

Postbigbangsf – Antebigbangsf
by Mira Keratová

Stano Filko declares he was born again and again on three different days. He therefore speaks of himself as a Trimini instead of being under the dualistic zodiacal sign of Gemini – having been born on 13th June 1937 and then given a blood transfusion and so being born again on 14th June 1937, while the following day, 15th June 1937, is then his official birth date as shown on his legal papers due to a bureaucratic error. He incorporates all these numbers into his artworks and elsewhere, for example his phone numbers. The year 1937 he proclaims to be the date of creation of his ideas. Many of his works are dated from this year and they do not always bear an evidence of the date of their production or reworking. On contrary, they are often antedated, following the creation of the concept but not date of origin of a material artifact. Filko engages in the practice of permanent reworking and specifying the content of his artworks especially since the 1990s. At that time he reconceptualized his already established theoretical system and structurally deepened it towards a totality. He sees himself going through constant transformations. He recognizes several identities of himself (clones), related to different periods: FILKO (1937-77) – FYLKO (1978-87) – PHYLKO (1988-97) – PHYS (1998-2037). He was reborn twice more, however. According to his testimony, he experienced two clinical deaths. One occurred in a quarry in 1945 and the other in factory producing military weapons in 1952. Elements of his private mythology related to these events (like the ladder, rocket and tunnel or Trenčín castle and many others) form part of his iconography.

His birthplace was Veľká Hradná village, near Trenčín castle in Slovakia. There he has sought to build a monumental complex since 2005. He calls it the ARC and it is intended to accommodate all his artworks, combining an archive, workshop, laboratory and institute. He started to build its premises around his grandparents' farmhouse, where his sister has lived until now. His conception of the gesamtkunstwerk with a particular positioning of selected elements (pyramids, beehives, etc.) is intended to define his lifelong and cosmic dialectics. In recent years he has concentrated his voluminous oeuvre there, including works for decades layered in his studio on Snežienková St. in Bratislava, structured into color spaces and conceived as a total installation itself (since 1965). Due to a family decision his works were recently moved to anonymous storage and the ARC project remains utopian.

He belongs to the generation of Slovak conceptual artists of the 1960s. This include artists who performed in life like Peter Bartoš or Július Koller, as well as Alex Mlynárčik, with whom Filko collaborated on series of manifestos and readymade events Happsoc. This social happening was created by the appropriation of reality determined by time and place (Happsoc I., Bratislava, 2-8

May 1965; with Zita Kostrová). In his Universal Action Filko later appropriated the whole state of Czechoslovakia with its life, past and future, feelings and of course place and time (Happsoc III, 1966). This was followed by the whole Universe in Happsoc IV (1967-71). With his close collaborator and friend Miloš Laky he started to work on the idea of the transcendental (pure emotion) in 1973-74 in the framework of the project and manifesto White space in a White Space (with Ján Zavarský), which Filko has since developed further. In 1982 he emigrated from socialist Czechoslovakia to Germany, being in contact with Joseph Beuys there. Having escaped in a Skoda car he repainted it white (BAJ- 85-70) and exhibited it at dOCUMENTA in Kassel shortly after his arrival. Later he moved to New York City, making contact with celebrities like Andy Warhol and Keith Haring. However, he never learned English but created a sort of “newspeak” incorporated in his artworks. This unique international language served to communicate his idea of the world. As an eclectic mixture of diverse philosophical and scientific terminologies, it also combined a variety of mystic and esoteric sources. During the 1980s Filko focused on neo-expressive painting in the Neue Wilde fashion. After the Velvet Revolution he returned home and since 1991 he has lived and worked in Bratislava, being permanently engaged with the details of his psychophilosophical system.

Stano Filko's work is enormously broad and dynamic. It is based on the cumulative archiving of objects and documentations through installations, environments and his voluminous immaterial Project Art, Prospekt Art or Text Art. These last are diagrams based on texts in a variety of media, including diverse found or adjusted paper materials (often scale paper), perforated and colored plastic, aluminum, or sound in the case of his severe audio recordings on vinyl. He often uses readymade texts, while elaborating his autonomous ideological system, which he calls a psychophilosophical system. In keeping with his seemingly hermetical, almost alchemistic approach he creates neologisms as his essential vocabulary by composing or abbreviating existing words. (Note: Some of his frequent abbreviations include: SF = Systém Farieb /transl. System of Colors/ – Stano FILKO... EQ = Emotion / Energy – Intellect ...; SOIQ = Spirit – Intellect ...; EISQ = Emotion – Ratio / Intellect – Spirit ..., among others.) The concept of numerology is strongly involved in his work. Following the artist's descriptions, he uses the Hebrew numerology in dealing with the number 8, Cosmological with the number 9 and Central-European numerology with number 10. His system is further more supplemented with a unique iconography and a particular repetition of elements like mirrors, scale-papers, globes, bombs, ladders, etc.

