

Miran Blažek - Visual artist

[Selected works](#)
[Selected writings](#)
[Biography](#)

Selected works



DORIAN



Monument

hand painted oil on canvas





Ritual
hand painted oil on canvas



Inside Story

charcoal within arm's reach on the walls; charcoal dust remains cooked with beeswax and shaped into a small scale gallery model



Incubare

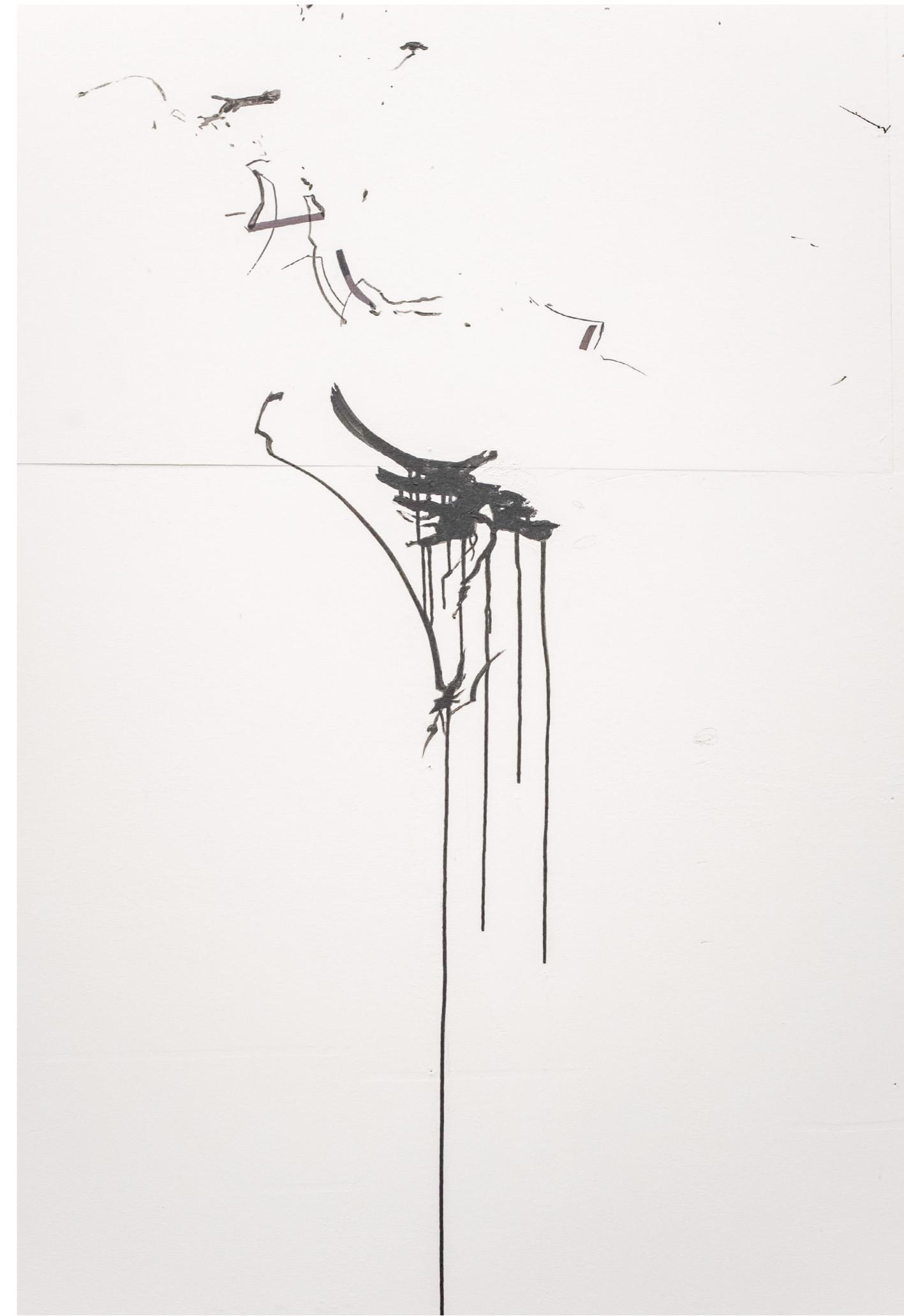
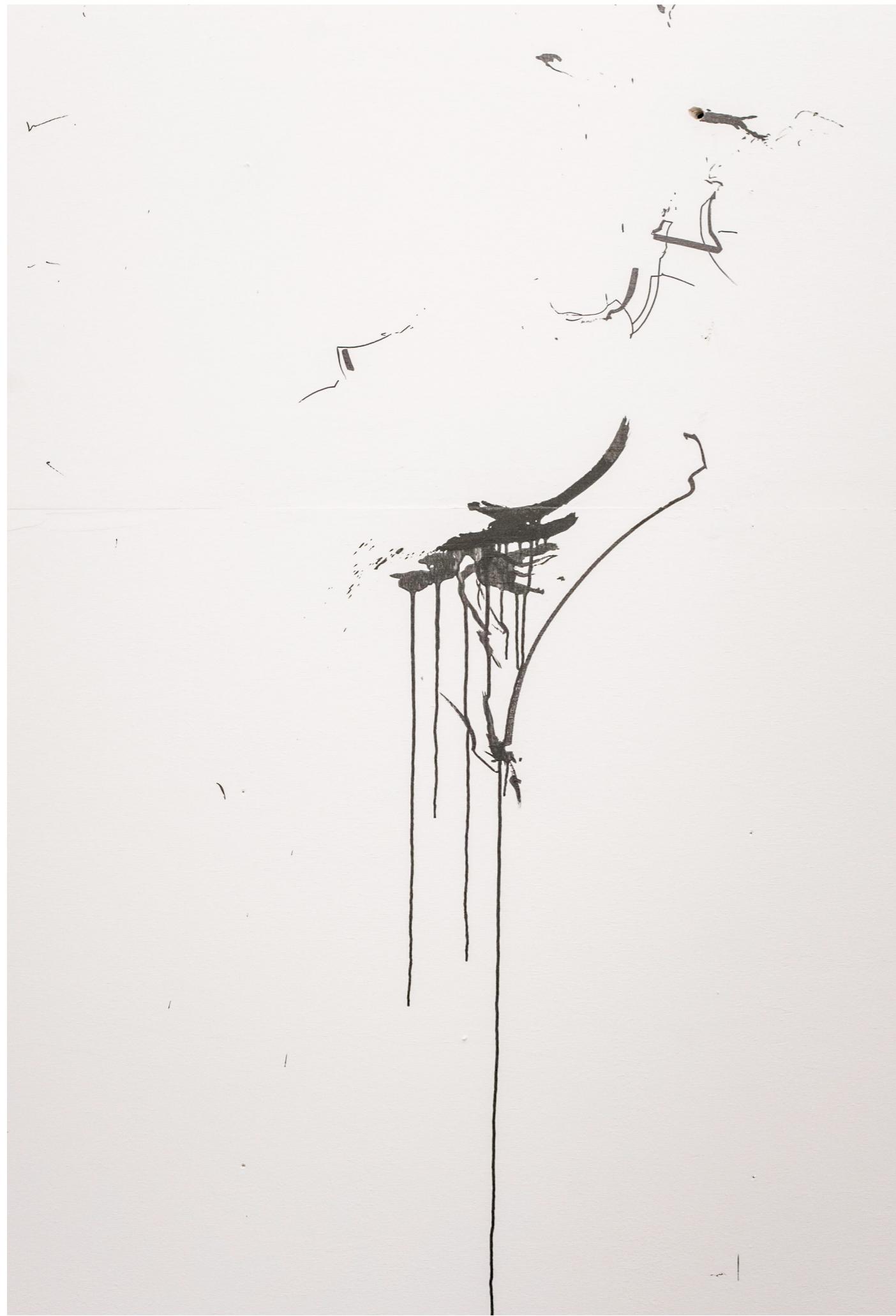
earth cooked with beeswax in proportion with abandoned underground space





Lazarus

artwork leftower of a previous artist Tvrtnko Burić in an Art residency on the left,
mirrored wall drawing on the right, acrylic on wall

