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Theatralia. 2014, vol. 17, iss. 2, pp. 191-222

ISSN 1803-845X (print); ISSN 2336-4548 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/130890>

Access Date: 16. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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Where Theory Meets the Practice: Jaroslav Malina's Space, Function and Sign in Scenography and Painting

However insightful and intriguing a theoretical framework may be, it is always naturally derived from a particular artistic practice that can in return benefit from its theoretical conceptualization. The fruitful interconnection between 'theory' and 'practice' can be clearly seen in the environment of the Prague School where the theorists and artists shared not only the same intellectual space around the topic of their interest but also regularly physically met, interacted and refined their ideas on more or less formal occasions.

Driven by the conviction that those two elements, theory and practice, form an inseparable complex, the organizers of the symposium invited Jaroslav Malina, one of the internationally renowned figures of the 20th and 21st century stage design, to give a presentation of his work. Drawing on his rich career of about 50 years that involves more than 400 productions, which in their approaches range from the so-called action design to the post-modern elements (cf. KOUBSKA 2008), Jaroslav Malina addressed the topics of space, function and sign.

While space and function are a natural ground for a practitioner of scenography, as Malina's life-long work well illustrates, the reading of the stage design as a complexity of signs is a gateway for semiotically inclined theorists to approach the study of the scenic space. Thus Malina, himself an admirer of the Prague School contributions to the study of theatre and scenography in particular, subjected his functional spaces to a semiotic reading on the one hand, while on the other showed how a conscious work with the practical elements of scenography in return influences theoretical conceptualizations.

The underlying feature of the three discussed (and of course inter-connected) areas of space, function and sign is a permanent friction between two opposing principles. As Ma-

lina explained, his work grows from the ever-present tension between the two-dimensional space of his paintings – his 'free work' as he likes to call it, and the three-dimensional space of his designs for theatre (cf. BRANDESKY 2011). There is a constant flow of signs and meanings between these two areas.

Focusing on his stage work, the tension between the painting and the stage design and between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional transforms in what Malina has called the *outer* and *inner spaces* in scenography. These are:

physical space and ideational space – space as geometry and space as an emotional quality, space as given by an objective requirement and space as a subjective asset. The first is – in the Cartesian sense – rational, organised, concrete. The second is – in the Husserlian sense – changeable, tending towards unreality, mystery or transcendence and striving for its own identity. (MALINA 2008: 75)

Oscillating between the physical and the emotional, between the tangible and the intangible apparently marks Malina's work in yet a different way. His primary requirement is that the stage design is functional, as opposed to merely decorative. According to him, the setting needs to be *physically* functional, with its core being the material properties and other parts that the actors come into direct physical contact with on stage. The other crucial side of the functional setting is its emotionality – it needs to be *emotionally* functional. That involves the other, more ephemeral, aspects of the stage design, which aesthetically speak to the spectator and evoke a certain emotion. They can also serve as a counterpoint to the physically functioning elements. To find the balance between the opposing principles, between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, between the outer and the inner, between reason and feeling remains a constant challenge for the artist.

In an effort to let 'practice' speak for itself and balance the abundance of 'theory' in this collection, the following pages bring milestones of Malina's work as a way of revealing the tensions and exposing the connections between space, function and sign in his designs and his paintings.

02

2014

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Space, Function, Sign: Selected Paintings and Stage Designs by Jaroslav Malina



Fig. 1. *The Deer King* (F. X. Šalda Theatre Liberec, 1973, directed by K. Kříž). Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 2. *Disrobing*, 1966. Collection of the Artist.

