

Artists: Helmut Bistika • Gali Fleischmann (CZ)
• Igor Hrnko • Ondrej Jurín • Peter Lipkovič • Andrea
Lipkovičová • Renata Szyszlak (PL) • Viktor Šefčík •
František Turcsányi • Edita Vološčuková • Júlia Zelená

Guests: Antonina Jasińska (PL) • Peter Župník
• Ester Šefčíková-Zaňáková

The narrative of coexistence which is presented in the symBIOsis C+S exhibition is a symbolic exploration of the fragility of contemporary humanity and our relationship to nature, society and our own identity in an era marked by instability, migration, conflict and ecological crisis. Employing a wide array of media, the artists explore the network of relationships, interconnections and cooperation between people, nature and culture. The exhibition is presented as part of the Theme cycle of exhibitions.

The project reflects upon the work by members of the C+S art collective; founded in 1990, C+S is one of the longest running organizations of its type in Slovakia. While the members of the collective have changed over time, the motto and the creative philosophy enshrined in its founding principles continue to uphold the group's quality and relevance, as is manifested in its ongoing exploration, experimentation and discovery. The collective currently consists of thirteen permanent members from three different countries (SK, CZ, PL).

Humanity is in a fragile state of mind. And there seems to be less of it than ever before. We are lost in our own worlds, stripped of all certainty; we are groping in the dark, fearful of what comes next. "We flee to the artificial paradises of social media, towards anonymous and equally lonely individuals, where the seeming virtual proximity is actually virtual distance" (Zygmunt Bauman). We are unsettled by uncertainty, migration, wars, gender issues, biological and genetic modification. Nature pays the price for our greed; landscapes, plants, animals, clean water and untouched air are vanishing. The world is crumbling into pieces, slipping away through our fingers.

The title of our project explicitly refers to the BIO context (in which BIO means life), but at the same time it offers the artists the space for wider artistic interpretations. The manifold nature of symBIOsis and the vast range of forms it can adopt are a source of endless fascination. It is a magic bridge, one in which we are all mutually dependent. We exchange, use, evaluate our collective information and emotions; we share the collective values and practices drawn from all spheres of life (philosophical, scientific, cultural, cognitive, historical, psychical, physical, even ecological). In the language of today, we can be said to live in a **network of bonds** which tie us together; in the language of nature, however, this is perhaps a **living garden** where we can learn about the cycles of life from the plants and animals, to discern how the secret language of nature works, to try to decipher its meaning over and over again.

Symbiosis is not some utopian idyll; it is the coexistence of different values within mutually balanced symbiotic relationships. From a scientific perspective, it is the ongoing interaction between two or more species of plants and/or animals. These mutual correlations can be categorized in different forms: **mutualism**, where two species obtain a shared benefit; **commensalism**, where one species gains a benefit

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and the other is neither harmed nor helped; and **parasitism**, where one species benefits at the expense of the other. A neat encapsulation of our everyday lives and relationships, whether at home or at work.

The **symbiosis C+S** project presents one such example of connection – coexistence. It plays out in epic narratives. It is a visual example that it is still possible to live in harmony, to coexist in parallel, to make altruistic sacrifices (?). The exhibition wants to stand up for humanity, to preserve a humane world, and present the viewer with the personal visions of thirteen artists. In addressing the issues at hand, we decided to establish three thematic groups:

- **Symbiosis in principle** – the artists form intuitive creative duos or groups which grant the joint works an emotional charge: **Helmut Bistika** and his clients, **Igor Hrnko** and **Júlia Zelená**, or **Viktor Šefčík** and **Ester Šefčíková-Zaňáková**.
- **Social symbiosis** – the artists encompass the full spectrum of interpersonal relationships, ranging from altruism to parasitism, touching upon everyday encounters and the need to reach compromises: **Gali Fleischmann**, **Andrea** and **Peter Lipkovičovi**, **František Turcsányi**, **Antonina Jasińska**.
- **Merging with nature** – unconventional artistic affiliations with the natural world as a living being: **Ondrej Jurín**, **Peter Župník**.
- **Symbiosis of science and art** – the artists draw inspiration from the parallels between scientific discoveries regarding the mycelia of fungi and our contemporary social lives played out "on the web": **Renata Szyszlak**, **Edita Vološčuková**.

The exhibition showcases artistic explorations of the phenomenon of coexistence in all of its many forms – from biological and ecological relationships to interpersonal, artistic and scientific interconnections. Within the current context of the crisis of humanity and the increasing fragmentation of the world, we issue a clarion call for a renewal of connections, empathy and mutual understanding. It revitalizes the narratives of coexistence which reflect various forms of symbiotic relationships – from harmonious mutualism to more predatory parasitism. **symBIOsis** is not only an art project but an appeal to seek out and find a new equilibrium and renewed hope in the shared space of life.

PhDr. Edita Vološčuková, PhD.,
exhibition curator



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