

Sekcija / Section



Edited by Łukasz Guzek

# Introduction

## by the Editor

Beer is everywhere. But in the Czech Republic it is an inalienable tradition. Like the national epic by Jaroslav Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk*, who tells his stories like Scheherazade. Beer is the reason why the Bohemian region is considered the equivalent of the Czech Republic, because Pilsner Urquell is produced there in the city of Plzeň. Even the communists, who ruled after World War II in the Soviet style, were not able to shake the tradition of beer. The hospoda became a house of art.

Of all the Central European countries, it was in the Czech Republic that surrealism was rooted the most strongly. And after the War, it became a legend of the avant-garde. After the Revolution of 1968, the Prague Spring, total control of society was imposed by the authorities. They themselves called it *normalization*. For artists, drinking beer in a hospoda became the only safe form of group meetings. At the same time, it was a very natural and understandable form in the context of surrealism as a common life activity raised to the rank of a work of art.

The first opposition artistic movement in Prague was Šmidrové (Lazy Eye, a disorder of sight, c 1954-68). Around 1962, Křižovnická škola čistého humoru bez vtipu [Crusader school of pure humour without a joke] was founded, named after its seat in the hospoda U Křižovníků [At The Crusader], and continued in the 1970s in other places, still being reborn on the basis of beer culture. The notion of 'pure humour' sounds a lot like 'pure art,' a principle that operates at a meta level.

Another example: František Maxera in the hospoda U Lojzy in Prague (1973) organized an exhibition of large ceramic jugs made by himself, which stood on the bar, full of beer. Since the author was a well-known opposition activist, the opening was also a political manifestation.

They are all indebted to the movement The Incoherents (Les Arts incohérents), Paris 1882, with its subsequent Dada-Surrealist forms of presentation.

The concept of "humour without joke" sounds similar to *The Party of Moderate and Peaceful Progress Within the Limits of the Law*, a book written earlier by Jaroslav Hašek (1911), where the author found opportunism as the highest form of political critique of life under the pressure of the authorities.

"Drinking beer with friends is the highest form of art" stated Tom Marioni in his conceptual art project, which he began in 1970 in San Francisco. In the same year, Petr Štembera - the most radical Czech artist of that time - contacted him. When Marioni visited Prague in 1975, they executed a joint performance. It is in the context of conceptual art that beer can be understood as a ready-made, and drinking beer becomes a form of critical art, both in Prague and San Francisco.

Artists are doing nothing illegal, but at the same time say to the authorities: I see you, I know what you are doing, and you will not break me.

# Jana ORLOVÁ

Silesian University in Opava

## BEER IN CZECH ART

### Introduction

Since any person or group of people can be readily categorized as a follower of such an ideology or as a deviant, drinking becomes a marker of identity and alterity (or ‘otherness’), establishing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, both within a culture as well as between cultures. In this way cultures are not simply objectively identifiable groups of individuals, but self-identified groups which impose upon themselves markers of identity and alterity. Such markers are often reinforced with notions which do not reflect reality, and usually though not inevitably, lead to presumptions of singularity and superiority.<sup>1</sup>

For the Czechs, beer is much more than just a popular alcoholic beverage: it is connected to cultural mythology, national pride and self-identification. Beer and the pub are romanticised in Czech culture on at least two levels: the first is the *topos* of the pub as a place of togetherness and social equality, the other the archetype of the talented artist/drinker. The present study

focuses on both these levels, given that beer and pub culture is a specific socio-cultural symbol for the Czechs, whose reflection is essential for grasping the artistic creation associated with beer. “Beer as a beverage is a cultural element that attracts activities, professions, ideas or artefacts around itself, creating a cultural configuration. By drinking together, by wanting to be together in our free time, we create a sense of mutual cohesion but also of difference.”<sup>2</sup> The Czechs are known for their record-breaking beer consumption, reaching 181 litres per person in 2020, compared to only 96 litres in Poland.<sup>3</sup> However, beer consumption has seen a slight decline recently.<sup>4</sup> Czech alcoholism is deeply intertwined with Czech culture and national identity. As will be shown below, pubs and beer were key factors during the process of the ‘awakening of the nation’ or the so-called national revival,<sup>5</sup> in which a crucial role was played by artists. However, in order for this to be possible at all, there of course had to be something to build on. That is why this text includes a short historical section. In order to achieve a comprehensive picture of the links of beer consumption to the Czech art scene, the study also includes literature and music in addition to the visual arts.

## Beer in Historical and Cultural Perspective

According to historian Jaroslav Novák Večerníček, beer was brewed in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic right from the beginning of the settlement, around the turn of the millennium, and was a cult drink until the advent of Christianity.<sup>6</sup> “After the year 1000, Bohemia exported its hops along the Elbe River to neighbouring countries. (...) Charles IV banned the export of Bohemian hops even under penalty of death and allowed the cultivation of hops only to people with special training. This was to preserve the Czech monopoly on the best quality hops.”<sup>7</sup> The Middle Ages knew two kinds of beer: ‘weak’ and ‘strong.’ The former solved “the problem of the omnipresent danger of water contamination and was drunk by all ages, including children, every day and all day long. The strong beer was then consumed in pubs.”<sup>8</sup> Even then, pubs were already the centres of social, commercial and cultural life, and “every town inhabitant had the right to brew a certain amount of beer and was allowed to sell it.”<sup>9</sup> A major issue was, of course, drunkenness (and related vices of all kinds), against which the author of the St. Wenceslas legend, *Crescente fide* (dated 973), had already railed. In the early Middle Ages, domestic beer production among the subjects was “predominantly a woman's affair,”<sup>10</sup> and women were also the bartenders in taverns. Women also freely frequented the tavern in the Middle Ages, whether they were ladies of honour or ladies of disrepute.<sup>11</sup> The literary composition *The Groom and the Apprentice* from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries contains the exclamation, “Milady, let the beer flow” (and also a warning against immoderate consumption). At the time of the national revival, the situation was considerably less free: women could not enter the pub without male escort.<sup>12</sup>

Beer, as an important part of life, was of course the subject of folk and tavern and couplet songs such as this sixteenth century pop song:

“He who gets drunk in the evening/ he knows it well/ he drinks again in the morning – he'll be as fresh as a daisy. It is indeed mighty sound advice to take a hair of the dog that bit you.”<sup>13</sup> The following satire on the Czech national anthem dates from 1860: “Where is my homeland? Where is my home? / Where there is daily booze galore! / It be no delusion, it be no sham / that I should consider the pub my home. / Not every place is the same, / the voice of nature says time and again / and my heart cries out with much glee, / that I only in the pub I am home and free!”<sup>14</sup> Besides that, folk magic is also connected to beer: many recipes have survived for how to ‘fix’ a spoiled batch of beer; besides incantations and herbs, holy water or the owl's brain were also used.<sup>15</sup> The following ritual is supposed to work on the supposed ‘pest’ of the beer: “Whoever did this to the beer, may the devil bring him here at once and give him no respite, neither on the road, nor in the house, nor on the water, nor ever. And if it be from the Lord God himself, Lord God grant me forgiveness and be a helper to this beer, that in the name of the F & the S & the HS & A. This thing was tried by Adam Tříška at Krumlov Moravský, when he was an under-elder in the year of the Lord 1627.”<sup>16</sup> However, beer was also spoken of in official church ceremonies. For the sake of comparison, here is the blessing of the Archdiocese of Prague in 1699: “Bless, O Lord, this beer which by your grace has come from the grain in order to become a beneficial medicine for the human race. And by invoking thy most holy name, grant that everyone who drinks of it may receive health for his body and protection for his soul. Through Christ, our Lord, amen.”<sup>17</sup>

## National Revival

Beer and the pub played a key role in the constitution of ‘Czechness,’ i.e. the modern Czech nation and the Czech language. One of the most important Czech writers, Jan Neruda, said the following about the U Bílého Lva [White Lion] pub, where patriots liked to meet: “If that ceiling were to fall on us, the Czech nation would be

dead!”<sup>18</sup> The relevance of this *bon mot* was verified by Vladimír Macura, a leading expert on the Czech national revival, according to whom the pub was extremely important for the constitution of the concept of Czechness since it “offered a public space for communication in Czech,”<sup>19</sup> which was not at all obvious at the time. In those days, Czech existed only as a dialect of the lower social classes, and the official language was German. This prominent position applied not only to the pubs in Prague, but also in other Czech cities. The language was the carrier of Czech culture in the broad sense of the word at this time, but the literary sphere was the most important. Macura further emphasises that pubs were also places that served as a site of political struggle.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, the term ‘kocovina’ (Czech for ‘hangover’) at the time meant, in addition to the unpleasant state following alcohol consumption, also “a noisy and derisive political demonstration.”<sup>21</sup> At the time of the national revival, beer was described as a ‘Slavic drink,’<sup>22</sup> but according to available sources, it was widespread across cultures, including Mesopotamia, Egypt and Mesoamerica.<sup>23</sup>

It is true for the Central-European cultural circle that the hospoda (tavern) or pub has been a social, political and cultural *topos* since the Middle Ages, where the lower and higher classes, intellectuals, artists, and workers met. The pub “bears the characteristics of the everyday, of democracy, it breaks the hierarchy of visitors, it is characterised by changeability and chaos.”<sup>24</sup> According to Josef Peřina, there are two basic types of beer society: the first is an association of intellectuals and artists, whose conversations are witty and creative, and the second type is a society of people consuming alcohol in order to numb themselves and fall asleep. In between, then, are various intermediate levels of “beer blabbers”<sup>25</sup> who share a somewhat limited intellectual horizon and an inability to take real action. The reflection of Bohemia as a country where “activity is hopelessly dissolved in beer,”<sup>26</sup> is quite common in the Czech context; beer is thus on the one hand loved and praised, on the other hand associated with idleness and viewed with disdain.

