ANNA MATOUŠKOVÁ  PLACES  HOMAGE TO LEO KRAFT

April 9th–July 10th 2008
Queens College Art Center, New York
The Queens College Art Center is pleased to present Anna Matoušková: Places: Abstract Paintings, Drawings and Glass Sculpture; Homage to Leo Kraft. This exhibition and its related programs began to take shape five years ago, after Anna Matoušková, a Czech artist, and Leo Kraft, an American composer and professor at Queens College, met in Prague. The two spent hours talking about art and music. Through a continuing dialogue, they discovered that while their media and backgrounds differ, their artistic concerns and creative processes are aligned. Reflecting on Prof. Kraft’s compositions, Matoušková created most of the pieces in this show, which she dedicates to his 85th birthday. Lectures and concerts accompanying the exhibition address the possibilities of inspiration crossing between art and music.

The abstract conceptual work on display comprises paintings in acrylics and drawings, and sculpture built of colored glass. Together, they offer insight into the oeuvre of a fascinating young Czech artist (born in 1963). A daughter of artists, Matoušková is a member of the so-called Angry Generation of students who emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, during their country’s transformation from communist Czechoslovakia to the democratic Czech Republic. Grounded in a fertile historic culture, she has been involved in the process of freeing art from the constraints imposed by the former totalitarian regime, and has embraced the openness of the new order. Her experience includes work in diverse media, exhibitions, projects, symposia, teaching, and public presentations. Matoušková approaches a work of art as a spiritual reality. Interested in contacts between fine art, other art disciplines, and science, she draws on her country’s art traditions while she introduces the ideas and experimentation of the present. In the process, she develops her nation’s artistic heritage and renews its connections with world culture.

The exhibition is part of Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America, a collaborative project of the Kupferberg Center for the Arts, of which the Art Center is a partner.

The Art Center deeply appreciates the considerable contributions of the co-sponsors of this project, the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College (Edward Smaldone, Director), Czech Center New York (Monika Koblerová, Director), Chappell Gallery, New York City (Alice Chappell, Director), and Amálie Maurer, Prague. Their vision, creativity, and enlightened support made its realization possible. On a personal note, to introduce an exciting artist from the land of my birth is a privilege and vivid joy.

SUZANNA SIMOR
Director, Queens College Art Center
Vodní znaky / Watermarks, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 100 cm / 47”x 39”
LEO KRAFT AND ANNA MATOUŠKOVÁ

The creative artist deals with aspects of color; with large scale form and detail; with structural design and surface; with emotional sweep and technical means. In issues both large and small these aspects describe some of the common ground among the methods, the intentions, and the results of both visual artists and composers.

Leo Kraft and Anna Matoušková first met in 2003 and discovered an aesthetically sympathetic approach to their respective disciplines through talking and sharing each other’s art. Each artist strives to provide a surface and immediacy in their work that belies an underlying structural component deeply rooted in tradition and traditional methods. There is sensuousness and detail in the surface that is supported by a structural concept that is filled with purpose. Nothing is random, or casual, whether the result is light and breezy, or dark and profound. When they met, Leo was happy to discuss his thoughts about Anna’s art, and they discovered a surprising level of common concern in terms of their approach to the technical construction of their art, its emotional purpose and the relationship of their completed works with an audience. For both composer and artist, technique is a means of creating something that ultimately connects with an audience in a way that lets them see/hear something about the world they already know, in a way that is deeper than they might have previously known. The details of construction are important and necessary, but only as a means of achieving the final art object, which can then live its life in relation to the audience member in particular and the human experience in general.

While the main title of the current exhibition focuses on “Places”, there is a secondary focus on the concept of “Surface Tonalities.” It is this term in particular which I see as a fundamental bridge between the works of these two artists. The term “Surface Tonalities” implies both the significance of an artwork’s surface and the variety that one is likely to confront on a work’s surface. It is the surface, after all, with which we come into contact, and through which we might comprehend the deeper structure of a work of art. Composers speak of a musical surface, just as visual artists acknowledge the significance of a work’s surface. It is on the surface that light plays, on the surface that musical details are perceived.

