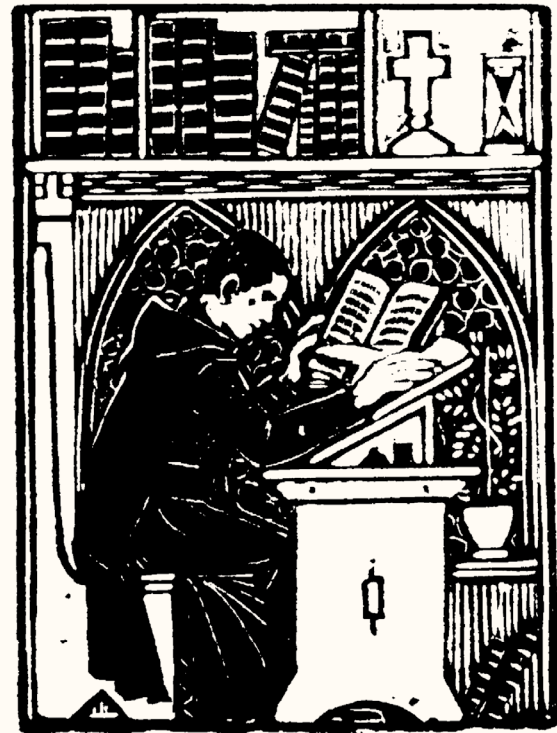# Ora et

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

CURATED BY MONIKA ČEJKOVÁ

Ora et

Ora et lege

The image is by an anonymous artist and is taken from the magazine *Pax* published by Benedictines of the Emmaus Monastery, 1929, vol. 4, p. 162. It was used even in other years as a divider separating individual sections. Original dimensions: 37 × 28 mm.

Ora et lege

A Question of Faith

One day a man came to the monastery. He wanted to see the manuscript. The abbot let him into the library, but warned him not to break the rule of silence. The man was sitting in the study, waiting. The monks prayed or worked. He listened to their voices. He heard him speak softly. The man waited a long time. He was starting to get hungry, but he didn't want to sit at the table with the monks, so he didn't ask for food. He did not want to break the rule of silence. He was getting sleepy.

He heard the monks singing. The singing was very beautiful. He sat alone in the library listening to their singing. He thought of the monks and the singing. He decided that the monks were happy. He tried to imagine what it would be like to be a monk, a member of the order. He thought of the library and the man who created the manuscript. He imagined a man sitting in the same seat where he was sitting, listening to the monks sing. He was sure the man was happy and that he was a good man.

The monks left the church. They returned to the dining room. The man heard them talking. They spoke loudly and laughed. They sat at the table and ate. The man was hungry but did not ask for food. He did not ask the abbot for food or permission to receive food from the monks. He didn't ask for anything. The monks were happy and did not want to disturb their happiness. He waited a long time. He was getting sleepy.

The monks went back to the church. The man left the library. He went back to his hotel and ate. He was happy and content.

The man became sadder each day. He was sad because he was not a monk. He was a man who couldn't leave the world. He wanted to stay in the monastery but the abbot told him that he couldn't. The abbot said that the man should leave to help the world. The man listened to the abbot and left the monastery.

He went back to the world and continued to be sad. He didn't want to be in the world. He wanted to be in the monastery with the monks. He wanted to be a part of the order.

The man went back to the monastery. He asked for permission to join the order but the abbot told him that he could not. The abbot told the man that he should find a place to be happy.

The introductory text was written by artificial intelligence from Alpha Industries based on the GPT-3 neural network created in the OpenAI laboratory.

One of the first questions a contemporary art viewer might ask is why, in a secular age, hold an exhibition inspired by an ancient religious order. The answer may lie in its strong tradition linked to the activities through which the Benedictines have worked hard to develop culture and education in our country. The Benedictine order is still an important representative of spiritual and cultural memory, including values that persist to this day. Last but not least, the exhibition relates to the premises of the Benedictine monastery in Broumov itself, a historically and visually unique place, providing a specific context that is not neutral and thus co-shapes the final form of the exhibited works. Nevertheless, the project *Ora et lege* is an attempt at a deeper dialogue between contemporary art and the teachings of the Benedictine order. It responds to particular elements that capture the essence of the Benedictine order and various selected elements of the Catholic Church in general.

The title of the exhibition *Ora et lege* (pray and read) paraphrases the famous motto of Saint Benedict, *ora et labora* (pray and work), and represents a key factor in the selection of the exhibiting artists. These are internationally renowned artists who in addition to their fine art production have been involved for a long time in writing their own texts: Ed Atkins, Kamilla Bischof, Jesse Darling, Liam Gillick, Martin Kohout, Florian Meisenberg and the Slavs and Tatars group. They have been selected because of the close relationship of the Benedictine order to education and literature, as well as the existence and importance of the Broumov monastic library, which comprises one of the most unique book collections in the world. The exhibition touches on topics associated with the monastery, but it also reflects a narrative turn in the visual arts, whereby authorial writing in various forms is brought to the fore, combining different literary forms and genres such as prose, poetry, drama, fiction or uncreative writing.[1] Authorial writing is presented at the exhibition in the form of Liam Gillick's book, Jesse Darling's e-mail correspondence, the essay by Slavs and Tatars, the incorporation of writing by Kamilla Bischof into her exhibited works and by Ed Atkins into the original monastery furniture, Florian Meisenberg's software-generated text, and Martin Kohout's text published online during the exhibition.[2]

The above-mentioned explanation sets forth basic premises of this exhibition, which refers to the Benedictine order from various point of view based on discussions between Monika Čejková, the exhibition curator and author of the accompanying texts, with the Archabbot of Břevnov and Broumov, Peter Prokop Siostrzonek OSB. Getting acquainted with the history of the Benedictines and acquiring some of their knowledge was a sine qua non for the exhibiting artists. In this way, the project symbolically refers to the tradition of the Broumov Monastery as a historically important center of culture and learning, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. With some exaggeration, this is reflected in the selection of exhibiting artists, who hail from different parts of the "old world" – Prague, Berlin, Copenhagen, Vienna, the United Kingdom, as well as New York.

The exhibition covers several thematic areas, which are not strictly defined, but rather loosely associated in the works by individual artists. One of the thematic areas could be characterized as the media revolution reflecting *mimesis* and medieval images (Liam Gillick, Florian Meisenberg, Kamilla Bischof). The problematic issue at the time was that it was impossible to depict the sacred since the sacred is inherently intangible. But at the same time, representing the sacred was the only real purpose of all representation.[3] Another area is hagiography, which has become a means for pointing out the importance of women in the Catholic Church as well as for reflecting on their unequal status in the church hierarchy in particular and gender inequality in society in general (Jesse Darling, Kamilla Bischof). The reference to the Virgin Mary, for example, highlights the importance and the contemporary society's idea of the female role, in which the attitudes of the Christian religion were reflected using a widely applicable iconography. This is followed by the ever-present theme of interreligious dialogue in the form of a critical polemic against deep-rooted stereotypes of national identity, power, language and religion (Slavs and Tatars). The last thematic area is a secular or rather an ambiguous relationship to the Church (Ed Atkins, Martin Kohout), which on the one hand honors its tradition and history, but on the other hand prefers or professes secular humanist ideals.

However, the exhibition does not present religiously conditioned or motivated artworks. In terms of style and content, it is based on a secular stance and seeks to touch the spiritual whole from a position familiar to every individual – tradition.

Although the strong link between contemporary art and the Church has essentially broken down, there are many projects that are trying to bridge the gap and conduct a dialogue of faith and art. One of the most significant achievements in terms of continuous activity and realized works is the Kunst-Station Sankt Peter in Cologne, Germany, founded in 1987 by the Jesuit Friedhelm Mennekes.[4] Until 2008 he curated interventions in sacred spaces in collaboration with artists such as Joseph Beyus, Christian Boltanski, Anish Kapoor, Martin Creed, Eduardo Chillida, Jannis Kounellis, Jenny Holzer and others. His seven principles for "a new attempt to bring modern art into the church" suggest that his projects have sought to transcend the history of church art, art in the service of faith, Christian iconography and its illustrative function.[5] The realizations have been carried out (up to this day) in the apse of the church, thus affecting the sacred space and the liturgy. Mennekes's exhibitions have inspired contemporary art interventions in the interior of the Church of the Holy Savior in Prague, which have taken place there since 2009 under the curator Norbert Schmidt, architect and head of the Center for Theology and Art at the Catholic Theological Faculty of Charles University, and are so far the only significant and deeply conceived example of the connection between contemporary art and tradition through installations in sacred space in the Czech Republic.[6]

Connecting art and sacred spaces is nothing new in the Broumov Monastery either.[7] The *Ora et lege* project, however, for the first time takes art outside the corridors and staircases of the monastery and at the same time it thematizes faith from the position of a certain current tendency in contemporary art. It makes an unacknowledged attempt at a certain "rehabilitation of Christianity as a worthy non-trivial possibility in the eyes of the children of postmodernism."[8]

Monika Čejková

1   A term used by American poet Kenneth Goldsmith to describe the crossing of conceptual art and poetry. This manifests itself in the use of techniques traditionally thought to be outside the scope of literature. Examples include using Google searches to create poetry, generating text with software, working in a word processing environment, repeatedly forwarding a blank e-mail or copying the numerical code of jpegs, etc. That is, treating a text through methods of cutting, editing and copying and the transfer of documentary and archival practices from the digital realm to the literary environment. These working methods have been preceded by the practices applied by William Burroughs, James Joyce, Stéphane Mallarmé and Gertrude Stein, but they actually date back to earlier times. Examples include George Herbert's early 17th-century wing-shaped poem *Easter Wings*, or Laurence Sterne's novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, published in parts over the years 1759–1767). See Kenneth Goldsmith, *A Brief Overview of Anti-Writing*, in Mathieu Copeland, Balthazar Lovay (eds.), The Anti-Museum, Fribourg 2017, pp. 637–648.

2   The urgency to produce creative writing, exhibit books, and dynamically adopt literary forms can be interpreted as having various reasons. According to Kenneth Goldsmith, conceptual poetry or literature is a response to the neutrality of the Internet, which treats all data on the network as equal, "whether it be a piece of spam or a Nobel laureate's speech" (Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, New York, 2011, p. 34). Among the most frequently cited, however, are opinions that see the origins of the narrative turn in art in an attempt to protect or reclaim originality in the prevailing aesthetics of post-production with its roots in 1960s conceptualism or in the post-media era, in which the boundaries between different artistic media are blurred. See David Maroto, *The Artist's Novel, A New Medium*, Warsaw 2019, pp. 23–45.