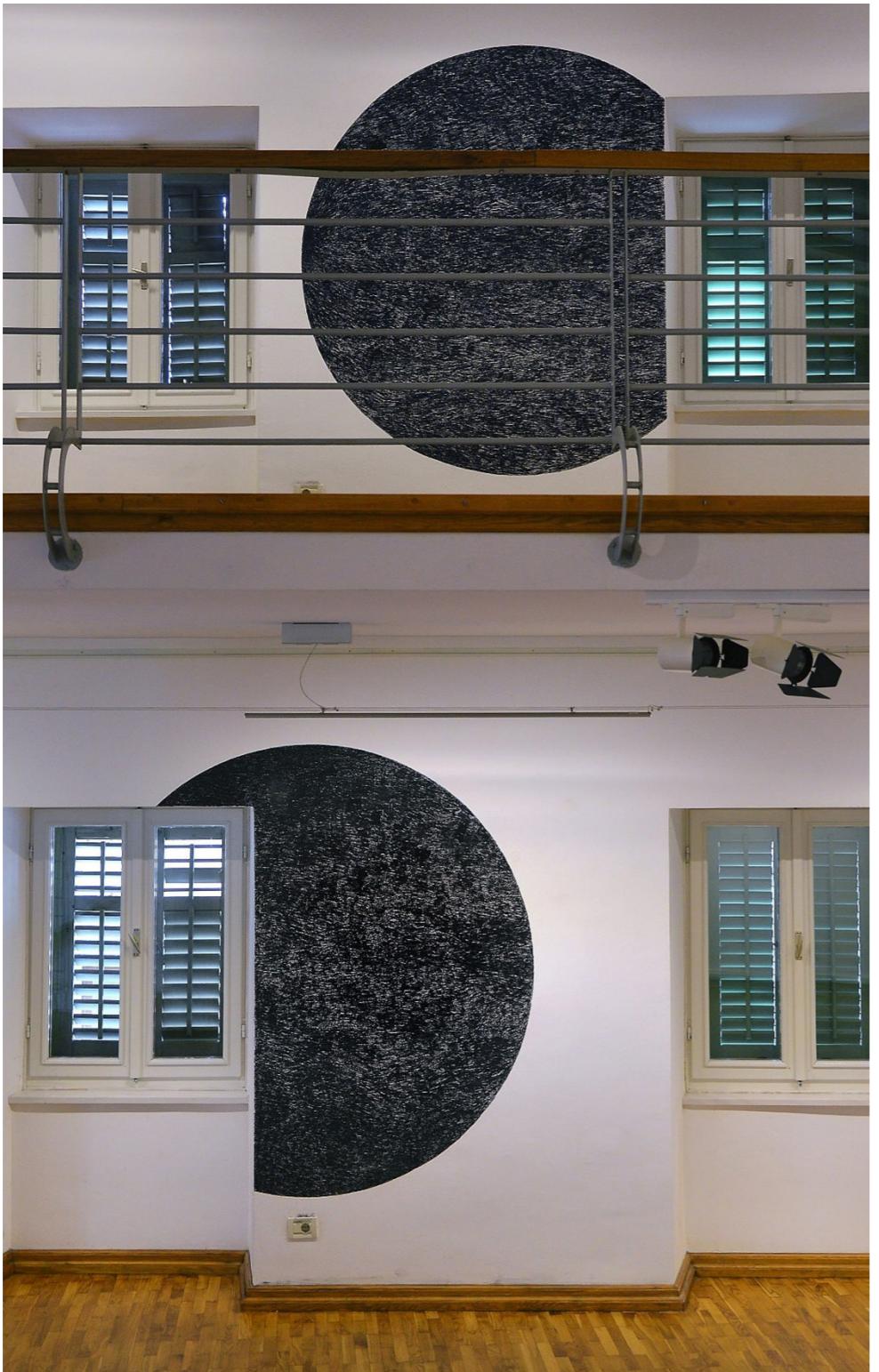




Ratio / series

charcoal within arm span in geometrical centers of walls





- *Ratio* drawing close up



- charcoal remains from previous two ***Ratio*** exhibitions in two different galleries, cooked with beeswax and shaped in small scale model of a third gallery



Polyptich

- charcoal dust remains from previous two ***Ratio*** exhibitions in two different galleries, cooked with beeswax and shaped in proportion with a third gallery, exhibited in a fourth gallery



Monochromes

photograph of gallery wall in the gallery space; print on canvas



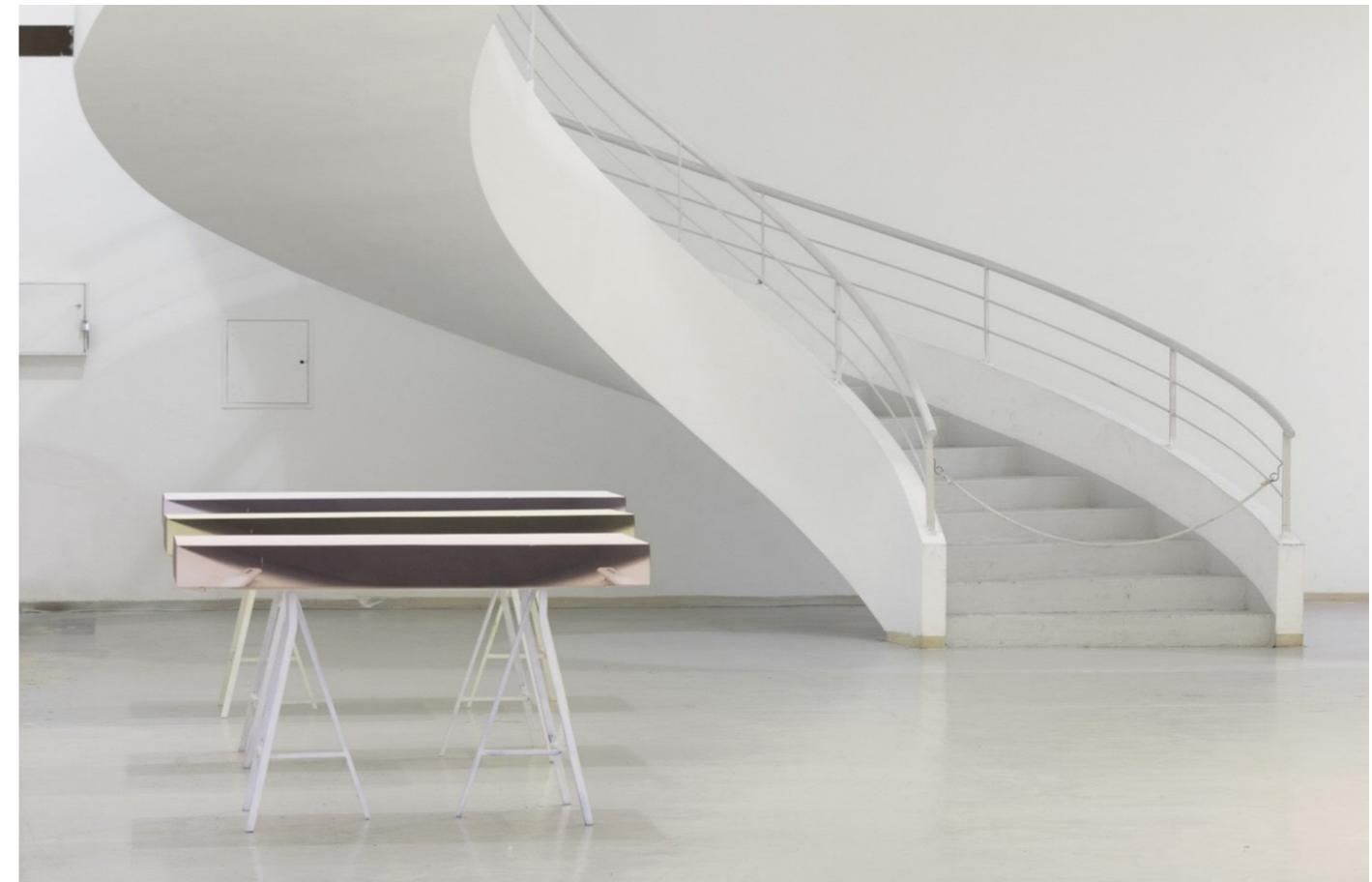
- photograph a of gallery wall in the gallery space; print on canvas, rotated





