

Roman Ondák Scene



Image of *Escena*, project by ROMAN ONDÁK at the Palacio de Cristal
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. 2013
Photo: Joaquín Cortés/Román Lores

DATES: 19th September 2013 – 23th February 2014

PLACE: Palacio de Cristal
Parque del Retiro, Madrid

ORGANIZED BY: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid)

CURATOR: João Fernandes

COORDINATOR: Soledad Liaño

The works of **Roman Ondák** (Žilina, Slovakia, 1966) question the circumstances of the artwork in its relation to the conventions which determine the space and time of its presentation. Viewers are confronted with situations induced by the artist, often almost imperceptibly, which displace them from their own expectations. A discovery and knowledge of Ondák's works gives rise to reflection and critical commentary upon what may or may not be identifiable as art, in an exercise of amplification of the recognizable world. In steering the viewer away from his or her own position, this work raises questions such as what is real about the artwork, which are the circumstances that affect recognition of the real, and what is the function of the viewer not only as interpreter but also as activator of the artistic process.

Roman Ondák appears in the artistic context of the countries of Eastern Europe, where the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s activated possibilities for critical reflection upon the conventions and protocols inherent to the construction of the real in social life. His work opened up new possibilities in a conceptual program whose figureheads included artists like Július Koller and Jirí Kovanda, who recently presented a project in this space.

The Ondák's creations have been shown in recent years at major artistic events like the Venice Biennale, where he represented Slovakia in 2009, and Documenta 2012 in Kassel. He has also exhibited many times at leading international museums and art centers. Many of his pieces are specific projects constructed for a particular time and place.

Scene is devised specifically for the Palacio de Cristal. The artist here adds a new architectural element to the existing building that takes material form in an elevated walkway running all around it. This walkway accessed from inside the building, offers all its visitors the opportunity of a new perception of the space, for the Palacio de Cristal can now be looked into from the outside in a way not previously permitted by its architecture. The new construction is also an exercise in camouflage, since the materials used by the artist replicate the building's original materials, as though this new architecture had always been there. The title, *Scene*, is both literal and symbolic at the same time. The interior of the Palacio de Cristal, with everything occurring within it, is transformed into a scene on the basis of the possibilities offered by a new external viewpoint. The visitor

becomes an active part of the work, seeing and being seen, and so converted into both an art object and the protagonist of the performative act. In venturing along the new walkway provided by the artist, the viewer is given the chance of a renewed perception and understanding of the reality of which he or she forms part. In the work of Roman Ondák, it is always through the spectator that the artist changes some part of reality so that everything will appear different.

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