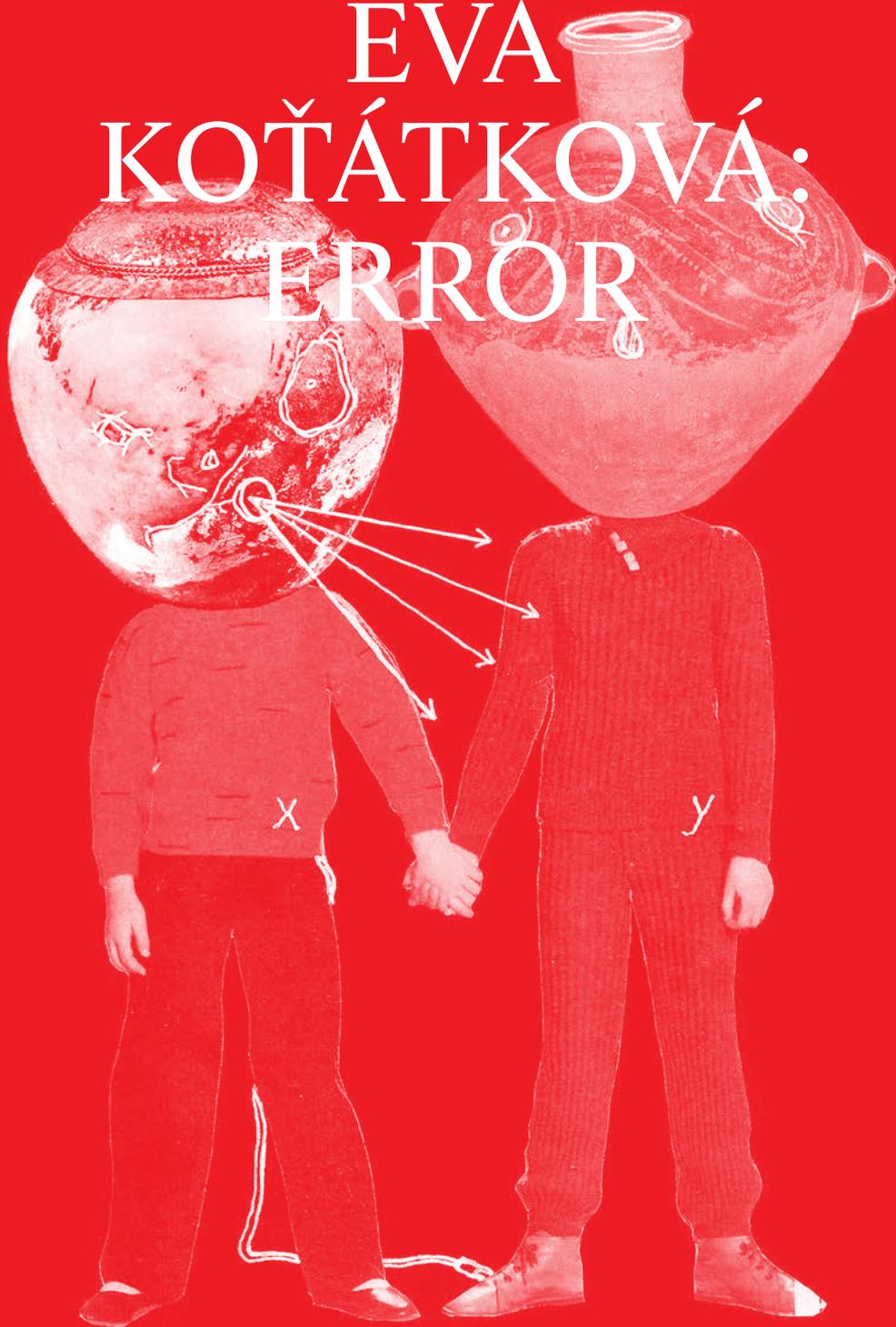


EVA KOŤÁTKOVÁ: ERROR



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FEBRUARY 2–APRIL 19, 2016

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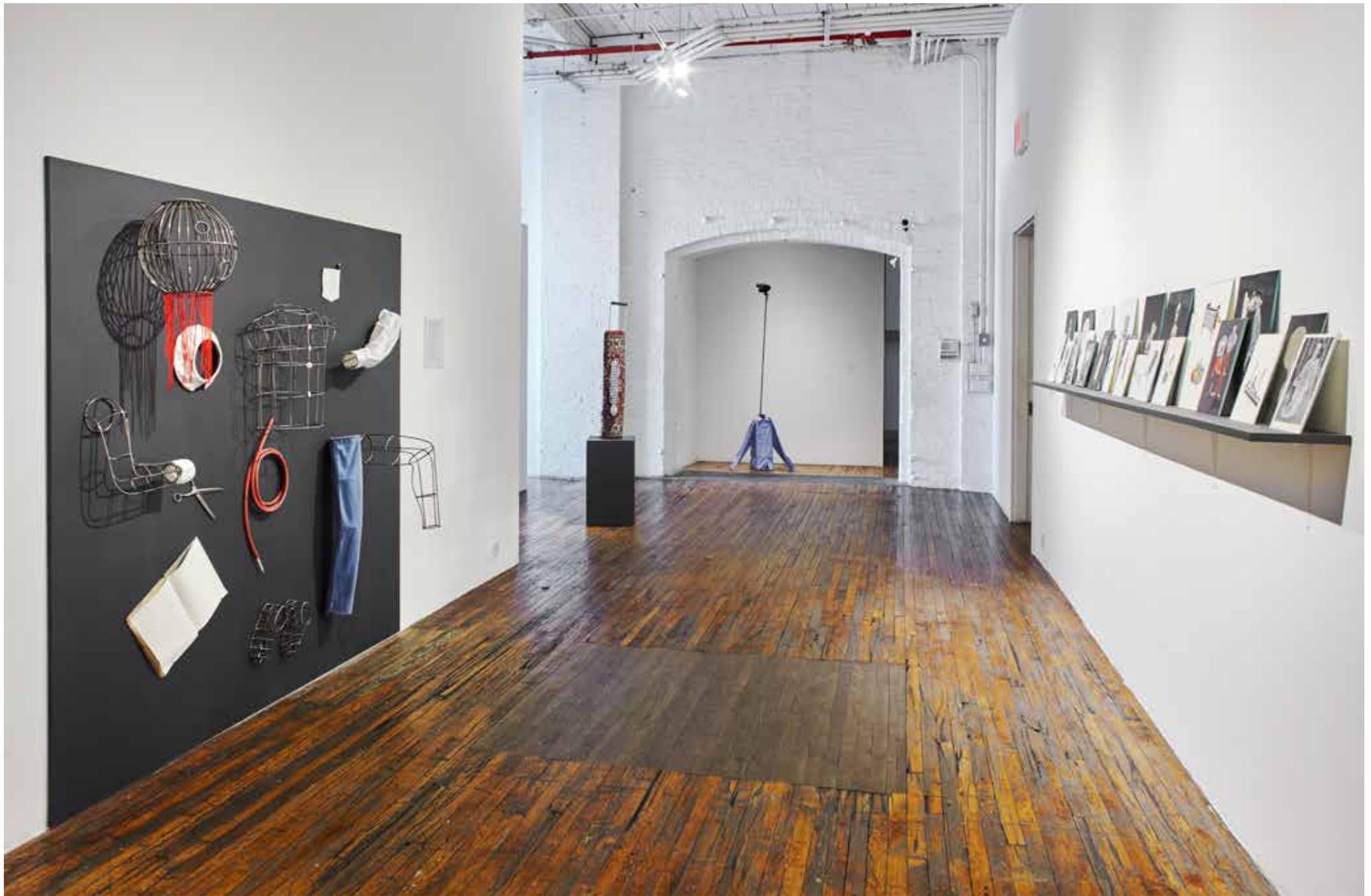
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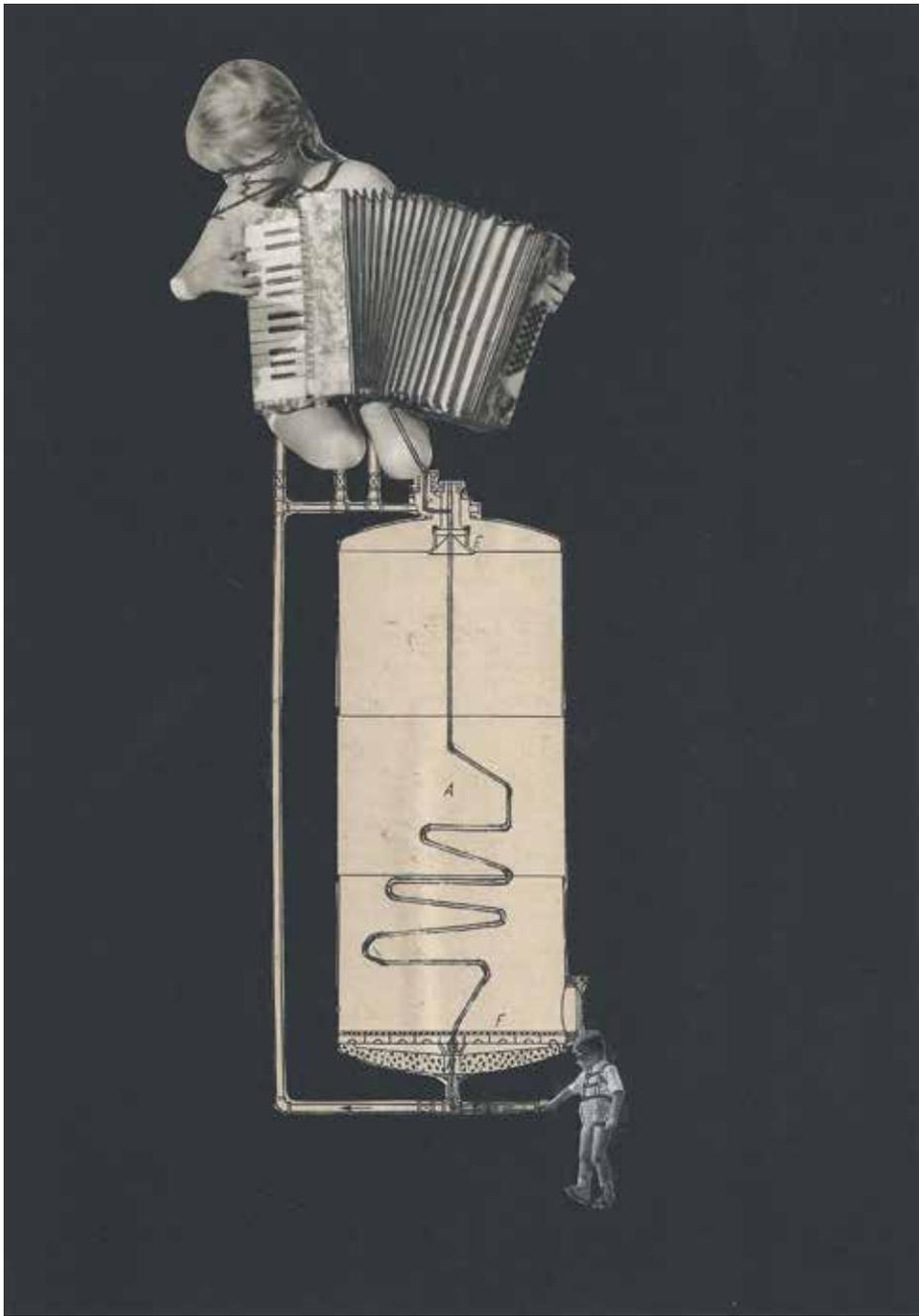
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Eva Kotátková: ERROR, 2016, installation view, International Studio & Curatorial Program. Courtesy of the artist; Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague. Photo: Martin Parsekian.



ERROR, 2015–16, collage on paper, 11½×8¼ in.
Courtesy of the artist; Meyer Riegger,
Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague.

FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Susan Hapgood, Executive Director

Eva Kotátková came to us in 2008, an artist from the Czech Republic who won the Jindřich Chalupecký Award. She had just finished her masters studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, and was the youngest artist ever to receive this esteemed prize, which already gives an indication of her extraordinary artistic gifts. She has come back to ISCP nearly a decade later at the invitation of Kari Conte, Director of Programs and Exhibitions, who selected her as the artist for our annual show solely dedicated to new work by ISCP alumni. Humble to an extreme degree, Kotátková has been generous with her time and her work, going above and beyond the call of duty during the organization of this project. The curator and artist worked over a short but intensive period of just a few months to create an immersive exhibition of individual artworks that garnered instant press attention and strong interest from many corners. *Eva Kotátková: ERROR* explores the symbolic and very real ways that human beings are subjected to institutional rules and regulations, using a range of mediums including sculpture, assemblage, collage, and a video drama that all resonate with harrowing visual imagery.

