznań, Poland. Since 2012, she has been an internal pedagogue of the Department of Art Communication at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, where she is co-head of the Studio of Communication in the Medium of Photography and head of the Studio of Fine Art Culture, she is a deputy-editor-in-chief and a member of the editorial board of the university scientific journal European Journal of Media, Art and Photography, and a member of the editorial board of the university yearbook of creative outputs of students, graduates and teachers MUUZA 2017, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK. During the years of 2012 – 2015, she was an external pedagogue of the Department of Photography and New Media at the AFAD. She has been a member of the Association of Slovak Professional Photographers and a member of the professional advisory board of the National Cultural Centre for the area of photography. She

cooperated with the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the creation of terms from the field of photography for Encyclopaedia BELIANA. Within the scientific research scope, aside from pedagogical activities, she also focuses on artistic, curatory, publishing, and exhibitory activities and leads photographic workshops. She has exhibited her works individually or as a part of a collective in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, France, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Mexico, Korea, Italy, and Spain. She regularly guests on professional lectures and conferences on the topic of photography at home and abroad. Her works have been incorporated into collections and funds of renowned public institutions at home and abroad. She regularly attends professional conferences in the field of photography.

**Individual Exhibitions**

- 2019** *Invisible Moment/Petra Cepková*, within The Upper Nitra Month of Photography, RegionArt Gallery, Prievidza, SK  
*Almost Home/Petra Cepková - Jozef Sedlák*, Sumec Gallery, The Design School, Bratislava, SK
- 2017** *There Are Places, And Places*, Ján Palárik Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK  
*By the Miracle of the Heart/Petra Cepková - Jozef Sedlák*, Museum and Cultural Centre of the South Zemplín, Trebišov, SK  
*Sublocations of Slovak Rural Country*

- (*Slowakisches Landleben*)/  
*Petra Cepková - Jozef Sedlák*, Galerie auf der Pawlatsche, Forum für Dokumentarfotografie at the Institute of Slavic Studies, University of Vienna, Vienna, AU
- 2013** *Ark No. 3*, Pálffy Palace Gallery, Bratislava, SK
- 2012** *Exhibition of the Paintings*, Café Gallery, Bratislava, SK  
*Exhibition of the Paintings*, Olga Art Gallery, Bratislava, SK
- 2010** *13th Chamber*, Slovak Institute, Vienna, AU
- 2009** *13th Chamber*, Profil Gallery, Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK
- 2007** *ANALGETICON/Kingdom of Painless - Kingdom of Asexual*, F7 Gallery, Bratislava, SK

**Collective Exhibitions**

- 2020** *Smoke and Mirrors* (Exhibition on the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Founding of the Department of Photography and New media, AFAD), Medium Gallery, Bratislava, SK
- 2018** *View from the Bridge*, Contemporary Slovak Artists, Imago Mundi a Luciano Benetton Collection „Join the Dots/ Unire le distanze. 40 collections, 6,354 works, 38 countries“, Salone Degli Incanti, Terst, IT  
*SGVHWMFCVMKEJBČPH-NP*, Pálffy Palace Gallery, Bratislava, SK

- Children of Podolíneć*, Specialized School and Orphanage of St. Clement Hofbauer, Podolíneć, SK  
*Where Man and Water Spring Together - Vyšné Ružbachy*, Municipal Office and Spa, Vyšné Ružbachy, SK
- 2015** *Podolíneć Is Also About Loneliness Within Ourselves*, Ján Palárik Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK
- 2014** *LUUK/Labyrinth of Artistic Communication - International Presentation*, Smolenice Castle, Smolenice, SK
- 2017** *10 YEARS Photography Days in Levice*, Synagogue in Levice, Levice, SK  
*Continuity/20 Years of Design School*, Satelit Gallery, Slovak Design Center, Bratislava, SK  
*Village That Doesn't Sleep*, Ján Palárik Theater Gallery and Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
*LUUK/Labyrinth of Artistic Communication - International Presentation*, Smolenice Castle, Smolenice, SK  
*The Archeology of Time/Brehov/Rad - Life and Stories of People of South Zemplín*, House of Culture and Minorite Monastery, Brehov, House of Culture, Rad, SK  
*Hommage to Martin Martinček*, City Hall in Levoča, Slovak National Museum - Spiš Museum in Levoča, Levoča, SK
- 2016** *LUUK/Labyrinth of Artistic Communication -*

