

Bohemian Mud

Studio of Ceramics and Porcelain



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Text © Vojtěch Märc

Concept © Maxim Velčovský and Milan Pekař

Photos © Gabriel Urbánek, Anna Pleslová and Ondřej Přibyl

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Bohemian Mud is an exhibition by the Studio of Ceramics and Porcelain at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. Highlighting distinctive contemporary trends in Czech ceramics, the exhibition explores their relationship to traditional production. Despite the calamities of nationalisation and privatisation that befell the Czech ceramics industry, producers and businesses somehow survived. Emerging from the tumultuous historic events that played out in Central Europe, Czech handcrafted ceramics studios now compete on the international market, reflecting the advancement of a globalised world.

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The exhibition showcases how media-specific artistic thinking, technological innovations and material-based experiments result in finished products. Ceramics is shown here as a medium that can expand to adapt to different fields, reflecting a heightened reality of seemingly infinite possibilities. For instance, the apparent constraint of not having access to a 3D-printer becomes an enabling part of the search for current and timeless forms. Similar ambiguities are expressed through other mechanical devices. In the age of the dishwasher, the precarious work of washing dishes by hand remains – a two-sided metaphor for manual labour and the economic migration of Western Slavs to the British Isles. Therefore, ceramics is not just about original pieces of art but also about cheap mass production. Do we opt for the bargain-basement supermarket cup or the precious collector item? The choice lies in the ever-shifting space between the price we pay and real artistic value.

Vojtěch Märc

About exhibition

Before the Velvet Revolution in 1989, design development was subsumed under state planning. All manufacturers and businesses were state-owned. While the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc led to the privatisation of Czech industry and the restitution of businesses and real estate, the rebirth of industry under democracy presented new challenges. Inspired by our nation's pre-war tradition, the aim of the school on an academic level is to initiate independent development, experimentation and discussion in relation to objects and projects. We support emerging alternative studios, workshops and individuals and consider this wellspring of talent essential for the future of both art and industry. In this exhibition, our students investigate various processes, showing the malleability and fluidity of ceramic materials and their capacity to be transformed into compact impermeable forms. Where there is an emphasis on experimentation, design need not always be perceived as that which is merely dependent on methods of replication. To that end, we support the abstract experimentation of students at every turn in the hope they come to the awareness that every idea is in fact a human product.

Maxim Velčovský

Foreword













Tran links the material reality of ceramics with the potentially endless opportunities afforded by ornamental decoration to embrace a world of heightened reality.

But instead of exploiting that reality for the purposes of customised consumerism, Tran creates both a palette and a digital archive of historical patterns.

Quynh Trang Tran Other Perspectives video 2017

Quynh Trang Tran Other Perspectives video 2017

	MOULD PREPARATION	WORK	TECHNICAL BREAK	PRICE	EXPENSES	EARNINGS	CZK/HOUR
ARTIST WORKSHOPS							
Self-produced	12 hrs	137 min	7 days, 2 hrs	19.20 €	4.80 €	14.40 €	6.29 €
Vanda & Valerie	—	83 min	6 days, 9 hrs	17.28 €	8.48 €	8.79 €	11.48 €
Helena Ladová	—	52 min	9 days	7.68 €	4.91 €	2.76 €	4.34 €
Luckavo	—	47 min	—	13.44 €	4.64 €	8.79 €	11.21 €
PORCELAIN FACTORIES							
G. Benedikt	10.5 hrs	10.5 min	1 day, 3 hrs	6.14 €	0.51 €	5.62 €	32.15 €
Czech Porcelain Dubí	6 hrs	8.9 min	21 hrs	1.49 €	1.32 €	0.16 €	1.19 €

As part of her research for this project, Hankeová worked at a number of ceramics workshops and factories with the aim of determining the ratio of time, work and money needed to produce similar items – in this case, cups. She tabulates the results to create a network through which she sees the possibilities for future employment. The "true" value of manual work carried out in Eastern Europe is thus placed in the context of the influx of imported products from China.

Veronika Hankeová The Price of Work chart and porcelain 2017



Veronika Hankeová The Price of Work cups from different manufactures 2017



Bartoňová looks at the phenomenon of how replicas of various masterpieces are used as decorative elements on mugs and cups sold by supermarket chains. This all-too-simplistic transition from art to industry results in the depreciation of high-value items but not in the appreciation of those of low-value. After all, value offers no discount.

Lucie Bartoňová Mugs supermarket ceramic cups 2016



Dávid Valovič Vulcanico porcelain, lava glaze 2016



Valovič works with Biedermeier figures produced by Czech porcelain factories, many of which are either damaged or have been stolen from their original environment – usually a bourgeois household.