Special thanks are due not only to Eva Kotátková and Kari Conte for this wonderful exhibition and the accompanying curatorial essay. Gratitude is also owed to Drew Lichtenstein, Facilities Manager, who ended up playing a much more in-depth role in the fabrication and assembly than initially expected due to sudden shifts of travel schedules and the need for adaptation. He handled all requests with grace and efficiency. We thank the Czech curator Vit Havránek, also an ISCP alumnus, for his insightful and thorough interview with the artist, and Kacha Kastner of hunt kastner, the artist's gallerist in Prague, for assistance with the organization of the exhibition. Finally, we are deeply appreciative of our funders for this project, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, Czech Center New York, The Greenwich Collection, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Without such generous cooperation by all of the individuals involved, and without the many different financial supporters, *Eva Kotátková: ERROR* could never have taken place. We are extremely proud to have organized and hosted this intense solo project of such a stellar former resident of ISCP.



The Judicial Murder of Jakob Mohr, 2015–16,
single channel video. 1 hour, 3 minutes, 35 seconds.
Courtesy of the artist; Are, Prague; Meyer Riegger,
Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague.

EVA KOŤÁTKOVÁ: ERROR

Kari Conte

Eva Koťátková's solo exhibition, *ERROR*, focuses on relationships between human bodies and the oppressive institutional structures that sometimes surround them. Koťátková is interested in the stories or cases of individuals who—for various reasons—are unable to integrate themselves into their social environments. These people become secluded, isolated, and handicapped by their circumstances, some developing alternative means to communicate through objects, props and devices. Others build parallel identities to escape from reality into a self-constructed world. They become subordinate to their own invented rules, and apply different communication patterns and new hierarchies to their everyday lives.

The exhibition features a new video, collages made with paper cut-outs from historical sources, and sculptural assemblages that pivot around Koťátková's long-term interest in normative institutions, and in particular, the Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital in Prague. This state-run hospital is the largest psychiatric facility in the Czech Republic, and has cared for tens of thousands of patients since its founding in the early twentieth century. In her work, Koťátková animates the fears and anxieties as well as the creative output of four former psychiatric patients: Aleš, Anna and Viktor from Bohnice, and Jakob Mohr from the Psychiatric University Hospital in Heidelberg, Germany. Through extensive research into both hospitals' archives, Koťátková unearthed the long-forgotten plights of these patients from the twentieth century.

The first of these works brings Aleš to light, a practicing surgeon who subsequently became a patient at Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital. The seven sculptures that comprise *Aleš's devices to measure the world* re-create in an exaggerated scale the antiquated medical instruments the former surgeon invented that Koťátková read about in medical records about him, that also included a small sketch by Aleš. The minimal sculptures in the installation are slightly rusty and suspended next to each other on the wall. Their awkward and threatening size are the output of a mental illness that led Aleš to design these new devices based on his study of body proportions, surgical explorations of the human body and instruments developed for the examination of specific patients. Aleš perceived Bohnice's clinic and its inhabitants differently from other patients; he examined the invisible anatomy of things and people and often claimed unexpected findings.

His fictive surgical operations were likely realized only on paper, and weren't used on patients, and are now realized as objects a century later by Koťátková.

Official records at Bohnice from the early 1920s mention a patient named Viktor who had frequent phantasmagoric visions of his own body as fragmented objects, especially when there were thunderstorms that affected the functioning of the hospital. The installation *Error (Body of Viktor, the electrician)* features, among other elements, a round metal "cage for a head" created by Koťátková. This cage is suggestive of the inner restraints of a person with mental illness, in which fears and phobias prevent the individual from taking certain actions in life. It also invokes the literal cages that psychiatric patients in Bohnice were sometimes confined in. Alongside this cage and also installed on a blackboard-painted square are free-floating appendages, shoes, a collar and a notebook from an art therapy workshop at Bohnice dating from circa 1990. The notebook was ostensibly made by a patient who was also interested in and affected by the relationship between the body and electricity, drawing eerie parallels to Viktor's case. Entries from Viktor's diary allude to the difficulties he faced in everyday life, as someone who believed his body was often split into pieces. He writes on one day, "the whole body dismembers, not accepting visitors today, not even my family" and weeks later "my body decomposed, I lost the key to the puzzle and am searching for arms and legs everywhere."

The entire exhibition coalesces in the video *The Judicial Murder of Jakob Mohr*. This hour-long video shows a trial written and staged by Koťátková and performed in Bohnice's theater, involving professional actors, staff and patients. The genesis of this performance is *Justiz Mord (Judicial Murder)*, a 1909–10 drawing made by farmer and psychiatric patient Jakob Mohr, who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. Mohr was a patient in Heidelberg and referred to his drawings as proofs or documents that testified to the existence of a so-called influencing machine. In *Justiz Mord*, he depicts himself as a defendant on trial, attached to an influencing machine operated by a doctor and surrounded by judges, a jury, and an audience. According to Victor Tausk—a disciple of Sigmund Freud who first wrote about influencing machines in 1919—these evil and complex constructions are believed by their creators to mystically control their victims' everyday actions and thoughts with the aid of levers, electromagnetic waves, cranks and pulleys.

Koťátková's trial animates this naïve and troubling drawing. In the video of the performed trial, Mohr is accused of minor offenses—broken windows, biting his mother, stealing keys and his own medical file, and escaping the hospital and posing as a goldsmith. He is convinced of his own innocence, and attributes all his crimes to the machine's mind-control powers. Mohr also suspects that the trial's judges, jury and audience are really doctors or fellow patients in disguise, there to betray him by proving his guilt. In Mohr's world, it's the magnets, electrodes, hair and cables of the machine that committed the illegal acts.

Faithful to the original drawing, part of the stage set and costumes were fabricated from paper, and the actor's rumpling of the thin sheets can be heard in the video. The actors also remain motionless and static when they are not speaking, as in the drawing, and the judge's motions are restricted to puppet-like signs. While Mohr professes his innocence, the man holding the influencing machine whispers Mohr's words right before he says them, providing all the answers to the judge's questions. Mohr says, "My words are not mine, I have never written them down... Whatever I hear, I repeat and transmit elsewhere... It's coming out of me on its own... I hear sounds as if they were coming from a broken telephone."

