

Jan Pfeiffer: Search for Happiness

Space C, Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta, Malta
14. 11. 2024 - 12. 1. 2025

Artist: Jan Pfeiffer

Curator: Lenka Sýkorová

A smile indicates a happy state of mind. Happiness as a desirable state has been promoted since the 18th century within political and social discourse. Today, happiness is perceived as well-being or the good life within the concept of social happiness (freedom and human rights), at the same time as subjective happiness (well-being) characterized by life satisfaction and an excess of positive emotions over negative ones. Voltaire defined happiness as a confluence of happy events and continuous pleasure. However, it is not possible to rejoice continuously, even if happiness is demonstrated as such on social media. Taking care of mental health, self-care and regular mental hygiene are part of the path to happiness. But this is at odds with today's hectic times, which often lead us down dead ends of envy, competitiveness, overwork and subsequent burnout. Different cultures have developed traditions and recipes for happiness ranging from Danish hygge, Swedish lagon or Japanese ikigai. Thus, on the path to happiness and life satisfaction, we certainly find fulfillment, but also loss of motivation. We share happiness, we explore it, when we look at it from an overhead or underhead view. When we leave the self behind and merge with others on the wave of happiness. Often we also measure our happiness. But it is so fragile and elusive, and so easily lost. The communication of happiness then enhances the happiness itself. Art is not only a reflection of ideas but also a part of culture that articulates an understanding of the changing construct of perceived happiness. Visual art can translate hidden thoughts onto paper or materialize them into space in the form of an object, installation or performance.

The exhibition with the title Search for Happiness is a seemingly simple metaphor or cliché conceived as a physical spatial experience in gallery space. The quest for happiness, joy and fulfilment is like an endless journey that has its ups and downs. In the drawing installation, Jan Pfeiffer also works with the concept of expected future events and the struggle not to be dominated by visions of the future, but to focus on the possibility of being here and now. The exhibition The Search for Happiness by Czech intermedia artist Jan Pfeiffer and Czech independent curator Lenka Sýkorová is based on their long-term collaboration and mutual inspiration. The exhibition is created for the exhibition space Space C, Spazju Kreattiv. The installation is preceded by a video performance, a collaborative effort between artist Jan Pfeiffer and students from the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta.

Jan Pfeiffer explores man's relationship to space. It is based on a preoccupation with gallery space and things – objects and installations, where morphology reflects the form of things in relation to meanings. Happiness as an elusive state of mind, which is the driving force of life, materializes in the form of a spatial experience, where the viewer is guided through the exhibition halls. Jan Pfeiffer respects drawing as an autonomous artistic medium, but also as a study tool that allows him to express himself in the form of symbolic systems that he relates to feelings of happiness. He explores the outside and inside view, macro and micro worlds. He tries to get to the bottom of things and grasp social, cultural and political relations by translating them into visual form. His work emphasizes a narrative component, set design and choreography, which in conjunction with the visual form creates scenes that come alive with the movement of the human body. The very processuality thus becomes a point of contact for the interpretation of Jan Pfeiffer's work.

Lenka Sýkorová

Jan Pfeiffer graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (the Studio of Jiří Příhoda and the Studio of guest professor Zbigniew Libera). In his artwork, he examines space as well as motion or the static state in space that affects our perception. His means of expression include drawings, animations, objects, installations, performances and videos. The link of his artwork is accident, the appearance of things in relation to their everyday purpose. Jan Pfeiffer deems drawing as an autonomous medium that during the 20th century infiltrated other visual media. The author also works as a university professor, film designer and exhibition architect.

Lenka Sýkorová is an art historian, associate professor, critic and independent curator. She deals with the history and theory of fine art and graphic design with a focus on contemporary artistic expressions with an emphasis on the medium of drawing within the historical reflection of its understanding as a universal visual language connecting painting, sculpture and architecture. She also focuses on curatorial studies by developing active curatorial and pedagogical practice drawing on contemporary methods of curatorial practice both in the Czech Republic and abroad, with an emphasis on the phenomenon of artist-run space and the artist-curator. In her scientific and research activities, she reflects on manifestations of post-conceptual art with an emphasis on intermedia form, site-specific installation, new media, collaborative art and performance art. She published in the Czech Republic and abroad. She curated a number of exhibitions in the Czech Republic, Europe, China and the USA.

Partners:

Faculty of Education Charles University, Department of Art Education in Prague, Faculty of Art and Design Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem & Department of Arts, Open Communities, and Adult Education, University of Malta.