## Švejk as a Symbol of Czechness

In the 1890s, a generation of writers who have been described as anarcho-bohemians entered the cultural space. These rebels and decadents, free from national sentiment, rebelled against the bourgeoisie, practiced free love, toyed with sarcasm and Satanism, and - drank. They chose popular and decadent drinking holes and positioned themselves as conscious hedonistic outsiders. “Drinking was for this generational group an essential and ambivalent reality, intoxicating and self-destructive at the same time.”<sup>27</sup>

One of the most loyal pub-goers of this generation was Jaroslav Hašek (1883-1923), who is the author of probably the most famous Czech book abroad: *The Good Soldier Švejk*. Švejk embodies the typically Czech “opportunism, the ability to survive under any circumstances (and at any cost), the art of challenging the world and outwitting the powers that be with the cleverness of a small man, and the contempt for ideal values that look beyond the benefit of the individual.”<sup>28</sup> The pub and beer are the only place of solace in this novel, a motif that is revived time and again in Czech art. “By going regularly to a favourite establishment, meeting with regular acquaintances and experiencing the evenings unchangingly, one gets the impression that life has an inner order, that there is something stable to grasp onto in case of emergency.”<sup>29</sup> Hašek spent most of his life in the pub, and naturally created his literary works there. In addition to *Švejk*, for example, he also wrote *The History of the Party of Moderate and Peaceful Progress within the Limits of the Law* (written 1911-12), in which he parodied the political conditions of his time. Hašek also took aim at the ‘beer politics’ of the newly formed national self-esteem: “We, the party members, without wanting to defy the general opinion about the necessity of alcoholism, have also sailed with the current of the times and established our centres in rooms where there was good beer. (...) For alcohol is the milk of politics.”<sup>30</sup> He also prepared the party’s poster and election speeches, which he delivered at

the Zvěřinů [Game] Inn in Prague's Vinohrady district.<sup>31</sup> Although there is no documentation of his activities, in the opinion of the author of this study, they could be described as the earliest Czech performance art.

The illustrations to *Švejk* were created by Josef Lada, a close friend of Hašek's. These illustrations definitively crowned Švejk as the (nowadays highly commercialised) symbol of the Czech pub. Without exception, Lada rendered pub scenes idyllically, in a 'folksy' manner, without the use of perspective, with black contours and stereotyped characters, making them somewhat reminiscent of children's colouring books. He produced a number of works on the subject, but the best-known is the figure of Švejk,<sup>32</sup> at first glance a stocky fat man in a battered uniform who is 'so stupid he's clever.' Hašek's Švejk is, however, a much more complex and ambiguous character than Lada's kindly-humorous portrayal: the book contains a number of absurd situations full of sarcasm, cynicism, and mockery. The popularisation of Švejk was further cemented by the film adaptation.<sup>33</sup>

## Beer, Pubs and Visual Arts Before

1948<sup>34</sup>

Bohemian inclinations were of course equally shared by personalities of the art scene, such as Mikuláš Aleš (1852-1913), a leading representative of the National Theatre generation, or the bohemians around the Mánes Association.<sup>35</sup> "When the consumption of alcoholic beverages extended late into the night, the well-behaved Aleš adhered to one practical principle, namely, that it was no use going home before 8 a.m. when the children were not yet at school."<sup>36</sup> In nineteenth century Czech painting, taverns can be found in genre scenes, whether in the aforementioned Mikoláš Aleš, the older realist Josef Navrátil (1798-1865), or the now almost forgotten Antonín Gareis (1837-1922). The scenes are usually idyllic, but there are also caricatures, especially in

connection with the moralisation of drunkenness. Josef Navrátil decorated his favourite Kléblats beer hall in 1848 with epitaphs, and Prague pubs were later also decorated by a number of artists from the Osma (Eight) group.<sup>37</sup>

The Osma group followed the current trends in world painting, whether it was expressionism or fauvism. Strong was the influence of the French scene (as it was with the literary anarcho-bohemians), and Vlček states that the strongest influence was wielded by Honoré Daumier with his relaxed handwriting.<sup>38</sup> Other significant sources of inspiration were Paul Cézanne and Edvard Munch. The decision to hold their first exhibition (1907) of the newly forming group is said to have been made at the Union Café.<sup>39</sup> Although beer was also served in cafés, it was a far more sophisticated environment: daily newspapers or even specialised magazines were often available. Cafés represented a step towards cosmopolitanism. However, this exclusive environment was also more financially demanding, and therefore the Osma members also spent a great deal of time in cheap dives. A pub typical for them was the Jedová Chýše [Poison Hut, located on the outskirts of Prague at the time, which is also where the motif of the *Players*, which the group worked on between 1908 and 1909, was probably created; the regulars were unpaid models for them.<sup>40</sup> In addition to expressionist imagery, there is also a social note in these works. "Pubs are places of mass rituals in which play and fun are unimportant alongside food and drink. (...) Playing games simply allows one to reincarnate, to immerse oneself in 'another being,' to zigzag, to lead the public into rapture and to pretend to be a winner in sweet noncommittal. Play reveals dispositions that remain repressed or hidden under the yoke of normal circumstances. Pub self-realisation (...) takes one away from the axes of the cramped world of needs and worries and views seemingly intractable situations as grotesque."<sup>41</sup> For comparison, I show two paintings from 1908, by Emil Filla and Antonín Procházka, the Bohumil Kubišta is from 1909. Another member of the group, Emil Artur Pittermann-Longen, produced a number of portraits of drinkers and smokers,



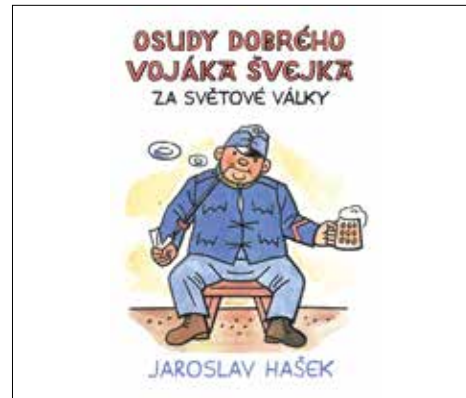
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2

**Kdo dá hlas,  
obdrží malé  
kapesní  
akvárium!**  
Strana mírného pokroku  
v mezích zákona

3



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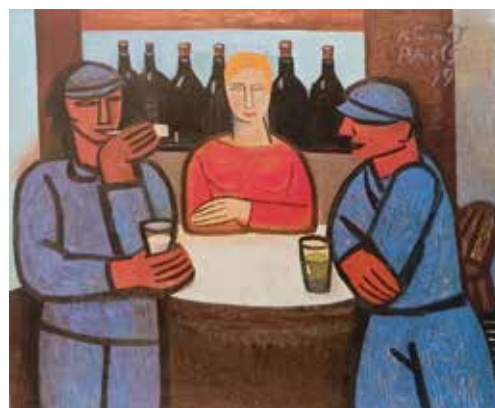




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1. Josef Navrátil, *Men at the Table - Company at the Table*, circa 1860, oil on cardboard, 38 cm x 32 cm. Accessed August 25, 2023. [https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/dielo/CZE:NG.O\\_14443](https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/dielo/CZE:NG.O_14443).
2. A new year's eve postcard from the beginning of 20th century (Polička Town). In Čeněk Zíbrt. *From the History of Beer*. Appendix (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2013).
3. Election poster of the Moderate Progress Party within the limits of the law. "Whoever votes gets a small pocket aquarium!" (1911). Accessed August 25, 2023. [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strana\\_m%C3%ADrn%C3%A9ho\\_pokroku\\_v\\_mez%C3%ADch\\_z%C3%A1kona](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strana_m%C3%ADrn%C3%A9ho_pokroku_v_mez%C3%ADch_z%C3%A1kona).
4. Josef Lada, *Švejk*. Jaroslav Hašek, *Good Soldier Švejk* (Prague, Cheap Books, 2023). <https://www.levneknihy.cz/osudy-dobreho-vojaka-svejka-za-svetove-valky.html#gallery>
5. Emil Filla, *Red Ace*, 1908, 65 cm x 75 cm In Miroslav Lamač, *Osma and the Group of Artists 1907-1917* (Prague: Odeon, 1988), 78.
6. Antonín Procházka, *Players*, 1908, oil on canvas, 100 x 119.5 cm In Miroslav Lamač, *Osma and the Group of Artists 1907-1917* (Prague: Odeon, 1988), 79.
7. Cyprían Majerník, *Card Players*, 1944, oil on canvas, 44.5 cm x 58 cm. Accessed August 25, 2023. [https://www.webumenia.sk/cs/dielo/SVK:SNG.O\\_791](https://www.webumenia.sk/cs/dielo/SVK:SNG.O_791).
8. Josef Čapek, *The Drinker*, 1913, oil on canvas, 36.4 x 60.5 cm. Accessed August 25, 2023. [https://sbirky.moravska-galerie.cz/dielo/CZE:MGA\\_1059](https://sbirky.moravska-galerie.cz/dielo/CZE:MGA_1059).
9. Emil Artur Longen, *Captured by Alcohol* (self-portrait), 1935. [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soubor:Pittermann\\_Longen\\_Autoportr%C3%A9\\_1935.jpg](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soubor:Pittermann_Longen_Autoportr%C3%A9_1935.jpg)
10. Karel Černý, *Interview*, 1949, oil on canvas, 84x100 cm. In Vojtěch Lahoda, Karel Černý (Prague: Odeon, 1994), 80.
11. Naděžda Plíšková, *Comisc*, 1970. In Věra Jirousová, ed., *K.Š. - The Crusader School of Pure Humour without Joke* (Hradec Králové: Gallery of Modern Art; Prague: Central Bohemian Gallery, 1991).
12. Eugen Brikius, *Still Life with Beer I*, performance documentation, 1967. In Věra Jirousová, ed., *K.Š. - The Knights of the Cross School of Pure Humour without Joke* (Hradec Králové: Gallery of Modern Art; Prague: Central Bohemian Gallery, 1991).
13. Jana Orlová, *Beer Drag King*, 2023, performance documentation. Trója Castle, Prague. Author's archive.

including his self-portrait. What they all have in common is that “the setting of the pub is usually only hinted at; the central subject is the figure and its psychological states. The artists usually refer to the space of the pub only by the most economical means; there is rarely more than a table and a glass next to the figure.”<sup>42</sup> The *Osma* and its theme of the card players was taken up a generation younger by Cyprián Majerník (a member of the 1909 Generation). His 1944 work is marked by a muted wartime colour palette, and besides, one can notice a difference in gender — two of the four figures seated at the table are women, while in the *Osma*, when women do appear, they are only in the background, not sitting together with the players at the table.