As the trial ensues, the machine breaks and Mohr is freed for a moment, only to have the voices planted in his head once again. While it appears only as a simple box made of wood with red threads that connect to Mohr's sweater, he insists on wearing a special vest that protects him from the box's electromagnetic rays. However, it's all a fiction, one that Mohr ultimately cannot prove, even to the patent office he sends the machine to.

Interested in art made by psychiatric patients, Koťátková introduces well-known works of outsider art into *The Judicial Murder of Jakob Mohr*. Five of artist Henry Darger's imagined *Vivian Girls* are called as witnesses, although they can only giggle and offer no real testimony. A head with legs and no torso, taken from the work of Karl Brendel, tells the jury that Mohr collected stones to throw through windows, slashed a couch open and trampled flowerbeds. Even the real-life director of the Prinzhorn Collection, Thomas Roske, playing himself, is called to the witness stand. During this collapse of time and place, and fact and fiction, Roske introduces Mohr's worldview, and how this was foreign to everyone in his environment. Mohr's careful attention to identifying everyone in his drawings and some of what they



The Judicial Murder of Jakob Mohr, 2015–16, single channel video. 1 hour, 3 minutes, 35 seconds. Courtesy of the artist; Are, Prague; Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague.

said, suggests that he thought about a future audience, one that could prove his hallucinations as reality and ultimately, his innocence as well. This recording for the future also allowed Kořátková to remain truthful to Mohr's imagined world, and she constructed her scenes based on the many angles of the trial that Mohr drew.

Kept under relentless surveillance and never actually alone, Mohr believes that he has lost control of his own thinking, and disassociates from the real world. Everyone leaves the courtroom as he calls out the names of people he thinks can prove his innocence to an empty room. The machine is nothing but the manifestation of Mohr's alienation from his own body and life, a double of himself, the merging of his internal life with external stimuli and an attempt to explain his own fragmented world.

Kořátková uses everyday items to make sense of the world in her *Theater of Speaking Objects*; they act as mediators for communication, speaking for those who cannot speak due to communication difficulties. Anna is an anthropomorphic puppet from this series presented in *ERROR*, constructed from a freestanding rolled rug. This sculpture is based on a young patient who drew herself wrapped in such a rug, believing that no one could see her inside. Kořátková's speaking objects are the manifestation of psychological barriers; they are props that bring those alienated from the world closer to others.

ERROR also includes a series of twenty-five collages full of images from outdated Czech books on education, sociology, psychology and nature. Kořátková's collage work has been at the core of her practice—she maintains a vast archive of disassembled images tied to her specific visual lexicon for future use. As she discusses in the interview, these collections are classified according to different categories such as arms, legs, machines, buildings, animals, individuals and groups of people.

Kořátková repeats motifs to compose absurd fictions. In the collage series for *ERROR*, human and non-human animals are depicted with various kinds of restrictions: bodies are blindfolded or made mute by tied white rope, vessels cover eyes, and objects stunt limbs. According to the artist, these scenes serve as metaphors for the control of subjects through institutional discipline. In particular, Kořátková depicts children in this series rather than adults, because they are still developing and transforming, and can be more easily shaped by the ideas of others, in error.

These collages follow the traditions of Dada photomontage artists including Hannah Höch and John Heartfield. In this regard, all of the collages in *ERROR* are composed from photographic reproductions and critically engage with the increased complexities of modern life. Half-human, half-machine hybrids are bound by rope, made by removing the outermost layer of the photograph, rather than drawn by the artist with a pencil, enacting a gestural violence through the making of the collage itself. Emphasizing a certain pose or situation, Kořátková's children are alienated by the mechanisms, objects and animals that limit them. At the same time, the collages suggest the ways that children are both formed and deformed by educational processes, frozen in unsettling and surreal moments.

Structure for looking into people's windows (from the series *Controlled memory loss*) is the oldest work in the exhibition, produced by the artist in 2010–13. This work is a physical prosthesis that allowed Kořátková to extend her sight by attaching a video camera at the top of a long rod affixed to a steel vest she wore around her torso. She used this unwieldy object to document the city, and specifically to film inaccessible places within public institutions or private spaces, thereby “stretching” her sight. This work points to the grand narrative of the exhibition, the anxiety of life in a society of discipline and control, emphasizing how we are outwardly and inwardly shaped by the institutions that surround us.

Kořátková's work reaches into history and brings forth parallels to contemporary society and institutional norms. Broadly speaking, she points to the constricted forms of governance that often are implemented by the state and its institutions, the inflexibility of rules and regulations that sometimes make no sense. In an over-institutionalized world, where lives and bodies are controlled by power structures, Kořátková shows how subjects too often become objects.

I'M INTERESTED IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL IMAGES

An Interview with Eva Koťátková
by Vít Havránek

VH I'm sure you're used to being asked this question because your work cries out for it: to what extent is your work autobiographical? Are any of your ideas and stories of fragmented bodies, powerful mechanisms or traumatic events linked with specific experiences?

EK I think that to a certain extent they are. My work is a kind of surface on which events from my own life, from other people's lives, and made-up stories encounter each other. It's not about a viewer being able to wander around and confidently decipher the sources of my work. I don't think it's important to clarify these boundaries or categories. Sometimes I'm not even absolutely sure myself of the veracity of memories that I reconstruct and refashion.

I've always been interested in the ways that an author creates their own biography, how they recount their lives through their work, which is then, often mistakenly, interpreted against the background of their official, normative biography. I'm interested in various subversive fictive models that attempt to disrupt and interrogate the official biography.

VH On the theme of autobiography, is the need to place your personal experience or that of the people you collaborate with in the center of things important to you? If so, why?

EK I use both types of resources, the experienced and mediated. The reason I borrow the testimony or stories of people who are disadvantaged in different ways is, firstly, that these are very often silent or rather silenced subjects, because they do not correspond to the standard image of how an individual functions. They are like broken machines. However, it is precisely these individuals or groups who speak more accurately about how society operates, what its weak points are, its fissures and flaws.

Think for a moment about people who face a very mild form of discrimination, for instance left-handed people. In fact, these are the people who are far better able to describe the world of right-handed people, the items that are manufactured for them and the pitfalls that this entails for left-handed people in everyday life.

