

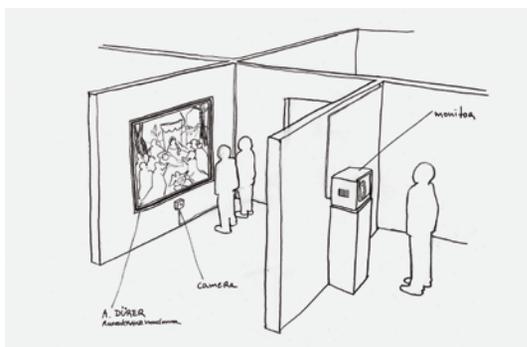


IT IS NOT
FUNNY,
NOT FUNNY

KAREL SRP

Almost everyone has experienced the feeling that something has been haunting them incessantly, they are harassed by an unclear idea that they cannot dismiss, they do not know where it comes from, what it means and when it will be over; it often emerges at inappropriate times and at the least expected moments when it almost seemed that it would never come back again, that the mind had managed to overcome it and push it back into the subconscious. It seemed for a while that the compulsive feeling had disappeared completely, but some unknown force brings it back to the surface again in a new form with a different meaning. Some of Křištof Kintera's works behave in a similar manner. They force themselves into our consciousness and demand attention. It is no easy task to resist their influence. They infringe on our thoughts when we are seeking peace and quiet, they wander around while we are sitting quietly trying to deal with our own thoughts. They behave more like humanoid objects, powered by electricity, or like quirky animals in need of care. Let us just mention one object out of many, whose real nature cannot be put across by a reproduction in a catalogue: an inverted plastic bucket, splashed with paint – it isn't a metaphor about finishing cleaning the house or even the end of pictures hung on the wall, but, as shown by the preparatory drawings, it contains a mechanism which allows it to move in both smooth and jerky motions. It wanders around the room in all directions. While moving about like this it doesn't have to be nearby to attract attention to its presence; the hollow, faint sound it makes carries out into the hallway. Although one can perhaps get used to it after some time, the bucket is hard to accept completely. It represents the clouding of the mind that prevents one from having a clear thought, located on the boundary between what is important and what is secondary. The impact is certainly ambiguous: the bucket helps one to focus and yet forces the eye to wander at the same time. The work, entitled *A Bigger*

Painting Is Watching You
/ Obraz se dívá, 1998



Plumbuman / Plumbař,
1995–1998

Problem than Yours (2007), suggests that Kintera's works have their own internal landscape and living space, which they occupy and fill. The works reveal the way the artist thinks. The clear insight in the works into the changing present gains a general, sometimes even a timeless legitimacy. Kintera is concerned with what he contains within himself and also with the world around him, what is a part of his personality and what belongs to the shared environment.

Before Kintera came to this position, in the second half of the 1990s he was attracted by the clash of contrasting spaces: external and internal, personal and collective, full and empty. For instance in the work *About Us Without Us* (1997) he developed a relationship between visual and auditory experience. Two bright black and white views into empty spaces, the first of the metro station at Náměstí Míru, the second a hall at the Main Post Office in Prague, is accompanied by an audio recording, recorded during peak operating hours in the public spaces. Kintera was attracted by the boundary conditions of everyday life: on the one hand being almost completely disembodied, on the other hand crowded with ordinary events. He placed them in stark contrast. In *Broadcast* (1998) he showed how far he could go in breaking the boundaries between the private and public spheres; on a street lamp on Krymská Street, where he lived, he hung up a screen, and broadcast a view of his private life for a period of one month. The screen was located near the author's apartment so he could watch faces of random passers-by out the window as they wondered over what they were watching. They were captivated by the inexplicable plot, which – as they soon realized – did not belong to any television program, but they were unable to identify the source of the video. Kintera continued to push even more strongly into public space. Nor did he exclude the state art collections. In 1998 he put a camera under *The Feast of the Rosary* by Albrecht Dürer, placed in the Sternberg Palace of the National Gallery in Prague, which filmed the viewers looking at the painting. He transmitted the signal to a screen in the next room, where visitors to the gallery could watch their fellows viewing Durer's work. Kintera was exploring how far he could go when approaching the personal space inside the public sphere without having the viewers know they were being monitored. These three works, creating a merger between the private and public spheres, determined one aspect of Kintera's approach. In parallel with this, for several years he also focused on capturing the life and creating a dwelling for a strange creature called *Plumbuman* (1995–1998). The *Plumbuman* found its temporary home in the basement of the House At the Golden Ring, as a part of a long-term exhibition of a new generation of emerging contemporary artists. *Plumbuman* – as the name suggests – was an artificial being created from lead. Lead plates covered the walls, floor and ceiling of its room, but also everything in its everyday life. Also *Plumbuman's* clothing was made of lead that he wore while walking in Prague. *Plumbuman* was almost autistic. Lead served as a protection for him against the outside world. He is said to have preferred the escalators in the subway the most. The evidence is a recording, projected on a television screen, also coated with lead.