3   Hana Hlaváčková, *Zobrazení posvátného* [The Representation of the Sacred], in Alexandr Matoušek and Lenka Karfíková (eds.), *Posvátný obraz a zobrazení posvátného* [The Sacred Image and the Representation of the Sacred], Prague 1995, p. 80.

4   Friedhelm Mennekes at first organized art exhibitions in churches in Frankfurt am Main at his parish Nied and also at the main station there. In the years 1987–2008 he worked in Cologne, where he founded the above-mentioned center for contemporary art and music, the Kunst-Station Sankt Peter Köln.

5   Friedhelm Mennekes, *Nadšení a pochybnost* [Enthusiasm and Doubt; *Begeisterung und Zweifel* in the German original], Prague 2013, p. 13.

6   Here we shall also mention earlier realizations carried out by artists in the late 20th century for the Catholic Church, such as Mikuláš Medek's series of paintings of the Stations of the Cross for St. Joseph's Church in Senetářov, and the realizations for St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Jedovnice, namely the altarpiece by Mikuláš Medek, the presbytery by Jan Koblasa and the etched windows by Josef Istler.

7   In 2015, there were three exhibitions entitled *3 × 2 for the Monastery*, featuring works by Martin Dašek, Kryštof Kaplan, Jiří Matějů, Pavel Mrkus and Pavel Hošek. The curators were Petr Vaňous and Iva Mladičová.

8   Petr Glombíček, *Jenom svět nestačí, Charles Taylor o sekularismu* [The World Alone Is Not Enough, Charles Taylor on Secularism], *Filosofie dnes* 2, 2011, No. 2, p. 70.

1   https://www.brevnov.cz/cs/benediktini-a-brevnovsky-klaster, accessed on 3 June 2021.

2   Georg Holzherr, *Řehole Benediktova, Uvedení do křesťanského života (komentář)* [The Rule of Benedict: An Invitation to the Christian Life (commentary)]; German original: *Die Benediktsregel: eine Anleitung zu christlichem Leben*, Paulusverlag, Freiburg, Switzerland, 1997], Prague 1998, p. 17.

3   Ibid., p. 13–17.

4   In the last chapter, for example, Saint Benedict specifically mentions the Rule of the Holy Father Basil, RB 73.5.

5   Georg Holzherr, *Řehole Benediktova, Uvedení do křesťanského života (komentář)* [The Rule of Benedict: An Invitation to the Christian Life (commentary)], p. 17.

6   *Regula Benedicti, Řehole Benediktova* [Regula Benedicti, Rule of Saint Benedict], Prague 1998, p. 49.

7   *Regula Benedicti, Řehole Benediktova* [Regula Benedicti, Rule of Saint Benedict], Prague 1998, p. 45.

8   Anna Holešová, *Obsahová skladba broumovské knihovny na příkladu starých tisků* [The Composition of the Content of the Broumov Library on the Example of Old Prints], in Martina Bolom-Kotari (ed.), *Knihovny benediktinských klášterů Broumov a Rajhrad* [Libraries of the Benedictine Monasteries of Broumov and Rajhrad], Hradec Králové 2019, p. 61.

9   Martina Vítková, *Knihy broumovské klášterní knihovny a jejich provenience* [The Books in the Monastic Library in the Broumov Monastery and Their Origin], in Ibid., p. 53.

10   Religious orders had to defend this role first in conflict with the Protestant Church, later after the middle of the 18th century in confrontation with the Enlightenment and secularized education. Although the Benedictines, as a contemplative order, placed emphasis in decoration on finding higher truth through meditation (as depicted on the vault of the hall), at the end of the 18th century the library was extended to include a balustrade portraying members of the monastery. See Martin Mádl, *Nástěnná malba v kontextu barokní architektury* [Wall Painting in the Context of Baroque Architecture], in Petr Macek, Richard Biegel, Jakub Bachtík (eds.), *Barokní architektura v Čechách* [Baroque Architecture in the Czech Lands], Prague 2015, p. 672.

One of the defining features of the Benedictine order is that it is not centralized and, from a legal point of view, it is not an order in the common acceptation of the word. Its individual monasteries operate as autonomous administrative units, and since the Middle Ages they have formed themselves loosely into congregations according to linguistic areas, territorial (state) borders or on the basis of mutual relations.[1] In 1893, at the instigation of Pope Leo XIII, the Benedictine Confederation was established in order to create a higher legal and organizational form for the purpose of more effective communication between Benedictine houses and congregations. Their head is the Abbot Primate, who resides at the Monastery of Sant' Anselmo in Rome and represents the Benedictine order at the Holy See. However, each monastery still has its own abbot.

The actual expansion of the order took place through the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (*Regula Benedicti*) which, according to legend, was written by Benedict of Nursia in about 529 on the ruins of the altar of Apollo on Monte Cassino in central Italy. It can be understood in two ways: on the one hand, as a set of guidelines for living together in a monastery in order to achieve a spiritual goal, and on the other, as a religious order, the Order of Saint Benedict, Benedictine monks. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* is considered a basic document of Western monastic life, which gradually replaced previous rules, especially Eastern ones. According to tradition, the *Rule of Saint Benedict* taught young Germanic peoples about Christian values and mottos such as "prayer and work", "morals and decency", "patience" and "living in peace".[2]

The text of the *Rule of Saint Benedict* is not a criticism or a counterpart of Eastern theology and monasticism.[3] Its roots can be traced to the tradition coming from Africa, Egypt, Asia Minor and Syria, to the rules of earlier date (for example, the *Rule of Saint Pachomius* or the *Rule of Our Holy Father Basil*), to the Holy Fathers, and to the experience of the previous generation of monks.[4] However, it has significantly changed the aspects related to ascetic practice and, unlike the ancient world, emphasized the value and ethos of work.[5] The Benedictine motto *ora et labora* (which, however, is not to be found in the text of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*) is based on the division of the day between prayer, *ora*, and physical labor, *labora*. The brothers are to engage in physical labor at certain hours of the day, and contemplate at other times. The Benedictine spirit represents peace, order, gentleness and calm. The ideal is the harmony between inner thoughts and outer expressions. The monastery is then a "place of peace in a troubled world", *pax benedictina*.[6]

In the past, the Benedictine order indirectly contributed to the development of book culture and study and supported the establishment of monastic libraries. Up to this day, members of Benedictine monasteries are obliged to regularly engage in "holy reading" (*lectio divina*) of the Scriptures. It is a specific method interconnecting reading of Biblical texts with meditation and contemplation. It consists of three specific steps: *lectio, meditatio, oratio* – reading, meditation and prayer.[7] In the first step, the text is read aloud, the second step consisting of re-reading leads to a deeper understanding and development of individual ideas, and the third step results in a spontaneous prayer, i.e., the very goal of *lectio divina*. In this way, Benedictines read together every day from the *Rules*.

Benedictines from Břevnov Monastery in Prague acquired the Broumov region in 1213 from Přemysl Otakar I, King of Bohemia. Over the time, from the inhospitable, sporadically populated, but strategically interesting area they created a supra-regional center of culture and education, reaching a peak in the 17th and 18th centuries when the monastery became the center of the Benedictine order in the Czech lands. Of special importance in the Broumov Monastery was its major reconstruction of (1727–1733) under Abbot Othmar Zinke (1664–1738), when the abbey acquired its impressive form of dynamic Baroque, designed by the architect Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer.

The monastic library, which came into being systematically since the founding of the Broumov Monastery, underwent modernization as well. Saint Benedict provides three types of reading: biblical, monastic and theological. Nevertheless, Benedictine libraries are pansophical, seeking to encompass all the knowledge of the world. The main development of the Broumov monastic library took place in particular in the 17th and 18th centuries, when local abbots collaborated with a wide network of buyers, covering the whole of Central, Western and Southern Europe, and complemented their collections with books both new and old.[8] In addition to religious literature, the library contains forbidden books (*libri prohibiti*), books on canonical and secular law, on church history, secular history and auxiliary historical sciences (diplomacy, heraldry, numismatics, etc.), philosophical treatises, works on geography, medicine, art, architecture as well as classical Latin literature and encyclopedias and monolingual dictionaries. Last but not least, the library also includes books written by members of the monastery. Its composition was directly influenced by several historical events. The key ones are the connection of the library with the Břevnov Monastery (from the Hussite wars until 1938) or the functioning of the monastery school, later a grammar school, for which books for teaching students were required.[9]

During the reconstruction of the monastery, a two-story hall was built, covered with a barrel vault and decorated with a ceiling fresco painted by Jan Karel Kovář from Prague (1740). In the middle of the fresco in the hall, the Holy Spirit appears in the trompe l'oeil painting of a cupola, below which there is the inscription *Ille vos docebit omnia* (He will teach you all things). One side of the hall features a scene from the Gospel according to Luke, a twelve-year-old Jesus in discussion with the elders in a temple. On the opposite side there is a scene of the *Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor*, where Jesus has come with three apostles and is transfigured before their eyes, while Elijah and Moses appear next to him and he speaks with them. Together with the extensive library collection, the fresco is a manifestation of the scholarship and importance of the monastic community in spreading faith, culture and education.[10]

Ed   Atkins

Although it might seem that Ed Atkins's work comprise mainly technologically precise, computer-generated videos and magnificently conceived installations, one of the main creative forms of his artistic practice is writing texts. In addition to critical essays, these are fictional stories on the border between poetry and prose, published as autonomous short stories or novels, or screenplays for his animated videos. There are autobiographical elements in these videos, a tendency to nihilism and melancholy, and they feature CGI avatars, making an intimate statement using a certain hyperrealism, a large number of details and vivid descriptions without biased opinion. Atkins's first collection of writing *Primer for Cadavers* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2016) consists of selected texts from the years 2010–2016, in which he connected in an original way various literary forms and genres – prose, poetry, drama and the so-called *uncreative writing*, i.e., a crossing of conceptual art with poetry using techniques that are traditionally assumed to be outside the scope of literature (e.g., the use of Google search engine in poetry writing).[1] Atkins also applied a similar strategy in the following experimental book *Old Food* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2019), accompanying an exhibition project of the same name presented at the Martin-Gropius-Bau and at the main exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2017). In a spontaneous, rapid flow of speech, Atkins presents himself as an ironist and provocateur who is gushing out an endless stream of absurd associations requiring a certain effort from the reader. So language is the basic element of Atkins's work, and the structure of the narrative – grammar and syntax – is the form he tries to transfer into animation, for example, when editing scenes.[2] In texts and videos, our attention constantly shifts between the live element (language) and the artificially created structure. In Atkins's videos, CGI avatars "created out of nothing" in the digital world make personal confessions or give prophecies in the form of a purifying monologue with absurd reflections on psychological crises and other various topics. They represent pure melancholy, because the fact that the characters are constantly missing something, without knowing what it is, fully defines them at the same time. Melancholy is at the center of all Atkins's production, which emphasizes the cruel side of reality and evokes a special sense of complicity. In his texts, there is a certain illogicality and artificiality, manifested in the meaning and composition of sentences, but at the same time we feel that the artist is brutally sincere.