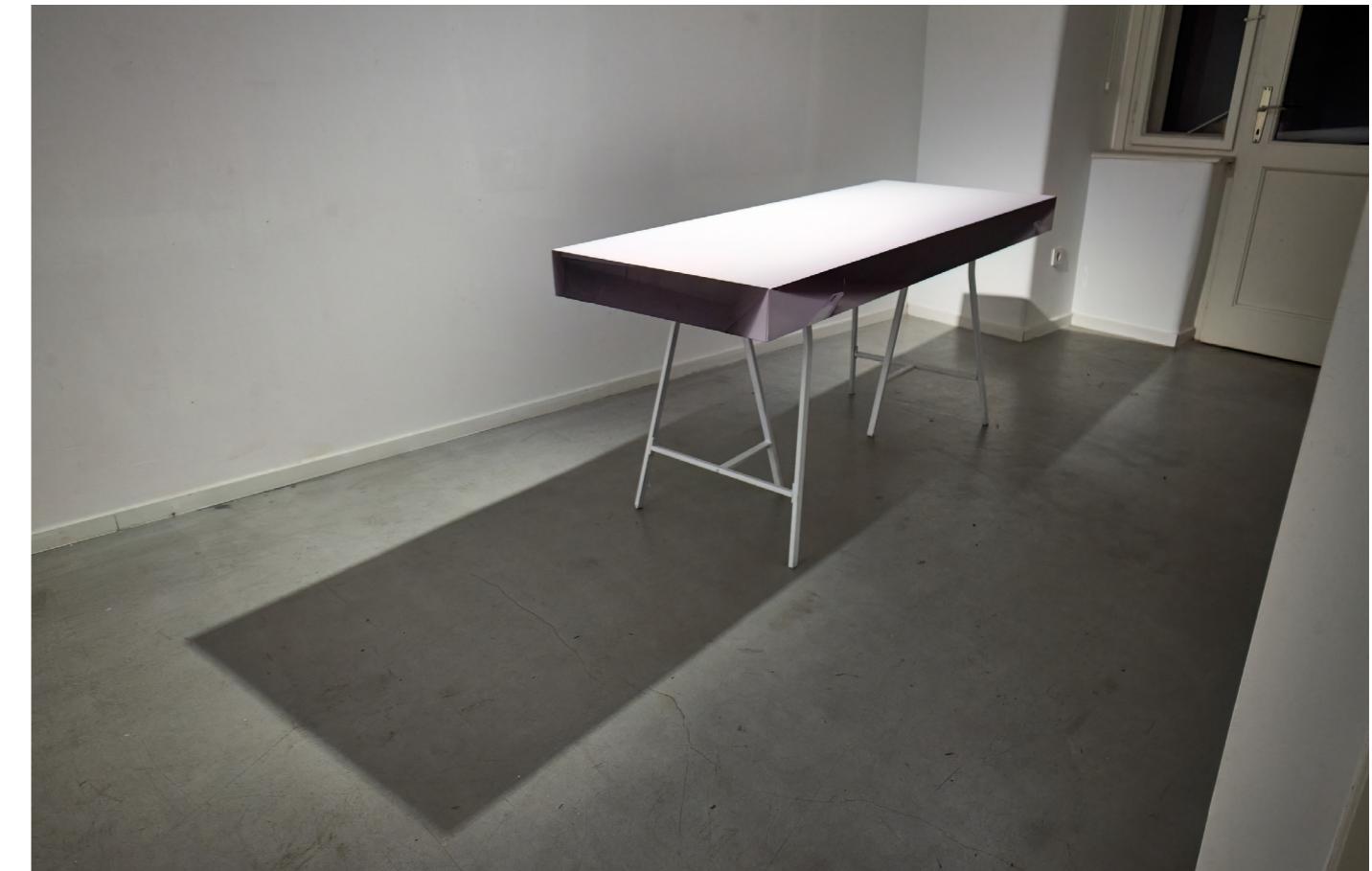
Plinths

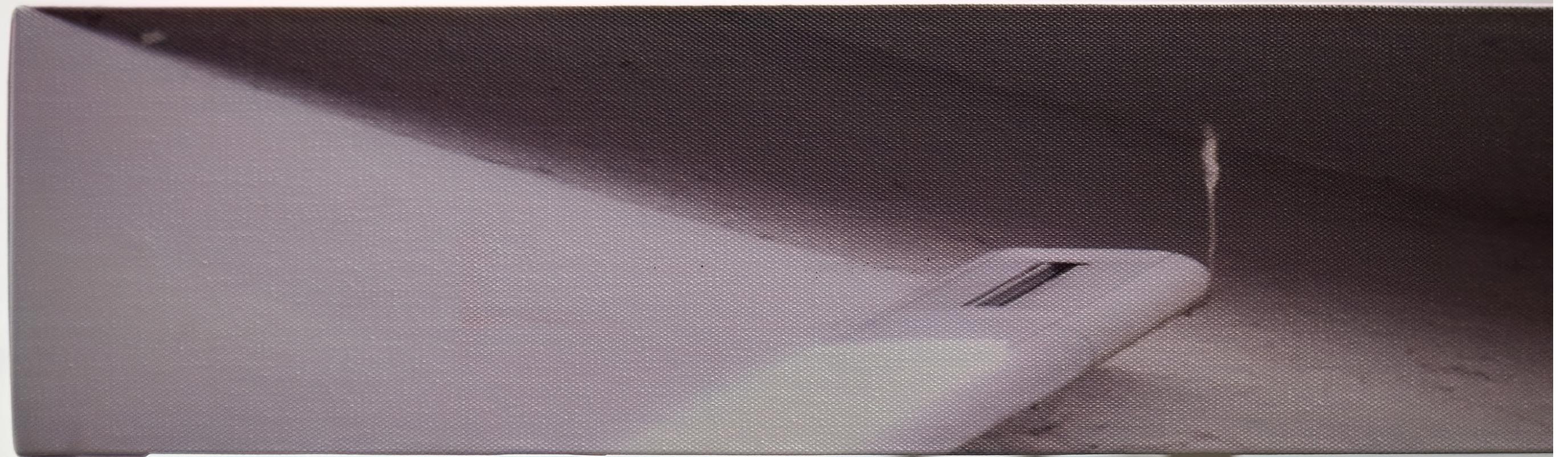
photograph of a gallery wall in the gallery space; print on canvas