Valovič buys the figures from antique shops and then re-glazes them. The result is not only the restoration of the figures but, more importantly, the restitution of lost meanings.

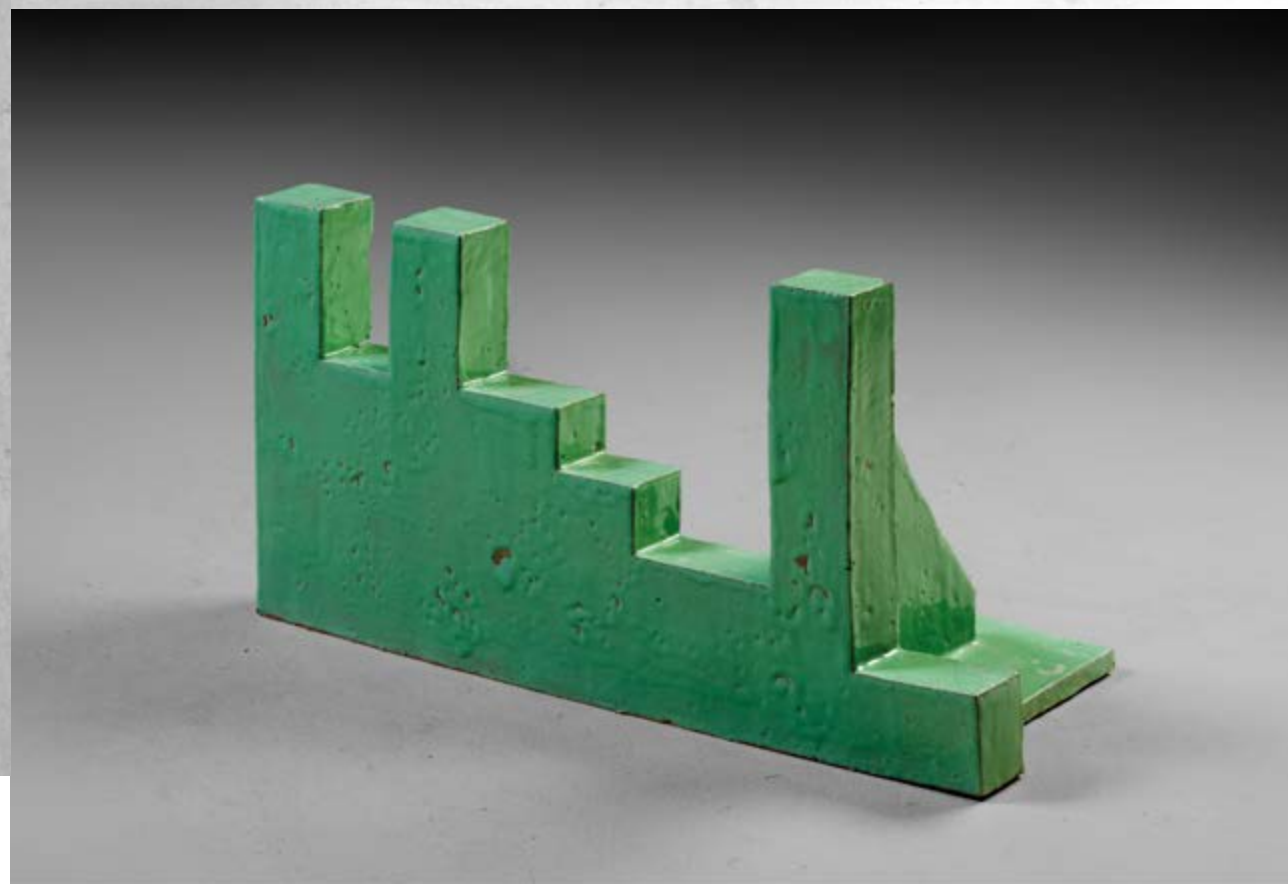
Dávid Valovič Vulcanico porcelain, lava glaze 2016



Dávid Valovič Vulcanico porcelain, lava glaze 2016

Ramdan reproduces fragments of the Adolf Loos-designed Villa Müller in Prague using ceramics. In experimenting with scale, material and colour, Ramdan creates artefacts that seem like backdrops or symbols. This process leads him to find Loos “guilty” of ornamentation, which is not reflected in the decor as such but in the architecture itself.