- International Presentation*, Smolenice Castle, Smolenice, SK  
*I50R OLEJÁR and Friends*, Umelka Gallery, Slovak Union of Visual Arts, Bratislava, SK
- 2015** *Re-migration of the Image*, Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK
- 2014** *Inner Worlds, Pictorial Report on Life and People in the Village of Hybe*, House of Photography and Liptov Gallery of P. M. Bohúň, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK
- 2013** *Stephen's family*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
*Hommage to Martin Martinček*, House of Photography and Liptov Gallery of P. M. Bohúň, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK  
*Slovak Evening Dedicated to New Slovak Photography*, talk Georges Vercheval (founder and former director of the Photography museum of Charleroi) about the book History of European Photography, this talk followed by a photo projection which shows the actual work from a number of young Slovakian photographers as Petra Cepková, etc.), Brussels, BE
- 2012** *Enter with Camera is Prohibited*, Gallery Sumec, The Design School, Bratislava, SK
- 2011** *A Youthful Medium/20 Years of Photography at AFAD*, House of Arts, Bratislava, SK  
*European Family and*

- Food/Eight Photographic Commissions (SETSE)*, Valencia, ES
- 2010** *Pre-Premiere/20 Years of Photography at AFAD*, GAMU Gallery, Prague, CZ  
*STORIES Petra Cepková/HANDS György Gáti*, SETSE project, House of Photography and Liptov Gallery of P. M. Bohúň, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK  
*Restless Medium/Slovak Photography 1990 - 2010*, House of Arts, Bratislava, SK  
*New Slovak Photography (Nueva Fotografía Eslovaca)*, XIV. Photography Biennale in Mexico, Centro De La Imagen/Image Center, Mexiko City, MX
- Pre-Premiere/20 Years of Photography at AFAD*, Central Slovakian Gallery, Banská Bystrica, SK  
*European Family and Food/Eight Photographic Commissions (SETSE)*, Loris Malaguzzi International Center, Reggio Emilia, IT
- 2009** *Body in Slovak*, Schody Gallery, Warsaw, PL  
*Body in Slovak*, M Gallery, Seoul, KR  
*Last Level*, Medium Gallery, Bratislava, SK  
*New Slovak Photography*, Prague Biennale Photo, Prague, CZ  
*Allons Enfants/Contemporary Young Plovak photography*, Slovak Institute, Warsaw, PL  
*Allons Enfants/Contemporary Young Plovak photography*, Festival Galicia, Rzeszow, PL  
*Allons Enfants/*



	Contemporary Young Plovak photography, Ostrava, CZ EASTWEST, Nitra Gallery, Nitra, SK 2008 EASTWEST, Medium Gallery, Bratislava, SK New Slovak Photography, VAM Design Center, Budapest, HU Body in Slovak, Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschule für fotografie), Bielefeld, DE Allons Enfants/Contemporary Young Plovak photography, Paris, FR Photo Auction, Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK Constructed Realities, Slovak Institute Gallery, Berlin, DE 2007 Doctoral Students' Exhibition AFAD, Aula Gallery, Faculty of Fine Arts, BUT, Brno, CZ Doctoral Students' Exhibition AFAD, CINEMATIK International Film Festival, Piešťany, SK Good Year, Open Gallery, Bratislava, SK Young Slovak Photographers, Csokonai Gallery, Kaposvár, HU 2006 Extra League, D Gallery, Slovak Institute, Warsaw, PL 2005 University Research Exhibition, Považská Gallery of Arts, Žilina, SK 2001 PETRA/Petra Cepková – Petra Bošanská, Exit Gallery, Prague, CZ	Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK Museum and Cultural Centre of the Southern Zemplín, Trebišov, SK Regional Cultural Centre, Levice, SK Imago Mundi a Luciano Benetton Collection “Join the Dots/Unire le distanze. 40 collections, 6,354 works, 38 countries”, Terst, IT	
	<b>Artistic Residencies</b>	Residency within the International Project SETSE/Seeing European Culture Through a Stranger's Eyes, The Polytechnic University of Valencia, Valencia, ES, 2009 – 2010	
	<b>Symposiums, Invited Lectures</b>		
	2019 Invited lecture titled <i>Petra Cepková/The Absolute in Art and Photography or a Note on Umberto Eco's Collection of Essays On the Shoulders of Giants</i> and moderator of the 3rd International Photographic Conference <i>We Must Talk on Photography</i> , within 12th International Photography Festival <i>Photography Days in Levice</i> , Hotel Golden Eagle, Levice, SK	2017 Moderator of the 1st International Photographic Conference <i>Issues of Contemporary Photographic Art</i> , within 10th International Photography Festival <i>Photography Days in Levice</i> , Hotel Golden Eagle, Levice, SK	
	2018 Invited lecture titled <i>Petra Cepková/Interpretation of Personal Stories in the Current Conceptual Document</i> and moderator of the 2nd International Photographic Conference <i>Photography in the Context of Contemporary art</i> ,	2016 Invited lecture and discussion about the project <i>Archeology of Time</i> within the exhibition <i>Béla Petrik</i> , The Month of Photography, Chapel of St. John in the Franciscan Church, Bratislava, SK	
<b>Collections</b>	House of Photography, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK	2012 Guest within project <i>16th Summer Photo School of</i>	