Through his choices, Kintera reveals his interest in a wide-range of materials, which oscillates from the highly artificial, like the polyurethane he used a little later, through to the domestic, as with his use of dough, to the extremely human, which was represented by the use of his own feces. Although Kintera is the creator of the shy *Plumbuman*, he cannot be directly identified with him. He lets the viewer look into *Plumbuman*'s abode, while *Plumbuman* prefers to wander somewhere in the city and only returns home after the opening hours of the gallery. When it seems that we could catch a glimpse of him, he disappears in front of our eyes.

The shift in the artist's focus, which Kintera had already begun in the work dealing with *Plumbuman*, was demonstrated quite significantly in another art piece called *It* (1996) in which he came to a meeting point between personal and shared space in one ambiguous and unnamable object, contrasting immediacy and the uncanny. The object *It* represented a concentration of Kintera's intensity at the time. It almost became his third eye, his view of the world was related to this artificially-created oval object, resembling an egg, perhaps similar to the sculptures of Hans Arp. *It* moved around on attached wheels. The artist took it on walks in the city, as shown by a number of black and white photographs depicting his travels on public transportation, wandering in the streets, dry or wet from the rain, visits to exhibitions and men's toilets. *It* was a major focus in documentary photos, whereas the people standing around were mostly shown from the waist down. Kintera treated it as a living being, as one of the members of his family. In his imagination *It* had its own memory and perceived the world around it like anyone else. While in the past *It* was more active, now, at least according to the photos,



it dwells in the artist's living room under the drying rack. It was significant for Kintera that he never sold *It* though he did sell photographs featuring its life. However, he often lent it for various exhibitions, where it was placed on the ground and every visitor could "play" with it for a while. For Kintera it was intolerable that *It* would become lifeless, displayed on a stand topped by a perspex box, as is usually the case with such objects.

In *It* (the title could be derived from a psychoanalytic dictionary) Kintera examined the border between living

and inanimate matter, but also between the purposeful and purposeless, between practical products and things that only resemble them in shape and function, yet which are purely aesthetic in nature. He considered the mutual overlap between art works and utilitarian objects. He made an extensive set of objects on the theme of this relationship, called collectively *Appliances* (1997–1998). The name was derived from their activity: the consumption of electricity, which powered them while serving no other purpose. Today the *Appliances* are exhibited in one room radiating an aura like precious works of art, but originally they passed through a marketing cycle surrounding their manufacture and sale. They were produced by the fictive Utitool company and Kintera gave each one its own name, for example Denor, Propero, Ultran. The artist wanted the appliances to enter daily life as soon as they were brought out. They were advertised on large billboards and placed on shelves between irons and electric kettles, and also presented in shop windows with other electrical appliances. Kintera primarily focused on the experience of random people who displayed interest in the appliances. When the shop assistant presents the appliance to the shopper, her/ she suddenly realizes that the product doesn't have any functional purpose, it can't be used for anything in the home and, what's more, it wastes electricity, which is increasingly expensive. The potential buyer realizes the fallacy immediately, that the appliance on offer is not what he/she had thought it to be, which creates a space for personal reflection on the nature of the object. Despite the fact that it has been produced and manufactured, the object will eventually come to be meaningless. Such reflection can lead to a transformation of the consciousness of the potential user who purchased the "object", for which he/she must reserve a special place, as it belongs neither to the closet with other home appliances nor to the category of clearly-defined artistic works. Describing the conjunction of the utilitarian and aesthetic object, in both their similarities and differences, Kintera reinvigorated the analysis of the structuralists from the 1930s on the linguistic function; they focused on the divisions in the character of language, on the merging of the poetic and communicative functions. Kintera captured the similarities and differences, all the viable options, through which his "appliances" could interact with the opposite field from their own, he revealed transitions between ordinary things and the work of art. He studied the dividing line in which the two fields approached one another, and yet, at the same time, moved apart. The "appliances" became passages which terminate with mirrors reflecting their shape in a new social context. The decisive moment was the possible metamorphosis of the thinking of the unenlightened viewer who may have come to buy the "appliance".