David Ramdan Adolf Loos stoneware 2017



David Ramdan Adolf Loos stoneware 2017



Exploring the alien world of sci-fi ceramics, Bartoňová examines the composition and potential uses of Martian soil. She creates her very own forms using materials of the same chemical structure as those found on Mars. These moulds imprint intimate, well-known motifs on the surface of the red planet - like the the fragments of a faintly familiar story. Archaism and futurism thus combine to create a future that is present in the nostalgia of planet Earth.

Lucie Bartoňová Memories of the Future martian clay and ceramics 2017



Lucie Bartoňová Memories of the Future martian clay and ceramics 2017



Lucie Bartoňová

Memories of the Future martian clay and ceramics 2017



Švábeníková exploits the unique technique of “marbling”, which consists in transferring colour/ink patterns floated on water to the surfaces of absorbent objects. Adapting the technique for ceramics, she creates a relatively easy and effective method of decorating porcelain vases with unique colour compositions.

Veronika Švábeníková Marble Vases porcelain 2016



Veronika Švábeníková Marble Vases porcelain 2016



In an act of subversion, Bárta hangs blue and white porcelain dishes as wall decorations. Divesting them of their original function and maximising their vertical position, he creates speakers out of the plates. In so doing, traditional patterns are reconstructed through sound and given new purpose.

Tomáš Bárta Zwiebelmuster Lautsprechersystem porcelain 2016





Martykánová creates containers with their own interior decorative elements by moulding in gypsum to resemble contour lines. As a result, the surface of each container assumes another dimension, surprisingly increasing in volume. The resulting ornamental cartography captures this technically precise yet subtle ceramics technique.

Monika Martykánová Contour Lines porcelain 2016



Martykánová draws attention to the underappreciated tasks of domestic work and reproduction. The standard picturesque theme of the traditionally conceived figure of the mother in the home is redefined through figurative ceramics. Martykánová creates a monument to the lonely single mother on a "living-room scale", foregrounding her as a modern Venus.

Monika Martykánová Good Mother porcelain 2015



Monika Martykánová Good Mother porcelain 2015







Martykánová's project came about on the one hand because of the lack of a 3D ceramics printer at UMPRUM, and on the other due to what she sees as the overuse of a limited technology within contemporary ceramics production as a whole. Her meditation on the possibilities of 3D printing connects traditional folklore themes with post-digital morphology, while examining the value of manual work in the face of automation and computerisation.

Monika Martykánová 3DIY porcelain 2017

Monika Martykánová 3DIY porcelain 2017



Taking items discarded by the ceramics manufacturing process, Špundová re-uses these remains as the basic structural elements for her own vases. The tectonics of these fragments raise questions about the relationships of dispensability with utility and fragility with solidity.