Josef Čapek, a member of the Tvrdošijní [Stubborn] group, whose best-known works are the original cubist variations, worked on the theme of the *Drinker* after 1918. “In 1918 he depicted the *Drinker* twice; he also created a linocut of the same name based on one of the paintings. From 1919 are the works *Drinker at the Window*, *Drinker with a Cigar* and *Drinker with a Pipe*. From 1920, there is the *Sitting Drinker* or *Man with a Pipe*.”<sup>43</sup> However, even this list is not exhaustive. These works by Čapek exhibit a primitivising tendency and an inclination to create character stylizations. A similar propensity towards caricature can also be observed in Karel Černý’s paintings from the thirties and forties, which, however, are also characterised by a certain dreamy melancholy. His paintings are multi-figured; the characters shown in them nevertheless give the impression of loneliness. In his work, too, women are a natural part of the society of drinkers. While his works from the thirties have a mundane, even aristocratic air, the certain of the paintings from 1949 already reflects an emerging socialist realism.

## Pubs and Cultural Underground

The tradition of pub prose was continued in the second half of the twentieth century by the writer Bohumil Hrabal. A creative method important for him was to sit in a pub, drink, observe events, and eavesdrop on stories. Associated with him is the legendary U Zlatého Tygra [Golden Tiger] pub. In his work, he broke down “the boundaries between the aesthetic and the extra-aesthetic, between one text and another, between the text of the work and the text of life...”<sup>44</sup> A close friend of Bohumil Hrabal was Egon Bondy, who in the fifties developed a kind of pseudo-primitive ‘embarrassing poetry’ and writing in the spirit of ‘total realism.’ Among other things, at stake was a need to break away from the influence of Breton surrealism, which for Bondy in Stalinist Czechoslovakia had lost its relevance. He reacted to the new situation with a desire to express the reality of life as rawly as possible, to accentuate its absurdity and at the same time to distance himself from ideology. He returned to his poetics in the seventies (during the period of ‘normalisation,’ i.e. after 1968<sup>45</sup>), when he became a living legend for the new generation of the cultural underground — especially thanks to the fact that his lyrics were set to music by the most famous of underground bands, Plastic People of the Universe. I use here the term cultural underground (to define a group of people who consciously chose to be outsiders in a communist society, against which they more or less defined themselves, while creating art that they knew they could not officially publish, exhibit, or perform, and thus creating mainly for their own affinity group. In this milieu, of course, were people of varying degrees of sophistication and education, but the common feature was the pub and the drinking of beer (and spirits). The pub once again became a place of relief from oppressive circumstances, a place of joy and togetherness. Especially significant was the connection between the underground movement, beer, and rock music. “The two phenomena have something in common: they let the intellectual components of the psyche rest and intensify

the primal experience, possibly inviting the imagination to develop.”<sup>46</sup> In a poem dedicated to the late wife of the beatnik poet Milan Koch, Bondy writes, “Mirka is no longer visiting / I guess it cannot be / But I know she still lives / In the heavenly pub with Koch she’s drinking / And rejoicing.”<sup>47</sup> Literary historian and critic Vladimír Novotný also associates the pub with the *topos* of the vanished paradise.<sup>48</sup> Panajot Karagjozov also illustrates the importance of beer and pubs in his own recollection as follows: “In the 1980s, the pub was to the Czechs what the church was to the Poles. The pub had an extraterritorial status, it was the existential minimum of freedom, without which the state would simply be gone. The most numerous police presence I saw in Prague was not on May Day or in November 1989,<sup>49</sup> but on the eve of the beer price hike in 1984.”<sup>50</sup> The Czech pub was also (not only) characterised by a specific democracy in this period, where drinkers of various social statuses met.<sup>51</sup> Vinopal notes that “the period of totalitarianism was in a sense similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in terms of the degree of political freedom and individual rights.”<sup>52</sup> Beer was also part of official propaganda, with slogans such as ‘beer makes nice bodies,’ ‘beer is our second bread,’ or ‘hunger is thirst in disguise.’<sup>53</sup>

Typical of the Czechs is their creation of so-called pub-table societies. “We can assume that the roots would be found in the old guilds and their meetings. (...) From the 1860s onwards, these formed the basis of local associations.”<sup>54</sup> Alongside the almost loose groups of regulars in the pub, “any other regulars from the pub or even the occasional visitor could join in without offending anyone too much, caste-enclosed table societies were also created, with a multitude of common signs and symbols and complex rituals and ceremonies, whose members occupied various roles and had their own flamboyant nicknames, such as parodied ‘offices’ and ‘functions,’ which were understood only by the initiated.”<sup>55</sup> In 1881, for example, the Mahabharata Table Society was founded, which accommodated literary men (Jaroslav Hašek was a member), artists, actors, and scientists.

In this spirit was also conceived the art group Crusaders School of Pure Humour Without Jokes [Křižovnická škola čistého humoru bez vtipu, or KŠ], which met in the Old Prague U Křižovníků [At The Crusader] pub. The Crusaders School was founded in the first half of the sixties<sup>56</sup> and “brought together unofficial and underground artists with a similar outlook on life, characterised by a specific humour and irony, an effort to connect the everyday with artistic creation and a sense of ‘pub romance.’ In the broad community of Crusaders, members and friends, many events have spontaneously emerged, most of them on the very borderline between artistic creation and banal entertainment.”<sup>57</sup> The group gathered artists expressing themselves through various artistic means, with all united by the themes of the everyday and the absurd, and also... their love of beer. This is naturally reflected in many of the works, or rather concepts, discussed in more depth below.

Beer as an aesthetic medium appears in Jan Steklík and Karel Nepřaš’ “continuous action *Beer in Art*, in which beer samples were taken from various pubs and sealed in resin, where they can remain preserved for centuries, or the *Crusaders Calendar* (1972), which consisted of photographs of seated and beer-drinking ‘Knights of the Cross.’”<sup>58</sup> The pub environment was also the setting for the parlour game *Frankie, Don’t Be Angry*, which used alcohol shots as pieces.”<sup>59</sup> This game was also implemented twice in the open air, with the game environment made of beer coasters. In a 1979 text, art historian Ivan Martin Jirous adds that the game *Frankie, Don’t Be Angry*<sup>60</sup> was inspired their feuds with Frankie the pub-owner and that even in the original Crusaders pub, the members of the Crusaders School were not exactly welcome: “The pub is an open structure into which the unpredictable is built in. Moreover, it’s not about the pub owner’s tolerance of the artist’s exclusivity in the surrounding ‘simple world’ – but it’s the constant struggle for existence in the midst of an essentially hostile environment.”<sup>61</sup>

Another member of the Crusaders School, Jan Steklík, developed various forms of ‘Knights of the Cross Love,’ which also included beer love – here partners caress each other with pints of beer – or beer orgasm: the symbolic meaning of beer foam.<sup>62</sup> Poet Jindřich Procházka “took a tablecloth from the table at which the members of the Crusaders School were sitting, with empty and unfinished pints of beer filled with ashtrays, cigarettes, cutlery and money ready to settle the bill with, tied it in a knot and threw it under the table. He then pointed under the table to a bewildered chief-waiter Frankie, who was wondering where it had all gone, and announced that he had just created a visual poem.”<sup>63</sup> Naděžda Plíšková has worked with the motif of beer pints: she has created, for example, a beer comic or graphics with the titles *Half a Pint* and *A Full Pint*.

Eugen Brikcius, philosopher and conceptual artist, was inspired by theology and absurd theatre: his actions were elaborate mystifications. He staged three versions of the *Still Life with Beer*, happening in Prague’s Kampa district: the first in the spring of 1967, the second in February 1968. This was followed by another version in 1991. Art historian Pavlína Morganová interprets and describes the piece as follows: “The entire event, where participants arrived with their own pint [glasses] to fill at the nearest pub, was accompanied by a number of ritual acts associated with drinking beer (pouring beer through funnels from the height of a ladder, ceremonial sipping and incorporating one’s own beer into the still life) and other performances.”<sup>64</sup> Brikcius himself commented on his concept several decades later (in 2003) as follows: “The path to such a still life is simple. First, we are attracted by the glasses on the tables in the restaurant. Since the plane of the beers is obscured by the guests, we have to think them away. In order to make the beer stand out even more – not as a drink, but as an object of aesthetic perception – a final creative step has to be taken: transferring the set of glasses from the tables to a different, unusual terrain. A dazzling still life thus comes into being.”<sup>65</sup> In 1968,

a theatrical happening *Tribute to Master Horský* took place in Ostrava. “The screening of the film from the *Still Life* happening, with the audience looking over their shoulders through mirrors, was complemented by a stage performance by Master Horský. As Master Horský, the poet, the beer-drinking Brikcius’ Muse, put one of the ten beers standing in front of him to his lips, the music began to play. It clearly alerted everyone that the Master was drinking. Brikcius thus presented the act of drinking beer in a slightly grotesque position as a solemn ritual.”<sup>66</sup> Indeed, for Brikcius, beer had both a secular (indulgent, lifestyle-related) and a spiritual-conceptual dimension. Beer, as an ambiguous symbol, was perfectly suited for his artistic puns on the border between genius and banality. In this, he claimed the legacy of Jaroslav Hašek.<sup>67</sup>

## Beer and Song Lyrics

After 1989, the interconnectedness of rock music and beer was transformed into so-called beer rock, i.e. a more or less consumerist combination of simple rock rhythm and elements of brass band or cowboy rhymes. The punk rock band Tři sestry [Three Sisters] is associated with the Na Staré Kovárně [Old Smithy] pub in Braník: the band was founded in the pub and named after it their first album from 1990, *Na Kovárně, to je nářez* [At the Smithy, there’s a blast]. For comparison, below are the lyrics of the song *Jarošovský pivovar* [Jarošov Brewery] by the band Argema (from 1993) and the lyrics of the song *Pivo* [Beer] by the underground singer Charlie Soukup from the seventies. The selected example clearly shows the historical shift of the society’s beer culture: from the crude image of beer as a quencher of existential anxiety, the song *Jarošov Brewery* depicts an idyllic folk rustic.

**Beer**

We shall drink a lot of beers  
 no wonder we shall drown our wits  
 the good guys want our brains to pick  
 we're all sure to become neurotic  
 the good guys want our brains to pick  
 we're all sure to become neurotic

IQ is a worm-eaten apple  
 the beer is indeed fine and dapper  
 beer is the victim of today  
 beer is love of the truthful way  
 IQ is a worm-eaten apple  
 seriously we shall drink of fearful evil  
 at having blood-signed ourselves to the devil  
 we like drinking more  
 we'll wind up at the clinic for sure  
 we like drinking more  
 we'll wind up at the clinic for sure

IQ is a worm-eaten apple  
 the beer is indeed fine and dapper  
 beer is the victim of today  
 beer is love of the truthful way  
 IQ is a worm-eaten apple  
 we're all sure to become neurotic  
 we're all sure to become neurotic<sup>68</sup>

**Jarošov Brewery**

It's stood there for years, to this day it still  
 stands  
 the brewery by the wayside known by everybody  
 for years it has stood there, it will continue to  
 stand  
 whoever knows Jarošov, knows the brewery.

