

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

Press release

František Lesák

Supposition and Reality

July 2 – September 5, 2021

Galerie

Preview for the press: Thursday, July 1, 2021, 11 a.m.
Please register at presse@secession.at

Opening: Thursday, July 1, 2021, .6 p.m.–8 p.m.

First day of the exhibition: Friday, July 2, 2021, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

The conceptual draftsman and sculptor František Lesák's work is dedicated to describing and understanding the world of objects and associated questions of perception. Creating systems of spatial reference, exploring alternating perspectives, surveying and mapping selected sceneries, and toying with shifts of scale are key elements of his creative toolset. Undertaking a kind of basic research, systematically planned cycles of works examine things and their relation to the real space around them as well as the space of media.

At the Secession, Lesák shows several bodies of work, mostly dating from the past few years, that have not or only rarely been on public display. The presentation sheds light on the contemporaneity of his art and continuities in his oeuvre.

In his new cycle *Supposition and Reality* (2020), from which the exhibition takes its title, Lesák probes the complex interplay between tactile and visual perception, but also scrutinizes drawing itself as a physical and mental practice that yields notations of reality. Implementing a rigorous experimental setup, he produced eighteen pairs of pictures that show his left hand in a variety of positions, applying two different practices. The drawing on the left in each pair seems comparatively open and clumsy, the result of the artist's attempt to draw the hand, with the fingers folded in a particular way, while holding it under the table so that it eludes his sense of vision as a corrective authority. Recording how he imagines the placement of his fingers solely on the basis of haptic perception, Lesák finds, results in an unreliable supposition that, in the majority of instances, does not match the actual state of affairs. Although it is his own hand that he studies through proprioception, dependence on the sense of touch alone makes plotting the hand in its cohesive form difficult. The tentative pencil strokes and the fragmentary form document this fundamental challenge. For the corresponding drawings on the right, by contrast, the artist held up the hand in the same position before his eyes. The facility with which he now captures its form, expertly employing abstraction of its volumes to obtain geometric bodies, suggests the trained graphic artist. Comparison of the two representations reveals the considerable differences between the forms of experience and knowledge that each approach activates.

The motif of the hands as tool and vehicle of gestural expression also appears in the photographic series *Establishing a Meter* (1972) and studies for *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* (1986–2020), on display in the same

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room. The extensive project *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* undertakes an appropriation of Gustave Courbet's *La Rencontre*, which shows an encounter between the painter Courbet, his patron Alfred Bruyas, the latter's servant Calas, and his dog Breton. Lesák built a scenic reconstruction of the group of figures, sometimes integrating himself as an additional character. At the Secession, he now shares the photographs and drawings he produced during the project with the public for the first time. His own body served him as the model that allowed him to simulate different choreographies of movements with which he imprinted his presence on the referential system of the exchange of greetings and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various postures.

Another major theme in Lesák's oeuvre that comes to the fore in the second part of the exhibition is the multiplicity of aspects that an object presents to the viewer. Striving to record all its dimensions and the concurrence of surface, form, and volume, he devotes himself to classics of art history as well as the representation of motifs he finds in nature. The series *Equivalents* (2020) and *Woodland* (2014) delineate erratic granite boulders. The rock formations are characteristic of the northern part of the Waldviertel region, where Lesák has lived for some years. The different partial views, which complement each other, always incorporate a reconstruction of the parts that are hidden from view. The embossed digits are explained by the referential system that the artist has devised to chart the objects and their position relative to one another, as well as to a numbering scheme associated with a large model kit that lets him manufacture different formations. The series *Hermes* (2012) and *Hermes Pointed with Light* (2003), meanwhile, zoom in on a statue by the ancient sculptor Praxiteles that was found in the Temple of Hera at Olympia in 1877; plaster casts are in the collections of many art schools.

Lesák's works are defined by a combination of painstaking accuracy and a frank acknowledgment of the limitations of the artist's own perceptions; they visualize the consequent ambivalence of preciseness. His comprehensive study of the nexus between the mind's apperception of the world and its description ultimately gestures toward the looming question of the nature of reality itself.

František Lesák was born in Prague in 1943 and lives and works in Vienna and Neu-Nagelberg, Lower Austria.

The exhibition program is conceived by the board of the Secession.
Curator: Annette Südbeck

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Artist's book**František Lesák. Supposition and Reality**

Format: 24 x 32.7 cm

Details: Swiss brochure in three-part fanfold cover, thread-stitching, 152 pages

Concept, images, and texts (g/e): František Lesák

ca. 100 illustrations

Secession 2021

Distribution: Revolver Publishing

EUR 35.00

The artist's book *Supposition and Reality* gathers different bodies of work that are united by a common theme: the interest in the sides of things that are turned away from the viewer, that escape perception. The idea of the multiplicity of aspects is also probed in systematic fashion in various graphic series and writings by the artist.

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Exhibitions

Hauptraum	Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster: VOLCANIC EXCURSION (A VISION) July 2 – September 5, 2021
Galerie	František Lesák: Supposition and Reality July 2 – September 5, 2021
Grafisches Kabinett	Karimah Ashadu: Plateau July 2 – September 5, 2021

Artist's books

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. Volcanic Excursion. A Vision,
ca. 50 images, € 26,40
František Lesák. Supposition and Reality,
152 pages, ca. 100 images, € 35,00
Karimah Ashadu. Open Shields, 64 pages, ca. 50 images, € 26,40

Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*
Beethoven – Painting and Music in cooperation with
Wiener Symphoniker

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission

Adults € 9,50; Pupils, students and senior citizens € 6,-

Press contact Secession

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