Still Life

photograph of a gallery wall in the gallery space; print on canvas, wooden legs

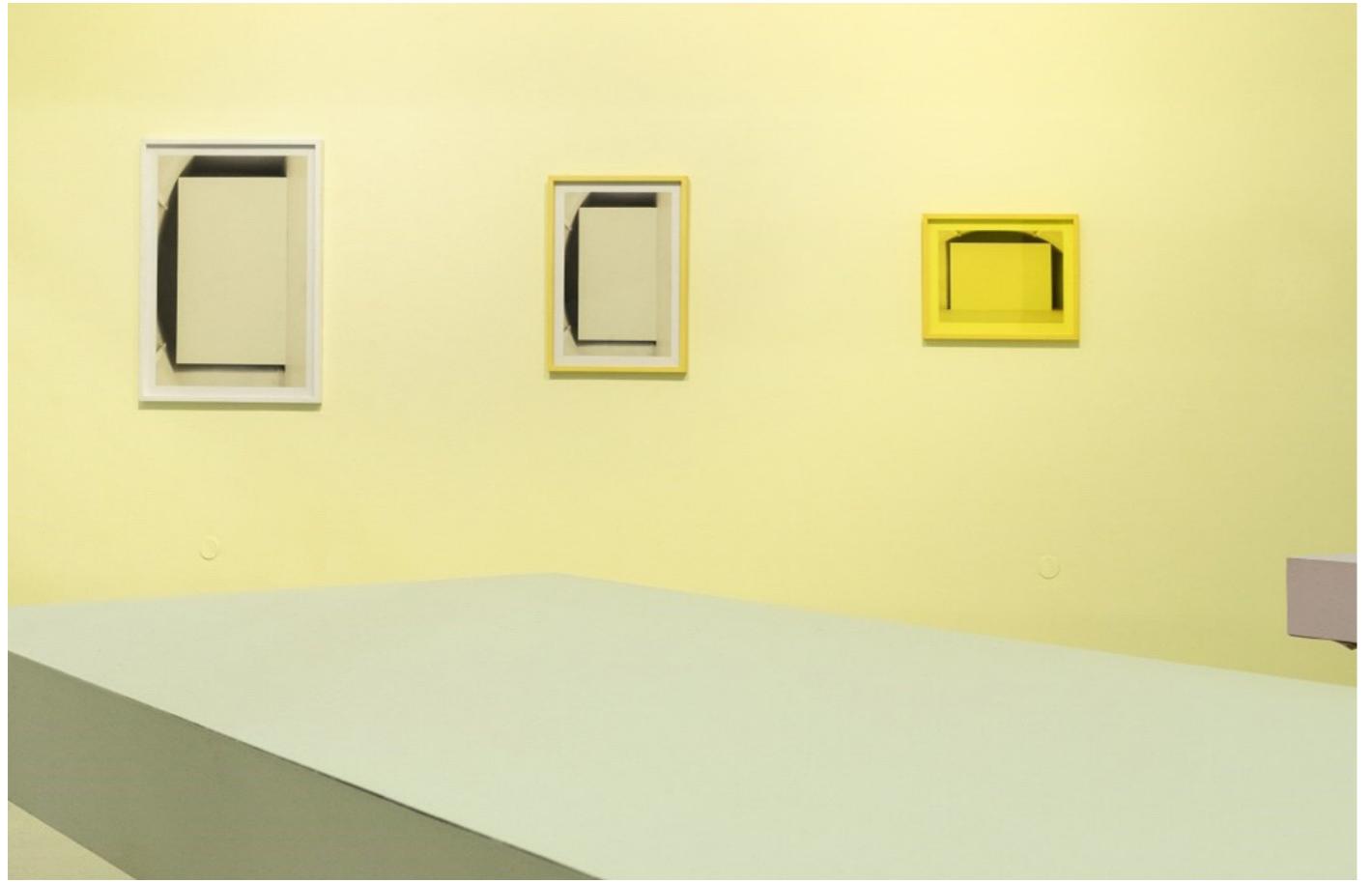




- *Still Life* print close up

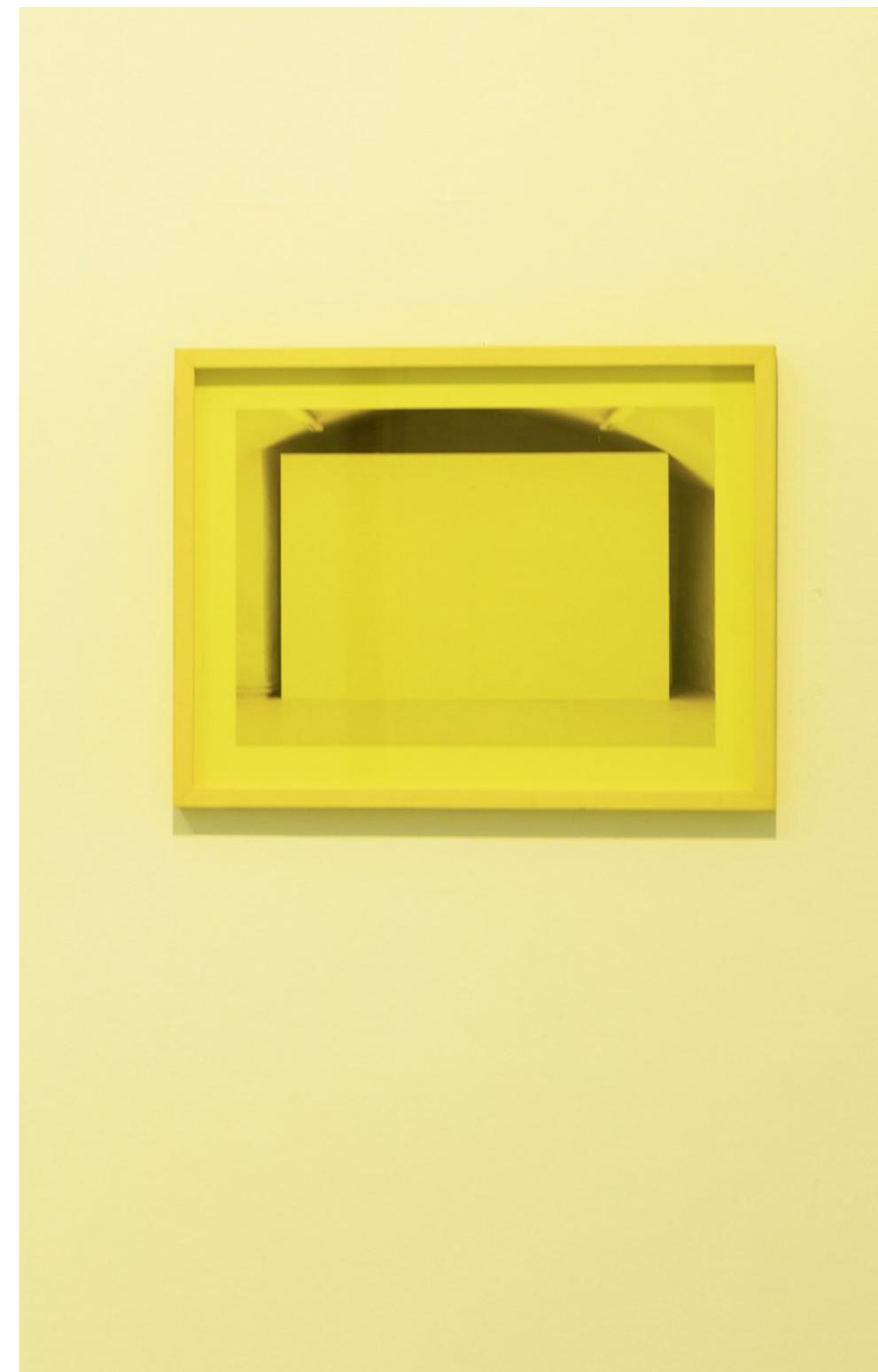


- *Still Life* print close up



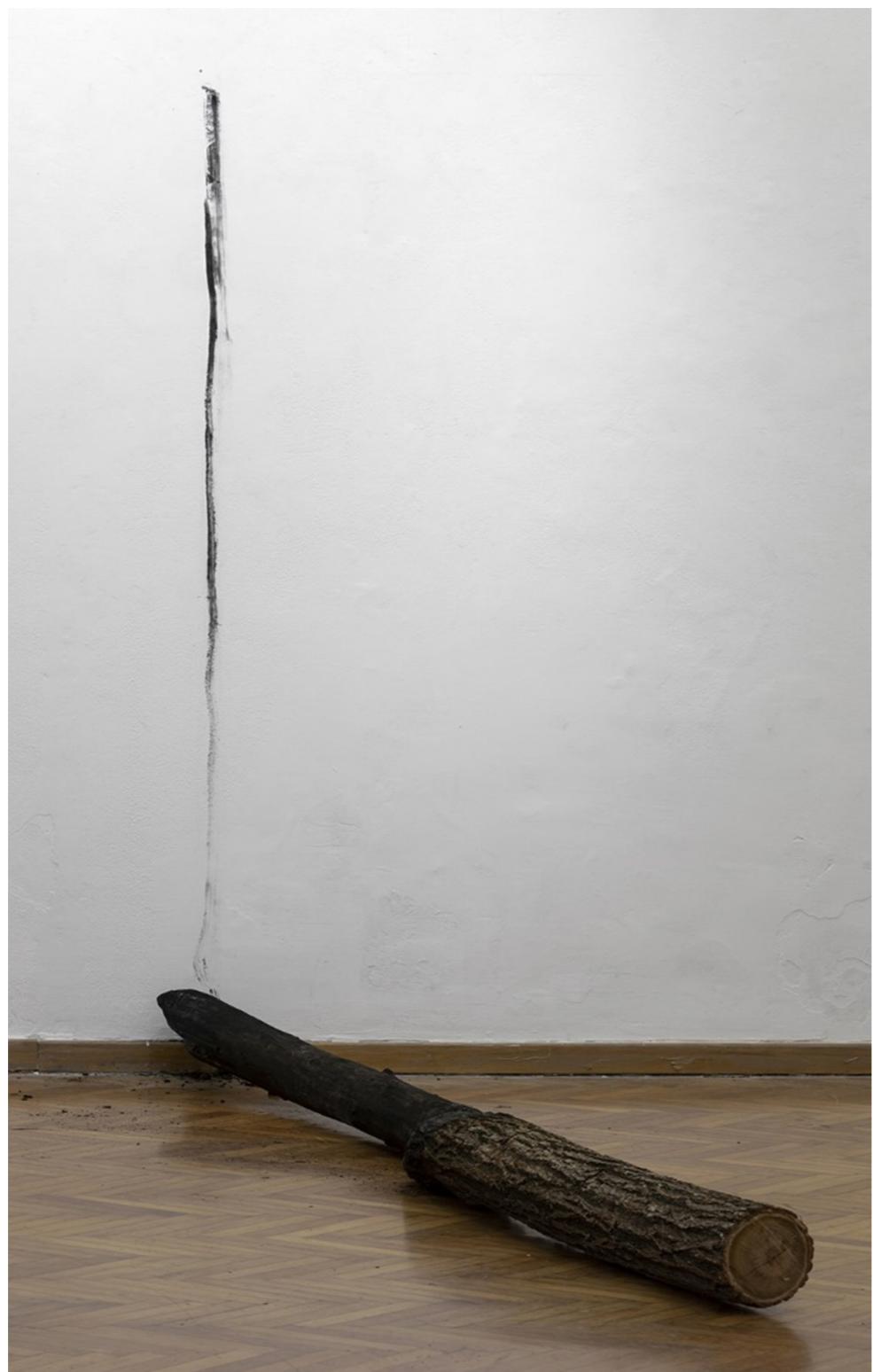
Tryptich

photo of a gallery wall in the gallery space;
print on canvas, colored frames, colored wall

