

# Ora et lege

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

*Ora et lege*  
Broumov Monastery  
19 June – 30 September 2021  
Exhibition Opening: 18 June 2021  
Exhibition Curator: Monika Čejková

The exhibition project *Ora et lege* is a dialogue between contemporary art and the essence of the teachings of the Benedictines, the oldest religious order in Western Christianity. The venue of the exhibition is the Benedictine monastery in Broumov, where artists Ed Atkins, Kamilla Bischof, Jesse Darling, Liam Gillick, Martin Kohout, Florian Meisenberg and Slavs and Tatars have prepared works referring to the history, knowledge, teachings and spiritual culture of the Benedictines. The author of the project is the exhibition curator Monika Čejková, who prepared it based on her discussions with Archabbot of Břevnov, Petr Prokop Siostrzonek OSB.

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. 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”. 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.

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 – the sacred and its representation (Liam Gillick, Florian Meisenberg, Kamilla Bischof). 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 as an analogy to the state of society in general (Jesse Darling, Kamilla Bischof). 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.

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

Open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
(June, September) or 5 p.m.  
(July, August); Guided tours:  
3 July, 17 July, 31 July, 14 August,  
28 August, 11 September  
and 25 September 2021

Admission: CZK 160 adults /  
CZK 90 children and senior  
citizens (to be paid on the  
guided tour); The admission  
fee includes a printed  
exhibition guide.

The exhibition is organized by the Broumov Educational and Cultural Center, a non-profit organization founded in 2013 by the Broumov Region Development Agency. Through cultural, educational, and community activities, the agency helps to promote the life of the Broumov Monastery, a national cultural monument, and is a celebrated European institution that encourages creativity, self-confidence, and tolerance. The exhibition *Ora et lege* is presented under the auspices of the Archabbot of Břevnov and Broumov, Petr Prokop Siostrzonek OSB. Realization of the exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, the State Cultural Fund of the Czech Republic, the Hradec Králové Region, the Czech-German Fund for the Future, the German Embassy, the Polish Institute, the Austrian Cultural Forum, and Hobra-Skolnik.