

Countryside Therapy

Vladimír Drápal, Jakub Dvořák & Michaela Nováková, Šárka Janeba, Barbora Lungová,
Bedřich Mrkva, Filip Nádvorník, Anna Treterová, Barbora Vovsová

This group exhibition brings together contemporary artists from various generations to explore the countryside as a place with transformative and healing potential in the face of the many challenges faced by modern civilization. These include people's growing mental and spiritual troubles associated with feelings of constant overload, burnout, anxiety, climate angst, or fatigue from an online world that disconnects us from the physical world in an era of artificial intelligence and climate change. The exhibition posits the rural way of life as a possible form of therapy, a path toward a simpler and slower life, a return to everyday things and physical activities. The countryside is also a place of more sustainable and self-sufficient living and artistic practice – it offers opportunities for actively producing one's own resources, for cultivation, community, fixing things oneself, and traditional artisanry and handicrafts, all of which can offer a sense of satisfaction and physical connection with natural materials and the world around us. The rural environment also provides an opportunity for a deeper relationship and oneness with nature, animals, the soil, the landscape, and natural cycles and rhythms, an integral part of which are rituals and feasts or holidays that retain their original meanings. In art and life today, the countryside and people's relationship to a given place, to local and community-based forms of land management, and to looking after the natural environment have become a part of active and activist agroecology and of alternative ways of life whose basic principles and approaches can be applied in the public space of the city as well. In this regard, the countryside is not an escape from reality, but can become a healing stimulus for resetting ingrained and unhealthy patterns of civilization.

At the same time, the idea of the countryside continues to evoke ambivalent emotions associated with various clichés and enduring cultural stereotypes. The face of today's countryside and the problems it faces are to a great extent the result of the violent collectivization of agriculture in the past, which ended up devastating the landscape and destroying rural structures, including original relationships and ways of life. Traditional rural culture has been and continues to be abused by national political ideologies, which hold it up as a form of national art, thus draining it of all meaning. Today's countryside faces numerous problems such as a lack of job opportunities, poor transportation, poverty, social exclusion, poor access to education or healthcare, and a general marginalization of the difficulties faced by rural populations. To a great extent, rural life today has come to resemble urban life on the periphery. On the other hand, considering the growing housing costs in the city, the countryside offers many people a chance to find affordable housing and a different life rhythm. For them, leaving for the countryside can be a challenge, but also an opportunity to return to things that many of us forgot long ago.

The exhibition explores the subject of the countryside in an associative manner, through sculptures and paintings by artists for whom rural life is a source of inspiration – either via direct experience with life outside the city, or as a way of working with the materials and themes that they explore through their art. Besides works by contemporary artists, the exhibition also includes selected pieces by the important Brno painter, printmaker, sculptor, and teacher Vladimír Drápal.

Curator: Marika Svobodová
Exhibition architect: Max Lysáček

House of the Lords of Kunštát
11 March – 24 May 2026
www.dum-umeni.cz

Accompanying program

Wednesday 18 March 2026, 4.30pm → For Me at the House of Arts – art workshop inspired by the exhibition

Saturday 28 March 2026, 9.30am – 3pm → Visit to a studio and garden and to artist Jan Karpíšek's bee colony in Soběšice near Brno

Wednesday 8 April 2026, 5pm → Guided tour of the exhibition featuring a discussion with invited guests

Wednesday 15 April 2026, 4:30pm → For Me at the House of Arts – art workshop inspired by the exhibition

Saturday 24 April 2026, 4pm → Brno Art Week – guided tour followed by workshop in the courtyard of the House of the Lords of Kunštát

Sunday 24 May 2026, 9:30am – 4pm → Visit to the Rainbow Garden near Kyjov with artist Barbora Lungová



For more information on accompanying events, follow our website: www.dum-umeni.cz.

→ *VLADIMÍR DRÁPAL*

Painter, printmaker, sculptor, and teacher Vladimír Drápal (1921–2015) – a founding member of the Brno art groups Profil 58 and Sdružení Q – studied at Brno’s School of Artistic Craftsmanship in the 1940s and subsequently under Josef Kaplický at the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague. He lived in his small hometown of Tvarožná near Brno, which became a microcosm for his lifelong art – characterized by a deep relationship to and connection with his immediate surroundings and the local inhabitants, animals, and nature. Drápal’s sculptures and prints lend the exhibition a layer of intergenerational experience. His works included in the exhibition – the head of a peasant, sculptural and graphic portraits of horses, and small abstract wax or wood models – place basic human, animal, and natural forms in a close relationship to one another, as related forms found in nature.