More importantly, it is through the surface that we get a glimpse of the universe that each work of art embodies, but it is always what is beneath the surface that supports it. In that sense both Leo and Anna are constructivists: the construction provides the fundamental support that must resonate through the work, and with the audience. In particular, Leo’s long relationship with audiences and with students has extended from his own extraordinary capacity to communicate. His gift for communication has established him as both an important composer and a leading educator. His books on musical theory are a significant part of
the ongoing task of American Musical educators interpreting and explicating the techniques of Western European musical culture. His books on music theory and ear training combine a complete and thorough understanding of both the theoretical and practical aspects of musicianship. These techniques and traditions then form the foundation of Kraft's own musical language, filtered through the lens of American experience. He is articulate with words and with music and, in a certain sense, these modes of expression extend from the same exceptional intellect. Kraft’s music is praised for its richly expressive directness, exquisite craftsmanship, structural clarity, rhythmic interest, harmonic and contrapuntal inventiveness and, in general, its ability to speak with a sophisticated and identifiably “American” voice. He writes “smart” music, but music that is filled with lyricism and emotion. His many recordings and performances attest to the ongoing interest in his music, whose “surface” always provides a rich experience of ‘tonalities.”

In their discussions and sharing of their work, Leo Kraft and Anna Matoušková developed a meaningful artistic friendship that has enriched each of them. Anna was struck by how Leo “got” her work, and she was attracted to his highly communicative music, especially those that evoke a specific “place.” Leo was struck by the natural connections he saw in Anna’s sculptures. The special nature of their mutual appreciation ignores distinctions of age, gender and nationality as well as artistic discipline. The shared joy of their appreciation of each other’s art, is a resonant metaphor for the meaning and purpose of art as a celebration of a fundamental capacity of the human spirit. There is a little celebration of that shared spirit with each performance, each exhibition and each new work created by these artists.

EDWARD SMALDONE
Director, Aaron Copland School of Music
Říjen / October, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 50 cm / 24“ x 20“
Otevřený vír / Open Whirl, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 35 x 40 cm / 14” x 16”
Rozlomená kompozice / Broken Composition, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm / 16”x 16”
have been listening to the compositions of Leo Kraft while looking at pictures by Anna Matoušková from her cycle “Tóny ploch” (Surface Tonalities), and I keep thinking about what might be the common denominator of this music and this visual art.

Leo Kraft is readily inspired by the experiences he made at various places such as Venice, but the music which he derives from his impressions and feelings is not at all descriptive or illusive, is free from all things “romantic” – its precursor is early polyphony. This is artful music, but not one desiccated by speculation. It is intellectually demanding and emotionally rewarding music, wholly contemporary, yet firmly linked to the past, and therefore endowed with depth.

The Surface Tonalities of Anna Matoušková are not abstract paintings in the proper sense. They did not come about by way of an abstraction from concrete, visible and tangible objects, but rather by way of a reification – concretization – of that which cannot be seen or touched and which is by itself something abstract. When Max Bill engaged in this kind of work, he referred to the objectification of “abstract thoughts”. Anna Matoušková does not objectify thoughts, but her experience of that most abstract of all arts: music. Bill believes that in such cases, one should speak of concrete art, art that seeks to create “a new reality shaped by new objects – items of spiritual need”. The means by which Anna Matoušková objectifies her inner reflection of Kraft’s music are represented by expanses of color, the equivalent of musical pitch – hence the term Surface Tonalities.

I am not sure what it is in Kraft’s music that touched Anna Matoušková so intensely as to compel her to respond by creating these paintings, and maybe she herself would be at a loss if asked to verbalize this compulsion. I can only venture a guess. Among other things, the “transparency” of this music, its peculiar luminosity, might play a role – at least it thus appears to me. If the music really has these qualities, then I find it easy to understand why it would mean so much to a painter who predominantly works with glass. And as far as those of Kraft’s compositions are concerned which are connected with what is known as the “genius loci,” this topic, too, must be close to Anna Matoušková’s heart – after all, she gave her exhibitions in New York (which build upon the Surface Tonalities displayed in Prague) the shared title Places.