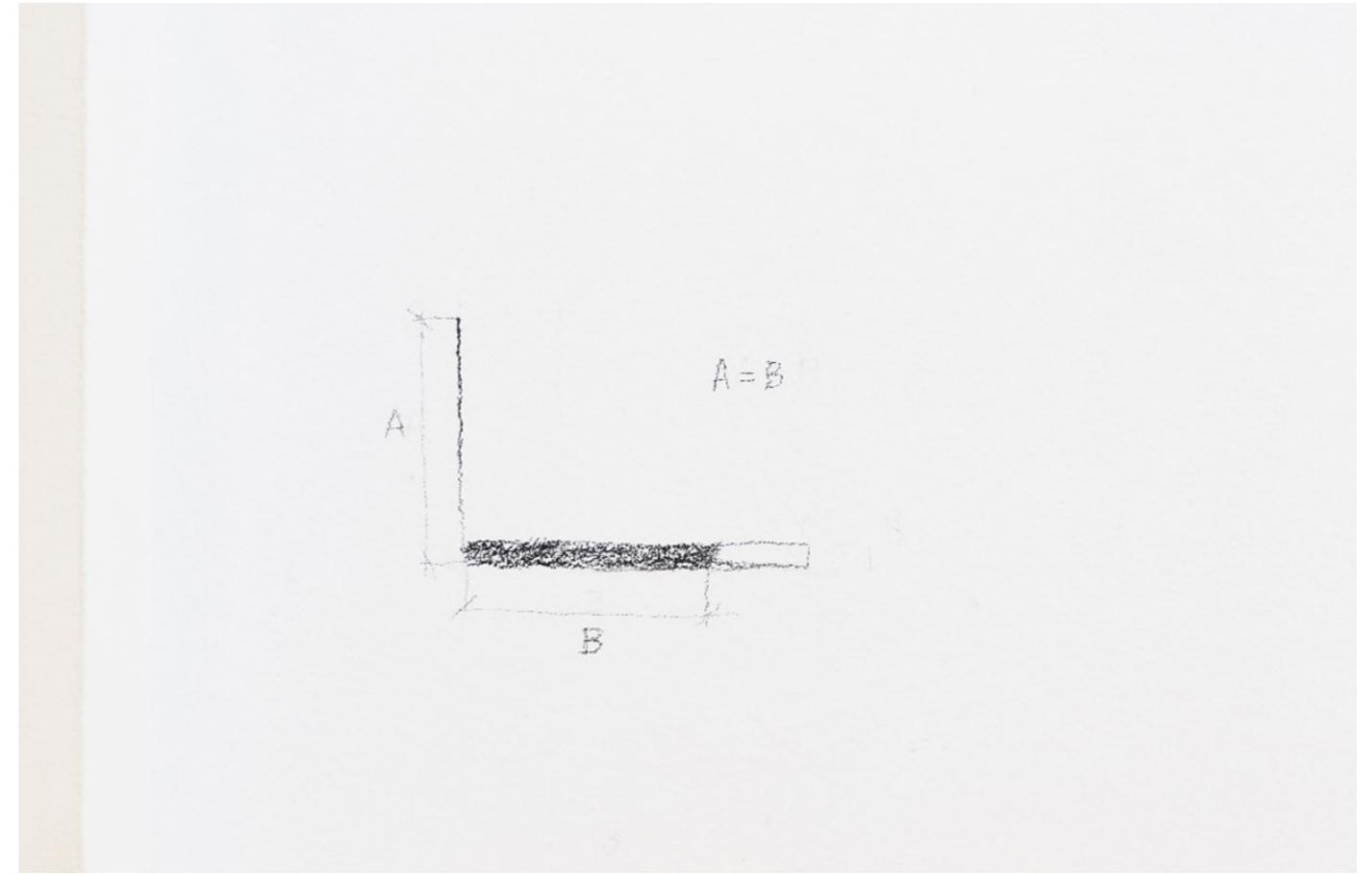




- **Tryptich** close up of a single framed print



Alingment, first edition
burnt wooden logs, charcoal on wall



Alingment, first edition info
charcoal on wall

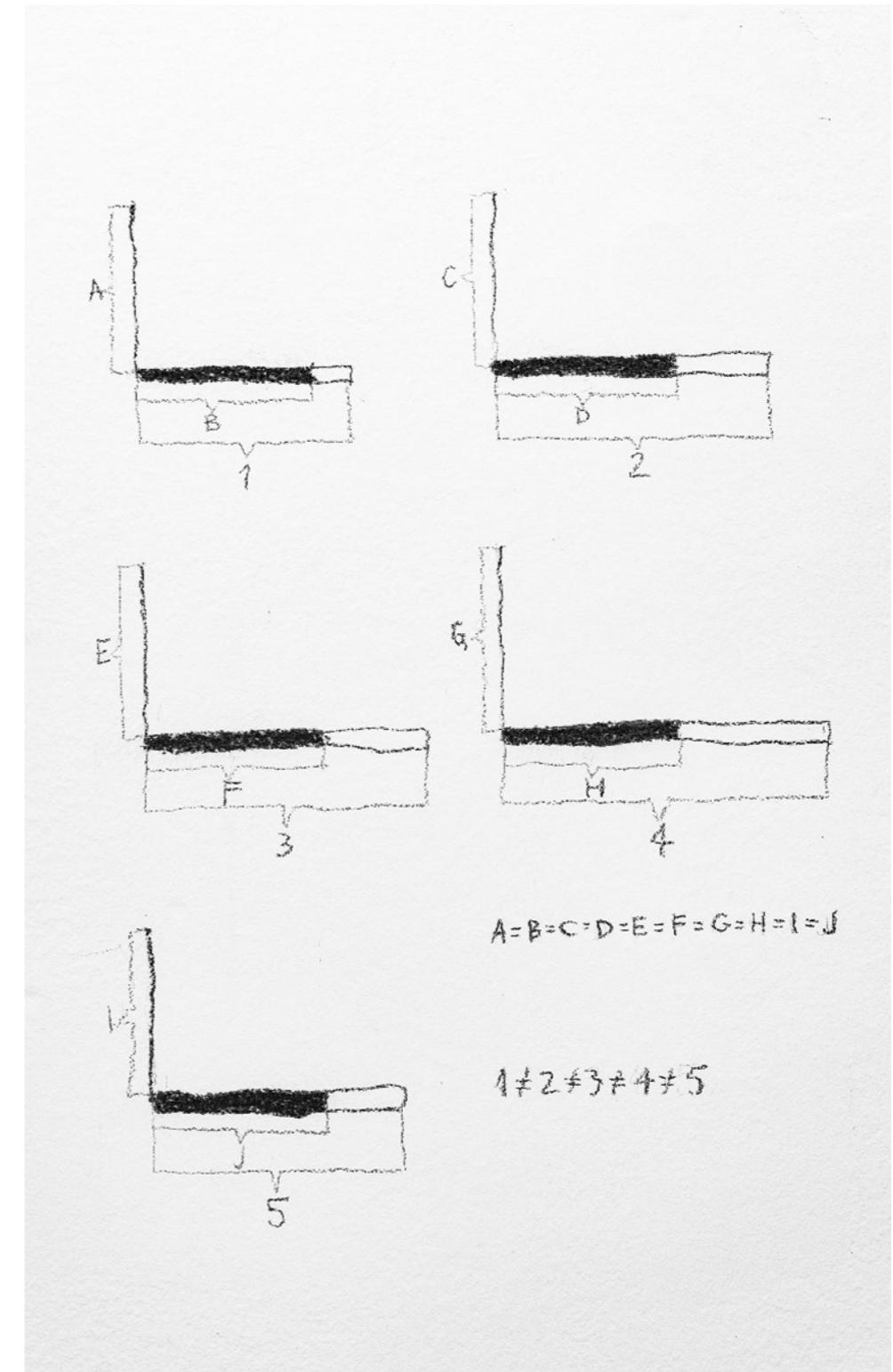


Alingment, second edition
burnt wooden logs, charcoal on wall

Alingment, third edition
burnt wooden logs, charcoal on wall







Alingment, third edition info
charcoal on wall



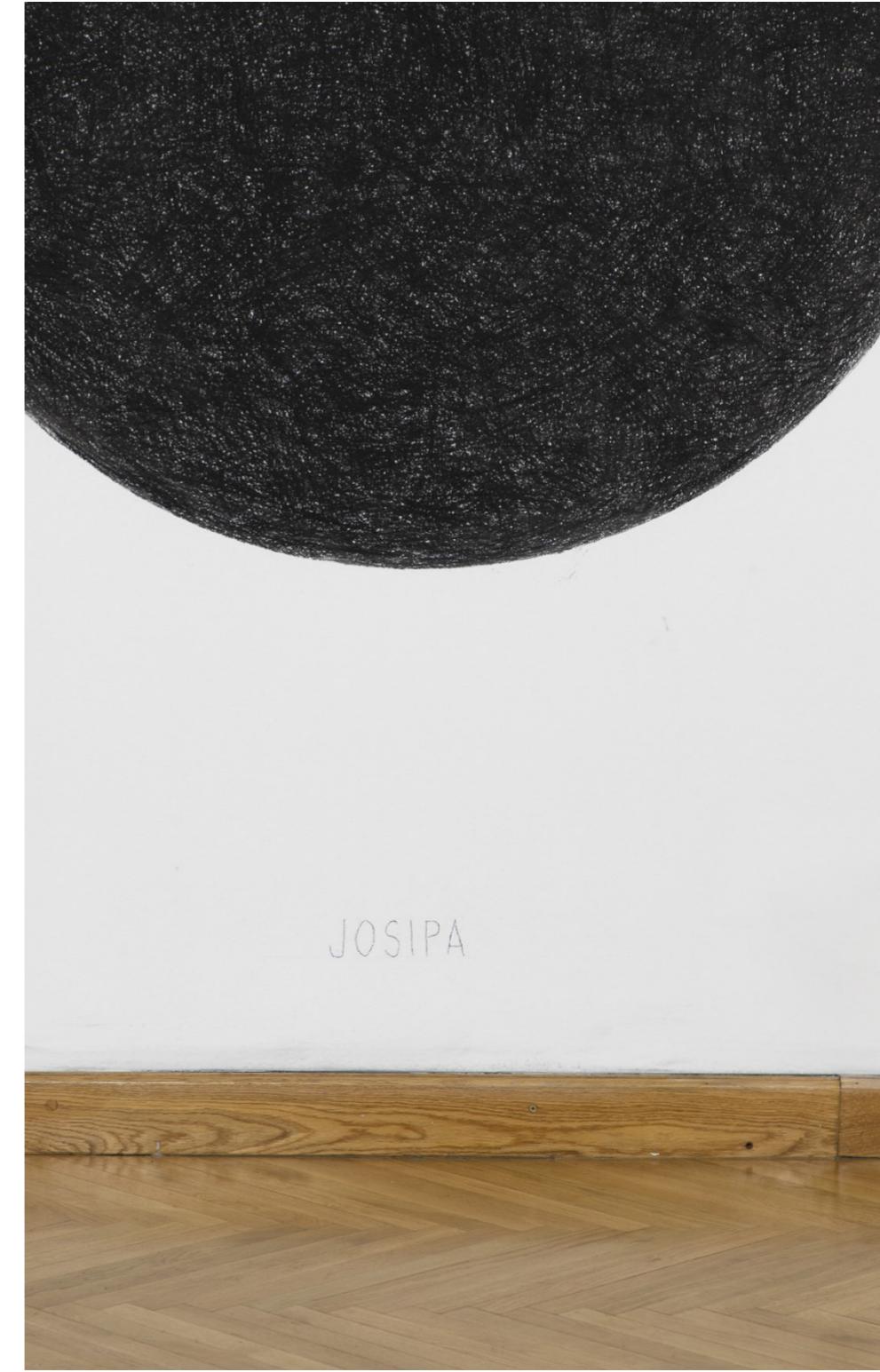
Alingment, fourth edition

charcoal within arm span of individual artists, aligned with each other in geometric centers throughout the gallery space





Dorian



Josipa



Andrej



Josip



Miran



Luka



Monumoment
video still



Monumoment
video still

Monumoment

Link to work: <https://miran-blazek.com/work/monumoment/>

In the video *Monumoment*, the act of turning off the lights on the front side of the building, returns the building of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb to its original state, an architectural mantle, a shell that confines space. This creates a sculpture, giving it the meaning of a monument. At the same time, it deprives the institution that resides in the building of its power, subtracting its inner light. Sixty-eight seconds of darkness, whose primary goal is to symbolically mark the 50th jubilee of the year 1968, becomes duration, a moment, an undefined time frame, commemoration with a minute of silence. The silence, however, is interrupted by the usual sounds of the city, and the background noise dominated by the buzz of car engines does not allow the viewer full immersion into reflection. Space, time and meaning are merging in the point of singularity, creating Monumoment. The whole work resembles documenting an unusual shamanic ritual of cleansing, which allows the entity of the Faculty an induced state of necessary sleep, and also belongs to the daily practice of turning a device on and off in order to achieve desired functioning condition.

Marko Pašalić

Selected writings

Alignment

In their ceaseless experimenting, they had learned to store knowledge in the structure of space itself, and to preserve their thoughts for eternity in frozen lattices of light. They could become creatures of radiation, free at last from the tyranny of matter.¹

These words are from the end of the screenplay for the cult film *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick from 1968. The magnificent film epic about the conquest of outer space and the evolution of man from dawn to the birth of a new stellar being who goes into another dimension with his eyes wide open, carries one of the possible keys to interpreting Miran Blažek's exhibition *Alignment*. During preparation for the exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts – the exhibition organized for him as the winner of the *Vlastimir Kusik Award at the 27th Slavonian Biennale – The Image as a Virus*, in one of the conversations between me (curator) and him (artist) we touched on what alignment actually stands for. At one point we realized that more than talking about the meaning of the exhibition title we are talking about instinct and creation, and what led to these works. About man's instinct to align, systematize, accumulate and materialize all his knowledge about himself and the world. About the creation of a new solar system within the white cube of the exhibition space and about the moments of enlightenment that lead us to new levels of knowledge. In the mentioned film, mysterious, black monoliths take us to these higher levels of human existence, the origin of which is never revealed to us, but the assumption is that it is the result of the technologies of a supernatural and superintelligent extraterrestrial being. With such a powerful interstellar guide, man discovers the vastness of the universe by mentally and physically setting off into unknown parallel existences. Today, in the real 21st century, science has confirmed some of the cinematic effects as realistic possibilities, and it is clear to us that beyond our solar system there are countless others, and so on to infinity. The very idea of this infinity through certain sections of history was not only incomprehensible, unacceptable and inaccurate, but also life-threatening – an illustrative example of this is the Italian priest, philosopher, mathematician,

mystic and astronomer Giordano Bruno who in 1584 argued that the universe is infinite with innumerable stars and with an infinite number of planets revolving around them as we revolve around this sun of ours, and the Catholic Inquisition declared him a heretic and sentenced him to death. He was neither the first nor the last to pay too high a price because he advocated scientific knowledge. But regardless of the prevailing spiritual and thought paradigms, man's gaze has always been directed upwards towards heaven, seeking the truth of his origin and a signpost for the future. Navigating the earthly steps according to those of stellar bodies, comparing what is seen with what is sensed and imagined is the very core of man's creative processes – whether we are talking about imagining a *Demiurge* of everything visible and invisible; whether it is the artist's gesture and the charcoal circle drawing on museum walls. Namely, the works featured at this exhibition are a continuation of the series of works titled *Ratio* – so far exhibited in different constellations in Koprivnica, Zagreb, Labin, Dubrovnik and Split – where the artist "in Vitruvius' manner" starts from his outstretched arms and draws the circle outlines within his reach, which is then followed by filling the center. In addition to the circle drawn by the artist himself, in this Osijek case five more circles are added – each one drawn and filled in by Blažek's fellow artists and according to their own proportions and strokes. What emerges in the museum is a simple space planetarium with spherical bodies accordant with the hand reach of each artist; a kind of cosmological cabinet of wonders that seeks to *align* the path of individual "planets" through practically dance choreography from room to room of the exhibition space. It may be quite coincidental (or quite the opposite) that at the same time as Blažek and his five colleagues are drawing a charcoal trail on the museum walls, the *alignment* of the orbits of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn is visible to the naked eye in the morning sky of the southern hemisphere for the first time in two decades.² The circles of Blažek and his colleagues are like shadows on the walls of this *cave of ours* representing one of the possible interpretations of this work because man senses the origin of himself and all his knowledge from a supernatural source. In a symbolic extension of this thought, Blažek, while applying charcoal to the surface of the wall with his transferred and creative touch, also builds in his genetic code into the birth of a new system. The use of charcoal is not accidental – while reaching into his interior to draw a circle, the artist reaches for charcoal as a carrier of the imagined as well as something originating from the sedimentary womb of the earth. *Coal is the sun's energy trapped in the bowels of the Earth.*³ Blažek often says – the remains of trees that used to grow under our sky and whose tree rings have stored evidence of the passage of time and memory of everything that happened under their canopy. The

1 Original screenplay by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke, narrator's part in the final part of the text not included in the final film; <http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/amk/>; (6 June 2022)

2 <https://www.space.com/five-planets-breakup-night-sky-june-2022>; (10 June 2022)

3 The statement of the Osijek artist Zlatko Kozina and an important starting point for thinking about the works *Ratio*.

materialization of these imaginary trees is also present in the exhibition space. Like a halved divider of pointed burnt tops, two acacia trunks left thrown once the line on the wall had been drawn. We are not sure whose hand is responsible for this move, but it was done in dualism with Blažek's. Like a cave shaman, a ritual of materialization of the invisible is performed starting from one's own diameter and existence in laying one's hand on the wall, and in that black surface of charcoal layers on the two-dimensional wall the entrance to infinity opens to us. The line drawn on the wall is a simple reminder to the crossing of that imaginary border.

