

Stano Filko

A Retrospective

19. 3. – 5. 6. 2022

Opening: 18. 3. 2022, 3 – 9 p.m.

Press talk: 18. 3. 2022, 11 a.m.

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark
Burgring 2, 8010 Graz (AT)

Supported by The Slovak National Gallery and
Linea Collection, Bratislava

Catalog

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With this retrospective of the work of Slovak artist Stano Filko, which has long been in preparation, the HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark takes a fresh look at a sustainably influential and utopian body of work. With generous loans from the Slovak National Gallery and the Linea Collection, Bratislava, this exhibition highlights the significance of this outstanding artistic position and its progressive design for society for today's less visionary times.

Filko was an important representative of the central European neo-avant-gardes, with an oeuvre that developed over many decades and remains remarkably contemporary. He had great success in the 1960s but then became a persona non grata after the Prague Spring was defeated, and after several years he fled the country in daredevil manner in a Škoda 120L, which he then painted white and presented at the center of his participation in Documenta 7. Thereafter Filko emigrated to New York. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain he returned to Bratislava and established the studio building Snesčenkova in the style of a "total work of art" whose rooms and artworks all adhered in color and size to a prearranged structure called *System SF*.

This concept was on the one hand stringent and yet still flexible, enabling Filko not only to give structure to and question his expansive and originally conceptual work, but also to rethink ideas such as the transcendental in the sense of an overarching impulse, beyond any essentialist readings, which was evident in the media diversity and openness of this concept of art.

Filko's complex oeuvre refers to the Fluxus, Nouveau Realisme, Dada, and Pop Art movements, while its independent multiperspectival development remains relevant today. In the early 1960s, Filko began to design installations, pneumatic sculptures, and utopian architectures that reflected his growing interest in cosmology and metaphysics. This was also seen in his happenings and actions. Always fascinated by anti-art, nihilism, and iconoclasm, Filko created several interactive environments based on his ideas of an open concept of media and interdisciplinarity.

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To the last, Filko accompanied his artworks with texts, which he was always testing and rewriting. Notwithstanding all the creativity, this was a structured approach that made it possible for the artist to develop his projects simultaneously as production and reflection, as well as facilitating a better understanding of his originally conceptual approach. Thus Filko pursued a holistic way of working that places art and life together as one so as to work toward an alternative view of reality by means of the unbounded work of art.

This exhibition includes selected works from all the artist's creative periods in order to draw attention from the systematic overview to individual works and their points of reference to each other. Alongside rooms focusing on specific themes or periods, the large exhibition hall in particular serves the purpose of presenting works from different phases together in loose and yet intensive arrangements, so as to see the autonomy and dynamics of each single work within a process of free association with the others. The distinctions between variously evaluated and studied different periods (the early phase that was recognized within a history of art, the neo-expressive "American" phase, and the self-reflective late phase) is here replaced by an overview and recognition of one entire artistic position.

Installations that show the artist's enthusiasm for space travel and the exploration of outer space are planned for the exterior areas around the museum. The large-scale sculptures *The Pyramid* (1995) and *DSUQ 4.D. Rocket* (2000) will be displayed on the museum's flat roof, each of them key artistic statements that combine the cosmos and the world. For the exhibition opening and finissage large balloon works (*Breathing – The Celebration of Air*, 1970; *Balloons*, 1978–2011) will be presented in the surrounding Graz City Park.

Given the significance of Stano Filko's large oeuvre established over several decades, and his charismatic personality, comparisons with meta-artists such as Joseph Beuys, Dieter Roth, and Paul McCarthy seem evident, and yet these would take us in the wrong direction, as it is important to avoid any stylization of Filko as a mythical artist figure whose excessive production and own theoretical frameworks might seem to lead to a hermetic interplay between the total work of art and a defined system. Rather Filko was concerned to overcome barriers and enter into dialogue. His works are characterized by a highly developed dialogic element and are often intended as offers for involving viewers. Not least thanks to his curiosity, liking of experimentation, and self-criticism Filko succeeded in keeping his works present, which is also due to his future-looking themes focusing on the cosmos and the body and spirit in reaction to – experienced and projected – realities.