Atkins's realization in the Saint Adalbert's Church *Untitled Anonymous* (2021) is atypical in the context of his work. It is based on the artist's experience from his visit to the Rosenborg Castle, a Renaissance castle in Copenhagen, the former seat of Danish kings built during the reign of King Christian IV in the first third of the 17th century. During the time when it served as a royal residence, only members of the royal family and their servants were granted access to the castle. One of the few spaces open to the general public was the local chapel, socially stratified according to Atkins, divided into individual parts, some of which were intended only for people of aristocratic origin and royal rank.[3] The separation of the various social classes expressed the supremacy of the ruling class over the common people. The commoners were assigned places without seats on balconies, where railings and platforms are covered with

inscriptions – names, dates and unspecified symbols. There are similar inscriptions in Baroque pews in the main nave of the Broumov Monastery's church designated for the lay public..

The Baroque wooden pews in the Broumov Monastery's church bear several layers of engraved inscriptions. These are most often names or messages in German and Czech, supplemented by a date or an automatically executed graphic sign. Many of them were probably made by students of the local Czech-German grammar school, which was established in 1624 based on a monastery school and operated until 1939, when it was closed by the Nazis. Apparently, for some of the students the church was a place where they could be idle for a while, and sometimes also the destination of their nighttime adventure expeditions, during which the students carved graffiti into the benches as well as into the marble choir partition. Other inscriptions were probably made by visitors to this cultural monument, and some of them even by participants in the Mass. Atkins's permanent intervention in the form of a sentence and date carved into the pew of Saint Adalbert's Church works with the original illegally executed inscriptions as an authentic record of history, without which the picture of the Broumov Monastery and its glorious past would not be complete. In the space of the church, a place with a clearly defined content which celebrates the most important thing in the liturgy – the Eucharist, the intervention seems to be a silent *sigilium*, referring to the pictorial sign as the primary way of graphic recording of human imagination.

For Atkins, the engraved inscriptions represent a record of conversations across the centuries. For him, touching these records makes a passionate, intimate and tangible connection with history, which is not celebrated in this way anywhere. Lives too "small" to leave a mark in any other way have been documented here by the imprint of their own hand.[4] Atkins deals with the concept of the pictorial emblem as the oldest form of record in human evolution, as it is known from the first human creations in the Paleolithic Age, for example, the paintings in the Chauvet Cave in southern France. Today we consider them artworks, although they served some form of an archaic religious purpose. Atkins also alludes to the tradition of monastic scriptoria (writing rooms) and illuminated medieval manuscripts, in which initials, filigree and other calligraphic signs not only filled the margins, but also represented a gradual transition to actual images on the pages of the manuscripts. Atkins works with the concept of symbols containing the whole message or with the ability to tell even smaller stories, which, however, remained hidden from the uneducated people.

Atkins chose a spot in the nave of the church, where the sentence *silence of the perpetual choire in heaven* dated *23 June 2041* was carved into the original Baroque pew, speculatively referring to the future. Despite its character of a permanent intervention in the national cultural monument, this realization is an intimate reaction in the context of Atkins's work, which can easily go unnoticed and which in time will merge completely with other inscriptions or be smoothed out and disappear forever. The sentence does not start with an article (The) and Atkins has added an "e" at the end of the word "choir". These small changes can be interpreted as

Ed Atkins (born 1982 in Oxford) lives and works in Copenhagen. His work has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *Get Life / Love's Work*, New Museum, New York, 2021; *Live White Slime*, Kiasma, Helsinki, 2020; *Ye Olde Food*, K21, Düsseldorf, 2019; *Old Food*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, 2017; *Performance Capture*, The Kitchen, New York, 2016; *Recent Ouija*, The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2015; *Ed Atkins*, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, 2014; *Bastards*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2014; *Ed Atkins*, Kunsthalle Zürich, Curych, 2014; *Ed Atkins*, MoMA PS1, New York, 2013; *Art Now: Ed Atkins*, Tate Britain, London, 2011) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *True Luxury... Art Acquisitions 2012–2018*, The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2018; *Being There*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, 2017; *The Policeman's Beard is Half Constructed*, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, 2017; *The Keeper*, New Museum, New York, 2016 ad.). Atkins's work was part of the main exhibition of the 55th and 58th Venice Biennales (2013, 2019) and it was exhibited within the 12th Biennale de Lyon (2013). It was included in the international shows Performa 13 and 19.

1   See Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing*, New York 2011.
2   https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/ed-atkins-something-missing, accessed on 1 July 2020.
3   E-mail correspondence with the artist, 7 March 2021.
4   Ibid.
5   Charles Taylor, *Sekulární věk. Dilemata moderní společnosti*, Prague 2013, p. 170 [English original: *A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, 2007].

an attempt to merge with other inscriptions, which are inherently illegal and often not grammatically correct. Similar language games appear in Atkins's above-mentioned texts, which require repeated reading in order to discern their other possible meanings. In this way, as we walk through the pews, we can think of Ed Atkins's message, which seems to be a kind of personal dilemma between rejecting institutionalized faith and retaining the right to spirituality greater than oneself within secular humanism. The absence of avatars in the Broumov Monastery reflects a certain semantic change in the artist's approach. The feelings of loss and resignation to life, which are typical of Atkins's fictional characters, are replaced by silence and search for the meaning of our existence as the basic model of spiritual life. As if Atkins's realization in the Broumov Monastery was a search for his own authenticity and spirituality in contrast to exclusive humanism, which rejects any religion or search for transcendence. Unlike Atkins's technologically perfect videos, here religion does not give way to science, technology, and rationalism, but may be a variation on contemporary notions of faith that, according to the sociologist and philosopher Charles Taylor, follow the social revolution of the 1960s with roots in Romantic resistance to instrumental individualism associated with the modern moral order.[5] The characters in videos are subject to this in self-pity, while succumbing to alcohol, light drugs, crying and despair, in order to get up and the next day start again.

Ed Atkins
Untitled Anonymous, 2021
hand-engraved inscription "silence of the perpetual choire in heaven, 23 June 2041" on a wooden church pew
courtesy of the artist, Cabinet Gallery, London, Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin, Gladstone Gallery, New York and dépendance, Brussels

Kamilla Bischof

Kamilla Bischof's art oscillates between the observation of everyday reality and an elaborate, imaginary world of her own fantasy in which animals, floral motifs or human figures appear in allegorical form. She presents her themes through expressive painting combining specific motifs with abstracted planes in the background. For the exhibition *Ora et lege*, she has created a series of large-format canvases loosely inspired by the Broumov Monastery, in particular the sacristy of St. Adalbert's Church, its functions and equipment, including its furniture and artistic decoration. The series is supplemented by Bischof's thematically related works of an earlier date. The paintings are mounted on firm pedestals reminiscent of dollhouses and can therefore be viewed from all sides – as with a dollhouse, one can walk around them completely.

In Christianity, the house has a symbolic meaning. The House of God is an early Christian symbol of "the house which God Himself built in the place which He has appointed and where the people are His guests. However, the House of God is not just a name of a building, but also a symbol of the community, which is the body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit."[1] In his *Rule*, Saint Benedict used many terms to denote a cenobitic monastery (*koinobion*): a school, a community, a workshop, or the House of God, which he sees as "a place of peace in a troubled world", *pax benedictina*.[2] The monastery occupies an important position in the Benedictine order; isolated from the secular environment it is a pillar of Benedictine spirituality, which is based on stability in the community – *stabilitas in congregatione*, mutual understanding among the brothers, and a life lived in one place – *stabilitas loci*. The spirituality of the Benedictines thus seeks God in a certain separation of their community from the outside world, which is to help distance oneself from worldly thoughts and desires.

Women have been part of God's house from the beginning. In the beginnings of monasticism, women appear as desert mothers, as nuns, and also as participants in missionary movements. However, with few exceptions, religious orders, including the Benedictine ones, are perceived mainly as a male affair, although there is a strong tradition in the female line as well. The tradition of Benedictine nuns was started by Saint Scholastica, the spiritual and biological twin of Saint Benedict. With his help, she founded the first Benedictine nunnery near Monte Cassino. Legend has it that Scholastica, wishing to spend an evening in discussion with her brother, once prayed to God for a storm that would prevent him from leaving her. This story reminds us that the fact that women have to fight for their own voices is deeply rooted in our culture. In the local context, the Benedictine convent (or nunnery) founded at St. George's Church at Prague Castle around 976 is the oldest monastery in the Czech lands, while the Benedictine monastery (or friary) was established approximately 17 years later in Břevnov.

For women, religious orders in convents offered an opportunity to get an education, to make use of libraries and writing workshops through which their ideas could circulate. The nuns wrote biographies of saints, theological treatises, instructions for spiritual life and the like, but their doings were put under the scrutiny of male authority.[3] The convents also provided an upbringing and schooling for many women from aristocratic families, or a refuge from an unsolicited marriage proposal; a good example in this respect is the life of Saint Agnes of Bohemia from the Přemyslid dynasty (1211–1282).

Kamilla Bischof's art is strongly socially conditioned by gender issues. The figures in the paintings exhibited in the sacristy and its immediate surroundings are life-size and bear female attributes. Women appear as the founders of the house, its patron saints or protégés. Here sexuality involves a slightly perverse atmosphere and is mixed with a Post-Romanticism that rehabilitates the body and emotional life. The artist uses a visual language characterized by a naive expression and moves freely on various historical and geographical levels. She mixes numerous cultural references with archetypal images from the collective unconscious as well as with her own subjective reality and the realm of Surrealism, as if it were the result of an examination of the cultural anthropology of the South American and European regions, of legends and fairy tales, but also of her fascination with long-extinct cultures. The innocent charm here usually turns into demonism and the grotesque. The marriage of opposites is personified by carnival scenes of a darkly anecdotal nature in which women turn into demons and wolves. An example is a scene in *Geschichten aus dem Gardinenwald* (*Tales from the Curtain Woods,* 2020), where an unspecified magical ritual is taking place – it may actually just be a daily reading of fairy tales at bedtime, as the title of the work suggests. The spells here may represent a kind of anti-divine aspect, as the Church viewed magical practices and women practicing the art of healing as maladaptive behavior during the Inquisition processes in the Middle Ages and early modern times. Manifestations of folk culture were gradually connected with heresy and demonology and were persecuted. The instruction for their persecution was provided by the *Malleus maleficarum* (usually translated as the *Hammer of Witches*), a treatise on witchcraft compiled around 1486 by two Dominican friars – Jakob Sprenger, Dean of the University of Cologne in Germany, and Heinrich Kraemer (aka Henricus Institor), professor of theology at the University of Salzburg and inquisitor in the Tyrol region of Austria. This treatise, providing a detailed description of witchcraft and the legal procedures to be followed in witch trials, became an authoritative source of information, the purpose of which – the eradication of witchcraft – was supported by the papal bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* of Pope Innocent VIII.

