

Samousnu

Jakub Hošek, Nik Timková

Curator: Ján Gajdušek

As if our hands had their own language, speaking directly to us. Alongside our spoken expressions, they communicate through a distinct vocabulary of gestures and subtle signs. The exhibition *Samousnu*, whose title derives from an unspecified dream of Nik Timková, directs the visitor's attention precisely to the motif of the hand. The works on display include both new and older pieces by the artists, illustrating that hands recur throughout their oeuvre in various forms and contexts. In Jakub Hošek's early paintings, hands appeared as severed, often grotesquely stylized claws. In his latest works, however, their lines spill beyond the canvas edge, taking on organic, contorted shapes akin to branches or roots. The inscriptions "Dissolve," "Anger," and "Losing Potential," combined with the motif of stitched patches and scars, serve as a metaphor for our imperfect efforts to piece together at least a semblance of wholeness from wounds and ruptures. In Nik Timková's work, the shape of the hand references fortune-telling practices and multifaceted gestures – it can become a glove, a vessel, or an oversized spatial object into which one might enter physically or mentally, exemplified by the monumental tracksuit hand, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for communication, protection, and vulnerability. In her large-scale textile installations and soft sculptures (where she employs denim, corduroy, tie-dyed, or transparent fabrics), she draws on the principles of collage by stitching and layering individual elements much like "fragments" on a canvas.

The exhibition thus emphasizes the tension between the suggestion of injury and the potential for renewal. In the way Hošek's stitched canvases and Timková's textile objects are connected by the motif of the human gesture, the hand emerges as a universal symbol of connection and manipulation, while also representing the intersection of the material world with inner, almost magical meanings.

Jakub Hošek and Nik Timková rank among the key figures of the contemporary Czech – and, in Nik's case, also Slovak – art scene. Over the past fifteen years, their long-standing collaboration in creative, curatorial, gallery, and pedagogical work, as well as in organizing music events, has significantly influenced the evolution and direction of progressive cultural activities, particularly in the Czech Republic.

In their joint practice, Hošek and Timková continuously strive to challenge conventional notions of institutional operations, taking inspiration from independent forms of production rooted in DIY approaches and subcultural aesthetics, all while seeking to spark and facilitate new dialogues between local and international communities.

Their primary working environment is the Prague-based gallery, music label, and collective A.M. 180, founded in 2003 by siblings Anežka and Jakub Hošek, Štěpán Bolf, Dan Dudarec, and Markéta Pecková as a response to the limited exhibition opportunities for emerging artists. At the Prague club Utopia – linked to the Ladronka squat community – they created a DIY space where exhibitions and music events converge, quickly shaping it into a hub for the youngest generation of artists.

Another dimension of their shared activities is the annual co-organization of the international multi-genre festival *Creepy Teepee*, held since 2009 against the historical backdrop of Kutná Hora. This radical cultural laboratory merges experimental music, performative art, and a community-driven spirit of underground spontaneity – elements essentially transferred and compressed into three days of programming by the A.M. 180 collective.

A third key aspect of Hošek and Timková's artistic engagement is their pedagogical work, underway since 2018 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where they lead the *Painting III Studio* together with Josef Bolf. The collective's curatorial and programmatic approach – emphasizing the ethos of collaborative sharing and the off-space scene – carries over into an open, non-hierarchical teaching model for the youngest generation of artists.

Nik Timková and Jakub Hošek thus remain pivotal figures on both the Czech and Slovak art scenes: with their vision and unconventional methods, they dismantle entrenched frameworks, while their creative, organizational, and pedagogical practice reveals directions for future artistic development. Their unwavering commitment to independence and belief in the power of subcultural and communal potential are the means by which they have, for two decades, succeeded in transforming contemporary Czech and Slovak culture.

Jakub Hošek (*1979, Prague) studied under Vladimír Skrepl and Jiří Kovanda in the painting studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1998–2004), where he developed his artistic approach centered on the confrontation of flatness, sharp lines, and textual fragments. A pivotal method for him is “cut painting,” in which he eschews direct painterly gestures in favor of manually cut cardboard stencils, layered onto the canvas and gradually filled with acrylic paint. The strictly defined, sharp contours that emerge from this technique draw on original sources of inspiration – ranging from album covers, comics, and punk, to pop art, 1980s New York street art, or post-internet aesthetics – and structurally recall collage. This deliberate removal of any illusory space leaves the viewer confronted with a calligraphic, design-precise mesh of darkly winding shapes.

In his paintings, Hošek develops motifs that oscillate between abstract networks of lines and surreal, stylized figuration, where one can discern fragmented limbs, comic-book monsters, or ruins of unknown architectures. The darkness, brutality, and bizarre storylines are softened by textual excerpts incorporated into the work. Rendered in Hošek’s distinctive “frayed-branch” lettering (inspired by metal band logos), these text fragments often intertwine with other motifs almost to the point of illegibility – sometimes they are snippets of favorite song lyrics, at other times the name of a band, a movie quote, or passages from books.

Alongside his artistic practice, he serves as an occasional curator, DJ, and graphic designer at the A.M. 180 gallery and the Creepy Teepee festival, collaborating with Nik on creating their visual identity. In 2005 and 2007, Hošek was a finalist for the Jindřich Chalupecký Award, and his works are now part of galleries and private collections both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Nik Timková (*1986, Košice) is a Slovak multimedia artist living in Prague. Her work fluidly connects new media, installations, sculptural processes, and textile art. She graduated from the Faculty of Arts at the Technical University in Košice, earned her master’s degree at Central Saint Martins in London, continued her postgraduate studies at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, and is currently completing a doctoral program at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague.

From her earliest projects, Timková has been engaged with the theme of garment deconstruction in art – exploring new approaches to incorporating textiles into gallery settings, for instance through larger-than-life textile objects. She also works with digital collages that blend the symbolism of pop culture, vampire or manga aesthetics with esotericism and new-gothic visuals. More broadly, her practice often employs DIY techniques, drawing on web-based platforms (such as Tumblr in the past), as well as post-internet and subcultural aesthetics. Her artistic output frequently arises in collaboration with additional authors (sometimes in tandem with Zuzana Žabková, other times alongside the Hošek siblings or within the Björnsonova collective), taking on the character of collective performative interventions. Since 2015, she has collaborated with the aforementioned Björnsonova group on feminist and ecofeminist topics. The group’s other members include artists and theorists Zuzana Žabková, Lucie Svoboda Mičíková, Lucia Kvočáková, Tamara Antonijević, and Tanja Šljivar. This “non-collective,” which became part of the Jindřich Chalupecký Award laureates in 2021 and will feature in the third Matter of Art Biennale in 2024, bases its performative approach on ritual readings of texts, corporeality, and witchcraft symbolism, thereby articulating a feminist and socially critical stance beyond traditional institutional frameworks.

In 2017, Nik Timková was part of a jointly honored group of finalists for the Oskár Čepan Award. Her installations, textile objects, digital collages, and performances function as a sort of magical space, yet one open to collective imagination, experimentation with identities, humor, and protest. The interconnectedness of body, object, and ritual thus stands out as a key feature of her practice.