The fourth room of the exhibition space is where the exhibition ends. There are three objects, and on closer inspection we will notice that it is a photograph digitally printed on canvas with a wooden painting frame, on legs. These are pure monochrome "paintings" created by mixing all the colors present in the exhibition room: parquet, walls, door handles, curtains, curtain tracks, light fittings flashing light... Each monochrome has its own tone that sets it apart from the other and was created depending on the position of "capturing" a frame. It is still life in its most basic form that functions like a carbon copy, where the representation literally duplicates the space and its physical limitation in the time gap between taking a photo and exhibiting it. Like a baroque painting where all the splendor of earthly life is presented on the table and where the artist records this dead life in the smallest detail – Blažek's contribution is equally lavish in its variation of literal truth. The atmosphere is captured, every flicker, every light ray of *space*. Here the exhibition functions like a house with openings for doors and windows through which we enter and exit continuing on the idea of infinity, free of matter at least for a moment. If we manage to align our thoughts, gestures and movements, we have managed to take this small but crucial step towards true freedom.

*One's mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason. Vast moving faculties occur in this geological miasma, and they move in the most physical way. This movement seems motionless, yet it crushes the landscape of logic under glacial reveries.*⁴

Valentina Radoš

Ratio

In the Ratio series I decided to produce a circular piece by rubbin charcoal onto the gallery walls. The center of the piece is also the geometric center of the wall on which the shape is applied. Upon "entering" the center of the wall, I draw a circle within my arm span, and directly impart on it the proportions of my body. These circles aspire to exponentially occupy the geometric centers of all available walls. The circle is inscribed regardless of how far the surface of the wall permits it. Through circular shapes defined by embodiment – in this case the shape of my body – I inscribe a cosmic reality which is visually representable, but also woven into eternity. This knowledge was described by the Roman architect Vitruvius, and depicted by Leonardo da Vinci in his drawing of the Vitruvian Man. Leonardo used it to illustrate the proportions inherent to the human body, whereby the arm span equals full body height – in Vitruvius words: erit eaque mensura ad manus pansas. Furthermore, this drawing reflects Greek wisdom by representing man as a microcosm – cosmografia del minormondo- since body proportions are inscribed with numeric ratios based on the same numeric mysticism imprinted into the universe. Along with inscribing this microcosmic nature of my body, charcoal was also a deliberate choice, for its capacity to metaphorically contain Sun's energy inside the bowels of the Earth. The mark of charcoal also bears the life energy it has itself emerged from and which is stored inside it. The energy of charcoal inscribed into Ratio, as well as the energy of its author, experience a renewal of their vitality with each new performance, mimicking the model of its sustainment in nature, allowing the piece to be described as a "work in progress" which can or wants to be completed when the energy of its creator is exhausted and turns into another form. In further development of this series, Alingment incudes several artists, their own body proportions and drawings, geometrically aligned with each other throughout the space. Each drawing undersigned by the artist, turns this whole experience within the gallery space in something like Planetarium, as each drawing recall celestial body, drawn and named, by each artist.

Igor Loinjak and Miran Blažek

⁴ Robert Smithson, *A Sedimentation of the Mind*; Artforum, September 1968.

Excerpt from the text *Spatial paradigms and manifestations of measurement in spatial aesthetics* by Miran Blažek and Josip Šurlin by Ana Bratić.

... Miran Blažek uses an analytical approach to enter the ontology of the image as an art object. He questions its limits, the possibilities of transgressions and affirmations, relying on subtle traces and reduced visuals.

...in the problematization of space, Blažek is more oriented to the relationships of measurements, volumes, colors and proportions between different objects that shape the structure of reality (but also gallery space), playing with their relocation in different temporal and spatial contexts. Relying on Deleuze's theory according to which measure refers to the quantity and intensity that characterize reality, we do not perceive the world as a static set, but as a continuous process of transformation of measures from one state to another.

... Thus, the measure becomes a means of observing and conceptualizing various ontological phenomena, enabling the understanding of the complexity of reality.

... In the context of the mentioned theory, in the work Alignment, Miran Blažek emphasizes the importance of the way of observing and the appearance of a certain object or situation. Although the physical presence of man is absent in the work, he is symbolically present through subtle traces of his interaction with the environment. Burnt trunks of different lengths indicate the elementary ways in which man approached the measurement of space in his early history. Each segment of the trunk is burned, leaving a certain amount of coal on each piece. Although the lengths of the trunks vary, the burned parts are of the same dimensions. These traces, present on the wall in the form of black lines or traces of coal, reflect the primordial need of man to understand and mark his environment.

... Encouraging reflection on our relationship to nature, space and scale, the author raises the question of how we perceive reality. Is it a random or carefully crafted situation? Through this subtle and metaphorical presence of man, Blažek explores the fundamental human need to define and shape the nature around him. Alignment questions the human relationship to the world, conditioned by the constitution of our perception of reality and the ability to shape it through aesthetic elements. It is also a visual meditation on the human connection with the environment and the ways in which we can shape the space around us.

... Continuing with the cycle of pictorial and symbolic articulation of space,

Blažek uses basic artistic elements such as surface, depth, proportions and measure, setting them apart as separate elements and autonomous works for themselves, within a new spatial and temporal context. The multipart 1/6 monochrome work includes two units: three canvases placed on improvised tables and three framed canvases on a pre-painted gallery wall. The monochrome series consists of a digitally intervened photograph reproduced in different formats, which shows the space of another gallery. It is ironic that one spatial reality is introduced into another through the use of photography, a medium that is often considered capable of fully approximating reality. In this context, photography becomes a medium without a particular symbolic meaning, emphasizing the contrast between spatial dimensions and their digital reinterpretation. The wall, which is usually flat, in Blažek's work becomes a specific artistic form without its usual function. The author's intention is to transfer one image and place it in a completely new context, changing its artistic characteristics.

... Here we are not talking about a wall or a photographic template, but about a completely new image created by combining all the color and spatial properties of the wall surface on the canvas format. This process is not just a simple transfer of visual elements, instead, it represents a reshaping of visuality, exploring the limits of perception and reinterpreting meaning in an entirely new environment. An artistic composite is not just a picture, a table or a spatial surface, it is a reflection of the ontology of the picture and the design elements of the space. Blažek's philosophy of visual and volumetric space is also manifested in the extension of the exhibit, on the "tables"

... Furthermore, three framed canvases with monochromatically treated surfaces are hung as a triptych on the painted wall of the space. In relation to the previous permutations of "tables" and pedestals, which included specific artistic motifs of one concise spatial section, the triptych represents the opposite approach to treating the image and spatiality. The author separates the color of the work from the given surface of the canvas and extends it to frames, glass and the gallery wall itself, which in this case becomes the construct and conclusion for the three monochromes. The suggestive diversity in yellow tones and the use of glass with a yellow tone, which covers the blue surface, further emphasizes the transition of the image into a wider spatial context. This segment can be interpreted as an exploration of the domain of easel painting and its potential for transformation beyond the framework of usual practices. The inverse approach of separating monochrome is not only an interpretation of the artistic process, but also the transformation of the wall into a conscious artistic construction.

Excerpt from the text *Charcoal and Rubber* by Božo Kesić.

... Miran Blažek investigates pictorial spaces and historically developed material carriers of the medium of painting, such as a painting frame or a gallery wall, which today unquestionably belong to the conventions of the "institution" of painting. In a broader sense, he is interested in the conditions for human expression through images, as well as various appearances and elements of the image as a symbolic form within Western culture.

... Works with the motif of a photographed gallery wall act as a meta-pictorial, historical-art rebus, that is, as a visual allegory about the development of the painting medium after half of the last century. In addition to illustrating the "illusion of function" that is particularly typical of three-dimensional art objects, pieces that significantly resemble a table (Clement Greenberg believed that minimalist works are art in the same way as a door, a table or a blank sheet of paper) metaphorically act as a link in the chain of historical transition painting from the wall to the surrounding space and its landing from a height to the ground as one of the accomplished development trajectories of painting.

... Furthermore, the flatness and monochrome that are not actually what they seem to be (for example, the "overflow" of the canvas towards the edges of the picture, the recognizable motifs of the gallery's technical inventory and the spatial volume of the original interior at the edges of the stretched canvas on the frame, the color unevenness of the texture on the canvas) in the mentioned Blažek's works point to unsustainability of complete anti-illusionism or non-referentiality, whether it is about the subject or some other reality. The same applies to the three hanging framed pictures, because they clearly share their visual field with the painted piece of wall in the Multimedia Cultural Center, thereby complicating the iconic difference of the picture, but also Greenberg's principle of opticality. The impression of the works therefore depends not only on the focus on the hung "fake" monochromes, but also on their correlation with the painted wall and with the overall gallery space in general. During closer observation, passive perceptual mechanisms can be gestaltically animated (for example, the direction or color of the frame makes them larger or smaller, or closer or further away from the real position of the observer, and the image can seem unitary or part of a whole).