With *Plumbuman*, *It* and *Appliances*, Kintera entered the ongoing debate about the role of the artist; one can only theorize about Kintera's relationship with

Appliance / Spotřebič,
1997–1998

Plumbuman, It seems to have been born to anonymous parents, and the actual creator of *Appliances* is not stated anywhere, only the logo of the manufacturer. Kintera is not *Plumbuman*, though he seems to have been the only one who could put on his suit and bring him to life, nor is he It, which he led around on a leash. As an artist, he exists somewhere in between, for a while on one side, for a while on the other, yet where precisely no one can say. This allows him to observe *Plumbuman*, *It* and *Appliances* from a distance, as if they were created by someone else.

In the late 1990s Kintera was developing a dialogic model and introduced the theme of direct address which created an encounter between the work and the viewer; this was mostly done through the use of written text, pre-recorded voice, or, in some cases, just the title, which complimented the work. Through this use of direct address, Kintera intruded into the public space. He did so mostly anonymously. Very few people knew that he



was the creator of characters, spray-painted through a stencil, called collectively *Elements* (2001), which could be seen throughout Prague at the beginning of the new millennium. These *Elements* were characterized by a big head and a body with missing limbs. The forms were derived from an earlier work, two wall-mounted kinetic sculptures made of lead, called *Relatives* (1995). Sixty various *Elements* adopted a wide variety of physical positions, with a text explaining each gesture. In their directness they attempted to enter the viewer's consciousness and become a natural part of it. They reflected on a wide range of contemporary opinion of the time and Kintera was establishing the basis for its future iconography. *Elements* represented the social framework in a simpler and clearer way than any other documents. Though some of the *Elements* stemmed from the use of well-known types (such as the Grim Reaper accompanied by the inscription "I Am With You"), for most of the works Kintera found a unique expression. Although they appeared in public areas, in their small size they were mainly focused on the consciousness of the individual observer. *Elements* prefigured the unmistakable *Talkmen* (1999–2003), male figures of small stature whose oval heads had no other features other than ears, dressed in smart or rustic clothing, which overwhelmed the viewer, as soon as he/she approached, with a number of both meaningless and urgent, shallow and serious questions,

asked with the artist's voice, modified on a computer. The viewer's response depended on the value they attributed to the work. The *Talkmen* appeal to the viewer's conscience, they trouble his/her sleep, they unsettle the viewer, perhaps even provoking anger. Kintera asked about anything: he mixed the familiar with the personal, some of the questions were reflections on various contemporary topical discussions, while others touched on ideas which people have always dealt with throughout history.

The mutual relationship of *Plumbuman* on the one hand and *It*, *Appliances*, and *Talkmen* on the other, could be compared to the contrast of positive and negative poles. They communicate the same ideas from various perspectives. In this way an oscillation between the subject and object comes into being, a situation in which one can reflect on the other in such a way that it becomes entirely eclipsed, as if the body had merged with the *Plumbuman's* suit, while at the same time it is possible to leave this relation and open oneself to a third possibility, a neutral point, where the artist and the viewer can at least take an ambiguous position, similar to the one that occurs in the transition between an art work and an everyday object. The range between the subjective and the objective, between interiority and an elusive commonality, representing the artist's own definition of "self", is not complete. To go further, Kintera needed to find a point which would allow him to see both sides, a point whose centre of gravity lay neither in himself nor in the object that he was creating. The artist stepped out of himself so that he could become someone else and at the same time he let himself be pervaded by his surroundings.

The infinite expansion of the world of consumerism is one of Kintera's starting points, against which he continues to define his work. This includes products, forced upon us by contemporary megastores, and also areas such as the cultural, sports or banking industries. The artist has taken a critical stance in response to many of their features. At the same time he has an interest in artificial and extremely lively creatures. With *Talkmen*, as with other like-minded works, he did not hide the operating mechanism which allows them to function, and he has demonstrated the technology in catalogues and in dozens of documentary photographs and preparatory drawings, including detailed technical renderings of the spare parts. He has explained and clarified everything he possibly could. He has always been curious about what's inside, but never without relation to the surface and the surroundings. Packaging often hides something inappropriate. Kintera filled a light blue bag from IKEA with raw viscera, and he put his own excrement in a Bata shoe box (this theme, but without any company name, was used on a poster for the exhibition *Gross Domestic Product*, which Kintera curated in 2007 for the Municipal Library in Prague). With his personal protest he questioned the role of brands in their control of the contemporary environment.



