

I WAS BORN IN YOUR BED

An exhibition by multimedia artist Daniel Pešta, whose work was featured in the 2013 Venice Biennale, will now be exhibited comprehensively for the first time in the Czech Republic. The project, which is dominated by two large-format pieces of video art, is about the phenomenon of the Romani issue and individuals' attitudes toward it. The exhibition will take place from 19 July until 5 September 2014 in the town of Litomyšl.

The attractive exhibition spaces of the town's chateau (Zámecké návrší) are welcoming the project, which was created for the Venice Biennale last year through a contribution from the Association of Romani Citizens of Lysá nad Labem. The exhibition takes its title from video art pieces that feature a performance by a group of children called "I was born in your bed - Narodil jsem se ve tvé posteli." The idea is based on the simple principle of class photographs and the way in which such souvenir compositions are typically arranged. In this photograph, however, the children gradually cover their faces.

The title of the exhibition in and of itself indicates how the majority population perceives the Romani issue. "We think of the life of Romani people as if it were something separate from our own existence. Let's imagine the hypothetical situation of our fates being reversed, i.e., that I would have been born Roma. Maybe we would have found unsuspected behavioral models for ourselves in that case, maybe we would have begun to behave differently, i.e., in the way that today is so simplistically called 'problematic'. Maybe this would have been inspired by fear, or resignation, or a sense of self-preservation, but not one of those factors is compatible with the word 'hope'," says Pešta.

The installation in Litomyšl was inspired by the events of last summer and autumn, which were marked by street fighting and displays of intolerance throughout the Czech Republic. There is no doubt that there is a serious problem with the largest minority in the Czech state and that a satisfactory solution to this problem remains a large and open question. However, what is also certain is that hatred and violence are not the answer, as they can only lead to human tragedy. In the exhibition, the large-format video art is accompanied by a cycle of small-scale portraits of these children that force the viewer to draw closer to them, portraits that express more about their personalities than they are perfect likenesses. Each portrait is underlined by the sentence "I am Gypsy and you? ", referencing the pride "in their origins" that is so necessary for the healthy development of all children.

Pešta also presents his cycle of assemblages, objects and videos using multicolored silicon masks as a compositional element, the softness and pliability of which contrast with the harshness of how society is very often divided.

"I was born in your bed" will open on 19 July at 17:00 at the "Zámecká jízdárna" in Litomyšl and will stay there until 5 September (open daily from 10-18). The organization of the exhibition was performed by Muzeum Montanelli, Pontopolis o. s., and Zámecké návrší Litomyšl p. o.

The website www.iwasborn.cz is dedicated to the project. Starting on 19 June the website will feature a brief video teaser on the exhibition created for its Litomyšl debut.

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