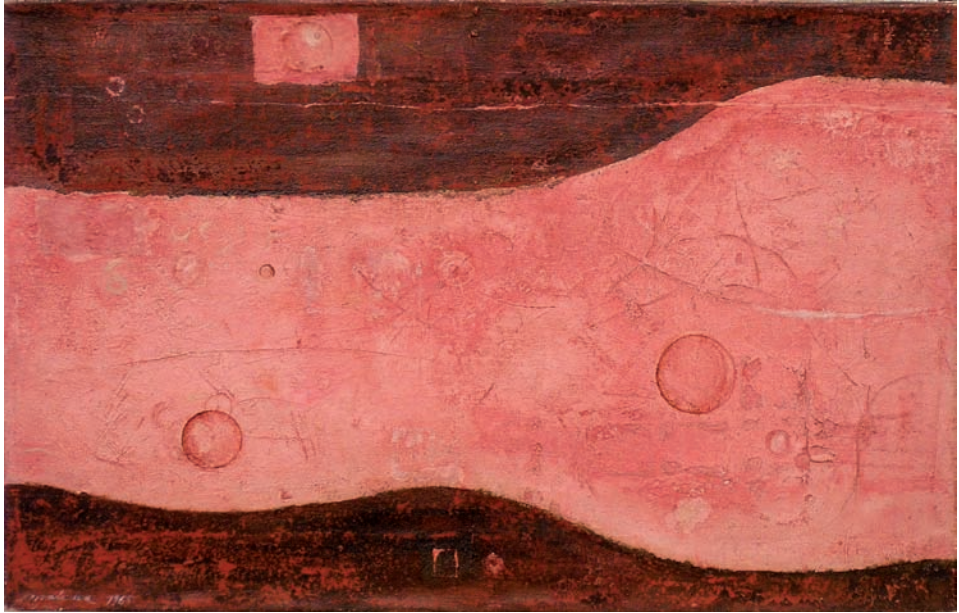


Fig. 3. *Red Nude*, 1965. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 4. *Love Letters* (F. X. Šalda Theatre Liberec, 1975, directed by J. Král). Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 5. *The Beauty*, 1980–1993. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 6. Klucence Village Green, 1974. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 7. *Leonce and Lena* (Drama Studio Ústí nad Labem, 1976, directed by I. Rajmont).
Photo K. Honsa. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 8. *Manon Lescaut* (The Workers' Theatre Gottwaldov, 1983, directed by I. Balada).

Photo D. Šimánek. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 9. *The Rise, Formerly Named as the Fall*, 1977-1979. Collection of the Artist.

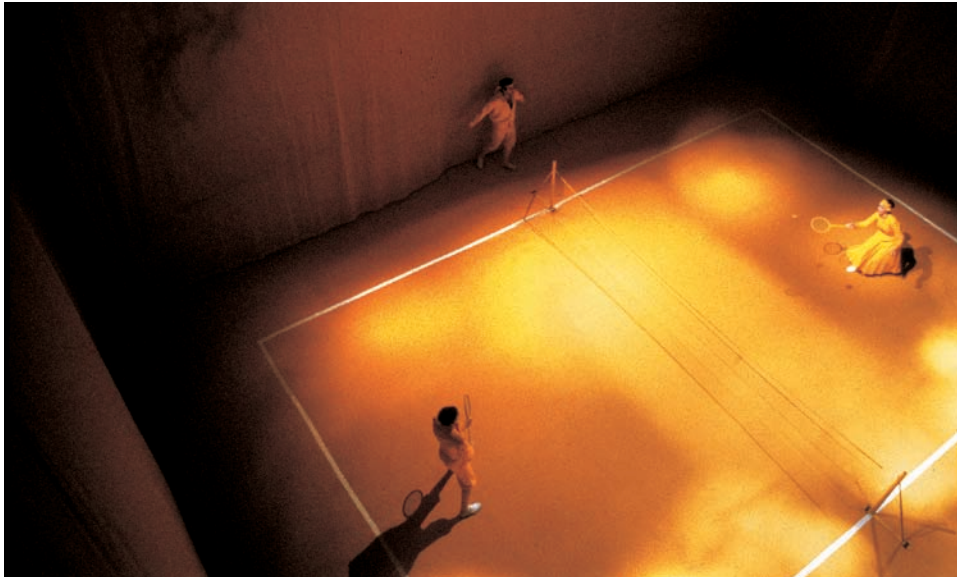


Fig. 10. *Intrigue and Love* (The Workers' Theatre Gottwaldov, 1983, directed by I. Balada)
Photo D. Šimánek. Collection of the Artist.

