



Centre  
for Contemporary  
Art

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## THE SILENT VILLAGE (12 January – 9 April 2012)

The exhibition **The Silent Village** is an innovative presentation of the events in connection with the tragic fate of the village of Lidice. The central work of the exhibition is the film *The Silent Village* (1943) by the British artist, poet and film director **Humphrey Jennings**. The contemporary artists **Paolo Ventura**, **Peter Finnemore** and the writer **Rachel Trezise** offer their response to the film and its theme in a series of black and white photographs, video and audio recordings and texts. The exhibition is accompanied by the project entitled *10:35* by the Czech documentary film maker **Jan Kaplan**.



The exhibition title is derived from the film of the same name, which was made by the British avant-garde film maker **Humphrey Jennings** only a few months after the razing of Lidice. Inspired by Viktor Fischl's poem "The Dead Village", Jennings found an analogy of Lidice in the village of Cwmgiedd in South Wales, and with the participation of mining families produced a version of the story of the Lidice massacre translated into a Welsh environment for the film *The Silent Village*. Jennings's film was created with the support of the British Ministry of Information, and remains a significant example of pioneering use of a documentary film in the services of the state. The film could be viewed as a predecessor of the

contemporary genre known as *historical re-enactment*, which has recently found popularity amongst contemporary artists.

The curator **Russell Roberts** chose Jennings's film as the main reference and core of the project, around which he built the entire exhibition. He contacted a number of contemporary artists and asked them to produce new works which could reflect the tragedy of Lidice from today's perspective. Several visits to Lidice and subsequent discussion and correspondence with the authors of the new museum installation **Lidice Memorial** **Bohumír Prokůpek**, **Pavel Štingl** and others inspired the development of the exhibition. The commissioned artists created new works, which by various methods of narration accentuate the power of the tragic story, signify the relationship between subjective and collective memory and the link between history and fiction.

In detailed shots of ordinary objects, **Peter Finnemore** attempts in a certain manner to freeze time and preserve that which remained of the people who "left". Through videos, books and a cycle of large-format photographs the artist offers a mournful and disturbing view of the theme of history, which oscillates on the boundary between personal and collective memory. The Italian **Paolo Ventura** provides his response to the film *The Silent Village* in a series of portraits of Nazis and scenes in which they appear. He creates photographs that appear to be historical records of Lidice, the surface of which he further encroaches upon by painting or scratching, in a metaphorical attempt to penetrate their narrative. **Rachel Trezise** presents a tale of a girl from Lidice who is adopted by a German family. The story highlights the problematic nature of the method by which we remember, and the reader uncovers a plot, in which fiction becomes history and vice versa.

"It is not whether art and fiction are suitable means to recover and represent such traumatic events but, more importantly, to discover their possibilities to ensure that we remember and to better understand how memory is made," states the exhibition curator Russell Roberts.

The exhibition *The Silent Village* was created through the co-operation of Ffotogallery, Cardiff, and the University of Wales in Newport. The exhibition curator is Russell Roberts, professor of photography at the European Centre for Photography Research, University of Wales, Newport.

## Jan Kaplan - 10:35



For the occasion of the exhibition *The Silent Village*, the DOX Centre for Contemporary Arts presents the video installation by **Jan Kaplan** entitled **10:35**, the title of which refers to the time when the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich took place. The project draws from the film by Jan and Krystyna Kaplan *SS-3: The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich* (1992), which uses a similar artistic strategy of historical dramatisation as the film *The Silent Village* (1943). However, the two works were created in different times and with different focuses, and thus displayed a different relationship towards the story they portrayed. Whilst *The Silent Village* translated the plot of the Lidice tragedy into a British environment for the purposes of war propaganda, *SS-3*, with the benefit of historical distance, attempted to present as accurate as possible a film processing of the assassination.

A comparison of Kaplan's video installation with the showing of the entire original film however reveals the extent to which the endeavour to present the most accurate possible reconstruction of the historical event is subject to the author's choice of elements influencing the form of the narrated story. Although the video installation loop may repeatedly observe the story of the assassination and seemingly fix its form, the potentially endless multiplicity of combinations of individual elements of the narration reminds us that the interpretation, and thus also the form of the historical event, just like the event itself, is created together with our participation.

The exhibition *The Silent Village* together with the Jan Kaplan's accompanying project *10:35* is to be held until 9 April 2012.

### Exhibition partners:

Ffotogallery, University of Wales, Newport, Prague Public Transport Company

### DOX Partners:

Zdeněk Bakala, Capital City of Prague, TECHO, a.s., Premiant City Tour s.r.o., Poster Infinity s.r.o.

The programme of the DOX Centre is realised with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

### DOX Media Partners:

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### Contact for media

Michaela Šilpochová

T: +420 774 222 355

E: media@dox.cz

### DOX Centre for Contemporary Art

**Office address:** Osadní 34, 170 00 Prague 7

**Exhibition Space:** Poupětova 1, 170 00 Prague 7

www.dox.cz

**Opening hours:** Mon: 10:00 – 18:00, Tue: closed, Wed – Fri: 11:00 – 19:00, Sat – Sun: 10:00 – 18:00

The premises of the DOX Centre have facilities for the disabled.