... Moving from the analysis of the *Bildträger* (the physical carrier of the image) to the consideration of the *Bildobjekt* (what appears as a "motive" on that carrier), requires a brief comment on the role of photography within the aforementioned series and floor object. Krešimir Purgar, in his review of the works realized ac-

cording to the already described principle, concludes that the photograph in the mentioned case serves as a "mere medium without symbolic charge" or as an "anamorphic link between the irreducible dimensions of space and time of the image". In other words, if it functions as an iconic sign, this medium within a medium tautologically supports Blažek's model of breaking the image into space. At the same time, functioning as a technical note of the trace, the photograph channels the special stay of the virtual space (which is the counterpart of the original gallery space) in another real space. In a conceptual twist, the cult value of the exhibited objects derives from a different "here and now". The expanded definition of aura is in force, according to which, in a groundbreaking attempt to reinterpret Walter Benjamin, that is, to equate aura and trace, we witness "the appearance of distance no matter how close it is", but even more "the appearance of proximity no matter how far away". The photograph mediates the artificial presence (according to Lambert Wiesing) of the shown motif through the givenness of the exposed objects, but also its "multispatial" nature, which gives the presence of the exposed objects additional weight and enables their aesthetic appearance in a dynamic "play" of the presence and absence of the motif. Such an experience goes beyond the combination of sensory and conceptual thinking, and its prerequisite is the phenomenological suspension of the observer or, according to Martin Seel's terminology, aesthetic attention, accompanied by a kind of unburdenedness of the observer that works together with the free aesthetic appearance of the work.

... In *Alignment*, Blažek alludes to the primordial human need for expression, connected to a series of historical phenomena, from prehistoric drawing on the wall to the invention of mathematically constructed pictorial spaces, as well as the need to take measurements and mark spaces for the purpose of orientation. The exhibited objects self-referentially refer to the (oversized) pencil as a rudimentary tool of artistic work. The marks on the wall (made by the controlled fall of partially burning logs) reflect Blažek's fascination with coal, which began at the latest with the Inside Story exhibition held at Zagreb's Academia Moderna ten years ago. In the background of this fascination is the artist's recognition of the symbolic polyvalence (coal as a fuel, as a means of heating, as a carrier of traces and memories ...) of "all organisms that have been given life by the Sun") and the metaphysics (almost mysticism) of this substance, as well as a belief in the transformative power of art and the artist as a kind of alchemist. Indeed, coal, not only in nature, but also in Blažek's oeuvre, appears in circulation: once as a means by which the artist, using the maximum length of the arm's span, outlines and fills circular forms on the gallery wall; sometimes in the form of bricks made from the remains of the just mentioned forms scraped from the walls; or as a trace of burnt wood

on the wall. And so in various places, and in various iterations and layouts of his works. On a metaphysical level, coal is a guide that communicates the continuity of the author's work written in it (for example, the length of a man's arm span most often corresponds to his height, and this measure is similar to that of the carbon marks left by the burning top of a trunk), as well as a link that connects different spaces in which the artist created with charcoal. Blaženka Perica summarized the symbolic-metaphysical nature of coal in Blažek's works as a "paradoxical link between the living and the inanimate", considering that the connection "between geological-organic existence and eternal cosmic laws (matter, time / duration, energy, natural laws) in the creative" processuality and openness" evokes in its "inaccessibility / comprehensibility".

Excerpt from the text *Parables on Virtuality: Picturespace as a New Scoptic Regime in Miran Blažek's Work* by Krešimir Purgar.

In the cultural history of humankind, there doesn't exist a single painting which in itself does not already contain or imply an extrapictorial or intrapictorial space. Pictorial implications of space exist in two basic ways: it can be created through the artist's intention or by the observer's interpretative strategy. Be that as it may, in both cases, the recognition of space within a painting is not a result of the physical ability of one's vision to discern a three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional surface which is the painting. Rather, it – recognition – is always culturally constructed. Therefore, although paintings in themselves do not contain physical space, they assume, describe, or symbolize it in various ways.

The works of Miran Blažek deal with the pictorial articulation of space. But they do not do this by using mathematical strategies of a Cartesian model of representation, nor by using a scoptic regime of the "floating" eye. Neither do they do so by succumbing to increasingly more popular strategies of immersion into virtual experiences. Granted, Blažek does use all of these, but his artistic procedure consists of him coding his works in the language of conceptual art, which this artist has formed as a kind of anachronistic, sensorial, non-computational algorithm such as a set of symbolic instructions by which one level of spatiotemporal reality can be experienced in some different form and in another place. In each of the exhibited works, *Diptych*, *Exhibition Wall*, *Monument*, *Eclipse*, and *Polyptych*, we can recognize consistently conceptualized notions which classical art has used from its very beginning, such as surface and depth, space and time, painting and sculpture. But that which makes them most current is that they are here presented as recurrences of physical existence in an epoch of virtuality.

In *Exhibition Wall*, we see a three-dimensional partitional wall being moved from one exhibition space (in this case the Kazamat Gallery in Osijek) to a new space through the use of photographic reproduction. Along the lines of the analytic course of modern art, this work deconstructs one spatial situation in order to reconstruct it and, much like a virus, inject it into the foreign body of a different space. We recognize the artist's original artistic intervention by its use of the medium of photography as a non-paradigmatic pictorial medium to "translocate" space. I refer to photography as a non-paradigmatic pictorial medium because it was initially designed as a solution that was, to the largest extent possible, supposed to approximate reality. In that, it necessarily distanced itself from the otherness of painting with regards to reality, which is the topic of notable texts by

Gottfried Boehm and Martin Seel.[1] The series of monochromes is comprised of one digitally-modified photograph which was then printed onto different formats. Thus, we do not experience the medium of photography in this work as a conveyor of reality, but as an anamorphic link between irreducible dimensions of the space and time of painting. Therefore, photography is used here purely as a medium, devoid of symbolic meaning, whereas painting, by the introduction of a new, spatial, fictional wall, has broken through space and time, and become a three-dimensional object.

In the works *Eclipse* and *Polyptych*, this tenet is brought to the forefront even more. Specifically, the concept behind *Eclipse* is that the artist, in the classic technique of charcoal, draws a circle on each wall that forms a space. Each circle's circumference is equal to the length of the arm with which the artist drew. Aside from this, each circle is placed in the geometric center of the wall on which it has been drawn. After they've been drawn, the circles take on a clearly two-dimensional aspect of a painting/drawing on the wall, but simultaneously define the boundaries of the area *inside* which they have been drawn. In *Polyptych*, we bear witness to a kind of threefold transubstantiation. Namely, the artist scraped the drawing charcoal, which had made possible the appearance of image to appear in this one place, in its material form. Upon scraping it off the wall and turning it into dust, he proceeded to mold it into a graphite brick by using a binder. This brick, therefore, now contains within itself a "record" of the previous space from which it was transferred, as well as the memory of another medium and shape – the charcoal circle – out of which it came to be. The space is primarily fenced by two-dimensional pictorial surfaces. These surfaces are then transformed into three-dimensional space which contains an invisible memorial record of all the previous spatio-temporal coordinates. Quite specifically, *Polyptych* compresses the memory of the spaces from its two previous incarnations; the work *Ratio 2* presented in galleries in Zagreb and Labin, and the work *Ratio 3* in a gallery in Dubrovnik.

Excerpt from the text of Blaženka Perica for the *East of Eden* exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Osijek.

...Blažek, to whom the anthropometric approach was important in the first part of his oeuvre, in a more recent approach chooses the technical picture as a starting point, e.g. for the works *Monumomentum* (2018), or *Exhibition Wall* which were shown in 2020 at the exhibition *Ratio IV* at the Salon Galić in Split. They are also the determinants for the exhibition *East of Eden*, with new works joining them: floor ambience and an object, i.e. *Plinths* (monochromes simply lie on the floor as elements of physical space determination and evoke the convention of sculpture), and *Work* (table, topos of work and communication, over which a white canvas is stretched – a digital print of a photograph as a version of previous works for *Exhibition Wall*), whereby there is an expansion of the field of action in terms of image spatialization and imaging (elements, physical parameters) of space using photography and video but at the same time additional layering, shifts to additional focus – the semantic level of the work. Thus, for the "monument to the moment" – the work *Monumoment* (2018), created on the occasion of the Zagreb group exhibition related to the anniversary of the freedom-utopian student revolution of 1968 – technical support was necessary, namely Jasenko Rasol's camera and video processing of the facade of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb shot in the late twilight, the time when people are no longer there, so the facade appears as a regular monumental raster of glowing uninterrupted window rows. Turning off all lights at one moment, sudden darkness lasting a minute and eight seconds (signaling commemorative silence? Or something a little more?) occurs in a loop, a repetition of the change with the lights being turned on.... Simple action, visual phenomena/appearances and meaning contained in the work title, and the conceptuality of the approach are reflected and continued in the aesthetics of white monochromes – wall objects called *Exhibition Wall* shown at the aforementioned Split exhibition *Ratio IV*: according to Blažek's description, one and the same photograph of the wall from Osijek's Kazamat Gallery "became a painting" by "being processed in a computer program, passed through layers, printed on canvas and stretched on the painting subframe." This results in a dual inversion: primarily the physical carrier of the presentation of artifacts (the exhibition wall) in the digital print of its photographed surface is turned into a two-dimensional scene on the canvas, and then the mounted print-canvas on the frame construction becomes a three-dimensional object hanging on the wall; it can be the same photographed wall, but the object can also be shown on another wall, in another space (e.g. in Split, or Osijek) which is again a property of the image / work as a sign called iterability, yet with the use of a wider range of

means and media, the individual work achieves conversion probability that makes the originality of the sign unrecognizable during transmission, so the property of portability of the sign assumes an operational function of a completely different quality than in the case of abstractions created in different, more classic media and procedures, which are also characteristic of Kaniža's frottages, as well as of Blažek's early achievements. Namely, *Ratio* is the name of the whole cycle of exhibitions that has a longer genesis the beginning of which was not in the spirit of technical, but subjectivist construction of the trace and its spatial transformations and media transmissions: it started in Gallery Koprivnica in 2015, continued in Gallery Bužančić, Zagreb, in the Labin City Gallery and in the Flora Gallery, Dubrovnik during 2017. In addition, in a way, the whole series was a continuation of Blažek's preceding depart from traditional painting after his return from a study trip to New York on the occasion of the *Radoslav Putar Award* (2012), which he demonstrated with his exhibition *Inside Story* at Zagreb's Academia Moderna in 2013. There, within his hands' reach, he blackened all the walls of the space with charcoal, and in a later version of the work he collected the remains of charcoal, mixed it with beeswax and shaped it into an object – a compressed interior model of the previously drawn space. This version of Blažek's works will be followed by a record: "Hypnosis, contemplation, alchemy, self-referential painting, institutional critique or simply a sense of the space in which he works and resides, (...), perhaps mysticism..."