The figures in Bischof's paintings represent self-sufficient, educated women, confident enough not to be susceptible to the false moralism of patriarchal culture or clerical control over sexual ethics. These female figures seem not to consider partnership or the stability of marriage essential to the social order. Rather, they prefer the intellectual and creative life, perhaps in a way similar to the determination and bravery of the women living in convents. *April* (2020) depicts a woman engaged in intellectual activity while studying, and *Wiesenstraße* (*Meadow Lane*, 2021) features a woman engaged in creative work, carving an object in the shape of a house. By putting these images of women into houses, these paintings can also be making an ironic allusion to the traditional concept of the role of women caring for the home and beautifying it.

Kamilla Bischof (born 1986 in Graz) lives and works in Berlin. Her work has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *Am Fuße der großen Stehlampe*, Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna, 2020; *SCHÖN VERMÄHLT*, Künstlerhaus, Graz, 2019; *Turm Frisur*, Halle für Kunst und Medien, Lüneburg, 2017; *Cosmetic Songs*, Sandy Brown, Berlin, 2017) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *Netz Werke*, Galerie Crone, Vienna, 2020; *Malerei aus der Sammlung der Stadt Graz*, Austrian Cultural Forum, Zagreb, 2020; *Paint, also known as blood*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2019; and *Der Hausfreund*, Heiligenkreuzer Hof, Vienna, 2019).

However, the installation of these paintings follows the tradition of church art in many ways, especially early and late medieval art. The houses forming the pedestals of the paintings function as a metaphor for the House of God adorned by painting. This aesthetic function was attributed to such images by the *Libri Carolini* [Charlemagne's Books], composed by theologians on the command of Emperor Charles the Great at the end of the 8th century. According to these books, images in the church serve a threefold purpose: first, the decorative function mentioned above; second, the instruction of the uneducated in place of books – *scriptura laicorum*; and third, visualizing holy persons and God in order to commemorate them, but not in the way prescribed by Byzantine theologians.[4] The *Libri Carolini* laid down the basis of a tradition which was to resolve, at least partially, the dispute over the worship of images and in which the West continued for the next few centuries (for example, such opinions in a modified version were voiced by Bernard of Clairvaux and Master Jan Hus).[5]

The *Libri Carolini* also recommends supplementing images with identification texts – *titles* – which, as literary programs, are intended to guarantee the correct reading of the scenes depicted and to convey a kind of thematic idea. The titles thus had a certain power over the images held by the (ecclesiastical) authorities and patrons.[6] This is how it is possible to interpret the texts mounted on the paintings at the back. In these texts, Bischof follows similar strategies as in the paintings themselves; the stories are mostly set in the real world, but lead into the realm of fantasy and surrealism. This active work with the back of the painting is also reminiscent of a concept from medieval art that acknowledges and artistically processes the sides and back of the painting in order to create a three-dimensional object as a natural part of the earthly material world.[7] If the painting is physically anchored in the material world, it is no longer necessary to display its subject with the help of optical illusion and perspective as an attempt at *mimesis*.[8] What is depicted in the painting refers only to facts beyond this visible world. The scenes in Kamilla Bischof's paintings work in a similar way. They remain abstracted and essentially ignore or significantly suppress any optical illusion.

1   *Regula Benedicti, Řehole Benediktova* [Regula Benedicti, Rule of Saint Benedict], Prague 1998, p. 33.
2   Ibid., p. 49.
3   Jana Opočenská, *Obraz ženství a mariologie* [The Image of Femininity and Mariology], in Blanka Knotková-Čapková et al., *Obrazy ženství v náboženských kulturách* [Images of Femininity in Religious Cultures], Prague and Litomyšl 2008, p. 83.
4   Jan Royt, *Úcta k obrazům a Libri Carolini* [Veneration of Images and the *Libri Carolini*], in Alexandr Matoušek and Lenka Karfíková (eds.), *Posvátný obraz a zobrazení posvátného* [The Sacred Image and the Representation of the Sacred], Prague 1994, pp. 78–79.
5   Ibid.
6   Ivan Folleti and Pavla Tichá, *Když se obrací říše* [When an Empire is Being Converted], in Chiara Bordino (ed.), *Teorie obrazu v raném křesťanství?* [Theory of Images in the Early Christianity?], Brno 2020, p. 19.
7   Hana Hlaváčková, *Zobrazení posvátného* [The Representation of the Sacred], in *Posvátný obraz a zobrazení posvátného* [Sacred Image and the Representation of the Sacred], Prague 1995, p. 83.
8   Ibid.

Kamilla Bischof
Geschichten aus dem Gardinenwald / Tales from the Curtain Woods, 2020
oil on canvas
150 × 180 cm
courtesy of the artist and Sandy Brown Gallery, Berlin

Kamilla Bischof
Wiesenstraße / Meadow Lane, 2021
acrylic on canvas
150 × 180 cm
courtesy of the artist and Sandy Brown Gallery, Berlin

Kamilla Bischof
April, 2020
acrylic on canvas
180 × 150 cm
courtesy of the artist and Sandy Brown Gallery, Berlin

Kamilla Bischof
Campingfragen / Camping Questions, 2020
oil and spray paint on canvas
150 × 180 cm
courtesy of the artist and Sandy Brown Gallery, Berlin

Jesse Darling

Jesse Darling's multimedia work deals with the vulnerability of the human body and mind, which can be particularly fragile from a gender perspective. In society and in some religions this is still a sensitive matter, from the position of women in the (ecclesiastical) hierarchy, to freedom of choice and the right to abortion, to gender minority issues. From time immemorial, special religious restrictions have been imposed mainly on female corporeality and sexuality, which the older concept of Christian doctrine saw through the prism of pollution and purity. This was connected with various recommendations at different periods, such as the ban on marriage during Lent, the doctrine that sexual acts between married couples were always venially sinful, or the purification of women after childbirth, as well as the myth of menstruation.[1]

Myths and legends with an emphasis on a relic of power become metaphors for Jesse Darling's own experience, transposed into installations, sculptures, drawings and original texts. A good example is the relatively extensive series related to the Christian thinker and Church Father, Saint Jerome, which also includes *Our Lady Batman of the Empty Center* (2018) exhibited in St. Adalbert's church at the Broumov Monastery. The series deals with issues of sexuality, the objectification of women, and discrimination against the LGBTQIAPK+ community, as well as the intimacy of erotic ideas referring to the artist's own subculture. Darling's starting point is ordinary, everyday materials that are often distorted and "injured" in her objects, representing the struggle for one's own autonomy. The artist presented the series at her solo exhibition at Tate Britain (*The Ballad of Saint Jerome*, 2018–2019) and at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019). The exhibition at Tate Modern was accompanied by Darling's correspondence with the Reverend Christina Beardsley, who herself has undergone gender transition. The form of epistolary conversation was chosen with regard to this historical way of theological communication. At the exhibition *Ora et lege*, we present it in a more extended version.

Saint Jerome (ca. 347–420) is known for the translation of the Bible from its original languages into Latin (The Vulgate), which contributed to the further spread of the Holy Scriptures. His literary and translation work was also one of the sources of inspiration for Saint Benedict when writing his book of precepts.[2]

Darling's series is thematically centered around the legend of Saint Jerome, who removed a thorn from a lion's paw and healed him. The grateful lion then faithfully accompanied him for the rest of his life. Darling views this story not only as an expression of nobility and kindness, but also as a reminder of the power and exercise of sovereignty that results in the domestication and subjugation of wildlife, or of otherness in general. The impulse for the series was the artist's neurological disease at the time, paralyzing most of her right arm, during which she came to the realization that "no saint can fix it".[3] Her disease – the lion's symbolic wound – becomes Jerome's wound, and by extension that of the whole world. What was initially a moving story turns into a story about a hierarchical relationship based on compromise, dependence, or the boundless faith of the individual in a higher structure and order, while at the top of the pyramid there is "the patriarch, the imperial-

ist, the supremacist, the taxonomist and the practitioner of the medical/psychiatric/diagnostic industrial complex".[4] In Darling's words, Jerome "becomes a symbol for the academy, the church and the museum – all of which preserve the status quo in gloved hands, a soft violence."[5]

Our Lady Batman of the Empty Center looms seemingly alone in the Saint Jerome series, because at its center there is the figure of the mother of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, related to the comic book figure of Batman, whose gloomy likeness is indicated by his typical costume. The Batman's early stories were dark and violent, but became more friendly and exotic at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, which was later interpreted as being associated with gay culture. The Mother of God is depicted here as gender-neutral, i.e., as a relatively negative figure within the context of mainstream thinking. Her face is masked by a fragile, silver foil wrap, torn in several places, revealing the lower layers as a possible symbol of the transgender process, the transition between identities.