Markéta Špundová Scrap Decor vases, stoneware, earthenware 2017



Markéta Špundová Scrap Decor vases, stoneware, earthenware 2017



Markéta Špundová Scrap Decor vases, stoneware, earthenware 2017



Vendula Radostová Entropy video 2015

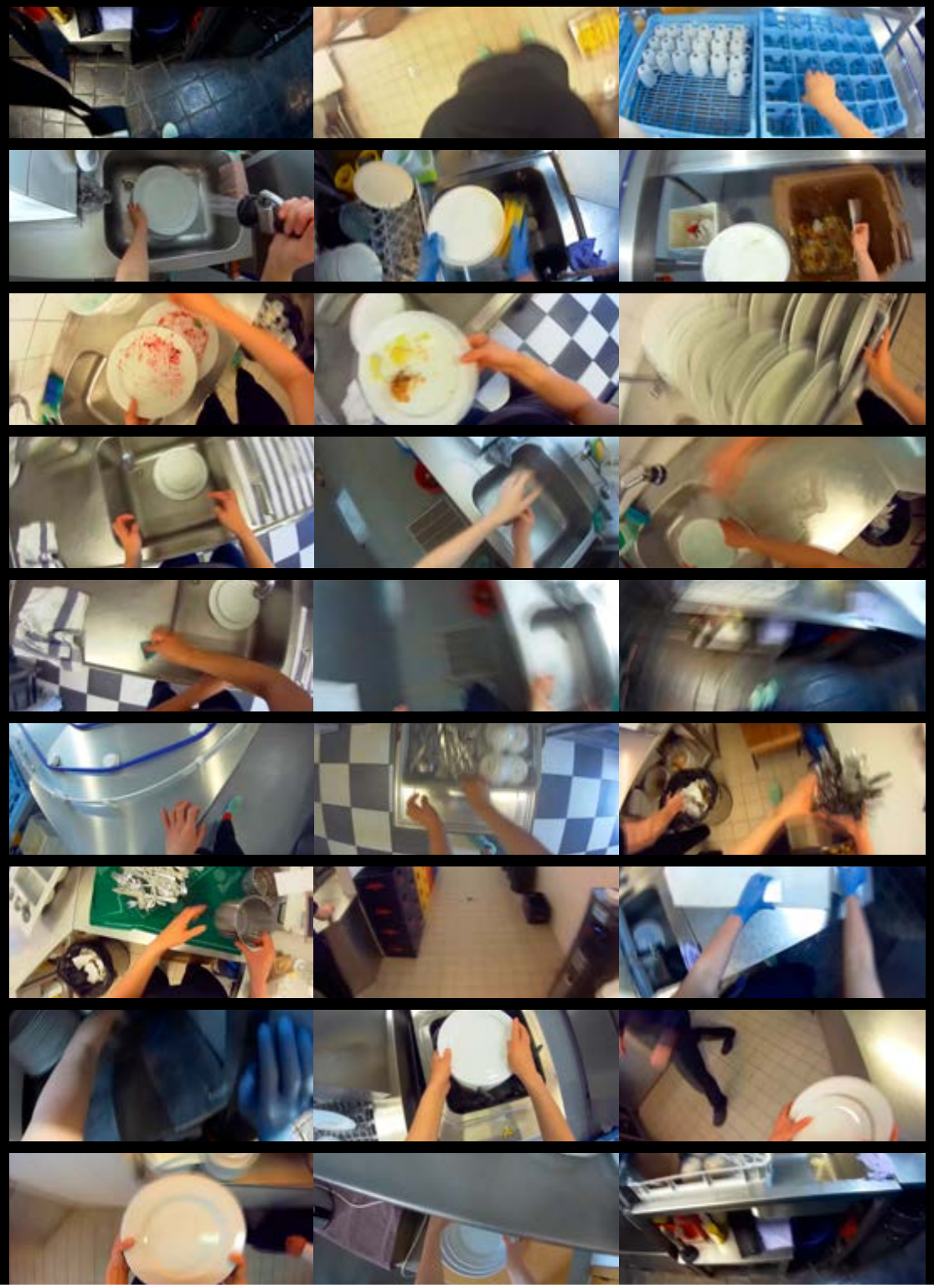
Radostová's film shows unfired ceramic figures from the famous Royal Dux Bohemia factory being submerged in water. Gradually disintegrating in the cloudy mass, the compositions of these figural forms provide a visually captivating meditation on the nature of entropy, bearing witness to the dissolution of social conventions and the abandonment of manual production.





Vendula Radostová Entropy video 2015

Vendula Radostová Entropy video 2015



The future of ceramics is likely to involve not only new materials and technologies, but also the ability to conceptualise its applicability to different media. The impulse for Radostová's film is to pair the uncertain future that many art school graduates face with the everyday chore of washing dishes, an act that renders ceramics "invisible". Emerging from the bubble-wash of the sink, the dish becomes a symbol of precarious employment and consequently, as Radostová contends, economic migration.

Vendula Radostová My Future in Ceramics video 2017

Vendula Radostová My Future in Ceramics video 2017

Quynh Trang Tran

Other Perspectives

Veronika Hankeová

The Price of Work

Lucie Bartoňová

Mugs Memories of the Future

Dávid Valovič

Vulcanico

David Ramdan

Adolf Loos

Veronika Švábeníková

Marble Vases

Tomáš Bárta

Zwiebelmuster Lautsprechersystem

Monika Martykánová

Contour Lines 3DIY Good Mother

Markéta Špundová

Scrap Decor

Vendula Radostová

Entropy My Future in Ceramics



UMPRUM The Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague was founded in 1885. Throughout its existence it has ranked among the best educational institutions in the country. It boasts a number of successful graduates who have gone on to become respected professionals, garnering international acclaim. The academy is divided into the following departments: Architecture, Design, the Fine Arts, Applied Arts, Graphics, and the Theory and History of Art. Each department is further divided into studios according to their specialist area. The studios are all led by leading figures of the Czech art scene. Twice a year the academy opens to the public for a presentation of student work, entitled Artsemestr. Each year the academy organises over 15 exhibitions, half of which are shown abroad. Prague's UMPRUM is the only Eastern European academy that figures in the indices of prestigious European and world art academies.

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And just as they were altered by the tumultuous historic events that played out in Central Europe, Czech handcrafted ceramics studios now compete on the international market, reflecting the advancement of a globalised world.