

Roman Ondák



Artist of the Year 2012

Passion to Perform



Roman Ondák

“Artist of the Year” 2012

If you say that an artist works with everyday materials, it usually means that he or she is demonstratively parting from venerated tradition, showing that one needs no special tools to make art and can perhaps do without a flawless white space in which to exhibit it. It can also mean that there are no suitable gallery spaces for this sort of practice or that the materials are simply not available on the market. All of these possibilities apply to the work of Roman Ondák, who was born in 1966 in Bratislava, Slovakia, and is among the most exciting representatives of a young generation of conceptual artists.

In 2012, Ondák will also play an important role in Deutsche Bank’s art program. Chosen by the Deutsche Bank Global Art Advisory Council, which is comprised of the renowned curators Okwui Enwezor, Hou Hanru, Udo Kittelmann, and Nancy Spector, he has been selected as “Artist of the Year” 2012. Next year, the Deutsche Guggenheim will present a major solo exhibition of his work that will subsequently travel to additional international institutions. Accompanying the show are an extensive catalogue and an exclusive artist’s edition. In addition, the bank will acquire a selection of works on paper for its collection. Following Wangechi Mutu in 2010 and Yto Barrada in 2011, with Roman Ondák the council chose an artist whose work emphasizes the draft character and conceptual approach of this medium. “It will be exciting to see how he will challenge the

medium of drawing and the material of paper in the future,” says Udo Kittelmann, Director of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, who nominated Ondák for the award.

Indeed, with the simplest means Ondák creates an art that lends everyday experiences and perceptions a philosophical, political, or sociocritical dimension. At the same time, his interventions scrutinize the art industry. When he represented Slovakia at the 2009 Venice Biennale, Ondák extended the landscaping in the exhibition park, the Giardini, into the interior of the Slovakian Pavilion. Bushes, shrubs, and even the garden path continued through the exhibition building, as though the structure did not exist. The work dissolved boundaries between interior and exterior space and hence the pavilion itself along with its function.

Whether with his installation “Catch” (2010) he lets a curtain stuck in the window of the exhibition space to sway in the wind and thus allude to an imaginary drama or mishap, or in his performance “Good Feelings in Good Times” (2003) has extras stand in line in front of the Kölner Kunstverein for no apparent reason—Ondák’s interventions play with our standards, expectations, and perspectives. The lines of people that he staged in 2004 in front of booths at the Frieze Art Fair in London take the relationship between supply and demand to absurdity. They can also be associated with the lines outside of stores in the former Eastern bloc, referring indirectly to Ondák’s

career, which was heavily affected by the collapse of the former Czechoslovakia. While the influences of Conceptual and Minimal art are evident in Ondák’s work, his art also incorporates the subversive tactics of the artists from Communist Eastern Europe. In Slovakia, too, artists critical of the system were forced to work in secret; they reacted to state-sanctioned art with subtle interventions and public actions.