	the House of Photography, invited lecture titled <i>Petra Cepková/Selection of Artwork</i> , Spišská Nová Ves, SK 2010 SETSE Colloquium, House of Photography, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK SETSE Conference, Reggio Emilia, IT 2008-12 Portfolio Review (member of the jury), The Month of Photography, Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK 2008-10 Portfolio Review (member of the jury), The Month of Photography/Transphotographiques de Lille, Lille, FR 2006 International Photo Competition <i>Frame</i> , Brno, CZ International Conference of Photographic Universities <i>Ninth Harvest</i> , Tomas Bata University, Zlín, CZ 2005 Critical Platform, AFAD, Bratislava, SK 2002 International Drawing Symposium, HU 2001 Beneficial Photo Auction <i>Hour of Photography for Children</i> , AC SOGA, Bratislava, SK	Quarantine of Images, Slovak Cultural Institute, Budapest, HU Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Zones of (Non) Calmness/Milan Illík, Laura Wittek, Peter Lančarič</i> , Umelka Gallery, Slovak Union of Visual Arts, Bratislava, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Image/Overflow of Realities</i> , Martin Martinček' Gallery, Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK 2019 Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Ecce Eva/Eva Jonisová, Ján Palárik</i> Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Gabriel Kosmály/Four Rooms – Retrospective</i> , Profil Gallery, Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK Curator of the exhibition and a moderator of the discussion titled <i>From the Viennese Artistic Diasporas/prof. Gero Fischer</i> (from The Institute of Slavic Studies, University of Vienna), Ján Palárik Theater Gallery and Mirror Hall, Trnava, SK 2018 Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Kristína Mayerová/Silent Cross</i> , Ján Palárik Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Children of Podolíneć</i> , Specialized School and Orphanage of St. Clement Hofbauer, Podolíneć, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Podolíneć Is Also About Loneliness Within</i>	Ourselves, Ján Palárik Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Gabriel Kosmály 1972 – 2018</i> , Synagogue in Levice, Levice, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>3Standstills</i> , Gallery in the attic of the Elementary Art School, Senica, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>3Standstills</i> , Exhibition hall of the Municipal Office of Velké Pavlovice, CZ Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Andrea Koncová/Intimate Spaces</i> , Trafačka Gallery, Nitra, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Marian Holenka/Passion for Light</i> , Exhibition Hall of the Municipal Office of Velké Pavlovice, CZ Co-curator of the exhibition titled <i>Personal/Non-personal Report</i> , Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK, UCM, Trnava, SK 2017 Co-curator of the exhibition titled <i>Ecce Homo/So Far, So Close</i> , Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Vulnerable Medium No. V</i> , Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK Curator of the exhibition titled <i>Plein Air ROZBEHY 2017</i> , City Hall, Velké Pavlovice, CZ Curator of the exhibition titled <i>MATÚŠ GRANEC/Tereza Nosková</i> , F7 Gallery, Bratislava, SK Co-curator of the
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exhibition titled *Perfume/Advertising for a Plastic*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
Co-curator of the exhibition titled *Psycho/Advertising for a Shower and Kiss/Advertising for a Hat*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
Curator of the exhibitions titled *Village That Doesn't Sleep*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM and Ján Palárik Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK

Curator of the exhibition titled *Confidentiality*, Ján Palárik Theater Gallery, Trnava, SK  
Curator of the exhibition titled *Andrea Boldišová/Fragilness*, Nomadic Arts Festival, Neighborhood and Territory, Mini Art Gallery, YMCA, Bratislava, SK  
Curator of the exhibition titled *Vulnerable Medium No. IV*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK

Curator of the exhibition titled *Spiš Homeland*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
Curator of the exhibition titled *Peter Lančarič/Stairs at the Corner of the Street*, Antiquarian Gallery, Trnava, SK

Curator of the exhibition titled *Advertising for a Mirror/Inner Worlds*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
Curator of the exhibition titled *Andrea Boldišová/Boundaries of Identity*,

Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
Curator of the exhibition titled *Vulnerable Medium No. III*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK  
Curator of the exhibition titled *Macrophotography of the Body/Sociological Portrait*, Ľudovít Hlaváč Gallery, FMK UCM, Trnava, SK

#### Articles and Books

*Jozef Sedlák/In the Confinement of Images 1976 – 2010* (author of the all texts), Photon Association/Gallery, Vienna, AU and Fotofo – Central European House of Photography, Bratislava, SK, 2021  
*Petra Cepková/ANALGETICON/Kingdom of Painless – Kingdom of Asexual* (portfolio), Døokument Magazine – Archive of Slovak Photography, <https://www.dokumentmagazin.sk/fotograf/petra-cepkova/analgetikon-risa-bezbolestna-risa-bezpohlavna> 2021  
*Hidden Behind Photography/Reflective Analysis of the Photographic Artwork of Petra Cepková and Jozef Sedlák*, Peter Lančarič (ed.), FMK UCM, Trnava, SK, 2019  
*Damnatio Memoriae* (co-author of the texts and photographs), Neumahr, Bratislava, SK, 2019  
Luciano Benetton: *IMAGO*

*MUNDI/A Look from the Bridge. Contemporary Artists from Slovakia. Art as a Space for Freedom, Vision and Reflection: 143 Artists and the Creative Reality of Slovakia* (presentation of the artwork), Liliana Malta (ed.), Antiga Edizioni, IT, 2018  
*Where Man and Water Spring Together*, Vyšné Ružbachy (co-author of the texts and photographs), FMK UCM, Trnava, SK, 2018

*Re-migration of the Image* (author of the photographs), AFAD, Bratislava, SK, 2016  
*The Archeology of Time/Brehov/Rad – Life and Stories of People of South Zemplín*, (co-author of the texts and photographs), Publisher Lúč, Bratislava, SK, 2016  
*Inner Worlds* (co-author of the texts and photographs), FMK UCM, Trnava, SK, 2014

*Photography as a Program of Communication* (co-author of the texts and photographs), FMK UCM, Trnava, SK, 2011  
*A Youthful Medium/20 Years of Photography at AFAD* (portfolio in the catalog of the exhibition), House of Arts, Bratislava, SK, 2011  
*RARA 02./Magazine for Contemporary Art and Architecture, Guatemala and Central America* (portfolio in the catalog of the exhibition), dir. Andrés Asturias, XIV. Biennial

Photography in Mexico and New Slovak Photography, Mexico City, MX, 2010 - 2011

*Families of Food* within the project SETSE (co-author of the texts and photographs *Petra Cepková/Cuentos - Stories - Príbehy*), The Centre for Creative Photography, Jyväskylä, Finland, 2010

*Petra Cepková / Cuentos - Stories - Príbehy* (co-author of the texts and photographs *Petra Cepková / Cuentos - Stories - Príbehy*), Pep Benlloch (ed.), The Polytechnic University of Valencia, Valencia, ES, 2010  
catalog for the exhibitions of *The European Month of Photography/EYES ON* (catalog of the exhibition), Impressum, Wien, AU, 2010  
*Tablecloth/From Family Photos to Views of Family* (co-author of the texts and photographs *Petra Cepková/Cuentos - Stories - Príbehy*), Lengyel, B. and Fisli. E. (eds.), Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, HU, 2010  
*Prague Biennale Photo 1* (catalog of the exhibition), Giancarlo Politi (ed.), PBF Foundation, Prague, CZ, 2009

*New Slovak Photography* (catalog of the exhibition), Macek, V. and Fišerová, L. L. (eds.), FOTOFO, Bratislava, SK, 2008

*Body In Slovak* (catalog of the exhibition), Koklesová, B. and Macek, V. (eds.), FOTOFO, Bratislava, SK, 2008

*Petra Cepková/ANALGETICON* (review of the exhibition), text by Ľubo Stacho, DOMINO efekt, No. 12, Vol. XVI, 2007

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