VH So you're not just interested in mechanisms and the world

of the discriminated against and disadvantaged, but more in how the person who is discriminated against sees the rest of the world?

EK You could put it like that, though they are interconnected perspectives. It's about the relationship of power and the oppressed subject and an attempt to see the world through the eyes of the oppressed, a kind of change of perspective that both expands and undermines our own world. To what extent this is genuinely possible is debatable. At any rate it forces us to move out of our comfort zone. What can seem logical and functional for one person can represent an obstacle or nightmare for someone else, whether we're talking about a staircase or certain words.

VH We'll examine the question of the institution in a while. But first I'd like to ask you one last question relating to your personal life, and that is whether you work systematically with family members and friends.

EK It's not something I spend much time thinking about, it comes very naturally. I sometimes collaborate with my father, who is a philosopher and writer and several of whose books I've illustrated. He allowed me to present one of his texts as a theatrically conceived lecture and another text as the audio element in an installation. I share with him an interest in certain authors.

VH In particular Samuel Beckett?

EK Yes. Beckett and Franz Kafka, for instance. And my mother and I work together on making things, for example the puppets that will feature in a performance of mine, the stage sets, or even collages. We are slowly putting together a kind of home picture archive comprising various cuttings from books and magazines. We have several boxes of these clippings that are classified by category: arms, legs, machines, buildings, animals, groups of people and individuals. I use some of these images in collages and others as a template for actions and situations. However, the archive works in its own right as a unique depository of images subject to a very distinctive style of classification and categorization.

VH Last year you mounted a large, long-running exhibition at the Prádelna Gallery in the Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital in Prague. The exhibition was called *Dvouhlavý životopisec a muzeum (Two-Headed Biographer and the Museum of Ideas)*. To what extent did the exhibition relate to the hospital qua institution, and what did you focus on?

EK My starting point was the psychiatric hospital, which is more than 100 years old and one of the largest institutions of its kind in

the Czech Republic. It doesn't possess a collection of the works of its patients like institutions of this type do in other countries. People must have been expressing themselves in all sorts of ways, not only through artworks, but they were never paid any attention. In both the exhibition there and a series of related actions and performances, I wanted to place the creative activities that have taken place in other, foreign clinics into this environment, to reveal the parallels between what might have taken place in Bohnice but was expunged. I began by researching the hospital archive in an attempt to discover interesting, forgotten creative personalities in the records. However, this soon proved to be a blind, though interesting alley.

VH So to begin with you were interested in an archive that, as it turned out, didn't actually exist?

EK Yes, this seemed the natural path to follow. However, the archive contains records made by the other party. It is written in the hand and language of the institution and only rarely, and usually by chance, are you able to track down the authentic voice of a patient in the form of a letter or a drawing. The records tell us about the day-to-day movements of a patient, what he or she said, and often quote their actual words. I was only allowed access to files up to 1927, because the later files are subject to the Personal Data Protection Act. The archive is gradually being destroyed and many of the records (apart from the basic registers) of the existence of people hospitalised in Bohnice are disappearing, as though the people themselves are being erased. It's as though, despite already being dead, they are only now definitively disappearing from the world.

VH These are mainly case histories?

EK Yes, they're case histories and admissions records, in many cases with a detailed record of the initial interview, which familiarizes us with their lexicon and biography. The patient's version often differs from the official life story contained in their file. In several cases, I found the files of people active in art or literature. However, the files did not treat these outputs as works of art in their own right. The files record that these artworks were destroyed, that a patient cluttered up their room with them and that they had to be confiscated, or that a patient destroyed them, for instance by eating them, rather than allowing them to fall into the hands of the doctors.

The personal collections of certain psychiatrists proved more of a source of possibly extant works than the clinic's official archive. This then showed how it would be possible to return works created inside the

hospital back to this context, i.e. by means of the private collections of those psychiatrists who worked there. However, many of these doctors viewed the works of their patients as nothing more than diagnostic material and ignored its artistic value.

VH This was so in the case of Stanislav Drvota, wasn't it? His book *Personality and Creation* (1973) was legendary amongst Czechoslovak artists of that time since it sought to trace the connections between psychological typology, pathology, and artistic creativity.

EK I think Drvota was a different case. He was interested in the output of patients from a creative perspective. For instance, Vladimír Boudník's Rorschach tests, as well as his drawings and letters, appear in the collections of both Drvota and the psychiatrist František Píсарovič, who knew Drvota. Last year I worked on Píсарovič's collection, which for many years had been hidden in his daughter's sofa, and exhibited part of it for the first time ever within an artistic context. However, Píсарovič was a radical example of someone who approached artworks as purely diagnostic material, and even labeled some of the creative output of his patients as degenerate. He wanted to publish a large book entitled *The Psychopathology of Painters' Expression*, which would have probably been more extensive than the well known book by Prinzhorn, with many case studies and illustrations. His collection is very sensitively put together and contains many good quality works. So much so that you find yourself not wanting to believe that their collector entirely disregarded this quality.

In the exhibition I worked with the motifs of representatives of Art Brut, with the visions and ideas or images that repeatedly appear in their works. I didn't present the works themselves, but drew on texts and drawings that document their ideas. Most of them are from the start of the twentieth century, i.e. from the time that the clinic in Bohnice was being established. Several of my visualizations of these ideas took the form of an object or installation, others took the form of performance, audio or theater production. Some were attempts at the most faithful reconstruction, the materialization of an idea, while others were freer in style. The aim was to introduce the visions and ideas of psychiatric patients qua artists in the context within which they had largely been generated.

VH This was true, was it not, of the series of tableaux vivants and performances you organised in the hospital grounds, in which actors illustrated images from the history of the creative work of psychiatric patients?



Aleš's devices to measure the world, 2016. Left to right:
28 × 12 × 1/8, 27 × 12 × 5/8, 24 × 8 × 1/8, 27 × 13 × 1/8,
19 1/2 × 13 × 5/8, 21 × 14 × 1 1/2, 28 × 12 1/2 × 1 in. Courtesy of
the artist; Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe;
and hunt kastner, Prague. Photo: Martin Parsekian.

EK My idea was to have a series of tableaux vivants and performances in both the exhibition space and the hospital grounds. The exhibition would take the form of a kind of malleable, expanding body, as though it were poking its hand out of a window of the building. At the end of the exhibition the tableaux would achieve independence and become a more natural element in the operations of the grounds and the day-to-day routine of the hospital. I was interested in the tableau vivant as something that defies time—whereas the performers maintain a particular pose, hold their breath and resist the natural expression of the body, the world moves around them.

