

Forbidden Death

Nika Autor (SI), Jože Barši (SI), Goran Bertok (SI), Vlasta Delimar (HR), Andreja Džakušič (SI), Zuzanna Janin (PL), Paul Mühlbach (IE), Teresa Margolles (MX), Eleonore Phillips (IE), Kate Pollard (US), Franc Purg (SI), Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook (TH)



Goran Bertok, *Post Mortem*, 2007, a series of photographs

2 October – 20 November 2009

Venues:

Likovni salon / Likovni salon Gallery

Galerija sodobne umetnosti / Gallery of Contemporary Art

Kapela sv. Elizabete / St. Elizabeth's Chapel

Opening of the exhibition and performance:

Friday, October 2, at 8 p.m. at the Gallery of Contemporary Art Celje.

performance

Vlasta Delimar: From the series *Erzsebet Bathory*

Forbidden Death depicts the attitude of contemporary society towards death. Even though death can be found on every step – in the media, films or videogames and of course also in real life (wars, occupations, death penalties, hunger, incurable diseases, etc.), the contemporary society and contemporary man avoid any direct contact with the dying, death or even a glance of either of them. According to Bauman death has the status of a radical and unnatural event; as such, this once in a lifetime and absolute event in everybody's life is not something one wishes to ponder upon; death is always the death of somebody else. It is pushed to the edge of the social consciousness and represents one of the greatest taboos of contemporary society.

Sociological theories state that death was withdrawn from the public sphere (in which it played a religious and social role) in the 19th century when it was transferred into the personal sphere and the 'technical treatment' of medical experts. Pushed away from the social events and everyday life it became a sidetracked and disturbing factor of human existence, invisible, hidden and a private experience. People die in hospitals and in retirement homes where they are emotionally and physically isolated from the everyday life. While trying his utmost to deny his mortality the post-modern man is attempting to spare himself from seeing death. He avoids thinking about his own death, trying to prolong life at all costs. At this he functions in the following way: *We are all aware of the fact that we are going to die, but we are also convinced that this will not happen to us.*

Over the past decades individuals and movements (such as Hospice and Association of Palliative Care), as well as disciplines (such as sociology, which has focused on removing the existing cultural factors that condition the contemporary attitude towards death and dying) are becoming louder and louder. These endeavours, i.e. the open dialogue on the universality of the appearance of death, are joined by the exhibition *Forbidden death*, which once again speaks about the issues that are so often discussed, but still not often enough. These are issues such as the passing, dying, grief at the loss of a beloved and death; the main intention of this is to bring death closer to us and make it visible.

The projects and artists participating in this exhibition mainly deal with the understanding of death and confrontation with it. They treat death through a personal context – this is why chiefly artists who had a direct contact with death or a personal experience with it were invited to participate in the project. This is not so much an insight into the social and cultural factors and changes that define the existing relation towards death or about death in the political context, i.e. in the context of wars and violence. As most people fear the sight of death, an important part of the exhibition is represented by video and photographic representations of actual dead bodies in morgues. Some of the works have been created specially for this exhibition.

The exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Celje City Council and the Spiro Ark London.