



La Biennale di Venezia

61. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

REPRESENTATION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA AT THE 61ST INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

JAKUB JANSÁ, SELMECI KOCKA JUSKO: THE SILENCE OF THE MOLE

Curator: Peter Sit

24/4/2026 – *The Silence of the Mole* project is presented in the same year that marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Czechoslovak Pavilion. This year, after a period of twenty years, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have agreed on staging a joint exhibition presentation at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia.

The project creators are the Czech artist Jakub Jansa and the Slovak artistic duo Selmeći Kocka Jusko (Alex Selmeći and Tomáš Kocka Jusko), and the curator is Peter Sit. The presentation is organised by the National Gallery in Prague (NGP) in cooperation with the Slovak National Gallery. The commissioner is Michal Novotný, director of the Collection of Art after 1945 at the NGP.

Artistic Concept

At the centre of the project stands Mr. M., a performer who throughout his entire life has played the fictional character of the mole – a figure originally aimed at an audience of children. *“The Silence of the Mole is a project that examines what happens to the imagination at the moment when it is transformed into a tool of cultural representation. The character of Mr. M. is a personification of care, creative labour, and non-verbal empathy, a form of expression through which he relates to the world. Together with the installation, the film analyses the process in which the poetic language of the imagination is transformed into a tool of ‘soft power,’”* the creators of the project explain. At the same time, the motif of the mole’s burrow and the character playing the mole work as a metaphor of how the two small states perceive themselves.

The installation, in which film, sculptural objects, and architecture are interconnected, follows a process in which the main character loses control of himself, the result being that after years of non-verbal empathy, his body and voice have ceased to belong to him. The project also works with silence as a motif of how the imagination becomes a depleted public mask, and raises questions concerning whether empathy itself can function as the sole tool for the transformation of others. The exhibition emerges as a unified environment, which is the outcome of a long-term dialogue conducted between all the members of the creative team. Jakub Jansa’s film is created within a direct relationship to the spatial sculptural installation by the artistic duo Selmeći Kocka Jusko, and the individual components cannot be separated.

The artists Jakub Jansa, Alex Selmeći, and Tomáš Kocka Jusko add the following: *“The subject matter chose us. We are reflecting our feelings, the context, the conditions, and the time in which we are preparing the project. We are working with how objects communicate with viewers and how visitors move within the installation. We are interested in the time they spend within the space, and what they will contemplate – even if this process is always unforeseeable to a certain extent.”*

Curator Peter Sit views the project as a whole that transcends the Central European context: *"The subject matter is highly topical and comprehensible. It reflects situations we are experiencing today all over the world, and viewers will be able to relate to it from a variety of perspectives."*

The Czech and Slovak Pavilion: 100 Years of Existence

The Czech and Slovak Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale in Venice was opened in 1926, in close proximity to the pavilions of France, Germany, and Great Britain. The exhibition of the state pavilion in Venice was a prestigious act of representation of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The pavilion symbolised the consolidation of the cultural and political significance of the newly established state of Czechoslovakia.

The building was designed by the architect Otakar Novotný, one of the key representatives of modern architecture. As a professional experienced in the field of exhibition architecture, Novotný adapted this modern pavilion to the environment of Venice through its classicising conception in the form of its symmetrical composition, portal, and lateral pillars, crowned with a steel skylight providing lighting from above.

Despite the breakup of Czechoslovakia, the pavilion remains within the ownership of the Czech and Slovak Republics, and since 2024 the partner of the pavilion has been J&T Banka, which, in addition to supporting art, has strong ties to Czech and Slovak cultural heritage.

The upcoming anniversary exhibition will be complemented by other projects prepared by the National Gallery Prague. In collaboration with Czech Television, a unique documentary is being produced that not only focuses on the Czech and Slovak Pavilion and the history of showcasing local art at the Biennale, but also offers a behind-the-scenes look at the preparation and execution of the exhibitions at the Biennale. The documentary will air this autumn. At the same time, the first comprehensive publication dedicated to the Czech and Slovak Pavilion in Venice, edited by Helena Huber-Doudová, curator at the National Gallery Prague, will be released. The book will explore various perspectives on the history of the Biennale and the participation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also on the cooperation between the two countries and their current approach to the Biennale.

The Silence of the Mole

Czech and Slovak Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice

Commissioner: Michal Novotný (NGP)

Artists: Jakub Jansa, Selmeči Kocka Jusko

Curator: Peter Sit

9 May 2026 – 22 November 2026



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Jakub Jansa (1989) is a Czech artist who works with film, installation, and performance art. His work combines fiction, humour, and absurdity with a critical reflection on social structures, power relations, and ideologies. In his long-term cycle *Club of Opportunities*, he focuses on issues of class and power in a poetic yet analytical style. In 2021 he received the Jindřich Chalupecký Award. Among other venues, his works have been presented at the National Gallery Prague, GHMP, Neue Galerie Graz, Pioneer Works, and Anthology Film Archives in New York, as well as at the biennales in Athens and Ljubljana.

Selmeci Kocka Jusko is the artistic duo of Alex Selmeci and Tomáš Kocka Jusko. In their work they concentrate on the relationship between space, perception, and imagination, creating intermedia installations and ensembles of objects. They examine the themes of labour, exhaustion, and deceleration as forms of resistance against the increasingly frantic pace of the modern world. They have exhibited their work in Prague, Košice, Ostrava, Hamburg, Budapest, Ljubljana, and Tokyo, among other locations, and have also realised permanent installations within the public space.

Peter Sit (1991) is an artist and curator who is currently employed as the artistic director at the magazine *e-flux journal*. In 2012–2022 he was a co-founder of the APART platform, with which he realised a series of exhibition and publication projects in Europe, the USA, and the Middle East. In his curatorial and editorial work, he focuses on contemporary art, language, education, and mental health. At present he is working on the research project *Art in Times of Anxieties and Depressions*.

Since 2019 **Michal Novotný** has been the director of the Collection of Art after 1945 at the National Gallery Prague, and since 2024 he has also served as the commissioner of the Czech Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In addition, he teaches at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. His research focuses on the identity of Central and Eastern European art. His recent projects include an exhibition of the new collection 1939–2021: The End of the Black-and-White Era with Eva Skopalová and Adéla Janíčková at the National Gallery Prague in 2023, as well as collaboration with the Centre Pompidou on the festival *MOVE: Intimacy as Resistance* at the National Gallery Prague and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Flower Union project at the Council of the European Union in Brussels, both in 2022.

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