One photo from the introduction of this catalog shows an inverted image of Kintera as a modern Atlas, supporting the planet Earth with his arms and balancing with his legs on

a ball, which is often a symbol of the Earth. His body is between two unequal relations. It has become a delicate line connecting different materials, a piece of earth and an artificial ball, and opposing concepts as well: one is physical, the second intellectual, one real, the second symbolic. Kintera is emphasizing the inequality of allegory and symbol, two conflicting approaches, extending into different areas of thought. Although they refer to one another, they cannot be identified so closely. This approach allows for the simultaneous presence of different perspectives: one conducted from a broad perspective from above, moving into the distance, the second, on the contrary, positioned from beneath, breaking through the depths. This photo is related to Kintera's new work *Private Planet* (2011), featuring his worn-out black shoes on an eighty-kilo ball of asphalt. The work refers to the use of common emblems, in which artists defined themselves in respect to the Earth.

After the object *It*, Kintera's reflections on the subject began to multiply. One idea passed into another and created space for new ones. While in the first case he created *Appliances*, objects that had never existed before but looked like real products, subsequently he assembled the desired shape from existing objects. He put together Fanta and Heineken cans to create metal cacti, over ten metres tall (*Homegrown*, 2003). He continued in this Arcimboldo-esque vein and in 2003 he created a new Adam and Eve from potatoes: a man embracing a woman holding a shopping bag. In this work, *We've Got the Power* (2003), he remembered his childhood experiments with conductivity. He linked the potatoes through wires and connected them to an electric display, which counted out their life span. It arose from a surviving mythopoetic idea, going back through Mannerism to the ancient world, about a man born out of the earth, in this case from three hundred kilograms of potatoes. Along with this figurative work, loosely referring to the theme of the first people, he presented his own conception of the creation of the world, a kind of big bang on a small scale (*It is Beginning*, 2004), which featured an artificially induced short-circuit, running between two poles of an electrical socket, lying in an empty room. The sparks were accompanied by a squeaking sound.

The works *We've Got the Power* and *It is Beginning* dealt with imaginary origins, resulting from the nature of electricity. A combination of the two works came together several years later in the large figure *My Light Is Your Life – Shiva Samurai* (2009), following in the Arcimboldo-esque

vein. It consisted of an assembly of two-hundred-and-fifty different table lamps, with transparent lampshades, and neon tubes. The light creature, whose imaginary head was adorned with a halo, came to have the form of a contemporary "electric" and shining saint, created only from lamps, pointed at the viewer, partially blinding him/her and producing a strong thermal heat. The figure made of lights is the exact opposite of the potato people and requires a great amount of energy. While the work *My Light Is Your Life – Shiva Samurai* was an antithesis in its content and material to the work *We've Got the Power*, the subtle figure, dressed in different clothes in each of the six versions (*Revolution*, 2005) was a response to the *Talkmen*, who asked their questions in vain without getting any response. Kintera made a significant revision of the original assumptions and gave them an opposite formal appearance. The work *Revolution* was a broad social challenge, but also an expression of the vanity of personal struggle. It had clear iconographic antecedents, which included in particular the figure of a man knocking his head against a brick wall in *Flemish Proverbs* (1559) by Pieter Brueghel. *Revolution* attracts attention in the exhibition hall before one even sees it. A regular vibration reverberates through the hall while the visitors often have no clue where it is coming from. Only when they find the source, they find out that it comes from a small boy, beating his head against the wall. Kintera emphasized the contrast between a loud, powerful sound and the size of the figure.

Kintera has no inhibitions in his approach to reality. He doesn't hesitate to use real objects or give the impression that they are real objects. He "humanized" three plastic shopping bags, for example, not only did their contents move about, but they also issued a recorder monologue, complaining about the world (*I Am Sick of It All*, 2003). He found out how far he could push the boundaries when using found objects when he stacked fifty bags of cement by Knauf on each other that looked as if they could crash down on the gallery visitors. Through the title he even provoked them to try to do what he did (*Do It Yourself – after Brâncuși*, 2007). This second level of interpretation – in line with the provocation and alteration – was suggested in the subtitle "after Brancusi" which made it clear that this was a variant on the *Endless Column*, put up by Constantin Brâncuși in Tirgu Jiu; primarily Brâncuși's sculpture was similar to Kintera's work in the use of a vertical structure built from repeating forms. Other than that, both works differed markedly.

Private Planet
[Soukromá planeta], 2011



Do It Yourself – after Brâncuși [Udělej si sám – podle Brâncușiho], 2007

My Light Is Your Life –
Shiva Samurai
[Mé světlo je tvůj život
– Šiva samuraj], 2009



Verticality is a significant factor in the artist's work. Kintera has made use of it again in his new work; he piled up pillows all the way to the ceiling of the gallery. In *Do It Yourself – after Brâncuși* he considered how far he could go between the reality and fiction, where the real changes into the possible, which turns into deceit. He went so far in these considerations that in his work *I Can't Sleep* (2004) he created the impression that a homeless person was lying bundled up in a sleeping bag and he even seemed to breathe: he had settled to sleep in the empty room of the gallery and the visitors have the feeling that they should not bother him by approaching to look. The preparatory drawings, however, show that the object arose from an opposite impulse, an almost Magritte-like idea of a sleeping man. Kintera compared thinking to steam from a kettle, inhibiting and disturbing the sleep, which provides the breathing motion of the sleeper.