JAROMÍR ZEMINA
Prague
Hommage à Leo Kraft I, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 100 cm / 53” x 39”
Okrové paravany / Ochre Paravans, 2008, acrylic on canvas, each 120 x 40 cm / 47”x 16”
Die drei Pintos / Three Pintos, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 100 cm / 47” x 39”
Among the musical works of Leo Kraft there are many that characterize blue skies, pure clean air and water, or are dedicated to places where the element of water plays an important role: From the Hudson Valley, Cape Code Sketches, Spring in the Harbor, Venetian Reflections. The title of Pacific Bridges has been described as expressing the type of music that links the people of Japan and the United States; the Pacific as being a “peaceful” ocean that both divides and connects the two countries. Therefore, both music and ocean have the power of bridging these distances. When we talked about Japan, Leo said he realized how greatly Japanese music differs from Western melodic language. He wrote Pacific Bridges using the Japanese scale but not their musical instruments.

Coming from a landlocked country in the middle of Europe, Czech people miss out on the pleasures of sailing on the sea. So in 2000, for the Japanese exhibition in the Nakama Gallery in Tokyo, my work consisted of many ships and boats. I painted the series of Ships using the red colors of chimneys, white

Lodě / Ships I, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 50 cm / 16”x 20”
banisters and grey skies; Boat Windows combined various techniques such as the element of rounded windows through plywood. I felt the necessity to react to the Japanese culture that I so admire, their fine art, novels and poetry. Leo Kraft encouraged me to express my feelings about the ancient Japanese screens whose beauty and strength surprised me during my visit to the Nezu Museum. That is the source of my Paravans. As the Pacific Ocean connects Japan and America, the Atlantic Ocean connects America and Europe. I hope to have bridged the Atlantic between Prague and New York.

ANNA MATOUŠKOVÁ
Prague

Lodě / Ships II, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 40 cm / 20” x 16”
Zelený labyrint / Green Labyrinth, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 40 cm / 47”x 16”
Červený labyrint / Red Labyrinth, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 120 cm / 16” x 47”
HOMAGE TO LEO KRAFT

Havelka Gallery, Prague: Anna Matoušková
Tóny ploch / Surface Tonalities
9th October – 3rd November 2007
Salon of the Club of Concretists
KK2 Olomouc:
Etudy a kompozice / Etudes
and Compositions
23rd January – 28th February 2008
Concert: Chapel of the Holy Body,
Art Centre of Palacky University, Olomouc:
Signály nad trati / Signs above the Tracks
by Sylva Smejkalová
for piano and electronics,
23rd January 2008
Queens College Art Center, New York:
Anna Matoušková Places –
Homage to Leo Kraft,
Gallery talk: Anna Matoušková,
Concert: Partita 6 for Four Flutes by Leo Kraft,
performed by the Femmes Four Flute Quartet
9th April – 10th July 2008
Aaron Copland School of Music, New York:
Lecture: Anna Matoušková,
Two Places: New York and Prague
Concert: music by Leo Kraft,
piano Laura Leon Cohen,
Scherzo from Three Scenes from the Heartland
by Edward Smaldone,
performed by Paul Kerekes, piano,
14th April 2008
ANNA MATOUŠKOVÁ
KOPECKÁ
Born 1963 in Prague

EDUCATION AND CAREER
1984-90 Academy of Art, Architecture and Design, Prague
Glass studio: Prof. S. Libenský
Prof. J. Svoboda
Prof. V. Kopecký
Lives and works in Prague

2004 Grant: Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfond
“Czech-German Project of an Exhibition Art & Fenomen”
2000 Commission for architecture: Azabuka Sumicyo
Park Mansion, Minato-ku, Tokyo

1999 Series of lectures in UK:
“Ordinary Life or the Way under the Surface”, Staffordshire
University, Surrey College, Wolwerhampton College, Westminster College London
1998 Head of the workshop:
“Escultura en Vidrio”, FCNV Real Fábrica de Cristales,
La Granja de San Ildefonso, Segovia, Spain
Since1998 Member of the Club of Concretists (Klub konkétistů)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2008 “Etudes and Compositions”
(Concert S. Smejkálová ), Salon of the Club of Concretists
KK2 Olomouc, CZ
2007 “Surface Tonalities”, Havelka Gallery, Prague
2004 “Art & Fenomen” (with Rieko Kimura and Hans-Günter Van Look), Karolinum, Prague (cat.)
2003 “Architekturen”, CzechPoint, Galerie des Tschechischen Zentrums, Berlin
2003 “Prof. Vladimír Kopecký und Anna Matoušková”, Glasgalerie Hittfeld, Germany
2000 “Řada”, Dům U rudého vola /Gallery 99/ The Brno House of Arts, CZ
2000 Gallery Nakama, Tokyo

RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2007 “SOFA NY 2007”
“VI. Art Prague”, Mánes Gallery, Prague
“Zeitgenössische tschechische Glaskunst”, Auswertiges Amt, Berlin
2006 “Ten Years of Casting Glass, Pelechov, Lhotský”, University of Brighton, UK
“Coburg Glass Prize for Contemporary Glass in Europe”, Coburg, Germany, (cat.)
2005 “Lhotský, Sklo Pelechov, Ten Years of Czech Mould-melted Glass Sculpture”, Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic,
Bratislava, Slovakia
“SOFA 2005”, Chicago
“Lhotský, Sklo Pelechov, Ten Years of Czech Mould-melted Glass Sculpture”, Moravian Gallery Brno / Europe Art Gallery, Ždár nad Sázavou, CZ, (cat.)
“Zeitgenössisches tschechisches Glas”, Glasmuseum Alter Hof Herding, Germany
“Vladimír Kopecký and His Sphere”, Chappell Gallery, New York
2004 “SOFA 2004”, Chicago
“Contemporary Czech Glass Art”, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Germany
“Lhotský s.r.o., Ten Years of Czech Mould-melted Glass Sculpture”, Museum of Northern Bohemia, Liberec, CZ
“Moderne Glaskunst aus Tschechien”, Papierfabrik Neumünster, Germany
“A New Vanguard”, Chappell Gallery, New York
“Collect 2004”
V&A Museum, London, (cat.)
2003 “Glass Weekend ’03”, Creative Glass Center of America at Wheaton Village, Millville, New Jersey
“Vladimíra Klumpar, Anna Matoušková and Pavel Trnka”, Chappell Gallery, Boston
“Libenský and His School”, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, (cat.)
“SOFA NY 2003”
2002 “SOFA 2002” Chicago
“Global Art Glass Triennial”, Borgholm, Sweden, (cat.)
“Sensitive Touch”, Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent, UK, (cat.)
“Stanislav Libenský and His School”, Tai-pei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan, (cat.)
“SOFA NY 2002”
“Sensitive Touch”, M.A.V.A, José de Valderas, Alcorcón, Madrid, (cat.)

SYMPOSIUMS
2004 “GLASSART 04”, Kamenický Šenov, CZ
1995 “Glass in Troja”, Prague, (cat.)
1991 “IV. International Glass Symposium”, Nový Bor, CZ, (cat.)
1991 “Kunst – Umění”, Rankweil, Austria, (cat.)

WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
Museum of Northern Bohemia, Liberec, CZ
Lemberk Castle, Jablonné v Podještědí, CZ
Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg, Coburg, Germany, (cat.)
Jan van der Togt Museum, Amstelveen, Holland
Bezdružice Castle, Bezdružice, CZ
M.A.V.A. Castillo de San José de Valderas, Alcorcón, Madrid
Ernsting Stiftung / Glasmuseum Alter Hof Herding, Coesfeld-Lette, Germany, (cat.)
Zahrada ve dne / Garden by Day, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 100 cm / 47” x 39”
Kouty zahrady A, B, C / Corners of the Garden A, B, C, 1993, each 40 x 30 cm / 16” x 12”
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Realization of this project was possible thanks to:

Queens College Art Center:
Suzanna Simor / Director
Alexandra de Luise / Curator
Tara Mathison / Assistant Curator
Mollie Moskowitz / Administration

Aaron Copland School of Music:
Edward Smaldone / Director

Kupferberg Center for the Arts

Chappell Gallery:
Alice Chappell / Gallery Director and Curator
Kathleen Pullan / Gallery Manager

Czech Center New York:
Monika Koblerová / Acting Director

Leo Kraft
Joyce Simon

Texts: S. Simor, E. Smaldone, J. Zemina, A. Matoušková
Photographs: M. Polák, P. Dörl, G. Urbánek, A. Matoušková
Translation: Agentura SPA, Praha
Concept of the catalogue: A. Matoušková
Graphic design: Grafický ateliér Černý, Art-D, Praha
Printed by Trico, Praha

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