

Jakub Hájek & František Hanousek, Jirka Skála

Five Peaks of Luxury

6 | 6 – 8 | 8 | 2026

curators Anežka Chalupová, Vít Novák

A visual representation of the exhibition's title can be seen in several drawings by Jirka Skála – a five-pointed star bordered with lace, a commodity evoking luxury and the privileged classes. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, this valuable commodity for the aristocracy became a more accessible decoration for bourgeois clothing and interiors, and ultimately a cheap, mass-produced product. Several lace stars, referencing social change, conclude Skála's entire series, which he has been working on gradually over the last three years. The key to deciphering these tangles is Karl Marx's *Capital*.

The series of fifteen drawings, *Reproduction: Instrument of Discovery*, is a precisely executed record of a social system. It represents an attempt to translate the economic abstraction of the second volume of *Capital* into a visual form. This DNA-like structure materializes Marx's socio-economic theory of how a capitalist economy continuously renews and expands its production processes, wealth distribution, and class structure. Step by step, we can identify individual passages showing how capital circulates, how it accumulates, and how means of production and the manufacturing of consumer goods are added. The series then culminates in a triptych featuring the aforementioned five-pointed stars bordered with lace (an exclusive product) and smileys (a mass product). Skála captures capital as a flow, an infrastructure reminiscent of the superorganism from the popular series *Stranger Things*, where every part is linked to the next and subordinated to a higher consciousness. By translating Marx's schematic analysis into an organic, dynamic structure, he reveals the true, aggressive nature of capital.

The stars from the final triptych leap over onto the drawing *Dust-choked Orchestra* by the artistic duo Jakub Hájek & František Hanousek. Skála has worked with the duo several times. This time, although they do not create joint works, they are united not only by the medium of drawing (after all, wire objects are also drawings in space) but also by an interest in the legacy of Marxist theories. In Hájek & Hanousek's large-format drawing, the tentacles of capital form into specific layers: figure – landscape – machine. The gears of industry intertwine the foreground with the bourgeoisie in nature, and the working class and industrialized landscape in the background. On decorative plinths reminiscent of 19th-century salon exhibitions, bizarre objects stand instead of polished statuettes or vases. Hand-wiring and a raw aesthetic decisively reject bourgeois taste as well as the principles of machine-producing cheap bourgeois decorations – the emblematic product of the Industrial Revolution. The authors work four-handedly. Co-creating as a pair is another facet of their work with the sentiment associated with a return to pre-industrial times and the thwarted ideals of the 20th century.

The proletarian revolution, the most hopeful ideal of the 20th century, foundered, and we must cope again and again with unjust capitalism, currently in its digital mutation. Marx will haunt us as long as capitalism exists. Reading Marx does not mean blindly adopting his theories. However, it can offer us a critical perspective that might help stop the destructive power of the current economic and social arrangement.

Artworks

Jirka Skála, *Reproduction: Instrument of Discovery (I.-XV.)*, 2024–2026, 15 drawings, pencil on paper, each 31,1 x 22,4 cm

Jakub Hájek & František Hanousek, *Dust-choked Orchestra*, 2026, graphite pencil, pen, ink, tempera, on paper, 106 x 146 cm

Jakub Hájek & František Hanousek, from the series *Iron Residue: Twisted Memory*, 2026, wire materials, ø 21 x 60 cm, ø 30 x 126 cm

Jirka Skála (1976) is artist, writer and teacher based in Prague and Brno. His artistic practice is focused primarily on the mediums of photography, performance and video. He also pursues a long-term interest in essay and short story writing. Most of his efforts are directed at thematising the transformations of paid and unpaid labour under the conditions prevalent in Eastern Europe. He focuses on interweaving these two activities and the way they become a source of new exploitation, domination and dehumanization. With his artistic production, he endeavours to find adequate means of resistance, as well as powerful metaphorical representations. His work has been presented at diverse international collective exhibitions such as *GNS* at Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2003), *The Other Tradition* at Wiels in Brussels (2011), *Manifesta 11* in Zurich (2016), as well as solo exhibitions such as *Exchange of Handwriting* at Art in General in New York (2006), *Jabberwocky* at Foksal Gallery in Warsaw (2014) and most recently *Aspirations of Foreign Bodies* at Hunt Kastner Gallery in Prague (2022). His publications include *One Family of Objects* (JRP Ringier, 2010), *Litany of Precariat and Boundaries of Opportunities* (Nakladatelství AVU, 2019 and 2022). His essays and stories have been published in a wide spectrum of media such as A2, ArtMap, Fotograf, Idea, Revue Prostor and Springerin.

The artistic duo **Jakub Hájek** (b. 1994) and **František Hanousek** (b. 1994) began their collaborative creative career during their studies at the Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, where both obtained their bachelor's degrees in 2017—Hájek in the multimedia studio and Hanousek in the field of new media. They subsequently continued their education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (AVU), where from 2018 they attended the Intermedia III studio led by Tomáš Vaněk; Hanousek graduated from there in 2022 and Hájek in 2023. Residency and project programs played a significant role in their artistic development, including those at the C. Rockefeller Center for Contemporary Arts in Dresden, the A.M. 180 gallery, and within the AVU academic platform Dálava. Alongside participating in numerous domestic and international group exhibitions (e.g., at Galerie Futura in Prague, Bistro 21 in Leipzig, or Dálava space in Prague), they have also realized solo projects, such as *Migraine Acuity* in Dresden (2020) or *Karneval chátry: rozplízlé osudy* presented at Holešovická šachta (2021) and at the Kostka Gallery in MeetFactory (2025). Recently, they were nominated for the StartPoint Prize, and their work is also exhibited within an international gallery context.

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