Kintera has a long-term interest in blending reality and illusion, in the overlap of conflicting meanings. The perfect representation of an external form has often led many sculptors to be accused of casting a live model. This led Kintera to the creation of an aluminum pole, leaning against the wall, called *216 cm of Something* (2007) – a cast piece of bamboo. He could not have identified more with the natural model while retreating from it at the same time through his use of aluminum, which maintains the lightness of the original bamboo. For certain objects Kintera often changed their purpose and reversed their significance. He sometimes created an object from two existing and similar ones, in a seemingly meaningless manner, conceived as a challenge for the viewer to reflect over his/her own activities. In a similar reworking, called *Make Work Not Sport* (2005), shifting the well-known slogan from the late 1960s "Make love, not war", Kintera attached gardening tools to the handles of hockey sticks. He also occasionally photographed found objects, which fired his imagination, whether it was the white central heating in the middle of the Gallery of Art in Karlovy Vary, for example, or two stripped animal skins, draped over stark balcony rails.

A Proposal for Subversive
Marketing Strategy for Banking
Institutions and Their Branches
[Návrh subverzivní marketingové
strategie pro bankovní instituce
a jejich pobočky], 2006

Amongst the work photographs introducing this catalog, Kintera captured an accidental encounter of clothes and a salami on a peg in his home. Under his hat, a salami is hanging next to his trousers. He has conveyed the male figure through the use of stand-ins. A hat, one of the identifying features of the artist's clothing, represents the head as a source of thought, while the thin vertical form of the salami stands for the spine, tongue, or phallus. The hat is directly related to the figure, while the salami refers to it in a more metaphorical way. The source of the photograph was "an accidental encounter" of seemingly incompatible things. It is as if this snapshot represents the long-term and ongoing course of Kintera's thought: his works stems from a slip of the tongue or anagrams of meanings which divert the imagination in unexpected directions, but which always return back to the original impulse; their validity is denied, yet is still present. Kintera makes use of unrelated motifs simultaneously, they maintain their own meaning, yet on the other hand they become a source for poetic tropes.

One of the basic features of Kintera's work consists in the use of surprise: the viewer walks into the room and gets frightened by the sharp blades of spinning circular saws embedded in the floor and hesitates to get any closer (*Do Not Touch*, 1996), he/she then looks into another room and sees a bobbing coconut, enters another space and sees a spurting, yet frozen and intractable waterfall of some red substance, which creates its own shape (*Red Is Coming*, 2007). The unexpected is one of the accompanying features of Kintera's approach: it can either be completely rejected or, on the contrary, can provoke to a variety of thoughts: about the meaning of reality, and about artistic activity in general. For the viewer that does not get through this double-edged division, the access to Kintera's work will remain closed. His works fill cracks inside their artificial and emptied surroundings. They explain why human beings can no longer be themselves and how they have become excluded from the world that they themselves created. The works arise from a feeling of dislocation, whose source is a feeling of futility and impermanence. Kintera deconstructs the persistent and emphasises the elusive. Sometimes it seems that he takes the position of the angel from *Melancholia* by Albrecht Dürer, who both is and is not open to the perception of its environment. He follows what is going on around him and inside himself, but also admits the hopelessness of any resistance. Nevertheless, the loneliness of the little figure in *Revolution* could be a challenge for others. In his latest works, Kintera has chosen a ball as a new shape, on the one hand, and a plastic bag, accidentally caught on a black tree, on the





other. He keeps returning to the transient, the fixed with the unstable, the essential with the random. Each has its own value. However, Kintera's melancholy does not come from the illness of his soul. Its causes are partly rational, based on the impossibility of combining an allegory with a symbol, which should enable him to switch immediately between natural and metaphorical meaning, between a thing and a metaphor, and partly social, when he realized the limited effect of personal defiance, which, however, has remained an important incentive for him. One example could be his second large-scale work in public spaces, which came after *Elements* and criticized the banking sector. In the title of the work, *A Proposal for Subversive Marketing Strategy for Banking Institutions and Their Branches* (2006), the artist used the vocabulary that is used by banks to promote their "products". Close to the current logos of individual banks he sprayed stenciled logos of their competitors (e.g. he placed the logo of the Czechoslovak Commercial Bank next to the International Commercial Bank, Commercial Bank and Volksbank; the logo of Raiffeisen Bank was placed next to the Czechoslovak Commercial Bank, the logo of the Czech Savings Bank next to the Czechoslovak Trade Bank). In a sense, this pioneering effort recalled the solitary acts of individuals during the Nazi occupation. Kintera's criticism of the system also had an opposite effect, inverting its previous goals. During his stay in Spain Kintera discovered a bank called Bankinter, containing a part of his name in the title. He appropriated the logo and published a photograph of a branch of the bank in the catalogue for his solo exhibition in the East Bohemian Gallery in Pardubice, so that it gave an impression that he may have actually built it on the streets of Prague. He approaches the extreme reification of contemporary society, the impersonal structures which control everyday life. His subtle and unspectacular interventions are often moving in a similar direction to the aims of broad social criticism. Similar projects reveal Kintera's range. On the one hand, he is represented by middle-class galleries, while on the other he acts as an anonymous street activist, fighting in his own way against any system which tries to limit human freedom.