These were followed by other anthropometrically defined works, regular shapes of the circle with which the cycle *Ratio* begins: on the wall/walls in geometrically determined centers of the surface / space Blažek used his hands to determine the contours / diameter of the circle in which the measurement of volume, the artist's body dimensions or his trace is described and inscribed, and in which the quality, the structure of the surface of the wall on which the drawing is performed is inscribed at the same time. The link between the existential vital and physical and geometric abstract aspects of circles, black regular monochromes, finds a certain counterpart in Blažek's reflection on materials. Although wax is also important to him (let's remember Beuys!), besides materiality, for Blažek, charcoal has also a special, symbolic, content, and even metaphysical value: deposited in the earth in the process of carbonization over millions of years, coal carries traces / memory of geological time, that is, sediments of organic matter (former organisms that were given life by the Sun); as a fossil fuel it produces energy, it has its physical laws and structures, and chemical formulas, i.e. its "life" can also be expressed scientifically. This seemingly paradoxical bond between the living and the nonliving; between geological and organic existence and eternal cosmic laws (matter, time/duration, energy, natural laws) is for Blažek not outside the domain

of artistic material creation, but through his processuality and openness this bond evokes exactly through its in-accessibility / comprehensibility. This starting point seems to be close to Sol LeWitt's view that conceptual art is irrational (irreducible to tautological propositions, to language, as Kosuth argued). LeWitt, who distinguishes the idea (components) from the concept (implies general directions), emphasizes: "Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach." and "Illogical judgments lead to new experience", as opposed to rational judgment that only repeats itself. Such binary conclusions are included but not obviously sufficient for Blažek's worldview and understanding of the term "ratio", which may be explained as the effect of historicizing the phenomenon of "pure" conceptual art, the shift from its initial period to the forms it takes today in the sense of "materialization of the dematerialized".

This historicization approach to the notion of the conceptual as contributed to its liberation from stylistic historical and artistic interpretations and the affirmation of intensifying the practices of transformations in art that prefer a conceptual, cognitive approach but do not give up those irrational levels of consciousness in creating works, especially if the emphasis is on processuality and not the finality of the work, to its always possible (permanent) new emergence, e.g. through metamorphoses and translocations, and even through de-construction rather than on the value of its (eternal) existence. Thus, for example, specially constructed frames of different-sized white monochromes of *Exhibition Wall* (and thanks to changes in resolutions of different white tones), give object appearance to individual works on whose wide edges there are lateral black and white photofragments of the originally photographed space, the Gallery Kazamat in Osijek. Presented on the wall of some (other) exhibition space, these objects already entail several different transformations / appearances of the same scene of the wall that became "transferable" across media just as the mentioned works – the copied walls of Josip Kaniža. However, while Kaniža's high efficiency is initiated by palimpsest layering and "signifier economics both at the level of the message and at the level of the medium" 20, in Blažek's works the Protean nature is more pronounced, the transformativeness of the work that puts media substantiality in the foreground, or rather subtle transitions from one medium to another in order to "blur" (not erase) the boundary effects of the intermedial (that artificial) space and enable different variations / transformations of media appearances of the work in an undefined number of occurrences. This procedure also automatically changes the iterable property of the work as a sign: it becomes changeable beyond recognition as it is expressed in an always different, not the same form, no longer representing anything but its own adaptive potentiality: readiness for the next change.

Blažek's work Polyptych addresses this as another interesting way of transferring the visual experience of one place and medium to the other one / s: the transformation of wall drawings, inscribed circles created for the purpose of their translocation to other spaces can be enacted as a wall intervention of scraping the charcoal traces of the previously completed work, the drawn circle. By bonding and cooking charcoal scraps and wax wall particles, thanks to compression, the black monochrome wall drawing can be „shrunk” into a black brick-shaped object and transferred to the next exhibition.

Biography

Miran Blažek (1983, Osijek, Croatia), has earned a BA in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in 2006, and an MA at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana in 2012. Soon after completing his studies, he started to enhance his work with practices that transcend the traditional idea of painting. In his work, he is drawn to border fields of the medium, primarily drawing and painting, and he engages in transposition – through action, material, or space itself. Blažek uses the experience of painting to develop various possibilities inherent to the nature of the medium. He has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Croatia and abroad. In 2012 he received the *Radoslav Putar Award* for the best young artist under 35, awarded by the Institute for Contemporary Art in Zagreb; in 2020 the *Vlastimir Kusik Award* on the 27th Slavonian Biennale; and, in 2025, the AICA Award by the Croatian section of the International Association of Art Critics at the 15th Triennial of Croatian Sculpture. He took part in several artist residency programs abroad: Hafenkombinat/HDLU, Leipzig; CREART, Kristiansand; and International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York. In 2026 he was part of a curatorial team for the 38th Youth Salon organized by the Croatian Association of Artists in the Meštrović Pavillion in Zagreb. In 2015 he founded the project International Student Biennial, an award exhibition for students and emerging artists; <https://studentbiennial.com/>.

Selected solo exhibitions:

- 2025 *Wood vs Woodness*, City Museum Nova Gradiška (with Nikola Pjevačević), Nova Gradiška, Croatia
- 2024 *Still Life*, Karas Art Hub, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2023 *Taking measures*, Multimedia Cultural Center Split (with Josip Šurlin), Split, Croatia
- 2022 *Alignment*, Muzej of Fine Arts, Osijek, Croatia
- 2020 *Ratio IV*, Salon Galić, Split, Croatia
- 2017 *Ratio III*, Flora Gallery, Dubrovnik, Croatia
Ratio II, City Gallery, Labin, Croatia
Ratio II, Vladimir Bužančić Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2015 *Monochromy≠Monotony* (with Robert Fišer and Josip Kaniža) City Gallery, Koprivnica, Croatia

- 2014 *Incubare*, POPUP Osijek, Croatia
- 2013 *Inside story*, Academia Moderna Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2013 *Monochrome*, Vladimir Nazor Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2012 Waldinger Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
- 2008 Kazamat Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
- 2007 CEKAO Gallery, Zagreb, Croatia

Selected group exhibitions:

- 2025 15th Triennial of Croatian Sculpture, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2024 *In Situ*, City Museum, Nova Gradiška, Croatia
- 2024 ArtExpo New York Art Fair, AGI Fine Art, Pier 36, New York, USA
- 2023 *East of Eden*, Gallery of Fine Arts, Split, Croatia
- 2022 *15 for 15*, Waldinger Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
- 2022 *East of Eden*, Centrum Gallery, Graz, Austria
- 2021 *Technometry of imprint*, International Center of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 2021 *East of Eden*, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, Croatia
- 2020 27 Slavonian Biennale, Museum of Fine Arts, Osijek, Croatia
- 2019 Westpol Air Space, *Known unknowns*, Leipzig, Germany
- 2018 *50 / 68*, 50th jubilee of 1968, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2017 *Body and Mind*, Kazamat Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
- 2016 X-House Open Studio, Kristiansand, Norway
- 2016 Projektraum Donau, Landhaus, Poelten, Austria
- 2016 T-Htaward@MSU, Museum for Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia
- 2015 Croatian Association exhibition of painting, Waldinger Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
- 2015 *Public-Work-Context*, Cultural Center Osijek, Croatia
- 2015 *POPUP Projektraum Donau*, Galeria Fundatiei Interart Triade, Timisoara, Romania
- 2015 *Abstract, figurative, disassembling, overlapping*, Museum of fine arts Osijek, Croatia
- 2015 *1+1*, The Year of Julije Knifer, Kazamat Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
- 2014 *deEvolution*, Museum of Contemporary Art of Istria, Pula, Croatia
- 2014 *Tabula rasa: Primary and Analytical in Croatian art*, Museum of Contemporary Art of Istria, Pula, Croatia
- 2013 Croatian Artist Association exhibition of drawing, Kazamat Gallery, Osijek, Croatia

2013 2nd Biennale of painting / Vienna calling,
Gallery of Croatian Artists Association, Zagreb, Croatia

2013 T-HTaward@MSU, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia

2012 23 Slavonian Biennale, Gallery of fine arts, Osijek, Croatia

2012 *Radoslav Putar Award*, Finale, Galženica Gallery ,Velika Gorica, Croatia

2012 *Tu smo 3*, Museum of Contemporary art of Istria, Pula, Croatia

2011 Osijek-Pečuh / Eszek-Pecs, Nador Gallery, Pecs, Hungary

2010 Croatian Artists Association exhibition of painting, Kazamat Gallery,
Osijek, Croatia

2009 Meeting Point Biennale
Gallery of Fine Arts, Pecs, Hungary
Kazamat Gallery, Osijek Croatia
City Museum, Arad, Romania

2009 Croatian Artists Association exhibition of drawing, Kazamat Gallery,
Osijek, Croatia

2008 Slavonian Biennale, Gallery of Fine Arts, Osijek, Croatia

2008 Meeting point Biennale
Gallery of Fine Arts, Pecs, Hungary
City Gallery, Plzen, Czech Republic
Waldinger Gallery, Osijek, Croatia
O. Kokoschka Museum, Poelchlan, Austria

2007 *Essl Award*, Glyptotheque, Zagreb, Croatia

2006 Slavonian Biennale, Gallery of fine arts, Osijek, Croatia

2006 FONA, Kortil Gallery, Rijeka, Croatia

2004 Slavonian Biennale, Gallery of Fine Arts, Osijek, Croatia

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