In the golden era of Baroque pilgrimage, images printed on silver foil were the subject of private piety. Pilgrims took them away from the pilgrimage processions as devotional articles, including replicas of amorous statuettes and copies of paintings, medallions, or reverse glass paintings and in particular, sacred images printed on various materials: paper, parchment, or on pewter or silver foil as mentioned above.[6] In terms of veneration, the Baroque period was characterized by the Marian cult; perhaps the most widespread type of loving reverence became the *Immaculata* – the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception.[7] In the Benedictine order, this followed the type of the "Virgin Mary of Benedictine Pleasures" (*Delitiae Benedictinae*), a replica of the statue of the Mother of God that adorned the house of the Anici family of Rome, where Saint Benedict of Nursia, founder of the Benedictine monastic order, came from.[8]

Our Lady Batman of the Empty Center views the complex development of Mariology as an integral part of theology. The emergence and development of the Marian cult in late antiquity meant the revival of the feminine dimension of the sacred, as from the beginning in Christianity the idea of the Savior God had been associated with the form of a man.[9] The cult developed especially in places with a tradition of ancient virgin goddesses.[10] It documents the interaction of the new religion with late antiquity in terms of the continuity of female deity cult, such as a goddess of a "Great Mother" type that existed in the folk environment, or in the typological proximity of the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis and Mary, especially in the form of the Mother with Child (Isis with a small Horus in her arms).[11] There is also a connection between the cult of the Virgin Mary and female ordination, confirming that women played an active role in the ecclesial communities of late antiquity but were gradually pushed out of the liturgical space.[12, 13] However, the unfortunate development of Mariology elevated the Virgin Mary above other women as a symbol of virginity, of female sexual abstinence, and mythicized her as the opposite of the sinful Eve.[14] The Church Fathers emphasized her perfection and humility, and Justin (ca. 100–165) and Ireneus (130–202) called her the "New Eve" who, by her obedience, rectified Eve's sins committed in the Garden of Eden.[15] Saint Augustine (354–430) also spoke of

Darling

Jesse Darling (born 1981 in Oxford) lives and works in Berlin and London. Her work has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *Gravity Road*, Kunstverein Freiburg, 2020; *Selva Oscura*, Galerie Sultana, Paris, 2019; *Art Now: The Ballad of Saint Jerome*, Tate Britain, London, 2018; *Support Level*, Chapter NY, New York, 2018; *Armes Blanches*, Galerie Sultana, Paris, 2017) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *Kunstpreis der Böttcherstraße Prize*, Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen, 2020; *The Same Room: Julie Becker in Dialogue*, Galerie Neu, Berlin; *Transcorporealities,* Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2019; *Running Room*, Horse and Pony, Berlin; *Les Ateliers de Rennes,* Biennale d'Art Contemporain, Rennes, 2018; *Bread and Roses*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2016; and *EXTINCT.LY Marathon*, Serpentine Gallery/Online, London, 2014). In the years 2019 and 2017 she exhibited at the main exhibition of the Venice Biennale.

Mary's victory over sins with the help of supernatural grace. The iconography of the Virgin Mary influenced society as a whole and could have held women back in the process of their emancipation.[17]

The cult of the Mother of God has flourished many times in different historical epochs, yet has had no real consequences for the religious or social status of women in Christian culture.[18] Women today may become nuns or consecrated virgins, but they are not an active part of the church hierarchy and stand outside the sacred space.[19] A stimulating, critical assessment of the Marian cult has happened through feminist theological currents which, under the influence of the second wave of the secular women's movement, began to emerge in the second half of the 20th century.[20] These currents are characterized by respect for women, a positive attitude among women towards their own bodies, and rejecting stereotypical images of womanhood, including Mary's moralizing image emphasizing her submission. Gradually, several positions arose, some of which viewed Mary as raped by the patriarchate (Mary Daly), as a secret Christian goddess (Christa Mulack), or as emphasizing the deeply psychological aspect and personification of the mother element of Deity (Maria Kassel).[21] Christian-oriented feminist theologians approach Mary without deifying her, seeking a biblically-based, ecumenically acceptable form of Mariology (e.g., the thinkers Rosemary Radford Ruether, Catharine Halkes and others).[22]

The incorporation of the Virgin Mary into the Saint Jerome series can be interpreted as a contribution to feminist theology and a result of Darling's allusions to the Vulgate and to certain of Jerome's linguistic choices that the artist notes in particular (for example, how 'shame' and 'woman' became in some way synonymous after Jerome's translation of the Bible).[23] Darling thinks this has codified aspects of gender difference that have since been used to justify and naturalize misogyny in the church as well as outside of Christian culture.[24]

1 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Harvard University Press, 2007, pp. 473–505, in particular p. 496.
2 In the *Rule of Saint Benedict* there are references to the *Rule of Saint Pachomius*, whose influence grew when Jerome translated it into Latin in 404. Cf. *Regula Benedicti*, Řehole *Benediktova* [Regula Benedicti, Rule of Saint Benedict], Prague 1998, p. 28.
3 https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-44-autumn-2018/jesse-darling-art-now, accessed on 17 June 2020.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Jan Royt, *Slovník biblické ikonografie* [Dictionary of Biblical Iconography], Prague 2007, p. 214.
7 Ibid., p. 211.
8 Today, this image is in the church of San Benedetto in Piscinula, in Rome.
9 Iva Doležalová, *Vznik kultu Marie v kontextu pozdního starověku* [The Origin of the Cult of Mary in the Context of Late Antiquity], in *Religio*, IV/2, 1996, p. 149.
10 Royt, *Slovník biblické ikonografie* [Dictionary of Biblical Iconography], p. 194.
11 Ibid., pp. 149–156, in particular p. 153.
12 Ivan Foletti, *Ženy u oltáře. Nikdy?* [Women at the Altar. Never?], Brno 2018, p. 9.
13 In an effort to define its own identity, Christianity became intolerant of pagan culture and various heresies. Therefore, it criticized the Collyridian sect, worshiping the Virgin Mary at almost the same level as Christ, or the early Christian heretical movement called Montanism that arose in mid-2nd century in Asia Minor, which put an emphasis on ecstasy and prophecy and in which women played an irreplaceable role. See Doležalová, *Vznik kultu Marie v kontextu pozdního starověku* [The Origin of the Cult of Mary in the Context of Late Antiquity], p. 155.
14 Jana Opočenská, *Obraz ženství a mariologie* [The Image of Femininity and Mariology], in Blanka Knotková-Čapková et al., *Obrazy ženství v náboženských kulturách* [Images of Femininity in Religious Cultures], Prague and Litomyšl 2008, p. 85.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ivan Folleti deals with this topic in the second chapter of his book *Ženy u oltáře. Nikdy?* [Women at the Altar. Never?].
18 Ibid., p. 156.
19 Foletti, *Ženy u oltáře. Nikdy?* [Women at the Altar. Never?], p. 9.
20 Opočenská, *Obraz ženství a mariologie* [The Image of Femininity and Mariology], p. 97.
21 Ibid., p. 85–86.
22 Ibid., p. 86.
23 https://bravenewwhat.org/content/1-work/3-texts/1-art-now/art-now.pdf, accessed on 17 June 2020.
24 Jesse Darling discusses the topic in her correspondence with the Reverend Dr. Christina Beardsley, in https://bravenewwhat.org/content/1-work/3-texts/1-art-now/art-now.pdf, accessed on 17 June 2020.

Jesse Darling
Our Lady Batman of the Empty Center (Temporary Relief), 2018
spray paint and ink on aluminum and wood, paper cup, cemetery flowers, gold leaf, finger sheaths, ECG stickers, Band-Aid wrappers, Perspex
134 × 65 × 25.5 cm
courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa Gallery, London

Liam Gillick

The starting point for Liam Gillick's site-specific installation in the refectory of the Broumov Monastery is a copy of the Shroud of Turin. It is a replica of the burial cloth in which, according to tradition, the body of Christ was wrapped after being removed from the cross.[1] The shroud bears the imprint of a male figure with wounds corresponding to the Gospel accounts of Jesus's suffering and death. The allegedly authentic Shroud of Turin has been kept in the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, and is considered one of the most revered relics of the Catholic Church (together with the nails from the cross and the thorns of Christ's crown). It is shown only on special occasions; for example, in 2021 at Easter, it was presented via a special online livestream (because of the coronavirus pandemic) to give believers encouragement. The Shroud of Turin is one of the most publicized such relics and its authenticity has long been debated. The Catholic Church itself is reluctant to acknowledge the existence of its approximately 40 copies. Liam Gillick's project deals with the issue of the dividing line between fiction and information, the original and the copy, and explains these notions on the basis of parables and the appropriation of works by other artists. These strategies are the result of Gillick's long-term interest in the principles of interior design and architecture, whose utility he interprets within the framework of critical art discourse as a starting mechanism for assessing what art may or may not be.[2] He claims that we are captives of the scenario of late capitalism, and in his realizations he presents an interest in complicated capitalist methods of production and the complex circulation of power relations in the neoliberal world.[3] He often refers to historical figures and ideological concepts, which he takes out of their original context and puts into alternative scenarios, responding to the fact that human society is constituted by legends, intangible phenomena formed by higher hierarchical structures and ideologies, such as the story of Christ and Christianity in general.[4] We as individuals live in these prescribed scenarios and unconsciously adapt our lives to them.[5]

In his realization in the Broumov Monastery, Gillick appropriates the work of renowned modernist designer Eileen Gray. After her death, her work, like the work of other great artists, was turned from the ideal of design as a democratic, accessible medium into artifacts that were auctioned or sold as collector's items in specialized galleries.[6] Most renowned modernist designers struggled during their lifetimes because art institutions denied them recognition. Eileen Gray's work was not included in MoMA's permanent collection for many years.[7] Historically, however, the merging of applied and fine art is nothing special. In the past, the two disciplines mutually complemented or influenced each other or interacted side by side. They are to be found in the interiors of medieval Gothic cathedrals and Baroque buildings, in Viennese Art Nouveau projects, in the workshops of the Bauhaus art school, in the milieu of the postwar Italian avant-garde, and in the work of Marcel Duchamp or pop art artists.

The imaginary center of the installation, *Three Borrowed Gray Rotations* (2021), consists of six pieces of furniture, appropriating the iconic design of the Eileen Gray table, which Gillick has complemented with his own chair. Gray's original design dates from approximately 1922–1924; it is a versatile, multi-level side table made of wooden boards, painted in black and white on the

surface. This table is an homage to the architects of the Dutch group De Stijl, particularly Gerrit Rietveld, as well as other Dutch architects whom she became familiar with when she participated in the *Exposition Française d'Amsterdam: Industries d'Art et de Luxe at the Palais Voir Volksvlijt* in Amsterdam in 1922.[8]

Gray's table has a strong painterly and sculptural presence in space, augmented by the play of the horizontal and vertical planes, the juxtaposition of black and white paint, and the interplay of open spaces and solid surfaces. Gillick's intervention consists of a small shift in proportions, albeit an exacting one, in the case of the modernist work, as well as a fundamental change in the way the table is being presented. Gray designed furniture in relation to the vertical and horizontal planes of interior spaces, especially those of modern (Functionalist) architecture. The furniture was designed to fit within such walls and flat surfaces.[9] Gillick focuses primarily on contrast, positioning three tables in diametrically different ways in terms of their form and content within the Baroque interior. This object of modern production stands alone against a background of Baroque decoration and handcrafted items. Its clean planes can be observed from all sides, and the mass of the three tables balances the "weight" of the blackened oil painting adorning the center of the refectory vault.