Kintera's use of chosen objects culminated in a distinctive use of bicycles, the artist's main means

of transportation. In the three versions of *Fatal Egoist* (all 2007) he "worked" with a bicycle in such a way that it directly reflected an increasingly serious mental condition, the seriousness of which could be seen by the bent seat, coming all the way to the ground in the third version of the *Fatal Egoist*. As if the rider had crashed into an imaginary wall, which he had created for himself, but is now unable to break free. They remind one of a popular slogan spray-painted through a stencil on the walls in Prague: We got rid of the bars, but we are still in the cage. However, the idea for *Fatal Egoist* arose from a different idea. Kintera wanted to create a bicycle shaped like the corner of a building. He bent it at a right angle and this provided an expressive gesture for the two following versions of *Fatal Egoist II* and *Fatal Egoist III*. The artist borrowed the title from the original name of the Egoist bicycle, produced by the company Author. All three versions of *Fatal Egoist* need to be placed in a particular way. While the deconstructed bicycle could lay on the ground or be leaned against a wall, its right place was directly on the street, it stood at road signs and caught the attention of passers-by who may have thought that the bicycle was left there after a road accident (see the famous "memorial" bicycle for fallen cyclists on a street in Prague 7), that it was not an artificially-made and precisely thought-out object. Even more significantly Kintera worked with bicycles in the large object *There Is No Way to Go Now* (2007), made up of six conjoined bike frames, occupying the surrounding space. The multiple metaphor of a cluster and collision refer to misunderstanding in a group. Kintera did not have to be a figurative artist to be able to comment on the present in his work. He also treated the selected object differently than the bicycles. He welded more metal parts to the bars whose shape reminded him of the bodies of animals and in this way he created zoomorphic content from anonymous objects (*Paradise Now*, 2009). He has gradually tested most of the meanings contained in common, ordinary objects, and different possibilities for imitating them.

It was only a matter of time before Kintera, who often makes use of electric power in his works, focused on street lamp poles. Back in *Broadcast* he attached a television screen to one of them. Another time he removed the lighting parts from the poles and assembled them in an absurd and large chandelier. In the preparatory drawing for *My Light Is Your Light* he directed the light down on the floor, but in the actual chandelier he turned



Fatal Egoist I
[Fatální egoista I], 2007



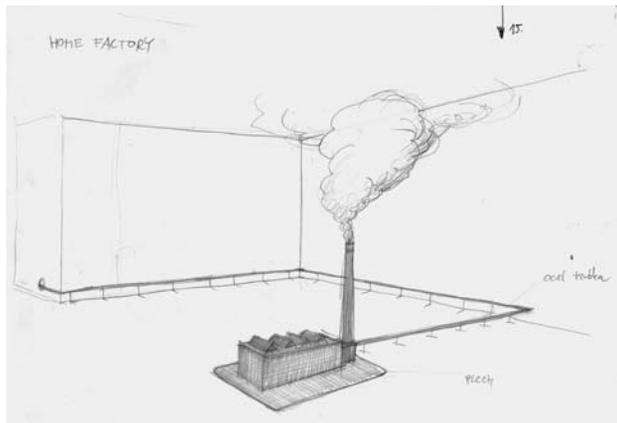
them over so that they nearly blinded the viewers when they approached it. The chandelier illuminated the room from below instead of from above. Its rusty supporting frame seemed to have been lifted from the bottom of the sea. The chandelier was deliberately made to look like an accidentally found object, although the artist actually constructed it. In the work *My Light Is Your Light* (2008) Kintera worked with the meaning of light. He was testing how far its sensory limits reach and how light can take on a new meaning. In his following works he developed the possibilities contained in the street lamp. He installed such a work for the first time in 2008 in Tilburg, Holland (*Miracle*, 2008). In a row of street lamps placed on the edge of a sidewalk and a cemetery, he inserted his own lamp but he turned it towards the cemetery so that the light shone on a statue of St. Francis, one of the saints standing behind the fence. In this way he linked the public and sacred spaces. There was also another experience that built on Kintera's concept of light, that went beyond the actual purpose of lighting. It did not illuminate the street but gave the light to the saint. In his four following objects the artist developed all the possible meanings that can be found in the use of street lamp poles. *Miracle*, whose duration is set by the date when the pole was installed in Tilburg (the miracle has taken place since September 12, 2008), was followed by works that were defined more accurately and comprehensively, in which the relationship between the light and that which is illuminated plays a fundamental role. To be able to change the meaning of a street lamp pole, Kintera needed to change it from its original vertical position so that it was positioned horizontally while maintaining the pole's integrity. What's more, the pole had to appear in a context that would be the most unexpected for a lamp pole. Just the name of the work *Lie Down and Shine*, sounding almost like a command, suggests its new position, connecting the interior and exterior space of the

