



Then and There

Exhibiting artists: **Peter Mezei & Juraj Toman**

Curator: **Mária Janušová**

Opening: Thursday, 14 December 2017, 6pm

Duration: 14 December 2017 – 4 February 2018

Venue: **Youth Gallery**

The exhibition titled “Then and There” presents two young artists, Peter Mezei & Juraj Toman. Even though their works might seem different initially, they are united by various internal specifications as well as the actual painting process. They both use classical painting methods, including frequent open-air painting sessions and traditional oil techniques. The final output is a result of tedious, highly focused work. Another common factor is that they are trying to capture the present time in several layers, including what happened before and after this time. Mezei and Toman are both fascinated by the monumentality of the mass or matter that they put in contrast with the insignificance, pettiness and ephemerality of man. Both artists produce contemplative works of inner peace that force the viewer to slow down and look. The exhibition title refers to an expression coined by Walter Benjamin, “here and now”, that relates to the unique aura that every artwork has in the present time and space. In the presented paintings, the “then and there” refers to a moment of preservation in time and space as well as it describes the nostalgia and melancholy that are so characteristic for the displayed compositions.

In his works, Peter Mezei mostly focuses on the theme of natural elements and their relationship with their surroundings. He is interested in the so-called inscape, an internal world (in comparison to the external one - landscape) that cannot be seen by man. It remains hidden and we can perceive it as an archetype of the initial form of the universe. Mezei sees stones and rocks as symbols of eternity, lying in the ground, connecting the inscape with the landscape. His “portraits” of stones utilise soft, merging, almost monochromatic colour scheme that makes them very subtle, almost fragile. Mezei uses his choice of colours to almost completely suppress the actual mass of the portrayed rocks. Rapid brush strokes and multiple layers of thick oil colours, they both abstract the image enough to make us only

suspect the presence of the actual stone and its individual depictions use dreamy, poetic language.

Juraj Toman's work focuses on urban sceneries portraying architectural and industrial premises and parks and other man-made environments in general. His compositions are often supplemented with figural staffage, although the actual figures are depicted in a very small scale in comparison with the rest of the image's elements. His motives often come to him while walking the town or staring out of the window. He often paints outside, especially when he becomes so captivated by a certain motive that it needs to be recorded immediately. While the artist's images are mostly realistic, there is a certain level of abstraction present within them. One of Toman's typical features is the element of time and time lines that are represented either by a noticeable arrangement of the paintings or by gradually fading the image's figures. Erasure of the motive, the artist's gestic painting language, multiple layers of colours, trickles of paint, smudges, thick viscosity, these are all responsible for the heavy, nostalgic and dark mood of Toman's paintings.

Mária Janušová

Peter Mezei (*1988, Rožňava) graduated from the Studio of Painting at the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica in 2013. He studied under three different teachers: Klaudia Kosziba, prof. František Hodonský and Ján Kudlíčka. In 2012, he spent one semester studying at the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic. He has participated at several art symposia and group exhibitions. He has had solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of the Mining Museum in Rožňava (2014), Platform 1-12 in Topoľčany (2015) and the Medium Gallery in Bratislava (2015). He lives and works in Rožňava.

Juraj Toman (*1985, Trenčín) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (Klaudia Kosziba's studio) and at the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica where he finished his doctoral studies under the leadership of prof. Ľudovít Hološka in 2014. Today, he works as a lecturer at the Department of Creative Arts and Art Education at the Faculty of Education at the CPU in Nitra where he teaches drawing and painting. He exhibits regularly both at home and abroad, usually a part of a duo exhibition or a group exhibition. Together with the painter Juraj Florek, he has been working on a long-term project of open-air painting of industrial premises in various regions of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. He lives and works in Trenčín.