White foam on a dewy bottle  
 this hop nectar I do know  
 I just tried it and had one drink  
 I've been thirsty since then till now.

Poverty, hunger, and fear have come and gone  
 with enough beer, one always could be merry  
 for three hundred years it has stood, it will  
 continue to stand  
 whoever knows Jarošov, knows the brewery.

White foam on a dewy bottle  
 this hop nectar I do know  
 I just tried it and had one drink  
 I've been thirsty since then till now.

White foam on a dewy bottle  
 this hop nectar I do know  
 I just tried it and had one drink  
 I've been thirsty since then till now.  
 Jarošov brewery.<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusion

This study has, within the spatial limitations given, presented a sketch of the complex relationship in cultural and sociological terms between the Czechs and beer, in particular, the place of beer within Czech society and art using examples from literature, and song lyrics as well as the visual arts. It shows that national alcoholism has deep roots directly linked to national self-identification – which in turn is linked to art. Through a selection of examples, the nature of the relationship between Czech beer, culture and art is portrayed in order to show how this was shaped over time, but also how it reflected the current social situation. As it seems, the roots of this phenomenon can be traced back to the historical origins of brewing in the territory of today's Czech Republic and it can be followed through the topic of beer as presented in medieval literary sources. In the period of the Czech National Revival (from the last third of the eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century), pubs and beer consumption played a key role in the construction of modern Czech identity, one expression of this was the literary portrayal of Švejk, who to this day figures as a potent symbol of national mentality. Beer has continued to play an important role in Czech society and art up to the present day. The paper presents some selected examples, focussing in particular on the role beer has had in the recent past in the so-called cultural underground (i.e. the unofficial art scene during the communist period).

For the Czechs, beer is a source of pride as well as shame, which is reflected in the examples given. Beer is a symbol of artistic bohemianism and rebelliousness, but equally of conformity and passivity. Pubs are associated with politics and patriotism (including the constitution of modern Czech and the Czech nation as such), as well as laziness and Czech smallness. They are a democratic space, historically associated with a place (albeit the last one) of safety and stability, a place where one meets regular acquaintances and can escape from the oppressive or hectic everyday

life. For the Czechs, the pub is a place akin to paradise – or one could also say: an escape from whatever one needs to escape from, including oneself. The relaxing effects of beer, the psycho-hygienic possibility to talk or reason without anyone remembering... and the related social and health consequences of alcoholism. Czechs and beer? Love to the point of hate.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Max Nelson, *The barbarian's beverage: a history of beer in ancient Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Jitka Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society* (PhD Diss., Charles University, Prague, 2008), 5.
- <sup>3</sup> “Global Beer Consumption: Czechs consume the most beer per capita,” accessed August 9, 2023, <https://finlord.cz/2022/08/globalni-spotreba-piva-cesi-spotrebuji-nejvic-piva-osobu/>.
- <sup>4</sup> “The Czech Republic is one of the countries with the highest alcohol consumption. How much do we drink? And how much do we smoke?” accessed August 9, 2023, <https://medium.seznam.cz/clanek/traveler-cesko-patri-k-zemim-s-nejvetsi-konzumaci-alkoholu-kolik-toho-vypijeme-a-kolik-vykourime-5420>.
- <sup>5</sup> The Czech National Revival is the process of the so-called “awakening of the nation” (or its re-creation by a group of enthusiastic intellectuals) from the 1880s to the second half of the 19th century, a process that was completed with the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.
- <sup>6</sup> Jaroslav Novák Večerníček, *The History of Beer: from the Birth to the End of the Middle Ages* (Brno: Computer Press, 2009), 97.
- <sup>7</sup> Večerníček, *History of Beer*, 86.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 96-97.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, 112.
- <sup>10</sup> Zdeněk Žalud, “The meeting and encounter of beer and wine through the eyes of laymen and physicians in the 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries,” in *Misted History*, ed. Martin Veselý Ústí nad Labem: Faculty of Arts, Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, 2019), 20.
- <sup>11</sup> Večerníček, *History of Beer*, 116.
- <sup>12</sup> Dobrava Moldanová, “The Pub and People Around It as Seen by Czech Women Writers,” *Pubs and Beer in Czech Society*, ed. Vladimír Novotný (Prague: Academia, 1997), 95.
- <sup>13</sup> Josef Staněk, *The Blessed Brewer: Chapters from the History of Beer* (Prague: Práce, 1984), 216.
- <sup>14</sup> Čeněk Zíbrt, *From the History of Beer* (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2013), 264.
- <sup>15</sup> Staněk, *The Blessed Brewer*, 119-126.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 122.
- <sup>17</sup> Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society*, 34.
- <sup>18</sup> Jan Neruda, *Pictures III, 1885-1888* (Prague: State Publishing House of Beautiful Literature, Music and Art, 1954), 238.
- <sup>19</sup> Vladimír Macura, “The Pub in Czech Patriotic Culture,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 29.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, 30-31.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, 31-2.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 33.
- <sup>23</sup> See Večerníček, *History of Beer*.
- <sup>24</sup> Vladimír Křivánek, “Give them this evening their warm pub, O Lord: Pubs and the Czech Anarcho-bohemianism,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 116.
- <sup>25</sup> Josef Peřina, “Mr Brouček's Relationship to Beer, or the Image of the Soul of the Czech Nation as Mirrored in the Pint,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 78.
- <sup>26</sup> Macura, “The Pub in Czech Patriotic Culture,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 35.
- <sup>27</sup> Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society*, 80.
- <sup>28</sup> Moldanová, “The Pub and People Around It as Seen by Czech Women Writers,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 99.
- <sup>29</sup> Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society*, 75.
- <sup>30</sup> Jaroslav Hašek, *Political and Social History of the Party of Moderate Progress within the Limits of the Law* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1963), 48.
- <sup>31</sup> Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society*, 80-1.
- <sup>32</sup> Lada had already illustrated Hašek's work before the First World War, but the final form of Švejk's face did not appear until the 1926 book edition (Pavla Pečínková, *Josef Lada* [Prague: Gallery, 1998], 118).
- <sup>33</sup> Thanks to the non-confrontational style and content and the apolitical focus of his works, Lada was a popular artist during the communist period. Similarly, the character of Švejk was very popular, which was reinforced by Jaroslav Steklý's 1956 film adaptation (a year before Lada's death).
- <sup>34</sup> February 1948 is when a communist coup d'état took place in Czechoslovakia.

- <sup>35</sup> The Mánes Society of Artists was founded in 1887.
- <sup>36</sup> Zdeněk Kment, *Pubs and Their Historical Role in Czech society, or, Inns in Bohemia, Taverns in Wallachia and Pubs in Valašské Meziříčí* (Valašské Meziříčí: Z. Kment, 2011), 110.
- <sup>37</sup> The original eight painters were Emil Filla, Otakar Kubín, Antonín Procházka, Bohumil Kubišta, Max Horb, Bedřich Feigl, Vilém Nowak, Emil Arthur Longen-Pittermann, later joined by Vlastimil Beneš, Václav Špála and Linka Procházková.
- <sup>38</sup> Tomáš Vlček, *Honoré Daumier* (Prague: Odeon, 1981), 34.
- <sup>39</sup> Miroslav Lamač, *Osma and the Group of Artists 1907-1917* (Prague: Odeon, 1988), 41.
- <sup>40</sup> Lamač, *Osma*, 160.
- <sup>41</sup> Radko Pytlík, *In the Shade of the Tap: Talks and Fantasies* (Prague: Emporium, 1996) 175-6.
- <sup>42</sup> Veronika Rollová, *Prague Pub – Inspiration for Czech Visual Arts of the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Prague, Charles University, Bachelor's Thesis, 2009) 22.
- <sup>43</sup> Rollová, *Prague pub – Inspiration*, 38.
- <sup>44</sup> Jan Jiroušek, “The Paradigm of the Pub in 20th Century Czech Prose,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 146.
- <sup>45</sup> On 21 August 1968, Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia in response to the political and cultural dislocation known as the Prague Spring. This was followed by a period of *normalisation*, an attempt to return to the frigid conditions of the fifties.
- <sup>46</sup> Aleš Opekar, “The Influence of Beer on Czech Rock Music,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 221.
- <sup>47</sup> Egon Bondy, *Poetry Collections 1974-1976; Příšerné příběhy* (Prague: Pražská imaginace, 1992), 114.
- <sup>48</sup> Vladimír Novotný, “The Czech Beer Society and Zdeněk Matěj Kuděj,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 122.
- <sup>49</sup> At the end of 1989 the so-called Velvet (i.e. non-violent) Revolution took place; the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The date of the demonstration on 17 November 1989 is key.
- <sup>50</sup> Panayot Karagjovov, “Requiem for the Prague Four,” in Novotný, *Pubs and Beer*, 247.
- <sup>51</sup> Pytlík, *In the Shadow of the Tap*, 162.
- <sup>52</sup> Jiří Vinopal, “The institution of the Pub in Czech Society,” *Our Society*, no. 2 (2005): 32.
- <sup>53</sup> Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society*, 22.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 76.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 77.
- <sup>56</sup> Věra Jirousová, ed., *K.Š. – The Knights of the Cross School of Pure Humour without Joke* (Hradec Králové: Gallery of Modern Art; Prague: Central Bohemian Gallery, 1991), unpaginated.
- <sup>57</sup> Pavlína Morganová, *Action Art* (Olomouc: Votobia, 1999), 41.
- <sup>58</sup> The author of the photos is Helena Wilson.
- <sup>59</sup> Morganová, *Action Art*, 42.
- <sup>60</sup> Soudková, *Beer and Pubs in the Culture of Czech Society*, 22.
- <sup>61</sup> “[E]ach of the playing parties plays a different colour (brown rum, red griot, green peppermint liqueur, white vodka, etc.; and the discarded dram must be drunk on the spot by its owner.” See Jirousová, *K.Š.*, unpaginated.
- <sup>62</sup> Jirousová, *K.Š.*, unpaginated. Duňa Slavíková, on the other hand, claims that the situation took place at the table of a regular guest who asked Procházka what a particular poem was. See Eugen Brikcius, *And the Body Became the Word* (Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2013), 9.
- <sup>63</sup> Jirousová, *K.Š.*, unpaginated.
- <sup>64</sup> Morganová, *Action Art*, 43.
- <sup>65</sup> Brikcius, *And the Body Became the Word*, 883.
- <sup>66</sup> Morganová, *Action Art*, 45.
- <sup>67</sup> In the preface, Viktor Šlajchrt speaks of Eugen Brikcius’ merging of the Hašek position and that of the creator of bohemian legends (in which he was inspired by the biographies of saints). In: Brikcius, *And the Body Became the Word*, 23.
- <sup>68</sup> Lyrics of the song *Pivo* (Charlie Soukup, 70s). Accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.karaoketexty.cz/texty-pisni/soukup-charlie/pivo-893494>.
- <sup>69</sup> Lyrics of the song *Jarošovský pivovar* (Argema, 1993). You can also watch the video clip. Accessed August 30, 2023, <http://www.argema.cz/skladby/jarosovsky-pivovar>.