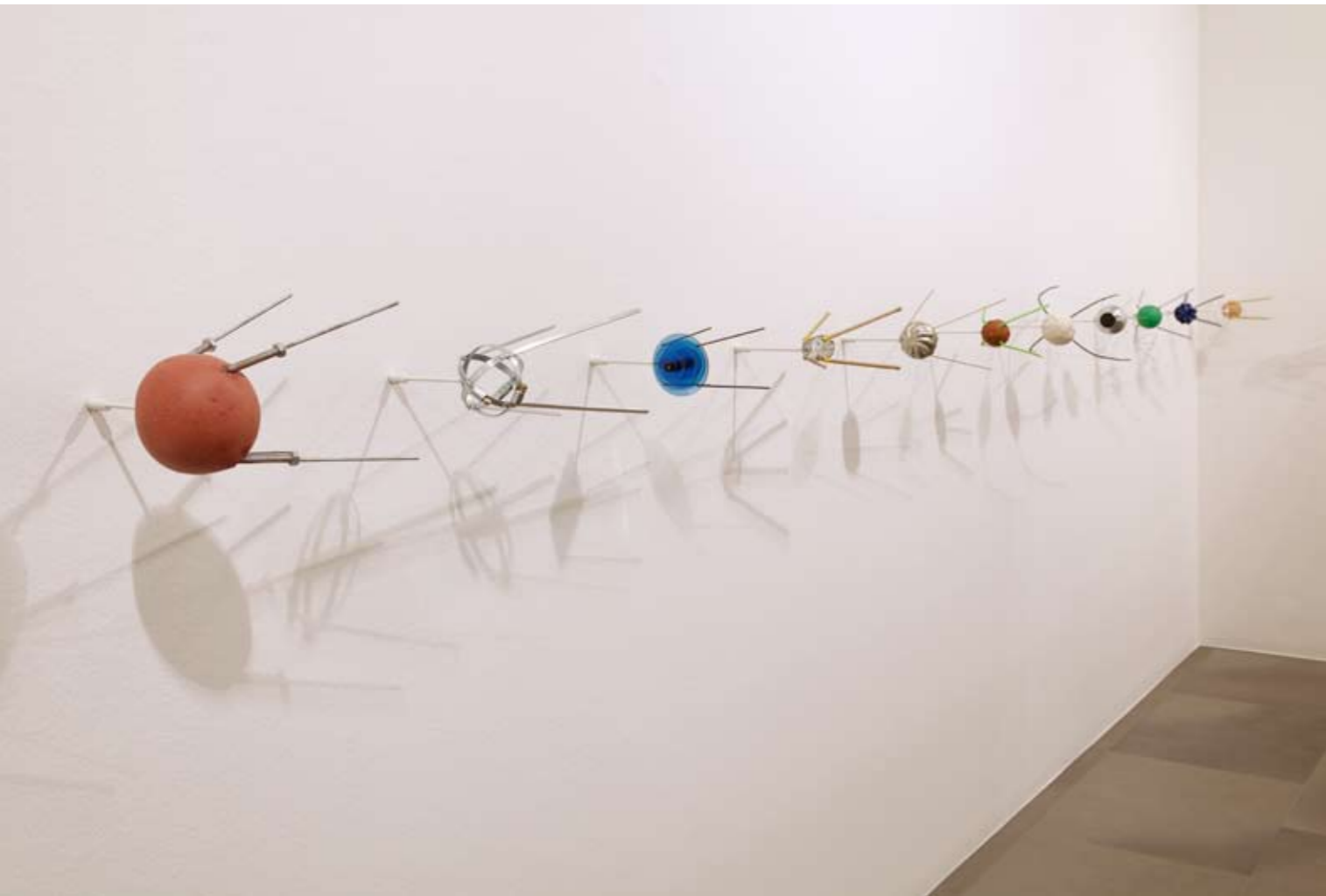
Although Ondák’s reserved art is often recognizable only at second glance, his importance in the art world is unmistakable. In 2011, he has had more international exhibitions than ever before, including solo shows at the Kunsthaus Zürich and in Oxford, as well as participation in the Venice Biennale. People used to ask him about his prescient institutional criticism. Ondák failed to understand what they meant: “Which institution?” was his reply. At first glance, his art is comparable to that of the Conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s—except they were testing their escape from the so-called white cube, while Ondák never even knew these structures. All that was available to him was everyday materials—and his own mind.

Cover: Loop, 2009
Installation, Czech and Slovak pavilion, 53. Venice Biennial, Venice. Courtesy the artist; gb agency, Paris; Janda gallery, Vienna; and Johnen Galerie, Berlin

Back cover: Measuring the Universe, 2007
Performance at Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.
Photo: Ernst Jank



Measuring the Universe, 2007
For the whole duration of the exhibition museum attendants offer to the exhibition visitors marking their height on the gallery walls along with their first name and the date on which the measurement was taken. Performance at MoMA, New York. Photo: Profzucker



Enter the Orbit, 2011
 96 versions of Sputnik 1 made
 by the artist and his friends,
 Installation.
 Collection Kunsthaus Zürich
 Photos: Oliver Lang



Почта 1
 Байконур
 СССР

Roman Ondák
 Sputnikova 1
 Bratislava
 Slovakia



After Return from Orbit, 2011
 Installation
 60 × 60 × 310 cm
 Collection Kunsthaus Zürich
 Photo: Arthur Faust