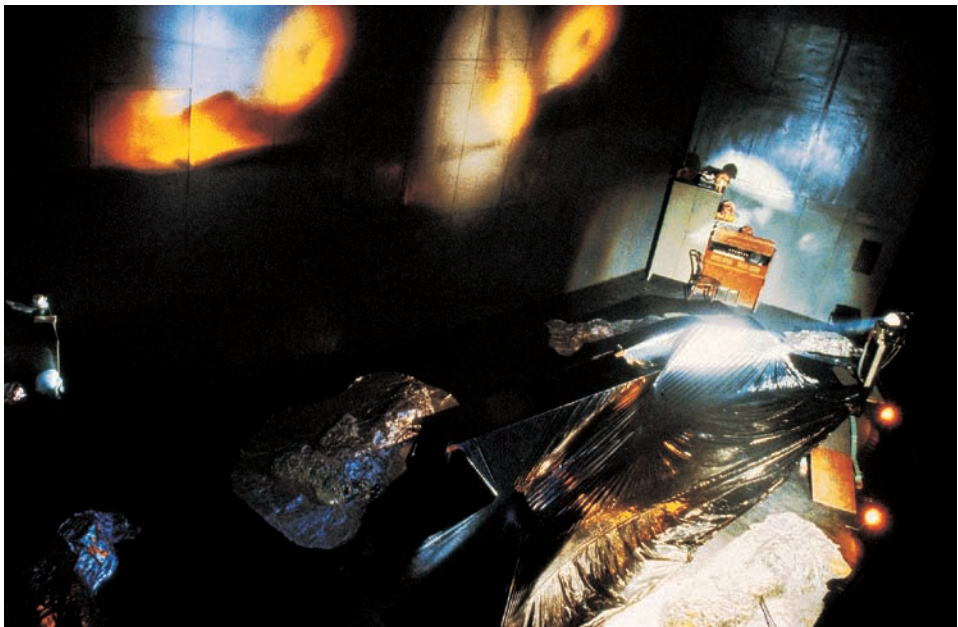


Fig. 11. *Intrigue and Love* (The Workers' Theatre Gottwaldov, 1983, directed by I. Balada).
Photo D. Šimánek. Collection of the Artist.

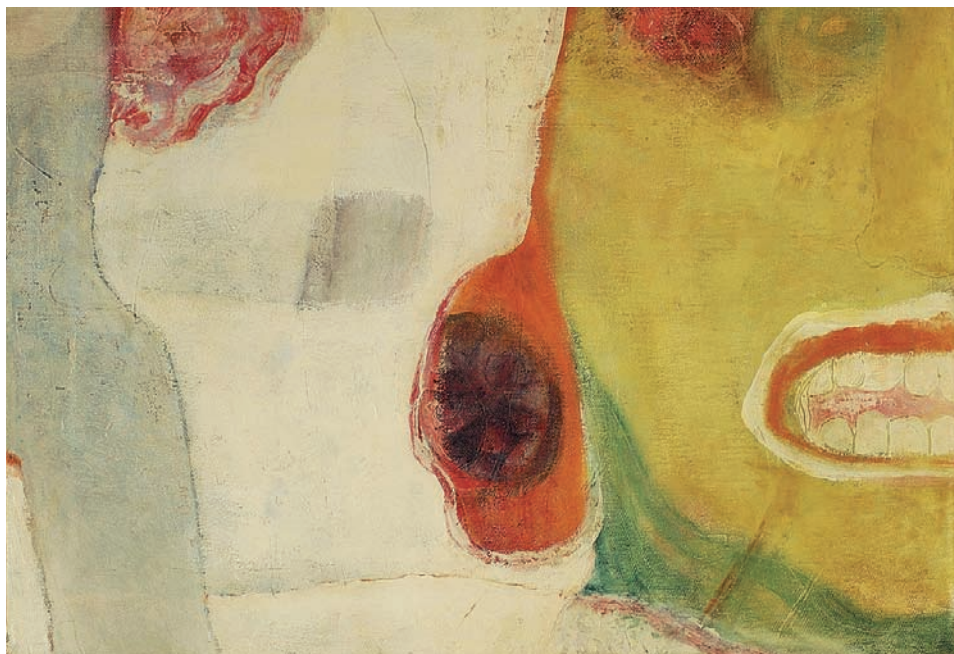


Fig. 12. *The Smile*, 1974. Private Collection.