On top of the tables is the new publication *Between Fable and Parable* (2021). In the concept, Gillick freely refers to the first artist's book by John Baldessari, *Ingres and Other Parables* (1972), in a format resembling a wall calendar. This piece took its genesis from a notebook entry where Baldessari had written, "Tell stories like Jesus." These were to be moral tales for young artists who had just graduated and were ready to enter the art community, and in the form of 10 illustrated parables, they pointed out the pitfalls to avoid.[10] Gillick's book is likewise a conceptual work. For his short written parables he borrows animal figures from (Aesop's) fables that find their doubles in the corporate world, in different jobs, or in a configuration database. The book's dimensions (15 × 10 cm) are reminiscent of prayer books intended for private prayer.

In today's post-media time, fine arts and design continue to evolve separately, although they often use similar principles and strategies. Gillick is specifically interested in issues of recycling, renovation and in the legacy of furniture design as a carrier of modernist "DNA".[11] He works in ways that the French art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud called post-production, denoting the tendency of a certain group of artists who have increasingly resorted to reinterpreting and reproducing works by other artists, or using existing cultural products (very often hitherto neglected forms) since the early 1990s.[12] A good example is Gillick's work with furniture design and this iconic product by Eileen Gray. According to Gillick, the creation of quasi-design can bring interesting stimuli to artistic practice and can formulate a new range of issues related to its development.[13] His thinking can be explained with the help of Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics (1998), which also includes Gillick's work. Artists (engaged in relational aesthetics) do not primarily care about the realization of specific objects but are more concerned with creating a reduced communication situation and new relationships.[14]

Liam Gillick (born 1964 in Aylesbury) lives and works in New York. His work has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *Redaction*, Casey Kaplan, New York, 2020; *Horseness is the Whatness of Allhorse*, Taro Nasu, Tokyo, 2020; *Standing on Top of a Building: Films 2008–2019*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina, Naples, 2019; *The Light is no Brighter at the Centre*, CAC, Vilnius, 2017) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *Drawing 2020*, Gladstone Gallery, New York, 2020; *Museum for Preventive Imagination – Editorial*, MACRO, Rome, 2020; *Age of You*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto, 2019; *Fly me to the Moon. 50 Jahre Mondlandung*, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, 2019; *Trix & Robert Haussmann. The Log-O-Rithmic Slide Rule: A Retrospective*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2018; *How to Live Together*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, 2017; and *John Latham – A World View*, Serpentine Gallery, London, 2017). In 2009 Gillick represented Germany at the 53rd Venice Biennale. In 2002 he was nominated for the Turner Price.

1 The Broumov copy was found in 1999 in a wooden case in St. Adalbert's Church above the Chapel of the Holy Cross behind a gilded stucco wreath with the inscription *Sancta Sindon* [Holy Shroud] together with a letter of authenticity dated 1651 signed by the Archbishop Julius Caesar Bergíria of Turin. It was given as a gift to Matouš Ferdinand Sobek of Bilenberk, the former monk of the Benedictine Order and Abbot of St. Nicolas Church in the Old Town of Prague and later Archbishop of Prague, who gave it during his lifetime to the Broumov Monastery. The document states that the replica was made during a ceremony by copying a painting from the "real" Turin Shroud and that it was given the sacrament by letting it touch the original. In the middle of the shroud, there is the inscription *Extractvm ab Originali* [extracted from the original]. The copy is displayed on the front wall in the refectory and dominates the entire room.
2 Liam Gillick, *A Complex of Thin Metal Rods Rehashed Art and Structured Discourse*, 2017, in Liam Gillick, *Half a Complex*, Berlin 2019, pp. 63–65.
3 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postprodukce* [Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World], Prague 2004, p. 39.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Deyan Sudjic, *The Language of Things*, London 2009, p. 210.
7 This happened only when it was inevitable from the point of view of the equal representation of both sexes. See Sudjic, *The Language of Things*, p. 187.
8 https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/eileengray/catalogue/#objects, accessed on 17 March 2021.
9 Ibid.
10 See Meg Cranston – Hans Ulrich Obrist (eds.), *More That You Wanted to Know about John Baldessari*, Berlin 2013.
11 Liam Gillick, *A Complex of Thin Metal Rods Rehashed Art and Structured Discourse*, 2017, in Liam Gillick, *Half a Complex*, p. 63., Berlin 2019
12 Bourriaud, *Postprodukce*, p. 3.
13 Gillick, *Half a Complex*, p. 63.
14 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Casoprostor v umění devadesátých let* [Nicolas Bourriaud, Space-time Factors in 1990s' Art], in http://www.divus.cc/praha/cs/article/relational-aesthetics-part-3, accessed on 5 May 2020.

Liam Gillick
Three Borrowed Gray Rotations, 2021
painted lacquered MDF
65 × 50 × 50 cm (desk)
25 × 30 × 30 cm (stool)
courtesy of the artist and Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna

Liam Gillick
Between Fable and Parable, 2021
print run of 50 pieces of 48pp books
15 × 10 cm
courtesy of the artist and Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna

Martin Kohout

Martin Kohout responds to the ever-growing ubiquity of digital media. In his work he combines new technologies, rationality and exact sciences with intuition and poetry, sometimes through the deliberate amateur use of technological devices. He often works with video, everyday installations, procedural works and performances that demonstrate certain principles of Western civilization with its ideals built on the development of high technologies and contingent on the continuous life online – the importance of continuity of time, authenticity, daily routine issues or the lack of physical activity. Kohout's artistic approach can be characterized by the tension between the simplicity of form and the degree of personal commitment, in which he puts his reputation at risk. This is especially true of his performances. In 2013, for example, he worked to the limit of his physical abilities, running through the seventeen-kilometer-long Gotthard Road Tunnel connecting two Swiss cantons. His recent performances include *Acapella ReDeLayered* (2020), Kohout's intense dance in front of an audience. However, his actions tend to be self-contained and, with a few exceptions, come into being without the participation of the audience, to whom they are subsequently presented in the form of documentation. The style of Kohout's performances is reminiscent of intimate, formally liberated and existentially based actions of the 1970s.

The animated video *Glare, and then everything stayed the same* (2021), which Kohout has prepared for the library of the Broumov Monastery, is a kind of a monolithic view of the interior, whose spatial disposition and individual items are associated with a sacral place. It presents a space in a special way, in which we experience a different state of perception and consciousness, as well as a certain timelessness. An important semantic element here is a Baroque window, which is a direct tool of the light production taking place inside the room and which also makes it possible to see the changes of day outside behind the walls of the building. The window thus conveys at least an approximate sense of time, while the gently changing scene in the interior occurs in a kind of time vacuum, within which a simple story is told.

The video works with the motif of light on two levels. On one level, it concerns the meaning of light as a purely physical phenomenon that we experience in everyday life and which helps us to exist and orient ourselves in the world; and on the other level, it works with an abstract quantity and culturally symbolic reference to something which transcends us and to which we attribute the qualities of the superhuman, "divine" or transcendental. Kohout cares about the illustration of the moment experienced inside the sacral architecture, which is accentuated by Baroque church buildings – he works with light in the interior and its dramatic impact on the perception of the size of the given space and its atmosphere, but above all with the uniqueness of the place.[1]

The rays of light that enter the interior in the video are artificially staged, but using advanced technical equipment and instructions that aim to achieve natural lighting effects and shadows. The process of animation becomes a certain metaphor for the manipulation of space by Baroque architects trying to evoke light phenomena that resemble those that naturally occur in nature, such as the rays of the sun passing through treetops or seeping through clouds, but also various atmospheric phenomena, such as vertical solar columns, etc. It is the same light that exists outside of architecture and which we do not always realize, while in the Baroque interior of a sacral building we seem to perceive its weight, although it is something intangible.[2]

Saint Benedict speaks about light in the Prologue to his *Rule*, where following divine light is synonymous with listening to God's words.[3] It is based on the encounter of man with God on Mount Sinai or Mount Tabor, evoking a fascination that has transcended human reason for centuries.[4] These scenes are usually depicted with light, the flaming sky and a lightning, describing the environment of the scene and a (divine) voice commanding the man to listen. The vault of the Broumov library hall, in which Kohout's video is exhibited, is decorated with the *Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor*, in which Jesus and three of his apostles go to a mountain, during which time Jesus begins to shine with bright rays of light and is transfigured before them, while Moses and Elijah appear next to him and he speaks with them.

Kohout's use of the Baroque style refers to the glorious past of the Broumov Monastery. At the same time, he has chosen less spectacular materials and framework for the scene, which does not necessarily have to be placed in a temple, but for which the operating premises of a monastery, such as part of an arcaded walk or of a corridor inside the abbot's residence, would suffice.

The video forms a time loop, presenting the main and basically only scene without giving a clue of what it tries to communicate. The artist applied a similar approach in his earlier work *Frogless* (2019), which is also an animated video featuring a frog in a failed attempt to jump. An invisible obstacle repeatedly prevents the frog from getting over it, and each unsuccessful attempt is followed by the sound of an unpleasant blunt impact of its body on the invisible surface. The word *Glare* in the title of the video *Glare, and then everything stayed the same* is evocative of Kohout's exhibition *Glare Inland, Quiet Attachment* (2011, Exile Gallery), from which it follows. The remaining part of the title, *and then everything stayed the same*, is a quote from *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the autobiography of the Trappist monk and theologian Thomas Merton. Kohout has selected a part of a sentence from the chapter on youth and studies, and employed it in the title as a certain paradox and agnostic controversy about faith, or as an expression of doubt about faith in general, which every believer goes through at certain stages.

The video, including its placement in the library, will be scanned as a 3D image after the opening of the exhibition and will become the basis of Kohout's next work – a video combining elements of documentation and the so-called director's cut. It will also contain a fictional verbal commentary based on a critical review of his own work exhibited in Broumov, including comments on the library and the exhibition *Ora et lege*. The real exhibition will thus serve as a setting and a theme for Kohout's new video, which will later be published online on the springs.video platform. The chosen form of work refers to the interconnectedness of individual projects of this artist, which are often complementary. At the same time, it is the result of Kohout's non-traditional approach to working with text, which he presents in his small-circulation publishing house TLTRPreß.[5] The critical commentary in the video is based on a similar principle as Kohout's short story of an earlier date, *Dear Muell*, which was published in an audio version in 2016. The short story is a fictional letter from a customer with a voice imitating David Attenborough, criticizing an imaginary customer center.

