

Project

200 dm³ of Breath

Part I

Libuše Niklová's Toys

Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, April 1st – July 6th, 2010
17. listopadu 2, Praha 1

Part II

Petr Nikl: Dialogue with Mum

Museum of Czech Literature – Hvezda Summer Pavilion, Prague,
March 31st – May 30th, 2010
Obora Hvězda, Praha 6 – Liboc

Curators: Petr Nikl a Tereza Bruthansová

Graphic design: Zuzana Lednická (Studio Najbrt)

Organised by: Arbor vitae societas, Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague and
Museum of Czech Literature

Who doesn't know her accordion-pleated cat and inflatable Buffalo? However, fewer know that the life-work of **Libuše Niklová (1934-1981)** includes a considerable amount of innovative plastic toys, whose originality at the time by far exceeded the qualities of standard toy production, both local and foreign. Even fewer associate her name with the renowned visual and theatre artist **Petr Nikl (1960)**, a member of the former Tvrdohlaví art group and author of internationally acclaimed Orbis Pictus project. Organizing Niklová's very first retrospective exhibition was the initiative of her son whose peculiar poeticism has been greatly inspired by toys. To pay tribute to her he has designed a concurrent exhibition of his own works reflecting upon his mother's production. The symbolic title of the project, **200 dm³** of breath, refers to the key role which air played in all of the designer's creations, be it little rubber figures, animals with accordion-like trunks or inflatable objects. It gave them shape and volume, allowed them to make sounds and harmonized perfectly with the elasticity and flexibility of plastic.

The designer's retrospective in the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, whose rather impressive, transparent-inflatable installation made by Petr Nikl himself, presents both Niklová's twenty years production for Fatra Napajedla, a company with which her work is inseparably linked, as well as her early designs of toys made by Gumotex Břeclav, where she commenced her career immediately after finishing her studies at the College of Applied Arts in Uherské Hradiště. At the time, the rare combination of Niklová's imagination, incredible inventiveness and vigorous diligence were very well accepted by both her employer and in numerous competitions, owing to which the majority of her designs were put into production. This is something that even young designers today often struggle to achieve. The toys she designed from the mid-fifties until the end of her life have become popular companions to several generations

of children. Whereas the small whistling rubber figures are attractive through their gentle charm, the inflatable and polyethylene toys designed for Fatra Napajedla excel in both their artistic creativity and technological ingenuity. She conceived of her inflatable furniture for children as living animals on which a child could sit and play at the same time. She transformed the bellows pipe from a flush cistern into the torso of her unique accordion-pleated animals, which produce a sound when squeezed. She also cleverly added similar sound-producing mechanisms to her inflatable toys. Through her attractive and thoughtful packaging and stylized printing on toys, swim rings, boats and mattresses, she excelled in the field of graphic design. Although this unique designer passed away at the early age of forty-seven, she left an incredibly rich pioneering work, a total of nine patents and three protected industrial prototypes, as well as the pleasure which her toys have brought to both children and adults to date. **Petr Nikl** has adopted a similar approach to addressing the realm of children and adults. To see for oneself, visit the **Hvězda Summer Pavilion** where his paintings, drawings, illustrations and puppets will lead an intimate artistic dialogue with his mother.

Tereza Bruthansová, Ph.D., curator of the project
February, 2010



Monograph 200 dm³ of Breath – Libuše Niklová's Toys

A monograph will be published to mark the occasion of Libuše Niklová's retrospective. The art historian and design theorist Tereza Bruthansová and the graphic designer Zuzana Lednická from Studio Najbrt are currently preparing the monograph. It will be richly illustrated with color and black and white photographs, and will also include a list of the designer's works. It will be published by the publishing house Arbor vitae societas.

For more information and press photographs, please contact:

Daniela Plná, Arbor Vitae societas, contact: daniela.plna@arborvitae.eu
725 537 141

Jana Ulipová, Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, contact: ulipova@upm.cz
251 093 265

Vladimír Uhlík, Museum of Czech Literature, contact: uhlik@pamatnik-np.cz
220 516 695 / 237, 731 448 561