

Roman Štětina

Fundamental for a large part of the work of Roman Štětina (*1985) is his work experience in radio, as are his parallel activities as a musician. Sound, whether in the form of the spoken word or in its own autonomous nature, is an important point of departure for him. At the same time, however, he does not neglect the visual side of his pieces. On the contrary, we find in many of them an emphasis on the very aspect of the image, video or installation of artifacts referring, within the framework of film or gallery language, to the sonic component of the given piece. His pieces often display idiosyncratic and contextually logical use of postproduction strategies, which otherwise have become somewhat conventionalized today. He has used the possibilities of such strategies many times in his work with the soundtrack of the film medium in such a way that it also fundamentally influences its visual statement. Also connected to Štětina's radio work is his creative interest in the neglected format of the radio play.

Some of his artistic points of departure are well explained by his piece *Talking about Art* (2012), in which he creates a virtual dialogue, linked to his radio interviews with artists, between himself and the long-dead, famous Czech actor Rudolf Hrušínský. This he achieved by means of combining archive television material with a sound recording expressing his opinions on the issue of artistic creation and the position of the artist in general. Hrušínský, who was very popular in Czech society, was also Štětina's precursor in popularizing visual arts via the media of television and radio. The artist was therefore bringing to life a longed-for dialogue with his role model.

In his last installation, *Studio* (2013), Štětina enters the field of narrative, mimetically conceived pieces. Here, too, the world of the sound studio and work with sound remain his dominant source of inspiration. However, while the piece is linked in many ways to his previous works, here, in contrast to them, he emphasizes the visual atmosphere of the given environment. With the aid of a video installation combined with a fragmentary impression of sound studio equipment, he transformed the space of the gallery into a visual transcription of a place primarily designed for working with sound. The spectator here finds himself in the position of participant in a virtual recording session in the role of both the recording technician and the recorded subject – the other visitors to the exhibition can observe him through a typical 'studio' window.

Roman Štětina has succeeded in finding a specific thematic area for the focal point of his interest that also generates a distinctive form. As well as the more general theme of the role of sound and dialogue in the context of narration of the moving image, his involvement in the disappearing field of radio, which has shifted to the peripheries of the media, is fundamental. It is perhaps because of that neglect that the medium is now sought after not only by Štětina, but also by other artists. Despite his relative youth, Štětina has earned for himself a distinctive position on the Czech art scene by means of his comprehensive, high-profile work. It is certainly somewhat problematic to assess an artist who in his oeuvre up to now has concluded only his first narratively conceived exhibition in a well-equipped gallery, at least in terms of the 'professionalized' gallery scene. However, it is his very balancing up to now between pieces for galleries and work for the medium of radio and musical activities that gives value his work and demonstrates new possibilities and combinations.

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