**PRESS RELEASE**

**Exhibition title:**  NotNormal

**Exhibiting artists:**  Blažej Baláž

**Venue:** Ján Koniarik Gallery in Trnava, Synagogue –

 Center for contemporary art, Halenárska 2, Trnava

**Curator:**  Roman Gajdoš
**Exhibition opening:** September 26th (Thursday) 2024, 6pm in Koppel’s villa, Zelený kríčok 3, Trnava

The current exhibition project by Blažej Baláž, titled *NotNormal*, is one of the two parallel exhibitions where this Trnava-based artist is presented solo at the Ján Koniarek Gallery, nearly 21 years after his last exhibition there. The synagogue space showcases older works from the early stages of his career, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s. This period follows his graduation from the Academy of Fine Arts in 1983, and it was a time that socially, artistically, and politically shaped his artistic language and thinking. However, the exhibition's aim is not to provide a historical showcase of Baláž’s work with his early, previously unexhibited paintings or to retrospectively evaluate his work from the late 70s and 80s. The common theme of the exhibited pieces is the topic of normalization, a concept that continuously appears in his work, whether through postmodern figuration or, later, in a post-conceptual approach where text becomes the bearer of visual information on the canvas.

Baláž’s texts, like mementos of instability and single-use, appear on used cardboards from dismantled boxes or on recycled papers of various types. Other texts appear on envelopes, official announcements, promotional flyers, bank statements, maps, book covers, magazines, or newspaper photos, with the printed text often serving as the starting point for the artist’s textually visual interventions and modifications, which he approaches with the intensity of a graffiti writer.

An almost obsessive need to revisit the past and address its parallels with the present is a constant in Baláž’s work. In today's social discourse, the word "neonormalization" is increasingly heard, as if history is repeatedly returning to a point where the same threats of the past recur. The *NotNormal* exhibition speaks equally about the era of normalization as it does about the present.

Blažej Baláž (\*1958) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava from 1977 to 1983 and currently teaches at the Faculty of Education at the University of Trnava as a professor. Over the last thirty years, he has exhibited his works in the fields of political, environmental, activist, participatory, and neo-conceptual art. The media spectrum of his work includes painting, actions, performances, events, drawings, objects, and graphic art. He has received several domestic and international awards, including the Prize of the Union of Visual Artists of the Czech Republic at the 9th International Drawing Biennial in Plzeň in 2014, and the Special Award by the Jury at the Osten Biennial of Drawing in Skopje in 2016.