Martin Kohout (born 1984 in Prague) lives and works in Berlin and Prague. His work has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *BATEARS*, together with Adrienne Herr, Exile Gallery, Vienna, 2020; *What if we gave a birth to a frog*, Brno Art Open, 2019; *Victorian Basics and Martian Stories*, together with Viktor Timofeev, Levy/Delval, Brussels, 2018; *Shade at the Shapes without Names Headquarters*, Polansky Gallery, Prague, 2018; *DungeonTT*, together with Lars TCF Holdhus, Rupert, Vilnius, 2018; *Hungry*, Wschód, Warsaw, 2017) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *Orient 2*, Kunsthalle Bratislava, 2019; *Realism With Aribbon*, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburk, 2019; *The Undisciplined*, Kreuzberg Pavillon, Berlin, 2018; and *Medium: Figure*, Prague City Gallery, 2017). In 2017 he became a laureate of the Jindřich Chalupecký Award.

1 Interview with the artist, April 2021.
2 Ibid.
3 Prologue 9, 13, 43, *Regula Benedicti*, Řehole *Benediktova* [Regula Benedicti, Rule of Saint Benedict], Prague 1998.
4 Ibid., p. 31.
5 The TLTRPreß publishing house was founded by Martin Kohout in 2011 as a platform for collective collaboration to check various formal book concepts and the mixing of literary genres. So far, TLTRPreß has published about two dozen books including theoretical publications and academic writing, artists' monographs, comic books, fiction, poetry, as well as experimental forms of text such as e-mail correspondence. The editor of these books is Martin Kohout or other invited authors.

Martin Kohout
Glare, and then everything stayed the same, 2021
4K animated video loop without sound
courtesy of the artist, Exile Gallery, Vienna, and Polansky Gallery, Prague

Florian Meisenberg

For the Broumov monastic library, Florian Meisenberg has created a series of paintings using a CNC (computer numerical control) machine used to create machine drawings. In principle, these machines work on the basis of a preset program in automatic mode, in which a number of complex tasks are performed without the need for any intervention by the operator. Meisenberg either does not interfere in the process and lets the machine draw a precise simulation of the space with a permanent marker using a regular grid over the entire surface of the canvas, or intentionally moves the canvas underneath the machine's head, distorting the pre-programmed results. This gives rise to irregular shapes and slightly chaotic drawings, which are incorporated into the final work as visual elements. The characteristics of this system (efficiency, quantitatively high production and accuracy compared to hand painting, liberation from monotonous work) represent the basic features of contemporary automated work processes and serial production, which Meisenberg repeatedly incorporates into fine art.

In these paintings, the artist conceives of space in many ways, some of which reflect the development of perspective in the history of art. One of the greatest leaps in the Western history of representation is the difference between the medieval and (early) modern concepts of painting. The medieval iconography emphasized contact with the sacred (showing respect to the represented object/subject as such and also as a mediator of the worship of God) as the primary function of the image, which was not in line with the concept of optical illusion and depiction of the material world. The new concept came with the Italian Renaissance, when painted images became to be based on a linear perspective as a result of several variables in culture and science, such as increased interest in Euclidean geometry and Arabic optics or empirical study of natural phenomena. The new rules reflected the position of the viewer, the observed object and the pictorial area that stood between them. Later, Baroque art, as can be seen in the library hall, employed strategies for depicting divine phenomena, imperceptible to the human eye, within the visibility and reference of our world. This was facilitated by illusive perspective projections making it possible to paint "virtual reality" on the ceiling. The themes of Baroque mural paintings work with a metaphorical perception of space, in which that what transcends us (Christ, God, saints, angels, etc.) is logically placed above us, often on the illusive upper floor optically connected to the actual building. Meisenberg, like Baroque fresco painters, works with the illusiveness of space as the basic prerequisite of painting, complying with a set of principles and schemes according to which the image of the world is to be properly constructed. In Meisenberg's view, such image is (de)formed by the absolute reach of the digital world, new technologies, continuous online connection, including small details, such as the active use of the hitherto unusual movement of the finger on the touch screen. Automatic moving, scrolling, clicking, etc. are the movements that our fingertips, otherwise used to gripping, experience for the first time.[1, 2]

Meisenberg's art reflects the fact that our relationship to representation of reality is constantly changing in relation to new technologies. Leaving aside the excess of digital images, the virtual world services have significantly changed the production and perception of art in recent years. From the point of view of painting, several visual trends have appeared in the last decade trying to reflect the power of the Internet and its presence in virtual reality, and by extension in social media. Chronologically of the earliest date, at least in terms of media reflection, is zombie formalism, culminating between 2011 and 2015.[3] It included tendencies towards reductive painting and straightforwardness (formalism) and return and revival (zombie) of half-forgotten original painting principles, especially abstract expressionism.[4] In connection with these tendencies, consideration has been given to the extent to which viewing images on Instagram or social media generally affect their very appearance. One of the visible representatives of zombie formalism has been Florian Meisenberg, whose work goes far beyond the traditional use of canvas. In his exhibition projects, he always places a painted image at the center of a complex installation, often including, in addition to the painting, digital simulations to be experienced through virtual reality glasses or on the screen. For the artist, virtual reality becomes a full-fledged tool for creating and demonstrating the ability to use new technologies, not necessarily in a rational way, but rather as a poetic pictorial poem.

In Meinseberg's paintings, all simulation of space (virtual reality, skybox method, CNC machines, etc.) is constantly exposed to the "flattening" that we commonly experience in the digital version. The flattening of space can also be a metaphor for a certain distortion of reality and its manipulation through the media. Meinseberg responds to this in his work *Blowing from the West, Fallen Leaves, Gather in the East* from 2016, which complements Meisenberg's exhibited paintings. Its text has been generated by a computer program from all available archive files from Wikileaks, a non-profit media company that publishes classified government documents, while using the Internet to maintain the anonymity and untraceability of its sources. Based on a pre-programmed algorithm, Meisenberg's computer program selects words and sentences from the archives, each time creating new paragraphs. These appear before us as a handwritten projection of a certain message or confession. Meisenberg achieves this through the often absurd associations, reminiscent in their form of the artist's manifest or a kind of freeform poems accompanied by reproductions of works or photographs from life, which Meisenberg publishes on his Instagram account.

Paintings with a spatial grid have been installed in the library hall directly on bookshelves to figuratively simulate the infinite breadth of the archives – knowledge, experience and stories kept in the spacious monastic library. The method of installation reflects the fact that Benedictine libraries are pansophical, seeking to encompass all the knowledge of mankind just like the Internet today, which claims to be the primary source of information. The Broumov monastic library was established upon the founding of the monastery in the 14th century, and its main development took place in the 17th and 18th centuries when local abbots collaborated with a wide network of buyers, covering the whole of Central, Western and Southern Europe, and complemented their collections with books both new and old.[5] In the first half of the 18th century, the abbot's residence underwent a major modernization in the High Baroque style, and so Meisenberg's paintings happen to be set in a grandiose Baroque interior of the hall.

Florian Meisenberg (born 1980 in Berlin) lives and works in Berlin and in New York. His work has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *onehundredfortythousandonehundredsixtyhourslater*, Kunstparterre, Mnichov, 2020; *Electric Forest (Bowery)*, Simone Subal, New York, 2020; *Pre-Alpha Courtyard Games (raindrops on my cheek)*, Zabludowicz Collection, London, 2019; *Complimentary Blue*, together with Anna K. E., Kunstpalais Erlangen, 2019; *Deep Tissue*, Berlin Model, Prague, 2019) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *Jetzt!*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, 2020; *Zoom*, Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf, 2020; *Jetzt!,* Kunstsammlung Chemnitz, 2019; *Link in Bio*, Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig, 2019; *VR360: Nausea*, Zabludowicz Collection, London, 2018; and *Hello World! Online Art*, Kiasma, Helsinki).

1   Omar Kholeif deals with this new touch in his book *Goodbye, World* (Berlin 2018, p. 133.)
2   The above-mentioned is well illustrated by the artist's web project, his own site, which uses a pre-programmed algorithm to search the Internet for content associated with his name, which is mixed with reproductions of his works. This material emerges from the depths of the Internet and forms the background for the abstraction created by moving your finger across the screen. The abstraction that appears on the display can be recorded at any time as a screen shot, and is also automatically archived to the system. Meisenberg intends to continue working with this material. See www.florianmeisenberg.com.
3   The term *zombie formalism* was coined by the American art critic and artist Walter Robinson, who used it in his essay *Flipping and the Rise of Zombie Formalism*, published in April 2014, in *Artspace*, https://www.artspace.com/magazine/contributors/see_here/the_rise_of_zombie_formalism-52184, accessed on 2 April 2016.
4   Ibid.
5   Anna Holešová, *Obsahová skladba broumovské knihovny na příkladu starých tisků* [The Composition of the Content of the Broumov Library on the Example of Old Prints], Martina Bolom-Kotari (ed.), *Knihovny benediktinských klášterů Broumov a Rajhrad* [Libraries of the Benedictine Monasteries of Broumov and Rajhrad], Hradec Králové 2019, p. 61.
6   Jiří Kolda, *Osudy broumovské konventní knihovny v Broumově* [The Fate of the Broumov Monastic Library in Broumov], in Ibid., p. 23.

Florian Meisenberg
A Room with a View (What Time Is), 2021
machine controlled permanent marker, oil on canvas
137 × 137 cm
courtesy of the artist and Wentrup Gallery, Berlin

Florian Meisenberg
Blowing from the West, Fallen Leaves, Gather in the East
2016
maxpatch, algorithmic simulation
developed in collaboration with Tommy Martinez, NYC
courtesy of the artist and Wentrup Gallery, Berlin

Florian Meisenberg
Im tollen Wahn hatt ich dich einst verlassen,
Ich wollte gehn die ganze Welt zu Ende,
Und wollte sehn, ob ich die Liebe fände,
Um liebevoll die Liebe zu umfassen.
Die Liebe suchte ich auf allen Gassen,
Vor jeder Türe streckt ich aus die Hände,
Und bettelte um g'ringe Liebesspende –
Doch lachend gab man mir nur kaltes Hassen.
Und immer irrte ich nach Liebe, immer
Nach Liebe, doch die Liebe fand ich nimmer,
Und kehrte um nach Hause, krank und trübe.
Doch da bist du entgegen mir gekommen,
Und ach! was da in deinem Aug' geschwommen,
Das war die süße, langgesuchte Liebe.

With foolish fancy I deserted thee;
I fain would search the whole world through, to learn
If in it I perchance could love discern,
That I might love embrace right-lovingly.
I sought for love as far as eye could see,
My hands extending at each door in turn,
Begging them not my prayer for love to spurn—
Cold hate alone they laughing gave to me.
And ever search'd I after love; yes, ever
Search'd after love, but love discover'd never,
And so I homeward went, with troubled thought;
But thou wert there to welcome me again,
And, ah, what in thy dear eye floated then
That was the sweet love I so long had sought.
(trans. Edgar Alfred Bowring)

Books in the hall are placed in 33 bookcases with a uniform gray-green design with decorative extensions. These indicate the area of knowledge to which the books on the shelves belong. Their placement in bookcases was also a matter of aesthetics – the arrangement of books depended on their format and the type and color of their binding, i.e., the books also acquired a decorative function and had to please the eye.[6] Meisenberg's works are mounted on these "walls" of books in order to achieve an illusion of space through a perspective, but they are also a metaphor for human knowledge, which by itself represents the collectively shared archives. The library thus provides a context and a framework to the physical environment, with which Meisenberg freely works as with an exhibition hall.

