

Jun 25, 2013 6:30 PM - Sep 2, 2013 12:00 AM

Poison Green



Exhibition examining themes, concepts and cultural fictions dealing with environment and ecology, featuring Czech and international artists Matej Al-Ali (CZ), Silvina Arismendi (CZ), Mark Dion (US), Petr Dub (CZ), Mathias Kessler (AT), Tomas Moravec (CZ), Yes Man (US), Anne Percoco (US), Katerina Seda (CZ), Klara Sumova (CZ) and Slavoj Zizek (SI). Curated by Kristyna and Marek Milde.

Rather than painting green and romanticizing nature, the artists and concepts, presented in *Poison Green* interrogate and study the complexity of our environment, examining the consequences of the urban, post-industrial, and virtualized reality we live in. Ultimately, *Poison Green* seeks to demystify the ideologies inherent in our understanding of nature, reflecting on conventions and stereotypes, and looking for possible enviro models socially integrated into our daily lives and culture.

The exhibition's name refers to the story of the once-popular emerald green color known as Paris green or poison green, which owes its beauty to the highly toxic arsenic pigment. Utilized to dye cloth and Victorian wallpapers, and favored by the Impressionist painters to represent nature, -in the nineteenth century it became notorious for its role in a number of mysterious poisonings and deaths. Today, when the question of how to save our natural environment from destruction is more urgent than ever, it is critical to distinguish between the "green" and the "greenwashed," between those practices that are truly ecological and those that merely pretend to be. The exhibition project *Poison Green*, symbolically referring to both life and death, examines the concept of "green" and its ambiguity as well as our fantasies, idealizations, and cultural understanding of nature.

Pioneered by environmentalists and marginalized for decades, today ecology is a hot topic in mainstream culture and media. The ongoing changes in the environment are forcing the developed world to an awareness of the consequences of its comfortable life and the realization that the environmental impacts of industrial society and the limitless exploitation of natural resources needs to be addressed.

Yet, as going green has become popular, politicians and corporations have adopted a new eco-vocabulary—"food miles," "ecological debt," "carbon footprint"—to serve their interests, confusing sincere environmental efforts with greenwashed agendas and eco-chic. Meanwhile, in our own lives, the question arises of what we as individuals can do.

Taking on the role of scientists, environmentalists, social workers, and teachers, the artists and participants presented in *Poison Green* explore the environment viewed through a multi-layered lens of culture and nature. Several of the artists adopt the methods of investigative research and apply them to topics such as energy, building methods, design, food production, science, social and educational models, etc. Unlike a scientific thesis, however, they convey their message through visual representations and metaphors, critically reviewing green approaches with an artistic sensibility that contributes a unique insight to the green discourse. While no pragmatic solutions and "correct" resolutions are claimed, the unconventional approach of these artists brings a new perspective to the way the fields of science, social studies, and politics understand the environment.

The exhibition *Poison Green* is incorporated in a series of installations and visuals that extends from the gallery of the Bohemian National Hall to its rooftop, where a community garden project accompanying the show is installed. Here participants and visitors have the opportunity to experience the process of how to grow just enough food for one dish. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of presentations, social events, and dinners.

VENUE:

321 East 73rd Street
NY 10021 New York
United States

DATE

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ORGANIZER:

Czech Center

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