

Ilona Németh: Eastern Sugar

Guests: Jeremy Deller, Harun Farocki, Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan
Invited project: Museum of Sugar

The largest presentation of Ilona Németh's work to date explores transformative events critical to current socio-political debates. The exhibition takes its title from one of the many foreign investors to enter the Central European sugar industry in the early post-Communist years. The histories of Slovak sugar factories thus reflect the realities of this turbulent period of rapid change, characterized by cultural, as well as economic liberalization and globalization. The factories' gradual privatization and disappearance provides a framework within which Németh can critically reflect on the manifold challenges posed by the post-industrial condition.

The architectural site of Kunsthalle Bratislava serves as the first point of entry into the complexities of the *Eastern Sugar* project. Turning the museum's Central Hall into a manufacturing site for sugar loaves, Németh reconstructs the lost past as memory through the fundamental human activity of manual labour. At the same time, the artist provides a space for participation; the real collective work of manufacturing. The production of these cone-shaped sugar pyramids is carried out by former employees of the sugar factories, together with unemployed people. Visitors are also free to join in with this activity throughout the exhibition, which over time results in a collection of "artefacts".

An important part of the exhibition is the *Archive* – the artist's research into the Slovak sugar factories, gathered from interviews, along with drone shots and photographs. Németh arranges the materials and documentation collected according to a museum-type depot system, in order to enable constellational thinking. The *Archive* maps past industrial times and captures the empty shells in their current pitiful state. Simultaneously however, it strives to offer an opportunity for the future, challenging us to develop a more sensitive awareness of what is at stake.

The focus on labour and its global distribution is further developed through works by the artists Jeremy Deller, Harun Farocki and Lonnie van Brummelen & Siebren de Haan, whose work is introduced to a Slovak audience for the first time. The German artist Farocki was deeply invested in sustaining temporal as well as spatial perspectives on labour, whereas Van Brummelen & de Haan's research brings forth the asymmetric aspects of production and distribution, inscribed within neo-colonial divisions of centre and periphery. The works by Deller relate to the uncanny gestures and alienated nature of contemporary labour conditions.

As part of her exhibition project, Ilona Németh has initiated the pilot presentation of a hitherto non-existent institution, the *Museum of Sugar*. The purpose here is to affirm the importance and value of collecting, storing, and thinking about the sources of memory for a once-prospering branch of industry.

Curator: Nina Vrbanová / Assistant Curator: Krisztina Hunya / Essay: Maja & Reuben Fowkes / Photo-Essay: Olja Triaška Stefanović / Architects: PLURAL, Marián Ravasz / Video: Cukru production / Graphic Design: Eva Kašáková / Editorial activities: Katarína Trnovská / Production and installation: Magdaléna Fábryová, Marcel Mališ, GUTENART, Peter Barényi, Roman Bicek, Branislav Višpel, Andrej Remeník, Viktor Karel / Accompanying programmes: Krisztina Hunya, Darina Šabová / Educational programmes: Daniela Čarná, Lucia Kotvanová / Media and PR: Marek Kuchár / Administration: Jana Babušiaková