Filko's oeuvre is telling in particular because individual works often refute any kind of system. Unlike a classical retrospective, this exhibition tries not to present the oeuvre in a traditional manner, but to show it in the form of a first attempt at an overview that also activates single works, so as to emphasize the topicality and visionary in Filko today.

This project is accompanied by a program of events and education and a publication, with the participation of Lucia Gregorová Stach, Patricia Grzonka, Christian Höller, Mira Keratová, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Boris Ondřejka, Jan Verwoert/Søren Grammel, and others.

The work of Stanislav "Stano" Filko (b. 1937 Velká Hradna, † 2015 in Bratislava) has been shown in renown institutions, including the Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava; Kunstmuseum Basel; Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz; Zacheta – National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; National Museum, Kraków; Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples; ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe; Ludwig Múzeum, Budapest; Garage Project Space, Moscow; New Museum, New York; P.S.1, New York; MACBA, Barcelona; Centre Pompidou, Paris; mumok, Vienna; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; státna galéria (State Gallery), Banská Bystrica; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; Moravská galerie, Brno. His work also gained international recognition at the 11th Biennale de Lyon, the Prague Biennale 3, the 51st Biennale di Venezia, Documenta 7 in Kassel, and EXPO 1970 in Osaka. With Emanuel Layr Gallery his works have been widely presented including at Frieze Art Fair London, FIAC Paris and Art Basel.

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Stano Filko
Associations – The Celestial Globe
/ Asociácie – Glóbus vesmíru,
 1966–1967; from the series
Associations / Zo série Asociácie,
 1967–1970
 Offset, paper
 70.1 × 49.5 cm
 Courtesy The Slovak National Gallery,
 Bratislava



Stano Filko
Shooting Range – Target Universe
/ Strelnica-terč: vesmír, 1966–
1967/2005
 Installation, collage, acrylic, wood,
 rifles
 350 × 180 cm
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna



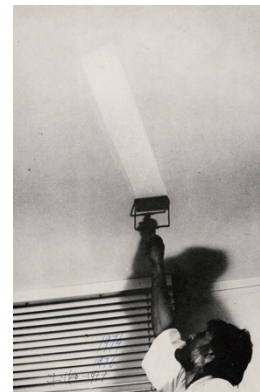
Stano Filko
Model of Observation Tower /
Maketa vyhlídkovej veže, 1967
 Metal, paint
 66 × 19 × 23 cm
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna



Stano Filko
Breathing: The Celebration of Air
/ Dýchanie: oslava vzduchu,
 1970
 Tarp, electric motor, fan
 Ø 550 cm
 Courtesy The Slovak National Gallery,
 Bratislava



Stano Filko
Record Cosmos / SP gramoplatňa
Kozmos, 1970–1971
 Vinyl, paper
 Ø 25 cm
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna



Stano Filko
EMOTION – Ontology (on the
ceiling), 1977
 Paper
 28.7 × 19 cm
 Courtesy The Slovak National Gallery;
 Linea Collection, Bratislava

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Stano Filko
FILKO on the Poster from Osaka
/ FILKO na plagáte Osaka,
 1970/2000

Paper, print, watercolor, pen, pencil
 103 × 68 cm
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna



Stano Filko
5th Dimension White
Ontologictranscendence Devoured
Everything / 5. Dimenzia Biela
Ontologickátranscendencia –
Zožralavšetko, 1980–1995

Paper, printing, pen, latex
 60.7 × 42.6 cm
 Courtesy The Slovak National Gallery;
 Linea Collection, Bratislava



Stano Filko
Old and New Testament / Starý a
Nový zákon, 1982

Diptych, assemblage, found objects,
 cardboard, paint
 165 × 200 × 35 cm
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna



Stano Filko
Retro Veľká Hradná II, 1995–
 2005

Paper, printing, felt-tip pen
 29.7 × 42.1 cm
 Courtesy The Slovak National Gallery;
 Linea Collection, Bratislava



Stano Filko
Rockets 5.4.3.D. / Rakety
5.4.3.D., 2000

Welded sheet, metal, acrylic
 Variable dimensions, 200 × 30 cm each
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna



Stano Filko
Central Brain / Centrálny mozog,
 2000

Found objects, fabric, plastic cord, wire
 70 × 55 × 55 cm
 Courtesy Linea Collection, Bratislava;
 Layr, Vienna

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