Sam Lewitt/Cheyney Thompson. Grid. Gradient. Drunken Walks.

19 April – 30 July 2017

Curator Karel Císař

Opening on Tuesday 18 April 2017 at 5.30 pm, discussion with the artists and exhibition curator at 4 pm (in English, with Czech interpretation), press conference at 1 pm

The Brno House of Arts, Malinovského nám. 2, Brno

The first solo exhibition of American artists Sam Lewitt and Cheyney Thompson in Central and Eastern Europe proceeds from the spatial and institutional fabric of the Brno House of Arts – on the one hand it rekindles the interest in abstract and system-oriented tendencies, on the other it takes full advantage of the symmetrical plan of the exhibition floor in the House of Arts. While the work of Sam Lewitt is an intervention into the gallery space based on electric power, Cheyney Thompson presents a selection of his sculptural work in the form of pedestals that he has designed using a parametric computer program, and paintings made on the basis of algorithms such as “random walk” or “drunken walk”.

*„Although the title of the exhibition of American artists Sam Lewitt and Cheyney Thompson might seem to include some discrepancy, since it combines austere scientific terms with an expressive phrase, the contradiction is specious, because all the words from the title come from the same scientific field. Actually, the words “grid” and “gradient” belong to applied mathematics and physics, the grid defining a specific place and the gradient describing a performance; surprisingly, the same applies to “drunken walk”, designating random process models in these disciplines,“* saysKarel Císař, exhibition curator, when explaining the title of the exhibition, taken from the names of exhibited works.

For this exhibition in the Brno House of Arts the artists created new artefacts or made specific adaptations of existing installations. Sam Lewitt (who took part in the 57th Venice Biennial) first displayed his work *More Heat Than Light* (2015), at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art in San Francisco, and then at Kunsthalle Basel. He connected customized ultra-thin heating circuits to the wiring system of the gallery; they represent enlargements of similar technologies used for temperature regulation in portable computers, and they “convert” the energy intended for lighting into heat. Since then, Lewitt has displayed the installation in different contexts, including a New York apartment rented through the web accommodation service Airbnb. In the Brno version of the installation the heating circuits are powered with half of the energy available for the House of Arts central hall. The rest of energy being used in the standard way for lighting a horizontal painting by Cheyney Thompson, in order to underline the common character of the exhibition. The second half of the heating circuits are located in the last room of the exhibition, where they consume all the energy and the space therefore is only lit by natural light.

Cheyney Thompson presents a series of paintings created specifically for this exhibition, and a selection of his sculptural work in the form of pedestals, which he first used in his so far largest European show at Kunstverein Braunschweig (2012–2013). The artist has designed the artefacts using a parametric computer program that enabled him to create objects of different shapes, but with exactly the same surface. With this procedure, he problematizes characteristic qualities of the pedestal, that is, its verticality and its function as support for an exhibited work. The height of the vertical objects from his series prevents them from presenting anything, and the horizontal ones are so low that they could rather serve as side tables. Another sculptural work on show is a sample from *Broken Volume* (2013) that also originated on the basis of an algorithm, this time that of a “random walk” or “drunken walk”, trying to simulate random processes, for instance stock market speculations.

At the institutional level, the installation rekindles the tradition of abstract and system-oriented exhibitions, dating back to the show of László Moholy-Nagy held in the Brno House of Arts, then Künstlerhaus, in 1935, and also to the installation *White Space in a White Space* that lasted for only one night and was organized there in 1974 by the three Slovak artists Stano Filko, Miloš Laky and Ján Zavarský with the purpose of making photographic documentation of their own work. With regard to space, the exhibition takes full advantage of the symmetrical plan of the exhibition floor in the House of Arts. The exhibition brings together and intermingles the spatial and institutional setting in the form of an intertwined installation, in which differences and similarities in the approach of both artists to current social, economic and political issues are disclosed by means of a passage from light to darkness, hanging artworks on the walls or laying them on the floor, and finally also through the rhythm of verticals and horizontals.

Accompanying programme:

27 April at 5 pm – **Systems Aesthetics and New Materialism** – discussion with artist and curator Jan Brož and Jakub Stejskal (philosopher and art theorist, Faculty of Arts, Charles University and Freie Universität Berlin), moderated by Karel Císař

10 May at 5 pm – **Commented exhibition tour** with a House of Arts lecturer

20 May – BRNO MUSEUM NIGHT

8 pm – Commented exhibitiou tour with curator Karel Císař

9 pm – Tempelhof – musical performance of the electronic duo designed especially for the House of Arts

25 May at 5 pm – Abstraction, Calculation, Speculation – discussion with artist Lucie Rosenfeldová and Václav Janoščík (theorist and curator, Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and Film Academy of Performing Arts, Prague), moderated by Karel Císař

31 May at 5 pm – Commented exhibition tour with a House of Arts lecturer

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