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# Duňa SLAVÍKOVÁ

Masaryk University Brno, Department of Musicology

## ABOUT THE CRUSADERS SCHOOL, ITS DOMICILE AND THEIR MAIN ARTEFACT

### The history of the Crusaders in their time

In this article, we introduce some of the complex activities of the Czech collective group of the Crusaders School of Pure Humour without a Joke (Křižovnícká škola čistého humoru bez vtipu, KŠ in short), a group of artists, active in the sixties and seventies, named after the pub where they met. Not only this titular pub U Křižovníků, but also other rooms of hospitality, pubs and taverns became the centre of interdependence of life and art. The members of the Crusaders School, like its domiciles, appeared and reappeared, changed at various stages. From 1963 until the final end of the movement only the Direction remained without a change, the legendary self-proclaimed directors,<sup>1</sup> the sculptor Karel Nepraš and the conceptual artist Jan Steklík. The sixties and seventies became the times of transformation. Radically new concepts of art opened up new definitions, since the sixties there has been no connecting uniform style. Artists used a lot

of intermedia processes in their individual or collective creative activity. The artistic production of the Crusaders introduced new practices that combined existing classical media as sculpture and painting with intermedia as happening, action, events, visual poetry and music. There was a predominant inclination towards corporeality, conceptual approaches, subversive humour and bitter grotesque. In their creative output theatricality, playfulness, vitality, self-irony and uncompromising self-reflection were of issue. The Crusaders, thus became one of the foremost Czech forerunners of the New Media. Their approach brought new forms of reflection and expanded the boundaries of Czechoslovak art.

Research concerning the Crusaders, the project which I pursue since some years,<sup>2</sup> should eventually lead to an improved understanding of the political and social conditions of making innovative art in a repressive system and to contribute to the history of knowledge of the twentieth century. In the historical sense, the Crusaders connect to both the Kafkaesque tradition of the absurdity of our world as well as to the Jaroslav Hašek's *Party of Moderate*

*and Peaceful Progress within the Limits of the Law* as general myths. Its aim is to start a new independent critical discourse that will re-evaluate the art of the Crusaders School. The intention is to critically discuss the Crusaders School and its activities as a link between theoretical reflection and creative practice and the presentation of their preservation and cultural products in exhibitions and archives.

A theoretical concern with the Crusaders and their intermedia is a *desideratum* in the Czech humanities. Many questions are posed regarding the position of the Crusaders in the art world of today. The Crusader community as such requires that art and the position of an artist in a dysfunctional society be considered in a way that might renounce common terminology. We discuss the problems posed by the aesthetics: whether the means of use of scandal, absurdity and humour can devalue art. Could the drinking of alcohol, and that not the genteel wine in a noble restaurant, but drinking beer in a sordid pub demote art and invite moralization and disdain of art critics and others? It is understood, that beer is one of the very few products, through which the Czech Republic has achieved world fame. In spite of this undisputable fact, in comparison with wine, beer is still considered to be a commonplace, proletarian drink, all the more, if consumed in a rundown pub. It is important to question, to what extent can such disparaged art, that originated in such a lowly ambience be integrated into the art landscape. The Crusader School's humour was one of the basic characteristics of the group. The major hypothesis is, that this humour, the refusal to take the collaborative activities seriously concealed the aesthetic character of these activities. Perhaps it is this, along with the authentic and absolutely uncompromising stand towards the establishment and the society that did not accept such a moral assessment, that is among the causes why the Crusaders remained to a certain degree outsiders up till now. It is assumed that some of the art theorists of the old school, with considerable influence in the future

writing of art history might have had issues with cultural memory.<sup>3</sup> They would not accept such models of self-development and creativity, which characterized the Crusaders community, while the young generation of theorists have only this abridged information at their disposal. Aleida Assman examines the differences and the interrelationship between collective and cultural memory, which focuses on cultural characteristics.<sup>4</sup> These studies have come forth as essential and central issues of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. The research on the Crusaders School based on cultural memory issues includes exploration of fields such as history, political studies, literary studies and others. How do we approach history to question and contest authoritarian ideologies, revealing alternative narratives and how their practices represent the past while challenging the available memory, which was shaped by those forces.

Political consciousness and civil disobedience in conjunction with a playful state of mind, the encouragement of humour and play in artistic creations evidently generated a cultural environment that refused to make concessions. This was understood in its day, at the heyday of the manifold activities of the group, all kinds of criticism could be heard from its own members or associates but discouraged future discussion. Only recently, since group cooperation as a major theme has been getting increased attention in art history, does it seem that the interest has been intensifying in the Crusaders and their work.

It is important to concentrate on the time of the most significant political and social transitions in the life of the group, on the early stages of the so-called *normalization*, between 1968 and 1974, since I consider these transitions to be formative factors in the development of the group. The specifically Czech political, social and cultural development after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968 had an impact on the many shifts in the field of the arts in that country and it is important to compare and interpret the motivation of making intermedia art

in the international and native unofficial art scene around 1968, the year of the student revolutions in the West and the year where the hopes of consolidating the emergent independent art scene in Czechoslovakia were diminishing. But the existing visual cultures in the country generated social and cultural codes that went far beyond the political iconographies. Unofficial art intervened in the dehumanizing situation as a corrective, as spiritual food. The Crusaders School used its intermedia, the ephemeral events, playful dialogues that were often drawn into scandal, nonsensicality or absurdity, to symbolize exceptional situations that freed human action from forcibly established norms. Vilém Flusser saw creativity as an activity designed to create something unlikely, as a definition for deliberate creations of wonderful situations.<sup>5</sup> According to Mikhail Bakhtin, carnival was a theatre without a ramp, where everything was permissible.<sup>6</sup> Being between art and life, it enabled flourishing of unusual rules that abolish social distances between the players in a communal performance that had no boundaries. Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque shows, that humour and the grotesque in arts is a corrective to repressive forms of power and a way of changing social reality in a positive direction.

The objective of those boldest fantasies with its provocations and trials was to create extraordinary situations in the search for the truth. Unlike some avant-garde groups in the West, the KŠ activities that displayed excess and grotesqueness did not contain elements of political radicalism, but they transmitted the content of general questions about the position of art and artist in society. Their individuality, independence and mobility across such streams in the society, that would refuse to give in, inevitably brought the Crusader School close not only to the underground, but also to the dissent movement. This landed several of the Crusaders in jail, some of them repeatedly, many of the main protagonists became signatories to the Human Rights Charter 77, and were consequently forced into exile by the coordinated efforts of the authorities.<sup>7</sup>

The Crusaders did not try to promote something specific in the arts. They looked for a chance to find a new perspective. Picnics, performances, the concept of a pub as spaces of 'empirical' exploration, many momentary rhetorical and dynamic physical exercises and the music performances of the groups own Midsummer Night's Dream Band<sup>8</sup> were not considered to be an artistic program as such, but were definitely not perceived as random phenomena. Their significance was taken seriously, and, as postulated by Nepraš, a necessity was felt that they be emphasized.<sup>9</sup>

Steklík and Nepraš met sometime in 1960 and bonded for life. Nepraš broke up with his previous group of artists, the Šmidras' during the second half of the sixties, but he transferred some of their characteristic codes into KŠ - a certain conspiratorialism and a system of collective order and absurd rules. In Steklík he found a master of ritualization, a wizard of diminutive subversion. Thus, the so-called *poetics of weirdness* of the Šmidra group was transformed into a different position with the Crusaders. The parallel society to the contrived bureaucracy of the *nomenklatura*, the Kafkaesque office, appeared in a much more relaxed and playful form, associated with the subversion of pub-attendance with beer as the ideological drink of the community. The School's continuous solutions to non-existent administrative problems relating to pub quality and equipment, beer, staff and member behaviour were written up in the Crusaders *Notebooks* and discussed at pub meetings. Thus, somewhere in the mid-sixties originated the first conceptual action of the Crusaders, *Beer in Arts*. Over many years, KŠ gathered, mostly with the assistance of *secretaries*, students of nearby Colleges clad in white uniform coats, samples of beer in various pubs all over the country. Those samples were 'empirically' evaluated as to its taste, looks, smells etc, encased in resin and exhibited, at times when exhibitions were still permitted. Another frequent series of beer events, the Czech Parnass, were nonsensical contests, for example: who would be able to drink two mugs of beer more

rapidly than other contestants, to become either Alois or Vilem, one of the of the nineteenth century *literatti* Mrštík brothers.

