

External, expert review

for Master's thesis by Karolina Chasáková's
We Are Not Supposed to Share a Language for How We Really Feel
at Academy of Fine Arts in Prague

I find it important to preface this text by pointing out that the deadline for submitting this review has been set by the Academy to a date pre-dating the installation of the thesis exhibition. In other words, at the time of this review, the artwork -that is an installation- couldn't be finished and therefore presented and discussed in full. The student has pointed this discrepancy to the teachers but no accommodation has been made. It is my opinion that such treatment is not only nonsensical but that it doesn't honor the work of the student.

Karolina Chasáková's piece titled *We Are Not Supposed to Share a Language for How We Really Feel* is a fragmentary text considering the dysphoria caused to sick bodies by the normative language and the dehumanizing power hierarchies of biomedicine. At the Academy of Fine Arts, the artwork is planned to take on the form of a sound piece -of the text read aloud- with an accompanying video transcript presented in a bare environment with only seating and a small library with several books. Online, the sound piece and its transcript will be available to those, who can't make it to the Academy in person.

Chasáková is preparing a piece firmly connected with contemporary political art using storytelling. Her planned installation uses emptiness and simplicity in a way reminiscent of historical, more abstract conceptual art to ask the audience for their time and focused attention. Here, she clearly follows in the steps of other artists (that Chasáková herself names as her inspirations) addressing sickness under capitalism, such as Johanna Hedva and Christine Sun Kim. In comparison to these artists, Chasáková is still feeling out her way to create immediate visual impact that would capture a passing visitor. However, the way she zeroes in on a topic -the harmful impact of abelist language here- and is able to bring it to light with all its nuance, ambiguities, and contradiction, without creating a caricature or a shortcut, passes the comparison with flying flags.

The centerpiece of the artwork is its sound piece of the same name, *We Are Not Supposed to Share a Language for How We Really Feel*, to which I want to dedicate a short further analysis. The decision to use third person narration brilliantly imitates the disassociative language of diagnosis that

then reflect in our society's slightly pathological relationship to sickness -as a personal lacking and individual burden, yet a fair target of public judgment. The everyday encounters that Chasáková peppers throughout the text serve as hooks to bring the viewer into her experience and, hopefully, make them reflect on their own assumptions and habits regarding physical ability. These intimate and specific fragments are skillfully mixed with broader reflections on language and observations of systemically perpetuated patterns. I regard this balance of the text highly. Formally, the chosen delivery of the text - using very pathos-free and closely recorded speech- was a decision aligned with the content as well as the installation. Here, the recording too can stand a comparison with other gallery-bound sound pieces.

Lastly, I want to take a moment to consider the way accessibility and different levels of bodily abilities (the topic of the piece itself) has been considered and integrated in the presentation of the artwork. I find it important to remind us that art that addresses sickness and ableism can't separate art making and the content of individual art pieces from praxis. Not only because it would be sloppy or critically flawed but because the artist often doesn't have any other option, because accessibility is existential. Here, Chasáková showed high level of awareness and integrity that, in my opinion, has to be considered when regarding the artwork. The labor that she invested towards proper accessibility riders, her consideration of the space (so a viewer can stop by for five minutes sit down and be comfortable for long periods of time) as well as integration of various modes of communication (sound, video, written text) should be a nearly automatic part of creating a public display but, unfortunately, is still exceptional and required quite a lot of practical work and awareness raising. The thoroughness and criticality that Chasáková showed by maintaining the integration of theory and practice is ultimately one of the main reasons why I regard this artwork so highly. Knowing the challenges that an educational institution, including the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, poses to similar attempts, renders this work even more impressive.

Considering the critical sharpness of the content, the depth of her engagement with the institution, as well as Chasáková's command of contemporary art practices and theories, especially those addressing disability, biomedicine, and sickness, I have no hesitation in proposing that Karolina Chasáková receive the title of Master of Fine Arts from the Academy and receive the grade 1 (A) (výborný) for her final work.

In Berlin

May 31st, 2022

Magdalena Jadwiga Härtelova