second floor of the Jonah House (2008), which belongs to the East Bohemian Gallery in Pardubice, where the artist's solo exhibition took place. An alien object from the contemporary world, sticking out of a window, found in an inappropriate context: this was almost a certain indication of a solo exhibition by Kintera. As with the case in Tilburg, the light accentuated what would otherwise be normally subject to the alternation of day and night, in this case a facade with a distinct Renaissance relief depicting Jonah being expelled by the whale. The horizontal pole of the lamp could be disconnected in two parts and fit into a smaller enclosed room in the gallery. Kintera did this at his solo exhibition at Galerie Schleicher+Lange in Paris (2008) as well. Although these parts were not connected, the light continued to shine. Kintera developed this idea further in Třebešice where he worked from his drawing entitled *Dead Lamp* (2008), showing a fallen but still shining lamp lying on the ground. In Třebešice, the base of the lamp sticks straight up from the ground, while the glowing body lies on the lawn, without any apparent connection with its base. In this way Kintera loosely referred to one of the common emblematic representations of melancholy, often depicted by a plain broken column. The work *Lay Down and Shine* represented a modern tombstone bathed in eternal light. Ruminating on the use of street lamp poles led Kintera to a significant conclusion, culminating in an outdoor work called *Of One's Own Volition – Memento Mori* (2009–2011), placed under the Nusle Bridge in Prague, a place where people would often commit suicide. Kintera bent the vertical mast of the lamp so that the light would point upward to the massive concrete bridge instead of down on the surrounding park and paths. After Tilburg this object became the artist's second public work referring to transcendent and extrasensory areas. In the six works with street lamp poles, Kintera has created a consistent body of work expanding on the utilitarian function of light.

Intensifying the effect of light led Kintera to contemplate the relationship between the sacred and profane. He gilded an empty metal barrel from which smoke would rise (*Holy Spirit Opened*, 2008). The barrel was originally used for storing oil, a source of future wealth and power. The earthly towards the heavenly. The profane suddenly appears in a reverse light when it obtains features belonging to the sacred. Kintera applied a reversible range to the selected object so that he could examine both poles from opposite sides; he negated the initial starting point making it possible to open up a space for the contradictory, which would not have otherwise been able to permeate the object. Kintera often makes use of polarizing materials in his works. This is also the case with gold: it represents wealth on the one hand, resulting, in this case, from the sale of oil, and, on the other hand it symbolizes the exceptional and the sacred. In this way he brings both the most common and the most unexpected features to the game.

Kintera's long-standing alternation between different approaches in his work culminated in 2009 in two works made simultaneously and intended for exhibition in interior spaces. Each of the works referred to different aspects of the contemporary world: one was a large and shining model of a factory made of galvanized steel (*Small Factory, Personal Industry, Ltd.*, 2009), resembling an enlarged children's toy, with smoke coming out of the chimney every now and then, and taking up almost the whole exhibition space; the second was a raven with the body of a man (*I See, I See, I See*, 2009), seated on a long branch, turning its head and uttering sentences in an abrasive and croaking voice: "That's the problem. The fucking problem", and, after a while, "It is not funny, not funny". A symbol of the relations of production was accompanied by a clear-cut reflection on the world uttered by a raven, belonging yet not belonging to the human race. First it provokes a smile, then it leaves a chill.