→ *JAKUB DVOŘÁK*
& *MICHAELA NOVÁKOVÁ*

The paintings of Jakub Dvořák (*1998), a graduate of the painting studio at Brno University of Technology’s Faculty of Fine Arts who since 2023 has occasionally collaborated with Michaela Nováková, capture the reality of today’s suburban landscape in the Vysočina Region, where both artists grew up and live. Their paintings of rural houses, streets, courtyards, gardens, or high-tension power lines in the landscape are an objective commentary and portrait of places – neither idealized nor ironic. From his position as observer, Dvořák records or documents the current form of places characterized by layers of past and present folk inventiveness and by the infiltration of urban cultural elements into rural architecture and the local landscape, of which they became an integral part.

→ *ŠÁRKA JANEBA*

The painter and illustrator Šárka Janeba (*1995) is a graduate of the painting studio at Brno University of Technology’s Faculty of Fine Arts. In her art, she focuses on everyday items, details of which she takes out of context and places into the center of her paintings as unique meaning-forming symbols that retain their original qualities despite their simple and reduced form. At the exhibition, Janeba is represented by a set of paintings from the A Bed Full of Weeds cycle, which reflects her life in the small village in the Vysočina Region where she and her family moved several years ago in order to build their own house, studio, and

garden. Taken as a whole, her paintings of seeds, bulbs, fruits, and weeds form an illustrated atlas of shapes accompanied by records of observation, work, and a sense of awe at the unpredictable growth, diversity, and forms found in nature.

→ *BEDŘICH MRKVA*

A recent graduate of the Department of Sculpture at Ostrava University, Bedřich Mrkva (*1999) focuses on working with wood, a choice of material that was influenced by the fact that his father owned a carpentry workshop and that he himself has his own craftsmanship experience. It also reflects a deep interest in the character of natural materials and the possibilities of working with them. Combining materiality and traditional craft techniques with inner feelings, personal experiences, and memories of his native Beskydy landscape, his sculptures and reliefs are formally reduced abstract and imaginative works characterized by the use of drawing, which enters into both the surface and the volume of the sculptural form. The contemplative nature of Mrkva’s work is closely intertwined with his personal outlook and his life in a small village in the Beskydy Mountains.

→ *FILIP NÁDVORNÍK*

The paintings of Filip Nádvořník (*1995), a graduate of the painting studio at Ostrava University’s Faculty of Fine Arts, reflect the personal experiences of an artist who, besides engaging in his artistic practice, also dedicates his time to his family farm and to carpentry work in a small town near Jeseník. The local Sudeten landscape, traditional architecture, animal husbandry, and work on the farm have all found expression in the narrative scenes of Nádvořník’s paintings, in which an exaggerated alter ego appears in the form of a cowboy – that complicated male hero who combines romanticism with colonialism, the expulsion of a region’s original inhabitants, and the confiscation of their lands. At the same time, the region’s everyday reality and rural idyll are associated primarily with ordinary tasks, hard physical labor, and the need to look after land, plants, and animals.

→ *BARBORA LUNGOVÁ*

In her artistic practice, Barbora Lungová (*1977), a graduate of the painting studio at Brno University of Technology’s Faculty of Fine Arts and winner of the 2025 Jindřich Chaloupecký Award, focuses on a critical examination of the canon of masculinity in painting and on environmental themes associated with queer identity in

the field of “critical gardening.” At the exhibition, she is represented by paintings from an earlier cycle of paintings titled Moravian Gothic, in which she subversively turns upside-down various stereotypes associated with rural Moravia, folk customs, and the traditional role of men and representations thereof. She also shows recent works, including a hand-painted book that explores queer desire in relation to nature and the landscape. In these works, guerilla and queer gardening become a means by which to question established clichés and to break free from normative models in order to actively participate in the public and natural space and look after its assets.

→ *ANNA TRETEROVÁ*

A recent graduate of the painting studio at Ostrava University’s Faculty of Fine Arts, Anna Treterová (*2000) presents several works from a set of paintings and ceramic sculptures on the motif of the ear of grain as a symbol of human society’s ancient connection with the soil, plants, animals, and nature. This theme reflects the artist’s personal experiences and her childhood memories of life on the small farm where her family has lived for generations and where these relationships and deeper connections with nature can be naturally developed and strengthened. The ear of grain, a symbol of birth and growth, has the structure of a fractal, an irregular geometric shape in which each smaller detail resembles the overall whole. It is thus a physical representation of the universal order of nature. In her work, Treterová draws on environmental philosophy, mythological texts, and physical and mathematical theories.

→ *BARBORA VOVSOVÁ*

Barbora Vovsová (*1991) is a graduate of the sculpture studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where she currently lives and works. She finds inspiration for her art from her travels and especially from nature, in particular from the growth of natural microstructures that organically evolve into more complex spatial forms. She works with wood, wax, and concrete. At the exhibition, she is showing a set of sculptural reliefs and drawn textile installations titled Mountains. In these pieces, she works with the gradual evolution of imaginative ornamental structures into architectural elements that resemble traditional structures or symbolic spiritual spaces filled with emotions arising from the monumentality of nature and mountains transcending the human scale.

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