**Tomáš Ruller**

**PERFORM-MADE / Resistant Moments**

13 September – 12 November, 2017

Curator: Dušan Brozman

Opening on 12 September, 2017 at 6 pm, press conference at 1 pm

The House of Arts, Malinovského nám. 2, Brno

**The Brno House of Arts presents a retrospective exhibition of Tomáš Ruller (\*1957), an important representative of action art and one of the first Czech video artists. The exhibition provides an overview of his work from 1974 up to the present.**

**The exhibition, prepared in cooperation with the Prague City Gallery**, consists of two sections separated in space and time, structured with regard to the two basic levels of Ruller's action art work. **The exhibition in Brno focuses on photographs and objects, presenting Ruller’s work in terms of classical imagery, while the Prague exhibition, scheduled for 2018, will focus on the element of time and the moving image.**

Tomáš Ruller, a native of Brno and an active performance artist since the 1970s, has been a key figure of the Czechoslovak art scene since the first half of the eighties. He has held performances continuously since then, often combining them with multimedia installations. His work is largely based on pre-conceived projects, as well as on systematic documentation work, evolving from simple photo-documentation of his early actions, when high-quality reproduction technology was almost unavailable in art circles, up to sophisticated digital recordings and postproduction more recently. The work of Tomáš Ruller is an important pillar of Central European postmodern art. It features distinctive diversity and a multimedia character, combining, for example, live performances with their projections and recordings, manipulated in real time. Much emphasis is put on work with symbols expressed by gestures, materials, objects, and media. Particularly important to him is their ambiguity and openness of meaning.

**In seven spaces and chapters, the exhibition in the House of Art** presents an overview of Ruller's work, with an emphasis on photographs, objects and installations, complemented with a selection of the most important video projections.

The retrospective leads the visitor from the early actions of the 1970s, realised in nature and alternative communities, through the expressive body-art actions of the 1980s. The next chapter covers the international cooperation projects *School of Attention* and *Black Market*. Their hours-long collective improvised actions could be characterized as action jam-sessions, historically following the Fluxus movement. The core of the work of the 1990s involves installations and performances integrating new media and technologies. Documentation and objects relating to alchemical experiments appear in Ruller’s work from the turn of the millennium. They may be seen, similarly to the *Open Situations* actions, as parallels of human coexistence and its interactivity. “*With the glass installations, large and wobbly, visitors have the opportunity to experience other important aspects in Ruller’s work, namely fragility, instability and vigorous tension. These subjects culminate in a sound-proof dark chamber, a storage battery of human energies, where the performer is the mind of the visitor, who is at the same time also the only direct observer of the process*,” says Dušan Brozman, the exhibition curator.

**The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated monograph**, mapping the essential periods, themes and forms of Ruller's artistic career with essays by contemporary Czech and Slovak art historians. Historical reflections, interviews with the artist and his own theoretical ideas provide a socio-cultural context to his work and a key to understanding it.

**Tomáš Ruller** (\*1957, Brno), is an artist, theorist, organizer and teacher. He studied sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In parallel with classical studies, he devoted himself to action art, engaging in alternative culture, and also in political resistance. The most famous moments of his performances include falling face first into a pile of dust (plaster, chalk, marble), his head covered with layers of paint, and especially his burning and collapsing figure. They appeared, for example, in extreme events such as *Prezentace / 5 dní* (Presentation / 5 Days; Brno 1987), *8. 8. 88* (Prague 1988) and *Ve třech dnech / 72 hodin* (In Three Days / 72 Hours; Prague 1988). He was represented at ground-breaking Czech exhibitions such as *Malechov* (1980 and 1981), *Malostranské dvorky* (Lesser Side Courtyards; Prague 1981), *Chmelnice* (Hop Field; Mutějovice 1983). He was a co-founder of the international movement of performers *School of Attention* (Warsaw 1983) and *Black Market* (Poznan, 1985), and organiser of the *Open Situation* festivals (Prague 1989 and 2007). He was soon recognized on the international scene. He was also one of the first Czechoslovak artists represented at the Documenta exhibitions in Kassel (1987), although the Czechoslovak authorities prevented his direct participation at that time. Ruller was a pioneer of new media art in the former Czechoslovakia; he experimented and developed the possibilities of technologies, from lasers and projections (from the late 1970s), through video (since the first half of the 1980s), analogue and digital transmission (in the 1990s), to live streaming (after 2000).

The exhibition is held under the auspices of Mr Petr Vokřál, Mayor of the City of Brno.

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