In his work Kintera combines the overt and the covert, the real and the mythical, the visual and the reflexive; he has defined a shifting range of conflicting positions with several layers of meaning, some of which can not be clearly expressed. They represent a set of landmarks around which the artist can move quite freely. In the same period when he made *Small Factory* and *I See, I See, I See*, he was working with the effect of light energy obscuring an actual form, and with decaying flesh as well. In *My Light Is Your Life – Shiva Samurai* (2009) a supernatural apparition, as if from another world, seems to draw nearer; in *All My Bad Thoughts* (2009) a repulsive figure made of transparent oil-coloured polyurethane lies decaying on the ground, apparently inspired by an older drawing entitled *Big Shit*, in which a small and helpless figure stands beside a big pile of feces. The sculpture *All My Bad Thoughts* arose from a drawing of an abstract cluster of shapes resembling a figure eight which subsequently takes on a human form. Kintera made two different versions of the drawing: in the first one, which is now in Krakow, a figure lies on the ground merging into a stain, in the second, more dramatic one, the angular position of the figure creates a double impression, inadvertently referring to the common motif from modern sculpture in which it seem that the object is rising and falling simultaneously. The man is trying to resist his fate, as if it were his last stand, or he is already falling passively. Kintera is making plain what others would prefer to hide. To express this mental state Kintera has chosen one of the most extreme positions, the theme of the transition from a solid form to the formless, disappearing into nothingness. After *All My Bad Thoughts*, a work with an almost dreamlike nature, he continued to work with his long-standing theme of sleep, this time he expressed it in a complementary fashion: a wad of crumpled white duvets, which he presented as a huddling figure dressed in slippers, slowly melting away. Kintera continues to work with the surviving forms of figurative sculpture. Polyurethane,



Small Factory – Personal Industry Ltd. [Továrnička – osobní průmysl, s. r. o.], 2009

as one of the main materials which led to the use of the anti-form in the late 1960s, can be used as an instrument of social criticism.

Kintera's current works continue to expand the dialogue between artificial form and the particular object, they increase the subversion of this relationship, which has become particularly clear in recent years when, on the one hand, works such as *Red Is Coming* and *All My Bad Thoughts* were made, and, on the other hand, through the example of shopping bags filled with moving vegetables and common everyday products. The relationship between the two poles is becoming more acute: the liquid and artificial material takes on figurative and zoomorphic shapes, connected with particular objects, like office chairs and sports shoes. Everyday items such as pillows, rugs and bed sheets are deprived of their original function and placed before the viewer as autonomous, moving objects, valuable in their own right. Sometimes Kintera creates strange creatures that seem to live in a world where no human has ever been before. For example, a long-eared athlete standing in a ski boot seems to be trying to shed his jersey with which his body has merged, as is the case with modern uniforms (unlike the empty shell of a body inside the suit of the Plumbuman). Like a slithering fish, after Braun, emerging from the shoe, the melting skier is at the end of his rope. Kintera is drawing closer and closer to the world of the senses, he gives it a new form made of tapered, dissolving plastic material, from which a "haunted" snowman emerges, rather hellish and nasty, which refers to the devil, as opposed to sweet and loveable. Kintera turns to the world of the senses as a source, attractive in its variability, while he retains his interest in consumer goods because he likes that he can criticize them. Kintera continues to work on two levels, expressing his abiding relationship to the object, either to real things that are sufficient to express the artist's concept, or newly created and artificial objects, in recent years made mostly from polyurethane. In the first case, he provides consumer goods with unique meanings, shifting them in new directions. In the second he gives a form to an actual object. This two-fold approach to the object, built up in a clearly defined contrast, contains a large number of intermediate stages and transitions.

Although one aspect of Kintera's work is similar to happenings and theatrical performances, in which he has occasionally taken part, he has rarely appeared physically in his own work. However, in the catalog for his solo exhibition in the East Bohemian Gallery in Pardubice he included an important photo: he appears

All My Bad Thoughts
/ Všechny mé špatné myšlenky,
2009



to be dead, lying on the floor of in his studio amongst bits and pieces of his own work, lying with open eyes, holding a cable in one hand. As if he has been struck down by a heart attack. Kintera is making reference to a significant and widespread iconographic type of the death of the artist, absorbed in his work. This ultimate concept lies at the heart of a four-fold model through which the artist's existing work can be defined. The artist's work oscillates on the one hand within the polarity of the beginning (e.g. *We've Got the Power, It is Beginning, Red Is Coming*) and the end (e.g. *Lay Down and Shine, All My Bad Thoughts*), and on the other within the polarity of transpersonal structures controlling the world (e.g. *A Proposal for Subversive Marketing Strategy for Banking Institutions and Their Branches*) and the limited possibilities of resistance of the individual (*Elements, Revolution*). Kintera walks freely between these four points, linking them and building them up in contrast to one another, he lets them join together and yet they also come into conflict at times. He continues to inspect these interlocking relationships from the turning point of his own temporality.