For instance, two performers represented a drawing by Jakob Mohr titled *Proofs*, which depicts Mohr as a patient/victim and doctor, as the party controlling his patient. Mohr was convinced that he was being remotely controlled by some kind of weird appliance, something between a camera, surveying equipment and X-ray machine. The physician who had control of the box transmitting the radiation was then to blame for Mohr's every move, gesture, word and offense. Mohr did not regard his drawings and texts as artworks, but as a form of evidence proving the existence of the influencing machine, a machine controlled by the institution. He used the machine to justify his crimes and explain his hospitalization.

VH Have you been able to put the machine into operation?

EK Not yet, unfortunately. That would be a truly dangerous invention. Another of the tableaux vivants was not static, but took the form of a kind of apparition or phantom. It was the escape of the *Vivian Girls* as depicted in drawings by Henry Darger. A group of children in the same costumes ran around the grounds and hid from the passing adults behind buildings and trees and in the bushes. The viewer could only ever see the corner of a dress, a strand of hair, or hear the whispering of girls and boys (Darger depicted the girls as strange, androgynous beings). This event was more improvised and spontaneous than the other tableaux, and yet it still managed for a moment to animate Darger's girls and the story of their perpetual escape from adults.

The viewer wandered around the park with the aid of a map and came across individual tableaux in hidden corners or open areas: *Dresses* as depicted by Helene Reiman, a *Flying Machine* by Gustav Mesmer, *Fight* by Jules Doudin, *The Ship Called Black Snake* by James Edward Deeds, and others.

VH *The Judicial Murder of Jakob Mohr* was a staged performance of the story that you were speaking about. Why did you choose this

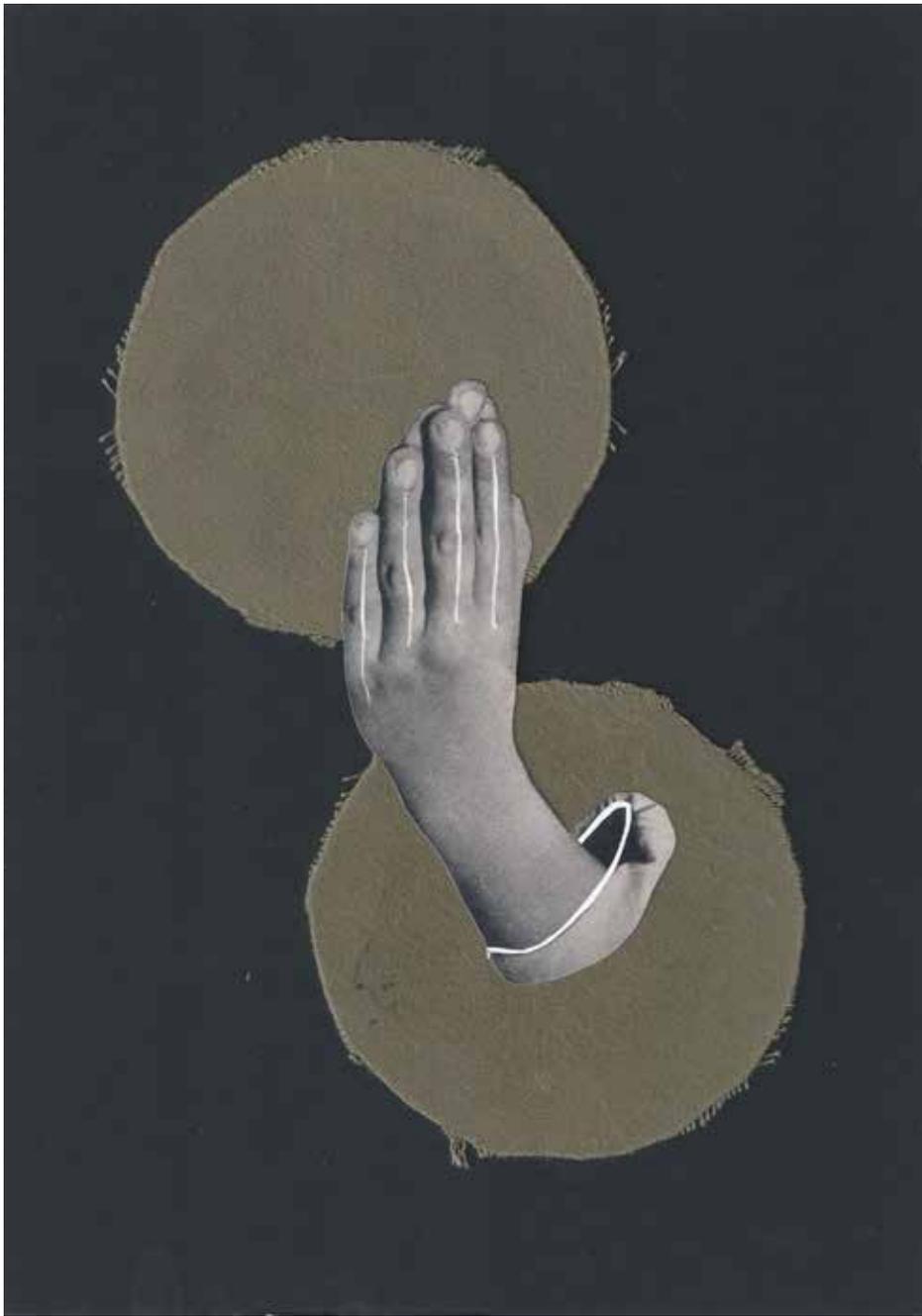
story? Did it seem to you to be archetypal in some way, or possessed of exceptional dramatic potential? This controlling machine brings to mind a Kafkaesque power to control the conduct of individuals and society as a whole, something we know, for instance, from *The Trial*.

EK This performance was actually the largest tableau vivant and needed more than 40 actors. The starting point was a different drawing by Jakob Mohr. The drawing that formed the basis of the performance, like many of the works of psychiatric patients, is on both sides of the paper. This was mostly done for economic reasons—any surface or foundation was suitable for drawing on. On one side of the paper the scene is set in a cellar, while the other side is given over to a detailed scene entitled “Judicial Murder.” The drawing, created in 1909, provides impressive documentation of the clash between the delusions and visions of a psychiatric patient and the reality of a psychiatric institution, as well as the institution of a court. In this respect it differs from Kafka's *The Trial*, because the scene here operates on the interface of delusional fantasy and reality. It touches on the apparatus of power, but also on the psychological processes influenced by mental illness. It isn't clear whether we are looking inside Mohr's head or whether we are being shown a genuine case of judicial crime committed against a psychiatric patient.