Filko conceptualizes the time dimension. His spatial works mostly belong to the so-called PostBigBang part of his oeuvre, in which he deals with a physical space (materialization – history – ratio – EGO...). Others are related to the AnteBigBang part, symbolizing the metaphysical world;

i.e. the Universe being approached over 4. D. of pure time by means of sensuality – sensibility – emotion – SPIRITUALITY.... Neither PostBigBang nor AnteBigBang relate exclusively to the creation of the cosmos but correlate with Filko's incarnations (13. –14. –15. 6. 1937) including his two clinical deaths in 1945 and 1952.

Stano Filko's COLOR SYSTEM is especially significant. He developed it against the background of systems researched in physics (Newton) and a knowledge of color from art theory. The crucial point is that Filko is using it as a structure. By dividing it into 5 dimensions he creates the rough vertical structure. Each one is furthermore horizontally structured into 20 colors. However, each color extends just to a particular dimension (creating chakras), while each higher dimension contains everything from the lower ones. The spatial model of such a schema would be a pyramid. 5. D. is a metaphysical-ontological space. 12. TRANSPARENT (Absolute); 11. WHITE (Essence); 10. GOLD (Spirit).

4. D. according to Filko is the Messenger defined by altruism. It is an asymmetric Space-Time of the Afterlife in opposition to 5.D., which is a perfect symmetry. 9. SILVER (Peak of the Spirit); 8. PINK (Falseness – Love); 7. VIOLET (Destination of Clinical Death). 3. D. is our Cosmos-Universe. Filko associates it with Egoism. 6. BLACK / indigo (Ego – Dark Matter); 5. BLUE (Cosmos – Material Reality); 4. GREEN (Social-political reality – Social Utopias); 3. YELLOW (Dualism – Birth of the Hermaphrodite – Beginning of Humankind); 2. ORANGE (Eros – Sex); 1. RED (Biology – Female – Magma).

Filko's system is all-encompassing. The colors are further more structured into anything else through philosophical systems up till plain logos. In this way the structuralisation as a mode of analysis is implied to any possible phenomenon, either the defined one or newly named by author. Substructures are ongoing until the tiniest element is reached.

With this formula he can create the endless linear row. However, at the same time, there is not only one such linear row running, but there are endless numbers of interrelated rows, which Filko develops on different subjects and within particular systems of knowledge in which he is interested (e.g. through discussing gender, evolution, the creation of universe, the afterlife, art, society, ethics, and so on and so forth). Yet in the variety of his descriptions he typically deals with contradictions. Binary oppositions enable him to develop additional internal dialectics (i.e. one of his customary topics is egoism vs. altruism). All such "rows" he creates then run parallel. For example dimensions can represent and be replaced by the classical elements (Fire, Air, Water, Earth) or cardinal directions (N, S, E, W), or in other cases by different social topics, and any other factors. Following

this established structure, Filko is always able to recreate additional parallel endless rows with functional interconnections. Complex overlapping layers with endless interrelations create a rhizome.

Filko is often regarded as an utopist. In fact he follows the universalist model of the world beyond our known universe. He attempts to achieve some kind of final algorithm (he would say Singular Truth instead of pluralistic relativity), enabling him to define an essential constellation explaining the infinity. Filko, who doesn't accept pluralism, doesn't believe that things can be one way and at the same time another. To him everything is somehow containable. Absolute Objectivity!

The actual show is based on the artist's selection of artworks presented before in the amt project gallery in Bratislava (2012). It is a chronological overview of Filko's work with the focus on its postbigbang part. The show deals with the creation of Cosmos, the idea of incarnation, the phenomena of Clinical Death and the space of the EGO depicted in a number of installations and objects.

Filko studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava in 1959-1965. He has participated in numerous exhibitions including the Biennale de Paris. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 1969; dOCUMENTA 7. Kassel 1982; FYLKO. Special Exhibit of Recent Work 1983-1985. P.S. 1 – The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Long Island City, New York 1986; Aspekte / Positionen. 50 Jahre Kunst aus Mitteleuropa 1949-1999. Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Wien 1999; La Biennale di Venezia, 51. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte. Venezia 2005; UP 300000 KM/S. tranzit workshops, Bratislava 2005; 11th Biennale de Lyon. Lyon 2011; Report on the Construction of a Spaceship Module. New Museum, New York 2014, and many others.

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