

Ora et lege

Ed Atkins,
Kamilla Bischof,
Jesse Darling,
Liam Gillick,
Martin Kohout,
Florian Meisenberg,
Slavs and Tatars

Broumov Monastery, Czech Republic
Opening: Friday, June 18, 2021
Exhibition: June 19 – September 30, 2021
Curator: Monika Čejková

The *Ora et lege* exhibition is a dialogue between contemporary art and the teaching principles of the Benedictines, the oldest religious order in Western Christianity. The venue is the Broumov Monastery, where artists Ed Atkins, Kamilla Bischof, Jesse Darling, Liam Gillick, Martin Kohout, Florian Meisenberg and the Slavs and Tatars group will prepare works pertaining to the knowledge, teaching, and spiritual culture of the Benedictines.

The area of Eastern Bohemia in which the Broumov Monastery is located was considered to be a bulwark against infiltration by Protestant preachers. The monastery itself was founded by the Benedictines in the 14th century in an area with a predominantly German-speaking population. The abbey became an important centre of culture and education for Central Europe, especially during the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1727–1733, the monastery was reconstructed into a more expansive complex in the Baroque style, based on designs by the architect Kilian I. Dientzenhofer. The north wing of the monastery was built at that time to provide a monumental space for the library, which takes up two floors.

The *Ora et lege* ('Pray and read') exhibition is inspired by Benedictine attitudes towards education and literature, and by the importance of the Broumov Monastic Library, one of the most unique book collections in the world.

The Benedictine relationship to book culture was guided not only by its motto, *Ora et labora* ('Pray and work'), but also by the rules written by the founder, St. Benedict of Nursia. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* required that members of the monastery devote themselves daily to the study and reading of Holy Scripture, thus contributing to the development of book and scholarly culture, and encouraging the foundation of monastic libraries. The Broumov Monastic Library was established alongside the foundation of the monastery, and its collection reflects a pansophical concept of the library that is characteristic of the Benedictines.

Presenting works and texts by selected contemporary artists of international renown, this project touches on topics associated with the monastery: the history of the Benedictine Order, artistic creation, spiritual culture, and pastoral care, as well as the matter of everyday life at the monastery.

Exhibiting artists – Ed Atkins, Kamilla Bischof, Jesse Darling, Liam Gillick, Martin Kohout, Florian Meisenberg and the Slavs and Tatars group – were chosen not only for their artistic work, but for their long-term involvement in creative writing.

The exhibition reflects a narrative turn in visual art, whereby authorial writing in various forms – short stories, for example, as well as poetry and nonfiction writing – is brought to the fore.

A text will be presented at the exhibition, either in traditional book form or as a collection of correspondence, comment on social media, painting, etc.

The thematic areas of individual works and texts were conceived in cooperation with the Archabbot of Břevnov Petr Prokop Siostrzonek O.S.B. and curator of the exhibition Monika Čejková.

The project will be realised as a site-specific exhibition on the unique historical premises of the Benedictine monastery in Broumov: in the church of St. Adalbert, its sacristy and mortuary chapel, as well as the Monastic Library and refectory.

The exhibition is organized by the Broumov Educational and Cultural Centre, a non-profit organization founded in 2013 by the Broumov Region Development Agency. Through cultural, educational, and community activities, the agency helps to promote the life of the Broumov Monastery, a national cultural monument, and is a celebrated European institution that encourages creativity, self-confidence, and tolerance.

The exhibition *Ora et lege* is presented under the auspices of the Archabbot of Břevnov and Broumov, Petr Prokop Siostrzonek O.S.B.

Realization of the exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the Czech-German Fund for the Future, the State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic, the German Embassy, the Polish Institute, the Austrian Cultural Forum, and Hobra-Školník.

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