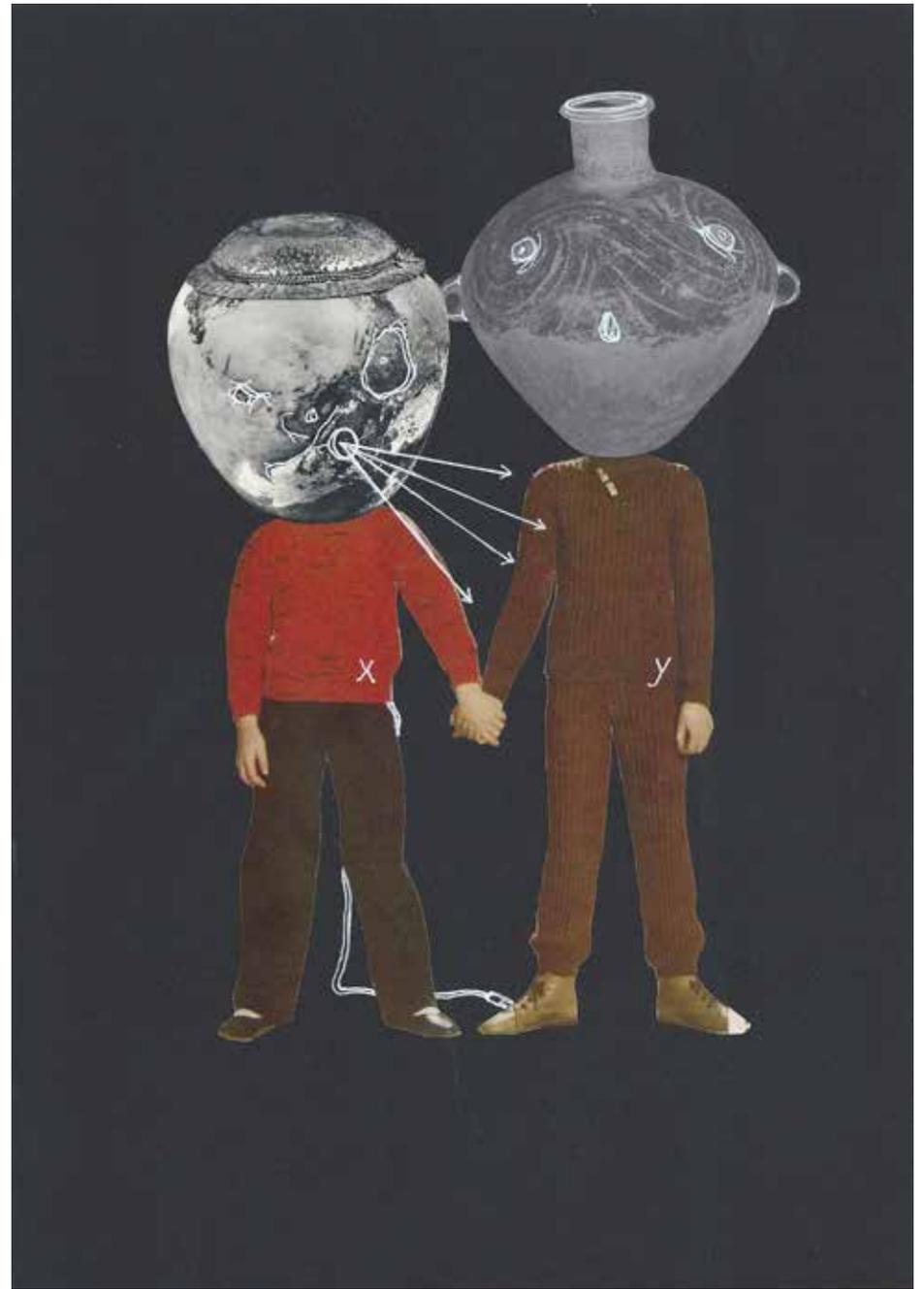
Mohr probably found himself up before the courts on several occasions due to various offenses. However, this trial is very specific, in that Mohr depicts more than merely himself as defendant, and the doctor as schemer and eavesdropper who controls Mohr and directs his responses. He also uncovers in the figure of the judges, assessors and members of the public, other physicians and patients who have come disguised and masked to testify against him. Mohr calls this a large “conspiracy against his person in order to compromise him.” This is a gigantic scene viewed from several mutually opposing perspectives in which a name, brief description, a few paragraphs and other codes are assigned to each character. The drawing can be used as a perfect diagram or as the starting point for the script as well as for the stage design. In the theater I enlarge the drawing and spread it around the scenery. The drawings of Jakob Mohr are kept in the Prinzhorn Collection in Heidelberg.

VH And how was the actual theater script created?

EK I tried to combine Mohr's own texts and notes (in several cases, for example, Mohr reads out a list of his enemies) with biographical information. The rest of the material represents my own imaginative



ERROR, 2015–16, collages on paper, 11½ × 8¼ in. each. Courtesy of the artist; Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague.



ERROR, 2015–16, collages on paper, 11½ × 8¼ in. each. Courtesy of the artist; Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague.

attempt to fill in the gaps in the Mohr case. For example, various fictional figures of other creative psychiatric patients appear before the court in the role of witnesses. Darger's girls make an appearance, as well as the *Head with Legs* by Karl Genzel, one of the Prinzhorn artists, and Joey, the Mechanical Boy. Joey was described by the psychiatrist Bruno Bettelheim as autistic and believed he was a machine that needed to be connected to the electrical outlet in order to function.

The characters appear, offer their testimony, and are only interrupted by the judge's questions. The actors adapt their bodies to the way they are depicted in the drawing. Some only appear in profile, others from the front, while the hands of the judges and the prosecutor move as though they were puppets and bring the characters to life like characters on an astronomical clock. The judge has items of evidence circulated. These are Mohr's personal effects and are seen thanks to the strangely skewed perspective of the tables on which they are placed. The performance also takes the form of a drawing or sketched vision, because the scenery and the actors' costumes are made of paper, and so a rustling is heard throughout the hall and a simple movement of the hand rips apart the jackets and robes and leads to the gradual disintegration of the scenery and figures.