Roman Ondák

Born 1966 in Zilina, Slovakia
Lives and works in Bratislava

Studies and residences

- 2010 Villa Arson, Nice
- 2007–08 DAAD, Berlin
- 2004 CCA, Kitakyushu, Japan
- 1999–00 Collegium Helveticum, Zürich
- 1994–95 Artest BINZ '39, Zürich
- 1993 Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania
- 1988–94 Academy of Fine Arts, Bratislava, Slovakia

Solo exhibitions (selected)

- 2011 Enter the Orbit, Kunsthaus Zürich
The Exhibition Vanished without a Trace, Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City
Time Capsule, Modern Art, Oxford
Eclipse, Fondazione Galleria Civica, Trento
- 2010 Before Waiting Becomes Part of Your Life, Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg
Shaking Horizon, Villa Arson, Nice
Glimpse, Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples
- 2009 Rear Room, Johnen Gallery, Berlin
Measuring the Universe, Museum of Modern Art, New York
Loop, Czech and Slovak pavilion, 53. Venice Biennale, Venice
Fluid Border, gb agency, Paris
- 2008 Across that Place, Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna
Path, CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco
Measuring the Universe, DAAD gallery, Berlin
- 2007 My Summer Shoes Rest in Winter, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich
The Day After Yesterday, BAK, Utrecht
Roman Ondák, Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck
- 2006 Here or Elsewhere, CAC Bretigny, Paris
It Will All Turn Out Right in the End, Tate Modern, London
More Silent Than Ever, gb agency, Paris
Touristis Trophies, Stift Melk
- 2005 Roman Ondák, Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna
Passage, CCA, Kitakyushu, Japan
Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Bignan (with Didier Courbot)
Spirit and Opportunity, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne
- 2003 Another Day, Dum umeni, Brno
Talker, gb agency, Paris
Teenagers, Gallery Display, Prague (with Julius Koller)
- 2002 Pause for a Moment, Gallery Priestor, Bratislava (with Josef Dabernig)
Guided Tour, Moderna galerija, Zagreb
- 2000 Roman Ondák, MK Gallery, Rotterdam
Room Extension, Kunsthof, Zürich
- 1999 Through the Eye Lens, Ludwig Museum, Budapest
- 1998 Discrepancies, Spala Gallery, Prague
Roman Ondák, Gallery of the City of Prague, Prague
Exposure, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw
- 1997 Roman Ondák, MK gallery, Rotterdam
- 1996 Roman Ondák, Gallery Ruce, Prague
- 1995 Roman Ondák, Artest BINZ '39, Zürich

Group exhibitions (selected)

- 2011 Power to the People, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
Ostalgia, New Museum, New York
ILLUMInations, 54. Venice Biennale, Venice
UniEspressione Geografica, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin
Summer Exhibition, Tate, St Ives
The Other Tradition, WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels
- 2010 Taking Place, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
What is waiting out there, 6th Berlin Biennale, Berlin
I'm not here. An exhibition without Francis Alÿs, De Appel, Amsterdam
We have as much time as it takes, CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco
- 2009 100 Years, P.S.1, New York
Die Kunst ist super!, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
Playing the City, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt
The Quick and the Dead, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
Voids, A Retrospective, Centre Pompidou, Paris
- 2008 Why there is always somewhere else, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe
5th Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool
8th Panama Art Biennial, Panama City
Translocalmotion, 7th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai
- 2007 From a Distance, WallSpace, New York
The World as a Stage, Tate Modern, London
Der Process, Prague Biennial, Prague
Memorial to the Iraq War, ICA, London
- 2006 Auditorium, Stage, Backstage, Frankfurter Kunstverein
L'usage du Monde, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka
How to live together, 27th Bial São Paulo, São Paulo
Ja//Ich, Secession, Vienna
Heroes and Anti-Monuments, Gallery Medium, Bratislava
- 2005 Universal Experience, Hayward Gallery, London
Works on the Edge, Ludwig Museum, Budapest
After the Fact, Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin
Nach Rokytnik, Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna
Red Riviera Revisited, Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia
Do Not Interrupt Your Activities, Royal College of Art, London
- 2004 The Future is not what it used to be, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig
Frieze Art Fair Projects, Frieze Art Fair, London
- 2003 Utopia Station Poster Project, Haus der Kunst, Munich
Durchzug/Draft, Kunsthalle Zürich



Loop, 2009
Preliminary drawing for installation,
18 x 24 cm.
Courtesy the artist