The collective flourished after 1968, with the new formation of the Crusaders community. This culminated in the Spring 1970, after an exhibition of sculptures of Karel Nepraš and paintings of Otakar Slavík in the Galerie Václava Špály, Špálovka in short. This was the most progressive Prague gallery, managed since 1965 by the arbiter of Czech artistic life Jindřich Chalupecký. This Špála Gallery showed the *crème de la crème* not only of progressive Czechoslovak art of the time, but also international art, from Duchamp to Beuys. Chalupecký showed many KŠ artists in one woman / man shows, for example: Karel Nepraš, Otakar Slavík, the intermedia artists Naděžda Plíšková and Rudolf Němec. The painter Zbyšek Sion and the concrete poet and theorist of happening arts Vladimír Burda participated in major group exhibitions. The Špála Gallery showed several important performances of Czech action art of the late sixties as Brikcius' s *Idea na Patření Obrazu* [The idea of observing a the picture] and *Šachy* [Chess]. Brikcius was one of the first action artists in the Czech Republic and his happenings were renowned. Zorka Ságlová' s event *Seno, Sláma* [Hay, Straw] was an unheard of gallery feat for Prague of that time (1969). Ságlová, another renowned action and conceptual artist was not KŠ, but her Crusader brother, Ivan Jirous with his wife Věra Jirousová, both art historians and poets, actively participated in her event, together with members of the Plastic People of the Universe group. Naděžda Plíšková showed an acclaimed intermedia performance, offering visitors goulash soup from a series of oversized sculpted metal spoons etc. Characteristically, the conceptual action of the poet Miloslav Topinka and the multimedia artist Rudolf Němec who planned to use the entire space of the Gallery was no longer permitted after 1971.<sup>10</sup>

Members of the Crusaders, artists who collaborated with Jindřich Chalupecký and his Gallery, enjoyed the privileged position of artistic

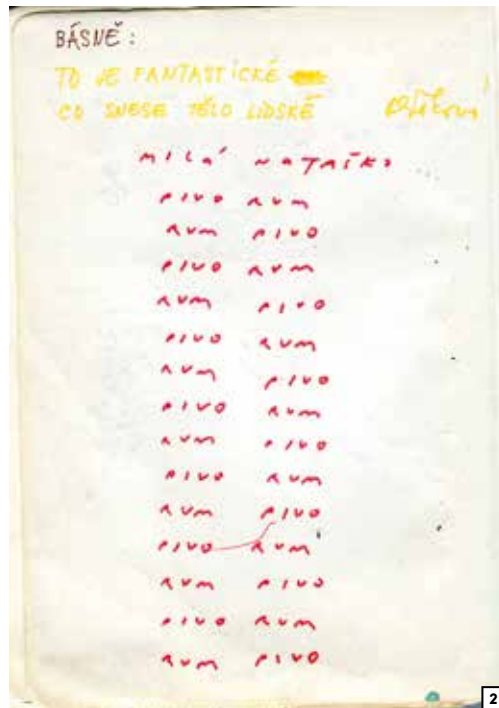
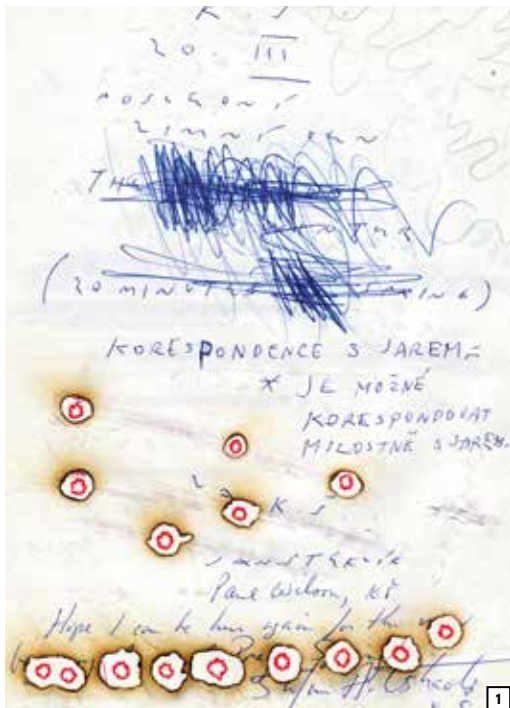
individuals for only a few years, roughly from the mid-sixties to the early seventies. With the change in political, social and economic conditions, their situation was drastically reassessed, as art as such was gradually liquidated by official structures and the privileges and successes that could be achieved in the free art world after the liberation and opening of the political system disappeared forever.

The newly established ruling structures no longer needed art as a propaganda tool, as had been the case in the fifties and early sixties. Nevertheless, they attempted to annihilate creative life. Only the *normalized* art was to be permitted, art that was primarily fraudulent and frequently of poor quality. Art as such had no value to the regime, but it could have become dangerous. According to Horckheimer and Adorno, art has to be ideological, because it is antithetical to the old social conditions.<sup>11</sup> Gradually, artists who did not actively collaborate with the newly established political and cultural structures, were prevented from publishing and exhibiting their work. Galleries and free media were gradually closed down, exhibiting, publishing etc. became impossible. Apart from being barred to function as creative artists, writers or musicians, the economic base of the artists, poets and writers was thereby, through a slow process, definitely removed by the early seventies.

The following decree of the Ministry of Czechoslovak Culture dated September 18, 1969 was addressed to all public museums and art galleries. This self-explanatory specimen was received in the Špála Gallery.<sup>12</sup>

According to § 1, it is punishable as a civil offence, unless proven a criminal offence under the Criminal Code, with imprisonment up to three months or a fine up to 5.000 Crowns or to both sentences in case of participating in an event (on the Gallery premises, meaning for example, action art) that might compromise public order.

The same applies to persons who publicizes or supports such an action, who disobeys



1. *KŠ Notebook*, 1971, poems by Naděžda Plíšková and Jan Steklík, 8smička Foundation
2. *KŠ Notebook*, 1971, Jan Steklík et al, 8smička Foundation
3. *Inventory of Říp - Křižovnická škola*, 1970, Jan Steklík with the inventory sample, photography Helena Wilsonová
4. Jan Steklík, *KŠ, Beer Love*, Lemberk 1971, photography Jan Ságl
5. *Inventory of Říp - Křižovnická škola*, 1970, In a pub on the way, photography Helena Wilsonová
6. *Křižovnická škola, Inventory of Říp*, 1970, The pub whose name was not U Tománků, photography Helena Wilsonová
7. *Beer Jugs* exhibition of František Maxera in the pub Chez Lojzya, 1972, with KŠ and the Prague underground, photograph Helena Wilsonová
8. The KŠ Midsummer Night Band playing for the Crusaders, 1975, photographer N.N.
- 9, 10, 11. *Beer Calendar of the Crusaders School*, 1972, Pub U Svitáků, photography Helena Wilsonová



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the demand to maintain public order, or whoever incites others to disobey this demand.

Gallery directors shall ensure that paintings and other works of fine art that are in opposition to the important national interests will not be exhibited in galleries and that promotion materials and other printed matter (posters, invitations, catalogues, etc.) as well as vernissage speeches, discussions, etc. are not used against this official demand.

Art commissions, councils, advisory councils, etc., have to ensure when considering proposals for reproduction or other realization of works of art these works correspond to the cultural political line of the state...<sup>13</sup>

The artists, who were previously members of the State Union of Artists, were excluded from the newly created Union (December 21, 1970), with an exclusively regime-compliant, selective, vetted membership, and were automatically re-registered in the Fine Arts Fund.<sup>14</sup> Although this Fund guaranteed the status of a free profession, without which artists would be considered *parasites* and thus liable to persecution, it did not permit artists, who were not compatible with the new rules, to exhibit and they were barred all their official sales. Later, the Crusaders who signed the Charter 77 (apart from them, only two or three other visual artists were signatories), were expelled even from this Fund, lost the status of freelancers, lost the right to keep a studio and the right to buy art utensils like professional paints etc, in government-controlled stores.<sup>15</sup> Since they were under control of the authorities, they had to take jobs like manual labourers, water pump workers, night watchmen in factories etc.

The anthropologist Viktor Turner deals with intermediate states, transitional phases in the course of life, such as the period between childhood and adulthood, periods of sharp changes in social conditions, the dividing lines

between the alien world and the environment with which man is familiar. He calls these threshold transitional states liminality. In these intermediate states, it is possible to create a new society, *communitas*, a community without clear social structures, which can achieve equality for the duration of the ritual or game. Like Bakhtin, using the example of carnival and ritual as a means of social renewal, Turner points to situations where all hierarchical rules for communities that have experienced a serious turning point – a situation of rupture of social norms – are abolished. Such a state of unstable interexistence, a transitional space, was symptomatic of normalization – a completely extraordinary situation, but at the same time, albeit for a very short time, it opened up possibilities for the experiments of the Crusader School, for dancing merrily not on a volcano, but on the edge of a dung heap. Interpersonal communication has become a phenomenon of freedom. Liminality is or can be a part of society, and Turner refers to his other concept, liminoidity, as to an escape from social oppression. *Communitas* allows you to feel and abolish the boundaries that divide individual actors. The Crusaders correspond to Turner's normative forms of *Communitas* – creative subcultures or groups that, despite societal pressures, separate themselves in anti-structures from institutionalized communities.<sup>16</sup> The Crusaders pub society created a carnivalesque community, which Steklík later described as a kind of strange, egalitarian hierarchy. Corporeality and authenticity were constants of both the common and individual being of the members of the KŠ. In the early seventies, various events were created, which exemplify the activities of the KŠ, events in the pub – the Crusader stage – and in the natural environment. At that time, the reduced, compact School lived with a playful, romantic-utopian attempt to avert the shock it experienced when confronted with how the society had fallen apart.

The contemporary attempts to merge life with art, the idea of social rebirth through art appeared in many avant-garde movements.



The maxims that George Brecht maintains about the Fluxus movement<sup>17</sup> can in part be applied to the Crusaders: that there has never been any attempt to agree on aims or methods; that individuals with something unnameable in common have simply naturally coalesced to perform their work. Brecht felt that *this common something* was a feeling that the bounds of art were wider than they have conventionally seemed, or that art and its long-established boundaries were no longer useful. He maintained that individuals in Europe, the US, and Japan have discovered each other's work and found it *nourishing (or something)* and have grown objects and events which were original, and often uncategorizable, *in a strange new way*. Ivan Jirous, the theorist and art-critic of the Crusaders, who was since 1973 six times jailed by the regime, goes even further.<sup>18</sup> He does not hesitate to describe Brecht's *this common something* as love: he holds that the *fantastic situations* taking place in the crusaders domicile - the Czech pub - were creations of a private community of people, who loved each other. Nepraš, the Director of the group, characteristically states that the Crusaders communications may have appeared like happenings, but this was not their intention. "There was no need for a label, since the Crusaders lived what they were doing."<sup>19</sup> Slavík's frequently cited paraphrase of Luke 2.7 "Nebylo pro ně místa v hospódě"<sup>20</sup> alludes not only to the sometime phenomenon of being thrown out of a pub, but also to the deprivation of the artist in the *normalized* world, while the regime gradually succeeded in reversing the cultural and social processes that were haltingly but seemingly permanently established in the second half of the sixties.