VH At present we are putting the finishing touches on a book you have created, which is being published by tranzit.cz and JRP Ringier. The book comes in two volumes. The first includes 22 sets of rules and regulations you yourself selected from institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, cemeteries or housing cooperatives. The second, substantially larger volume contains many new collages as well as older work that relates to the rules and regulations. I am interested in why you feel it is important to work with historical materials. In the case of the book, this means materials related to the institutional policy of Czechoslovakia from the 1960s to the 1980s, while in the case of the Bohnice Psychiatric Hospital it means institutional practices dating back to the first few decades of the last century. Can you imagine working with institutions in other countries and other time periods?

EK It would certainly be possible and several times in the past I have been asked to react to a specific situation, to draw on a specific place or to relate to a specific period of time. However, I always bring my own experiences to such situations, and that is based on the time and place in which I grew up. In general I try to ensure that my work is meaningful for anyone who is ready to reflect upon it. I'm interested in universal themes.

However, work on the book was very intense because I confronted material that had been part of my childhood and adolescence. You could say that the images, along with the institutional rules and regulations that we gathered for the book, are somehow inscribed on my body. They are archived in my body, they circulate in it and wait for an opportunity to manifest themselves and remind me of their existence, when, many years on, their archetype appears in the form of a specific clipping or extract, for instance from school or building regulations. It is as though the rules and regulations of institutions were contained in the gestures and postures of the body, and also as though there were a way of deciphering things and situations around one derived from the pictures or their reproductions. Just as the body reacts to a familiar smell or an old familiar place, so here images and passages from texts play a similar role.

VH Your work draws attention to sexism and shares with feminism a demand for liberation from such oppression. What is your relationship to feminism?

EK If I can return briefly to the theme of Art Brut and the work of psychiatric patients, women as artists/psychiatric patients occupy a silenced, marginalized role. Much attention was paid to male patients who expressed themselves creatively. They were supported in their creative efforts and respected as artists. Think of Adolf Wölfl (who was regarded and regarded himself as an artist). Women on the other hand disappeared behind the walls of the institution. Their conduct was subject to the general perception of woman as submissive and inhabiting the private sphere while men dominated the public sphere. Any more expressive, emotional manifestations were classified as hysteria or madness—see for instance the degrading experiments conducted by Jean-Martin Charcot and the illustrative lectures and demonstrations he performed on his female patients. However, as far as Art Brut is concerned, for me it is the women who are the most interesting figures, because they often speak very convincingly of their marginalised, subordinate role. Their work is often more radical and speaks to me personally with greater intensity, because it was created from within a patriarchal society that has its foundations built on inequality and domination.

VH Some currents within feminism argue that sexism is a link within a complex chain of patriarchal dominance manifesting itself through economic exploitation and inequality and the devastation of natural resources, and that the patriarchal system cannot be

restricted to the relationship between the two genders. Is paranoia not a consequence of this state, a paranoia that is then established as normality (as R. D. Laing formulates it in *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*)? Where is your work positioned in relation to all of this?

EK In my work I reflect on feminism in the broadest sense of the word. I see it as drawing attention not only to the dominant status of one gender over the other, but to the ascendancy of a stronger subject, the exercise of power, inequality, and simplistic dichotomies in general. This in turn allows me to speak of the violence perpetrated against animals, the isolation and stigmatisation of ill people, the abuse of the teacher/pupil hierarchy. I can identify with what, for instance, Gayatri Spivak says of democracy, the intuitions of democracy, the teaching of democratic principles to those people in whose thinking this concept has been relegated to mere fantasy. Similarly, I am interested in how certain feminist theories apply to ecology, for instance.

On the other hand, in terms of day-to-day functioning, interaction with others and within the context of self-reflection, feminism in the narrower sense of the word is important in terms of being an endeavor to transcend given roles and to interrogate clichéd myths.

VH Do dreams play a role in your work?

EK I always felt an affinity with surrealism, which was an impressive but failed attempt to get closer to the logic of dreams or illusions about the world of the mentally ill. I admire the work of Toyen, who gained access to the male world of fine art among other things by virtue of her masculine stylization and ambiguous identity.

When working with visual materials or on installations, I attempt to visualize, to define that which cannot be seen—invisible cages and regulations. In fact it's a kind of strange realism. I'm interested in the conflict between external and internal images, how the surrounding environment is inscribed on the body and, similarly, how various anxieties and visions bear down from within on the same places.

In childhood some neurological findings meant I had to have a regular electroencephalogram (EEG), and I was always fascinated by what you could read into this graph, what it said about the turmoil in your head. After each examination, marks remain on the patient's head from the special skullcap, a head net that is used during the examination, and so the machine is imprinted for a short time on your

head. As a child I used to wonder whether the equipment could read my thoughts and dreams.

However, you could say that I am more interested in a state of vigilance, in waiting for sleep, than I am in dreams, as though sleep's task is to ensure that images and experiences are reassembled in a different, better way. It's a kind of incarceration in a state of wakefulness.



ERROR, 2015–16, 25 collages on paper, installation view. Courtesy of the artist; Meyer Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague. Photo: Martin Parsekian.



Error (Body of Viktor, "the electrician"), 2016,
metal structures, fabric, plastic and paper,
82½×86½×17 in. Courtesy of the artist; Meyer
Riegger, Berlin/Karlsruhe; and hunt kastner, Prague.
Photo: Martin Parsekian.

Eva Kotátková (b. 1982, Prague) was an artist in residence at ISCP in 2008, as the youngest person ever to receive the Jindřich Chalupecký Award for artists from the Czech Republic, with support from the Trust for Mutual Understanding. From 2002 to 2008 she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague, at the San Francisco Art Institute and the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. Recent solo exhibitions include *Out of Sight*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, USA; *Eva Kotátková: Anatomical Orchestra*, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, Germany; *A Story Teller's Inadequacy*, Modern Art Oxford, UK; and *Theatre of Speaking Objects*, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany. Group exhibitions include *2015 Triennial: Surround Audience*, New Museum, New York, USA; *Avatar und Atavism: Outside the Avant-garde*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany; *5 Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, Russia; and *The Encyclopedic Palace*, 55th Venice Biennale, Italy.

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