

Art is the best thing that could have happened to me. I am delighted whenever I can discover, live and gain new experiences. (H. Bistika, 2023)

The **herzLicht** exhibition showcases the work of the East Slovak artist Helmut Bistika, a figure who has spent most of his creative life working outside the artistic mainstream. His work has developed in isolation, inclining more towards the German-speaking world than to Slovakia. In terms of form, his art follows in the line of the art brut movement, but the artist himself does not consider this as important – the key aspects of his work are creativity, freedom of expression and a joyful playfulness. The exhibition commemorates the occasion of the artist's 60th birthday and is presented as part of the *Profiles* exhibition cycle.

Bistika's work emerges from the rich local cultural and narrative heritage of the Carpathian Germans and is strongly influenced by his work with the mentally and physically disabled. Art therapy, in which the artist helps others, is not only a form of treatment but is also a powerful experience and a source of mutual learning. What are the key principles of our existence? How are our behaviour and choices determined by our impulses?

The artist is acutely aware of the fragility of life, of the limited temporality of our bodies. Half-life is an unavoidable reality that we can only come to terms with through a certain corrective madness. His works are marked by an overgrowth of blood vessels, suffused with sexual energy and the nearness of death. Life is full of suffering, yet we can be saved through love, the generative (and creative) fertility.

Bistika's earlier work consists of portraits, including self-portraits, and angel motifs that express the search for his inner being and the hope of release from earthly suffering. Mythological creatures and other beasts refer to the animal nature and occasional savagery of humankind. In his more recent work, the artist takes an abstract approach to this feeling, damaging and treating the material to emphasise its symbolic value and memory. He often works with found materials, both natural and civilisational, which he deconstructs and combines into surprising collages. Day by day, he rediscovers and recycles subjects, forms and ideas. The sheer variety of used materials allows for multiple interpretations, in which the haptic quality of the work alludes to the sense of touch, a crucial element in psychic and also physical healing.

Mgr. art. Katarína Balúnová, ArtD.,
exhibition curator

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Produced by: Gallery of Spiš Artists – cultural facility of Košice Self-governing Region, in cooperation with the artist

herzLicht

noch immer wichtig/
stále dôležité

Helmut Bistika

profiles

Helmut Bistika (* 31. 7. 1963) is a painter, graphic artist and creator of art objects. He studied art carpentry, pedagogy and art therapy. Since 2009 he has worked as an art therapist for the Maják NPO, and he has long collaborated with the Department of Paediatric Oncology in Košice. He has organised and led creative workshops for children both in Slovakia and abroad (Germany, Belgium, Denmark). Since 1989 he has exhibited his work not only in galleries but also in unofficial spaces, cafés and churches. In 2009 he opened the Galerie Cafe, a space for Creativity, Art and Coffee in his hometown of Medzev. He is an active member of the East Slovak art group C+S and has participated in many artistic residencies abroad. His work has been exhibited in Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Austria and the USA and features in the collections of the East Slovak Museum in Košice, the Gallery of Spiš Artists and private collections both in Slovakia and abroad (Germany, Austria, USA).

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