

## **Statement about the damage of the exhibition of Artur Żmijewski, Úplní**

Artur Żmijewski's current exhibition entitled *The Whole Ones*, presented at the Artwall outdoor gallery in Prague, has been repeatedly damaged a month after its opening. The cycle of photographs depicting nude people with amputated limbs supported by people without disabilities symbolizes mutual solidarity. The exhibition was organized to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Paraple Center – organization that helps people with spinal cord injuries.

The first panel of the exhibition was damaged with golden spray shortly after the opening. After three weeks, two more photographs were damaged, again using spray. Simultaneously, the Facebook page of the Artwall Gallery was temporarily blocked after being mass reported as pornographic. Several citizens also complained to the district municipality Prague 7.

Most of the complaints and physical interventions in the exhibition do not seem to be related to the refusal of inclusion and support for people with disabilities, but to the depiction of naked male bodies. The exhibition also provoked reactions from citizens who complained about nudity in public space in e-mails addressed to the curators of the exhibition.

"The aim of the exhibitions at the Artwall Gallery is to initiate public discussion on complicated topics and inspire viewers to rethinking their opinions. That is why we value every initiative for meaningful discussion. However, we do not approve of vandalism, as it does not present arguments, to which it would be possible to respond," said the curators of the exhibition Lenka Kukurová and Zuzana Štefková.

The curators added: "Photos of Arthur Żmijewski depict nudity but do not contain any sexual or violent content. Nudity has been present in art for centuries, even in Christian art. In this sense, the exhibition can be perceived in the artistic tradition of the nude. The depiction of naked bodies in the photographs draws attention to human vulnerability. The photographs do not feature perfect bodies, but bodies of people who do not meet the norms of bodily perfection. These people with disabilities do not hide their bodies, they are not ashamed of them and act as self-confident individuals.

Representations of naked (mainly female) bodies are commonly present in the streets of Prague in the form of sculptures, but especially in advertising. These depictions, however, do not cause any strong negative reactions. The rejection of Żmijewski's photos by some viewers is based on how they perceive them. The exhibition speaks of solidarity and support. The aesthetic or non-aesthetic perception of naked bodies with disabilities is not contained in the images themselves, but created in the eye of the viewers."

Exhibitions presented by Artwall Gallery were damaged several times in the past. For example in the case of the project of Tomáš Rafa *Competition for the Czech-Roma Flag* (2013) or in response to the exhibition *Guma Guar Collective Identity* (2008), which criticized corruption. Artwall Gallery focuses on political and socially critical art.

