

# Oh and Hah, Beauty, Ruin and Slack

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## Concept

The image and concept of ruin, also because of their historical evolution, allow us to follow and name complex and various metamorphoses of human society, which has fully entered the fourth industrial revolution and another era of colonisation – that of cosmos and biological bodies, virtual space, and iconosphere.

Our project Oh and Hah, Beauty, Ruin and Slack follows these shifts using cultural and artistic expressions with overlaps to other fields, such as psychology, sociology, topography etc. Topics covered deal with institutions, biology, gender, society, politics and biopolitics. The project mediates local situation, i.e., Ostrava and the Silesia region as a former industrial and mining centre, and reflects on it in the context of global narratives. A perspective of ruin as a re-evaluated concept related primarily to romanticism points (both ironically and seriously) at many clichés and nostalgias accompanying residues of older industrial forms. Image and ruin also evoke positive emotions that help us link the past to the present: we use them as a critical and affirmative background of our project.

The project will have many formats: exhibitions, performances, lectures, workshops, discussions, concerts, and engagements, and will use these to capture contemporary forms of “ruination” within the systems of our lives, works, relationships and environment. To see these ruins and walk through them is to picture and meditate on the causes and consequences of the undergoing inner and outer decline of our civilisation, which is not only destructive but also has – as we believe – emancipation potential.

The departure point of PLATO dramaturgy for 2021 is a parallel reflection on the gallery’s institutional position and general development of institutional practice and ethics. The gallery is located outside the centre: it is in the post-industrial heart of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Its location necessarily leads us to think about and clash with the general (and often romantically viewed) state of degradation encoded in the embryo of the modern but also post-modern and post-colonial era.

Our civilisation consciously creates ruins as places and situations to experience the beauty of old age and infinity, as well as unconscious

versions that function within outwardly functioning organisms and systems. PLATO dramaturgy for 2021 is interested in location and corporeality, but also in time and difference, and the image and state of ruin now when humanity passes to the fourth industrial revolution. Ruin is not a construct anymore, a romantic image of the intoxicating experience of slowed-down disappearance; it is a genetic part of our DNA. Yet sometimes it is difficult to discern and not so easy to pass through as it was to pass through half-demolished walls of a preserved medieval torso.

The exhibition (and a quasi-research) year-long project will take the form of five gradually changing – and at one point frozen – dramatic scenes. Each scene – an exhibition unit per se – is based on the gradual increase of curated independent artworks and art projects. At some point, each scene will emerge as a structured whole (i.e., an exhibition), which will then disintegrate and change as another scene will be created. This is also why we gave up on the traditional format of exhibition opening but want to frame each scene at the moment when it takes its final form of a planned and structured unit.

Other partial interventions and activities will then sieve and sink through the settling scenes: performances, lectures, texts publication, music events, film screenings and other formats and off-formats created in collaboration with local and international art and academic scene and communities. These activities, their production and distribution will be roofed by the ad-hoc appropriated identity of the Greek underground publisher Octopus Press (with the consent of its founders)

Five scenes (Metamorphosis; Time of Mourning; Ruin, Diversification; Smouldering Ruin, an Image; Ruin, Investigation) take into account PLATO's planned move to its final destination (now under reconstruction) in the former city abattoir in mid-2022 at the latest. The final scene, curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc, and including a publication summarizing institutional development of PLATO until its move to its final home, will therefore take place in spring 2022. The Octopus Press will function as an independent dramaturgy line throughout the year. New texts were commissioned for it and texts to be translated were selected, as well as previously published texts to be re-published. Octopus Press will also publish video and audio recordings. We view Octopus Press as a platform that could, in case of further government restrictions reducing the accessibility of exhibitions and cultural institutions, not replace, but cover for direct contact with art and artists in real-time and space. The theme of ruins also implies a situation when it won't be possible to carry out the project as planned due to external reasons.

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