## The Domicile

In his article on the Crusader School, one of its members, the psychologist Vladimír Borecký sees the original Crusader pub as a fusion of a pub and a temple. He describes the Heideggerian *in der Welt sein* by paraphrasing *im Gasthaus sein* as

a dimension of being that anticipates the pub and places it imaginatively around itself in any place and, according to the philosopher Ivan Dubský, a Nietzschean scholar, who was associated with the Crusaders, in a specific time, the time of the drinker (*tempus bibuloris*).<sup>21</sup>

The time of the pub, says Bakhtin, passes in carnevalistic time, when historical time is turned off. This time takes place in an unlimited number of radical transformations and metamorphoses.<sup>22</sup> The time of the Crusaders did not take place in the normal time of the thwarted Czech culture, it unfolded in a carnivalized time. What is the concept behind the time of adventure - time in the pub - and what are its social implications? What role do fate and chance play here? Bakhtin asks questions about the formation of time. The duration of adventurous time is only a substitute duration, but at the same time it also contains fundamental sociological narrative or existential dimensions. The time of adventure is connected with the negation of progress and development, because adventure leaves no traces in biographical time.

The pub was an integral part of the existence of the Crusaders, its generating medium. The space of the pub became the domicile of the KŠ, which substituted it for the non-existent other shelters. The pub played the role of a habitat, a living space and a home in which people created, lived, drank beer, sometimes even ate and slept. The pub provided the fragile security and safety of a home in precarious existential conditions. Creative individuals took refuge in this pub society, where the pub took over the role of a theatre stage in the middle of life. The pub as a social construct worked, at least temporarily as a space for therapy and (mostly) friendly communication, as an oasis for KŠ performers, defined by an attitude of similar values and principles with collective consciousness. The principle of 'necessary stupidity' was defined by William Kentridge as the ability of an artist to function simultaneously in different forms. According to Kentridge, 'this necessary stupidity or foolishness' – an activity that cannot be explained rationally – must

be practiced by the artist all the time.<sup>23</sup> This disposition was completely fulfilled by the KŠ in their life in the pub.

Michel Maffesoli, a sociologist who in his youth was associated with group collaborations with Guy Debord's SI,<sup>24</sup> and with its German artistic offshoot, the SPUR group,<sup>25</sup> considers the pub to be a stage, an epiphany of the Dionysian, a space for disinhibition.<sup>26</sup> Being in the pub 'relaxes languages and connects bodies.' The pub is a place par excellence for creative sociability and a call for integration. Everyday life in a pub deals with social phenomena that cannot be reconciled with the postulates of rationalism prescribed by standardized social orders. In the sociology of everyday life - i.e. the daily playful stay in the pub - this *everyday* became a means for creative activity. These Crusaders activities transmitted the content of general questions about the position of art and the artist in society through play. In group work, theatricality, playfulness, vitality, self-irony and uncompromising self-reflection were appreciated. In the ritualization of everyday life, the pub became a metaphor for being, an infrastructure of artistic and cultural expressions - with beer as the foremost artefact. A meeting place has been elevated to art. The pub environment, notwithstanding whether it was comfortable or aesthetic, played a central role in the group's communicative community. Here, a subversive laughter culture was cultivated, which arose when political and cultural power systems asserted their domination by means of restrictive control and restriction mechanisms.

The search for survival in a difficult time resulted in a utopian settlement of another world, in a pub as an alternative home for another life. Bakhtin's *Menippea*, Menippean satire, which always contains various genres, is intrinsically motivated by a basic philosophical goal, the search for truth in the play, in fanciful situations where carnivalesque existence and its culture of laughter allow for the temporary abolition of the social order and thus the existence of a the cathartic role of laughter ensured

emotional survival. Before laughter there was first a subversive thought.<sup>27</sup> The laughter of the Crusaders was creative, liberating and reflective. The humour and laughter in the pub had a socio-positive effect. They strengthened the cohesion of the group, opened up spaces for community and equality among laughers. This is how a different understanding of openness, overcoming distance, laughing at oneself was created. With this laughter, invention and courage, the pub became a scene of liberation, in which a symbiosis of body and spirit was found.

### Beer-Works of the School

Before Nepraš and Steklík created their continuous event *Beer in Arts* in the second half of the sixties, their first cooperation began with publishing of cartoon humour, frequently with the beer leitmotiv. Steklík's drawings were formally perfect, intelligent, inventive and exceptional. He experimented with the medium from free representational drawings to cartoon humour. His playful subversive drawings were congenially complemented by drawings of Nepraš, one of the greatest Czech sculptors, who was a draughtsman able to connect, as in his sculptures, the tragic with the comical. Those grotesque drawings were neither caricatures, nor jokes, rather a black humour, an elevation of a cartoon humour to a reflective, subversive existential instrument. Steklík was passionately committed to beer as to a tolerant principle of existence. It was significant, that the Crusaders in their *Beer in Arts* never criticised or differentiated between the kinds of beer in their game, in their beer inspection. It was the empirical, cool, if subversive assessment of the beer culture as a sign of the cyclical and symmetric model of the interhuman communication. Jozef Cseres maintains in his Steklík's monography that Steklík became beer in the sense of the Deleuzian concept of becoming, and turned his coexistence with beer into a work of art.<sup>28</sup>

Steklík began to create the documentation, the reflection on the beer ethos of the School through the only existing record and archive of the ephemeral art of the Crusaders, the exercise book, the school and work-book, the *Notebook*. It originated on the pub table and always offered a forceless possibility of its activation. In the surviving *Notebooks*, the atmosphere of belonging of the Crusader *communitas* has been preserved to this day. From their reservoir of action, the spirit and joyful mood of the participants shine through. Steklík *et al.* wrote down all spontaneous ideas in the Crusader Schools *Notebooks*, Steklík burned them, fed them with beer and food (especially sauces), with art, artefacts, kept and lost them on the way. The booklets run like a red thread through the existence and history of the Crusaders. The *Notebooks* are both an archive of the KŠ and its in-between space – something between a notebook, a concept, a school or class cooperation and, last but not least, a collection of playful crusader follies. The *Notebooks* created nonsensical information and entertainment with specific codes that were optimal for maintaining the dialogic structure of the Crusaders Symposium. The more the participants differed, the richer the pseudo-messages obtained, which led to consensus and discourse. The world of these texts - figurative and of pictorial codes, sketches spread on the surface of notebooks, took place in the world of a pub, where the experience of space was synchronized with imagination, with various concepts and foolishness. The *Notebooks* contain a multitude of beer work-events or projects, for example *Project of Beer Mushrooms* (Steklík was a dedicated Cage fan), *Mushrooms in the Form of Beer Foam*, a request of a *Patent for a Beer Thermometer*, a request for a *Psychological Research of Beer*, joint drawings of *Beer Foam Formations*, a patent of a *Beer-time*, several haikus-limerics on beer etc.<sup>29</sup>

In this article there is no space to enumerate all Steklík's beer-works of the sixties and seventies, his drawings of beer mugs in various stages of fullness, drawings of kegs, the

taps, the countless drawings on beer coasters etc. He instituted a conceptual beer-work, using the prints of the real beer tab markings as symbols, thus creating a poetic convolute of a *Beer Calligraphy*. His *Cosmic Brewery* was an event where the random structures in beer foam are correlated to astronomic constellations. A concept of the *Říp Pilgrimage*, Říp being the mythological mountains of the Czechs, originated in a tavern and took place instead on the peak of the mountain, in a pub not far from the start of the quest. The photographic documentation from the KŠ photographer Helena Wilsonová shows, that notwithstanding the fact that the action was aborted, the Crusaders were satisfied with the outcome.

From the interview of Ivan Jirous with Karel Nepraš: <sup>30</sup>

KN: For example, the main event, or the only collective one that went on throughout this year, was the Crusaders Calendar. November and December are actually left, so you can say that it's practically finished. I think that this is the event that describes the Crusader School properly. Similar was the taking of the beer samples - because that's something we do always and normally. We're sitting in a pub - and we're drinking beer there, and to capture it in this way, to photograph it, I think that's the height of absurdity. This is really absolutely mundane, the everyday, taken out of context by emphasizing the last day of the month, although it doesn't matter at all, because we would be there at any time. I think this goes deeper - through the surface.....

IJ: The most important thing about the Calendar seems to be that there is actually a complete cancellation and denial of the event, it is no longer there as anything of substance.

KN: yes, that was my dream, my events were just these. That's what I wanted, that's

what I did with Honza (Jan Steklík) - the beer samples. Registry-mere registration that this and that, and that, and that, and no one can take it. .... It is not important whether things are brought to an end. A thing that's evolving, or too alive, can't worry about documentation—that's not the point. Nowadays, it often happens that a complete stupidity is properly documented and presented as something far more significant than what it originally was. I really like the way Honza is doing the *Beer Calendar*. With that simple approach. I'm just an enemy of the big photo shoot of all the events, because then it leads to the pomp we were talking about a moment ago, it's actually being made again.....

This part of the interview concerns Steklík's the Crusaders action of the *Beer Calendar*. At the end of 1971, Jan Steklík commissioned Helena Wilsonová to document the *Crusaders Calendar* - an event he had just conceived. From the beginning to the end of 1972, starting in January, the members of the Crusaders who were free that day were supposed to meet on the last day of the month in the pub U Svitáků, and do what they always did. Helena was supposed to capture the events of that day photographically. The everyday life of the Crusaders, sitting around and drinking beer, a common event with unplanned procedures, was to be mapped. By photographing the *Calendar*, the participants became conscious participants in Steklík's event, which characteristically represented the blurred line between art, documentary and life, when the everyday was elevated to an event. In this *Calendar*, the members became participants, sitting in the pub became a visual representation that gave a different meaning to everyday spontaneous encounters. The *Calendar* is the essence of the Crusaders' documentation, the deception of iconic images and at the same time a reflection of their reality.<sup>31</sup>

Steklík made various sound art concepts with beer, assembled many beer collages. Famous were his actions of *Beer Orgasm* (with Finnish artist Outi Heiskannen) or his frequently repeated actions of *Beer Loves*, where the mugs (not the human carers) kiss and embrace.