2021
machine controlled permanent marker, iridescent acrylic and oil paint on canvas
127 × 127 cm
courtesy of the artist and Wentrup Gallery, Berlin

Slavs and Tatars

In 1964, the founder of the Benedictine Order, Saint Benedict of Nursia, was named patron protector of Europe by Pope Paul VI. The Pope wished to emphasize the importance of Saint Benedict's role in the cultural, educational and Christian cultivation of the European continent. What did it mean to be a patron of Europe at the beginning, and what does it mean today? What values, symbols and ideals have been preserved from the past and what has changed? A series of four reverse paintings on glass created by the "Slavs and Tatars" group critically challenges deep-rooted stereotypes about national identity, power, language and religion.

The Slavs and Tatars are an international collective or, more precisely, a platform whose members act anonymously and work as one organism. They take an unconventional approach to researching the cultural diversity of the geographical area that lies "east of the former Berlin Wall and west of the Great Wall of China".[1] The platform began in 2006 as a book club whose activities initially focused mainly on language research and working with books. Today they deal with these topics using various media. They organize lectures, produce their own publications, create complex art installations, and curate exhibitions. In the beginning, the form of a club was ideal for avoiding the kind of hierarchy that naturally forms in the academic environment or in cultural institutions.[2] In their work, the Slavs and Tatars undermine the well-established idea of the "clash of religions and civilizations" between East and West with the help of satirical humor that is reminiscent of various non-conformist satirical weekly magazines. They consider themselves to be everyday archaeologists, attempting to "resuscitate" history and seeking alternative scenarios to reactivate cultural memory.[3] This attitude corresponds to the belief that cultural memory is not a predetermined thing, but rather a phenomenon that is constantly being materially and ideologically formed. The series of reverse paintings on glass presented in the St. Gertrude mortuary chapel in the Broumov Monastery is a site-specific series created for this exhibition, symptomatically representing the basic characteristics of this movement. Thematically, it loosely follows from the series of an earlier date, *Friendship of Nations: Polish Shi'ite Showbiz*, first presented at the 10th Sharjah Biennial in 2011, consisting of a publication, objects, lectures, etc., which examined political, literary and religious overlaps in the history of two countries – Iran and Poland – from the 17th century to the present. This series was a symbolic beginning of their long-term interest in discovering the convergence of the Catholic faith and Shiite Islam, to which the series for the Broumov Monastery is connected.

The starting point of the series was the historically unique and undoubtedly risky four-day trip made by the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, to Iraq in early March 2021. During the apostolic journey, Pope Francis met with the Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, the leader of Iraq's Shiites, an event considered a significant milestone in Iraqi history and the most important event in the dialogue between the two religions. The pope's visits to ancient cities, such as Ur (the birthplace of Patriarch Abraham according to the Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions), were also symbolic. By visiting Ur and referring to Abraham's legacy in his speech in this city, the pope put an emphasis on the concept of Abrahamic religions as one faith tradition.[4]

With their contribution, the Slavs and Tatars are responding to the numerous analogies between the Catholic faith and (Shiite) Islam in terms of theology, iconography (12 imams corresponding to 12 apostles, etc.), but also, for example, the use of traditional reverse painting on glass which, with its roots in antiquity and in Byzantine culture, is one of the very oldest techniques of glass refining.[5]

Reverse glass painting is a specific phenomenon of folk art and performed primarily a religious function, to which was further attributed a magical function, namely magical protection or magical prosperity.[6] It is based on the cult of the image and the belief that an image, as a representation of the person depicted, has the same power and characteristics as the represented figure.[7] Pilgrims brought home sacred images and other devotional articles from their pilgrimages as objects of private and collective piety. The depicted saints were supposed to protect the owner and members of his household or ensure his prosperity. In the Czech environment, their placement in peasants' houses served a religious function. The "sacred corner" was located in the corner of the living room, diagonally opposite the furnace, where a table with benches formed the natural center of family life.[8] It was a place for daily prayers by individual members of the family and for their gatherings, for example, before meals or on special or urgent occasions. The pictures were often hung obliquely so as to be clearly visible from the table. In the case of a serious illness, the table turned into an altar when a priest came to administer the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.[9]

In the Czech folk environment, reverse glass paintings became household items in the middle of the 18th century. Their production took place in the borderlands inhabited by ethnic Germans and was connected with the glass industry. There was one such workshop in Broumov. The theme of a reverse glass painting was almost always associated with the Catholic faith and the depiction of saints. After the implementation of the Edict of Toleration *(Toleranzpatent)* in 1781, images began to be painted on glass for Protestants as well. Since the Protestant Church forbade the depiction of the body, the motifs were more modest, moralistic, and didactic, containing quotations from the Bible or the Edict of Toleration, Eucharistic symbols and symbols of faith.[10] At the end of the 19th century, their role changed into a decorative display item, and the development of folk painting on glass practically ended. At present in the Czech environment, several artists use this traditional technique more as a kind of leisure activity. One of them is Jiří Honnis in Opalovice near České Budějovice, who created paintings for this exhibition after Slavs and Tatars designs, reflecting his own artistic style. Shared co-authorship and the choice of traditional handicrafts is the result of a specific understanding of the collective work of people of different professions, following the example of the Arts & Crafts movement, which reformed the arts and crafts in the second half of the 19th century. The Slavs and Tatars have chosen craft as a gesture of solidarity, whether between faith, ethnicity or between different types of art.[11]

The Slavs and Tatars are presenting paintings that could be hung in the home of either a Catholic or a Shiite family. The individual scenes feature elements of both religions. On the one hand, these elements appear in a simple combination of characteristic components, and on the other hand – when, for example, the faces of the Catholic apostles are covered with Shiite veils, they manipulate familiar scenes. *The Last Supper* could thus also depict a meeting of the 12 imams, and the face of Christ could be the face of a caliph (*Communion (Ahl al-Apostles)*, 2021). The reproduction of a facial likeness, which has appeared in various forms in history, can be interpreted as an attempt to indicate inclusion and continuity.[12] Covering the face can also act as a reminder of iconoclastic movements and the following verses: "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them."[13] In the Christian religion, this comes up in an almost regular repetition in both major reformations and in small initiatives for *ecclesia semper reformanda* [the church reformed, always reforming].[14] Islam forbids the depiction of human face and body, which especially applies to the Prophet Muhammad and his close associates. In Persian art, however, we find examples of his partial depiction. The face of the prophet is "whitewashed" here, either emitting light or seeming to be covered by a blanket, to at least partially comply with the ban on images.

The collection of reverse glass paintings by the Slavs and Tatars is accompanied by an essay entitled *Mary and Fātima in the Catholic and Shi'a Traditions* by Christopher P. Clohessy, a Catholic priest and professor of Shiite Islamic studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies in Rome. The essay on the respective roles of Mary and Fatima in Christianity and Islam is the result of a symposium on the dialogue between the two religions, initiated by the Benedictine community in Worth Abbey in England and the Qum Research Institute in Iran. The Slavs and Tatars accompany this essay with their own commentary, which they use to contextualize the text for the exhibition *Ora et lege*.

Slavs and Tatars (established 2006 in Eurasia) is an anonymous international art collective, originally founded by a Polish-Iranian duo. The work of Slavs and Tatars has been presented at many solo exhibitions (e.g., *Régions d'Être*, Villa Arson, Nice, 2020; *Crack Up-Crack Down*, CCA Ujazdowski, Warsaw, curated by Slavs and Tatars, 2020; *Pickle Politics*, Sugar Contemporary, Toronto, 2019; *Sauer Power,* Kunstverein Hannover, 2018; *Made in Dschermany*, Albertinum, Dresden, 2018; *Mouth to Mouth*, CAC, Vilnius, 2017; *Mirrors for Princes*, Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich, 2014; *Beyonsense, Projects 98*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012; *Khhhhh-hh,* Moravian Gallery, Brno, 2012) as well as group exhibitions (e.g., *Empört Euch!*, Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, 2020; *Amuse-Bouche: The Taste of Art*, Museum Tingley, Basle, 2020; *Arts & Crafts*, Kunsthaus Graz, 2019; *Krefeld hybrID*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 2019 ad.). In 2019 the work of this group was presented at the main exhibition of the 58th Venice Biennale.

1 https://slavsandtatars.com/news, accessed on 8 May 2020.
2 https://www.whitefungus.com/kind-circuity, accessed on 5 May 2020.
3 https://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-1/interview-with-slavs-and-tatars-, accessed on 6 June 2020.
4 https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/9/pope-franciss-visit-to-iraq-beyond-the-symbolism, accessed on 11 September 2020.
5 Luboš Kafka, *Malované na skle* [Painted on Glass], Prague 2005, p. 7.
6 Kafka, *Malované na skle* [Painted on Glass], p. 64.
7 Ibid. p. 62.
8 Ibid, p. 64.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid, p. 31.
11 A commentary of the Slavs and Tatars in their text for the exhibition *Ora et lege*, 2021.
12 See Ivan Folletti and Katharina Meinecke, *Jupiter, Christus, Chalifa* [Jupiter, Christ, Caliph], Brno 2019.
13 Exodus, 20:4–5.
14 Friedhelm Mennekes, *Nadšení a pochybnost* [Enthusiasm and Doubt; *Begeisterung und Zweifel* in the German original], Prague 2013, p. 12.

Slavs and Tatars
Communion (Visit Iraquiam), 2021
reverse painting on glass with acrylic and synthetic paint
32 × 44 cm
courtesy of the artists and Raster Gallery, Warsaw

Slavs and Tatars
Communion (Ahl al-Apostles), 2021
reverse painting on glass with acrylic and synthetic paint
32 × 44 cm
courtesy of the artists and Raster Gallery, Warsaw

Slavs and Tatars
Communion (The Guarantor of the Deer), 2021
reverse painting on glass with acrylic and synthetic paint
44 × 32 cm
courtesy of the artists and Raster Gallery, Warsaw

Slavs and Tatars
Communion (Virgin Buraq), 2021
reverse painting on glass with acrylic and synthetic paint
32 × 44 cm
courtesy of the artists and Raster Gallery, Warsaw

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