But Steklík was, of course, not the only Crusader, who worked and lived with beer. Jindřich Chalupecký said about Eugen Brikcius, that he has only beer and radishes in his head (after taking dislike to his visionary concept of *Roof Terrace Gardens* where radishes were to be raised). Chalupecký hated beer culture, the Beer Boheme, he held that beer is the death of the Czech nation.<sup>32</sup> Although he respected members of the Crusaders as individual artists, he detested the group with its tavern activities. In 1967, Brikcius created the happening *Still Life with Beer*. It took place on the Prague Kampa island. The basis was the artists inspiration with pub conditions, where the guest optically overshadows the beer mugs, which, however, should excel, and that not as a drink, but as a subject of aesthetic evaluation.<sup>33</sup> The happening was perceived as a mysterium, a ritualistic mystification, where the filled beer mugs were carried out of the pub and deployed in the terrain by the participants, who had to kneel on the sidewalk, with the forehead to the wall. A beer environment on the street transformed the function of the beer mugs to an aesthetic view of shapes and colours, transposing customary pub scenery into a different setting, creating a glittering still life in a free space. The action, as usual, was dispelled by the police. In 1970 Brikcius created another beer action, the anthropometrical exercise *The Homage to Master Horský*, originally designed for the London Arts Lab. Horský was Brikcius' childhood friend, who liked to drink beer (or rather was a drunkard) and at the time of the performance was not in England. Brikcius served as his substitute, although he showed in the background some photographs of Horský, emptying his mug in one go. This was accompanied by the famous song *Roll Out the Barrels*. The Horský substitute (Brikcius)

had to empty ten beer mugs on the stage, relieving himself behind the curtain, with an amplified sound of the urination. This exercise was repeated in a theatre in Czechoslovakia, in Ostrava a year later with considerably less success.<sup>34</sup> Rudolf Němec, another Crusader was blowing into the bear foam, creating various shapes, which he sketched and later cut into cardboard cutouts, creating solid *Beer Clouds*.

Naděžda Plíšková, an exceptional printmaker, draughtsperson, ceramist, sculptor and poet created numerous beer-works. Her graphic art contained inspired drawings, dry needles and prints on the beer theme - mugs in various stages of filling with beer, comics of beer, small beer mugs, big beer mugs, a *Case for Beer*, *Ten Gentlemen and One Lady* etc. Plíšková coined the term of the *Pub Romanticism*, one of her Poetry Collections was published under the same name. She created a ceramic and textile assemblage of a *Beer Hamper*. In print as well as later in sculpture she created a funereal *Monument for My Husband*,<sup>35</sup> where she placed on the top of the tombstone two bronze beer mugs, one of them standing, the other partially overturned.

Jindřich Procházka, a creator of concrete and visual poetry included beer in his typograms, his narrative poems. Otakar Slavík painted in his oeuvre several *Men with Beer*, amongst them a portrait of *Ivan Jirous in a Hat with a Beer*. One of his beer paintings was reportedly shredded by his then wife, because of her antagonism to beer. In the taverns, the group members played many severe battles with beer coasters, Ivan Jirous made sometimes a small event of devouring a coaster. The Crusaders collective sometimes poured beer over each other, as a homage to the wine libations of the antique Symposium.

The beer-works of the Crusaders were by far not the only arts output of the *communitas*. In addition to many other topics and activities, there were big actions trips (with active participation of the Midsummer Night Dream Band) taking place in the seventies, mostly away from Prague

that had become dangerous for such activities. The everyday life in the pub as space for creative community was intertwined with the ritual of existential nonsense, which led to creativity, but also contained the basic tragedy of existence. Social changes and personal experiences of people who found themselves in the unexpected situation of losing even the precarious security of being, sometimes escalated into an open crisis. But this is another story, where, of course, beer still plays one of the major roles.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The myth is, that the one proclaimed the other.
- <sup>2</sup> With exhibitions of the KŠ individual artists, group exhibitions, publications, lectures I am currently completing a PhD on the topic in the Philosophical Faculty of the Brno Masaryk University. Last but not least, I am (was) a member of the group since 1970, as titular professor of decorative frames.
- <sup>3</sup> Marie Klimešová, "České výtvarné umění druhé poloviny dvacátého století," In *Alternativní kultura. Příběh české společnosti 1945-1989*, edited by Josef Alan et al. (Lidové noviny, 2001), 385, 395-397.
- <sup>4</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der europäische Traum. Vier Lehren aus der Geschichte* (München: C.H. Beck, 2019), 132.
- <sup>5</sup> Vilem Flusser, *Die Revolution der Bilder. Der Flusser Reader zu Kommunikation, Medien und Design* (Mannheim: Bollman Verlag, 1995), 215.
- <sup>6</sup> Michail Bachtin, *François Rabelais a lidová kultura středověku a renesance*, translated by Jaroslav Kolár (Praha: Argo, 2007), 136 ff.
- <sup>7</sup> Charter 77 was a Czechoslovak civil rights initiative document, which arose from a background of solidarity of an informal association of persons, who asked the government to respect civil and human rights.
- <sup>8</sup> Named after the incapable mechanicals from the Shakespearean play. The group played together with several underground groups, like Plastic People of the Universe, DG 307 etc., thus becoming one of the first occasions when KŠ merged with the underground and later with the dissident movements.
- <sup>9</sup> Duňa Slavíková, *Křivožovnická škola čistého humoru bez vtipu*, Catalogue of Exhibition, edited by Duňa Slavíková (Roudnice nad Labem: Galerie umění Roudnice nad Labem, 2015), 12.
- <sup>10</sup> This and further, see note 9 and Duňa Slavíková, *Křivožovnická škola I-III*, as well as Jirous, *Zpráva o činnosti Křivožovnické školy*, 1-7. Copy of the Topinka/Němec Gallery concept in the archive of the author.
- <sup>11</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt a. Main: S.Fischer Verlag, 1986), 117.
- <sup>12</sup> Document in the archive of author.
- <sup>13</sup> Edict of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Culture No. 12.494/69.
- <sup>14</sup> Jiří Mikeš, "Svaz českých výtvarných umělců v době normalizace" (Master Theses, Masaryk University, 2013), 2.
- <sup>15</sup> This concerned following Crusaders, who were interrogated, harassed and persecuted: artist Eugen Briekcius jailed 1973, forced into exile, artist Olaf Hanel, forced into exile, artist Jan Šafránek, forced into exile, artist Otakar Slavík, forced into exile, musician and poet Vratislav Brabenec, jailed 1976, forced into exile, Ivan Jirous, art historian and poet jailed six times, Věra Jirousová, art historian and poet jailed, Jaroslav Kořán, writer and translator, jailed, Jiří Daníček, poet, jailed etc.
- <sup>16</sup> Victor Turner, *Vom Ritual zum Theater: Der Ernst des menschlichen Spiels* (Frankfurt a. Main: Campus Verlag, 2009), 84-89.; Victor Turner, "Variations on a theme of Liminality." In *Secular Rites*, edited by Sally F. Moore and Barbara C. Meyerhof (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1977), 36-37, 40.
- <sup>17</sup> George Brecht, "Something about Fluxus," *Fluxus Newspaper* no.4 (June 1964): 5.
- <sup>18</sup> Ivan Jirous, "Zpráva o činnosti Křivožovnické školy," in *Magorův zpisník* (Praha: Torst, 1997), 125-133. This article was the first attempt to establish and critically evaluate the Crusaders as an art collective. It came out as samizdat issue in 1972; then published in the samizdat paper *Vokno*, no. 80 (December 1979); and several times after 1990; official publication was in 1991 in the Catalogue of the KŠ exhibition, edited by Věra Jirousová, Středočeská galerie Praha and Galeri umění Hradec Králové, later in *Výtvarné umění* 3-4 (1995). However frequently in a slightly changed wording. See Bibliography.
- <sup>19</sup> Ivan Jirous, "Zdá se že v současné době používáš," interview with Karel Nepraš from 1972, remained in manuscript as samizdat issue. Published together with another interview of Jirous with Nepraš under the common title Karel Nepraš, *Život jde přes nás* in the catalogue of the Nepraš exhibition *Sitting, Standing, Walking*, Prague Belvedere, 2002. I am referring to a text published in: Ivan Jirous, *Magorova Oáza* (Praha: Torst, 2019), 205-221. See bibliography.
- <sup>20</sup> There was no place for them in the inn.
- <sup>21</sup> Vladimír Borecký, *Odvracená tvář humoru* (Liberec Praha: Dauphin, 1996), 79-81; Ivan Dubský, "Čas pijáka," samizdat 1972, published 1991, 65-7.
- <sup>22</sup> Michail Bachtin, *Chronotopos*, translated by Michael Dewey (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2016), 140-141.
- <sup>23</sup> William Kentridge, *Charles Eliot Norton Lectures. Six Drawing Lessons: In Praise of Shadows*. Harvard University Press, 2012., *You Tube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdKkmSqYTE8>, accessed 10.4.2014.
- <sup>24</sup> Situationist International (SI) was a neo-avantgarde movement based on the theory of the concept of the spectacle, a strong societal criticism, originated in the fifties and sixties in France, reference see Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967.
- <sup>25</sup> SPUR was a revolutionary artistic collaboration of artists, 1957-65.
- <sup>26</sup> Michel Maffesoli, *Der Schatten des Dionysos. Zu einer Soziologie des Orgiasmus*, translated by Martin Weinmann (Frankfurt a. Main: Syndikat, 1986), 140. Maffesoli has rather in mind the wine than beer taverns, however, the principle remains the same.

- <sup>27</sup> Bachtin, *François Rabelais a lidová kultura středověku a renesance*, 136 ff.
- <sup>28</sup> Jozef Cseres, "Pivní Jan od Kříže," in *Steklik*, Jozef Cseres and Tereza Petiskova, eds. (Brno: Host; Dum umeni Brno, 2022), 182.
- <sup>29</sup> Some of the *Notebooks* still exist, and, since some were appropriated, they found their way as the first (and probably the last) Crusaders artefact into the art trade. Thankfully, they were bought by a friendly, albeit private Gallery, so they can be researched.
- <sup>30</sup> See note 19.
- <sup>31</sup> See Slavíková, *Křížovnícká škola II*.
- <sup>32</sup> This was reproduced by several friends, remark by author.
- <sup>33</sup> Eugen Brikius, *Můj nejlepší z možných životů* (Praha: Pulchra, 2012), 67.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibidem, 87. The author witnessed both performances, the Ostrava intellectual Ivan Binar witnessed the expectations of his city. The public in Ostrava was starved for high culture and expected something totally different.
- <sup>35</sup> This being no other, than one of the Directors of the Crusaders, Karel Nepraš.

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