Fig. 13. *Landscape with a Bird*, 2002-2012. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 14. *Landscape - Figure*, 2013. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 15. *Midsummer Night's Dream* (ABC Theatre Praha, 1984, directed by K. Kríž).

Photo D. Šimánek. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 16. *Medea* (Studio Forum Olomouc, 1981, directed by I. Balada). Photo I. Šimáček. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 17. *Don Juan* (The Workers' Theatre Gotwaldov, 1985, directed by I. Balada). Private Collection.



Fig. 18. *Poster Original Art for Exhibit in Regional Gallery Liberec, 2004. Collection of the Artist.*



Fig. 19. *Insulted und Injured* (The Theatre of Western Bohemia, 1984, directed by J. Fréhar).

Photo B. Hořínek. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 20. *Love's Labour's Lost* (National Theatre Prague, 1987, directed by K. Kříž).

Collection of the Theatre Research Institute, Ohio State University.



Fig. 21. *The Street*, 1990. Collection of the Artist.

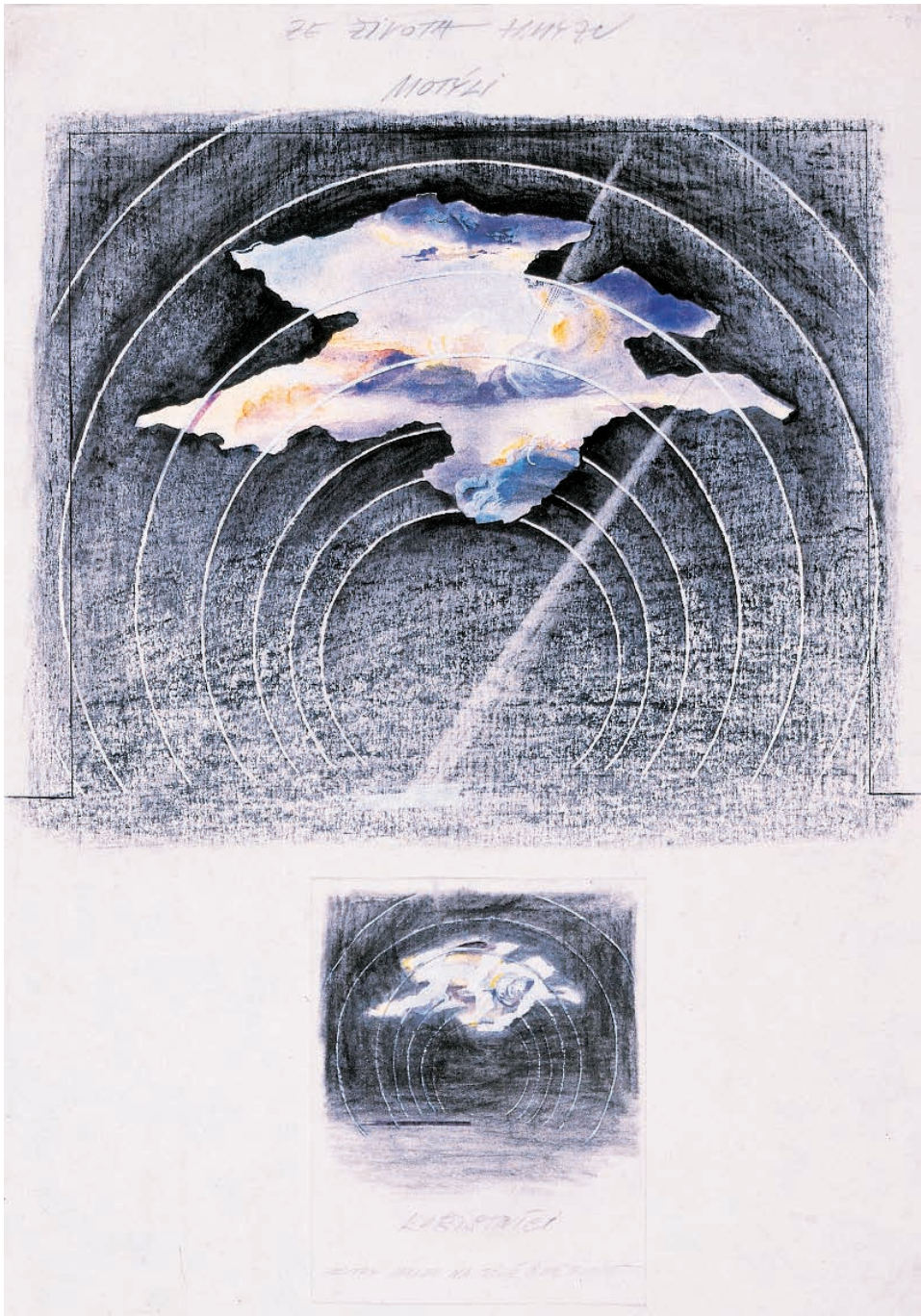


Fig. 22. *The Insect Play* (National Theatre Prague, 1990, directed by M. Krobot). Private Collection.



Fig. 23. *Aphrodite*, 1980. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 24. *The Head*, 1999. Collection of the Artist.

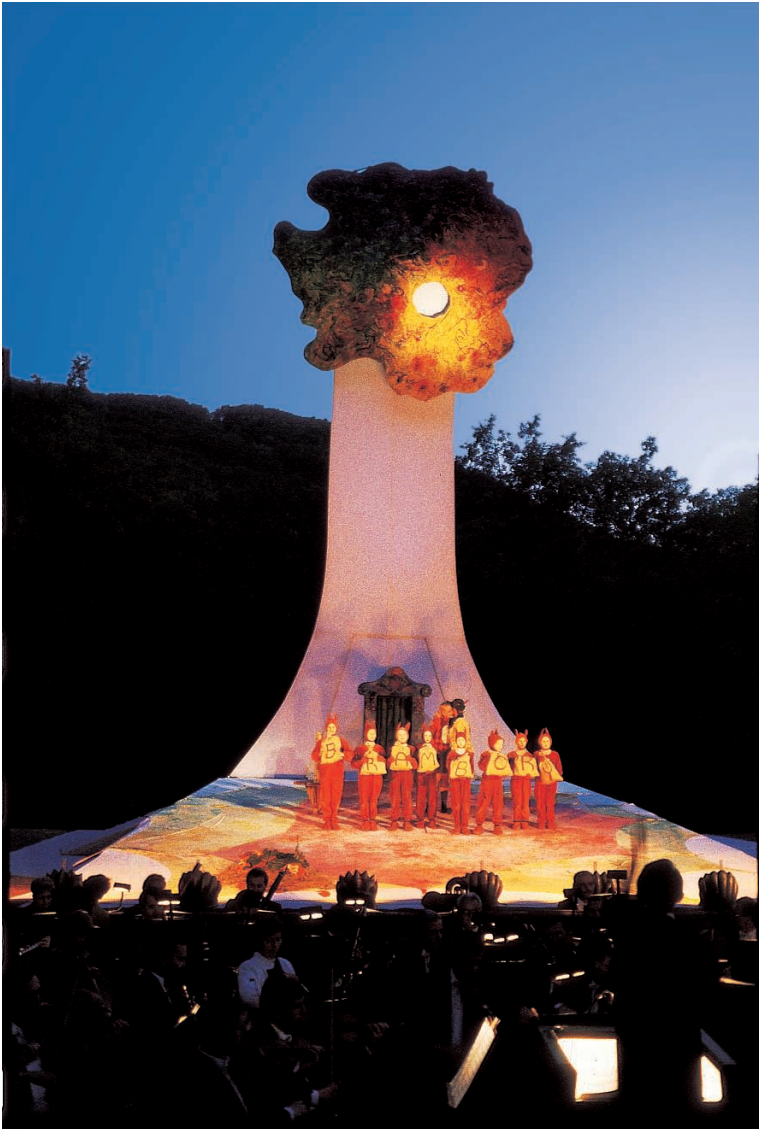


Fig. 25. *Cunning Little Vixen* (State Theatre Ostrava, 1994, directed by D. Sulkin).

Photo J. Hradil. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 26. *The Walk*, 2013. The Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 27. *Come nasce il soggetto cinematografico* (City Theatre Zlín, 1998, directed by I. Balada)

Photo J. Regal. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 28. *Jazz*, 2013. Collection of the Artist.

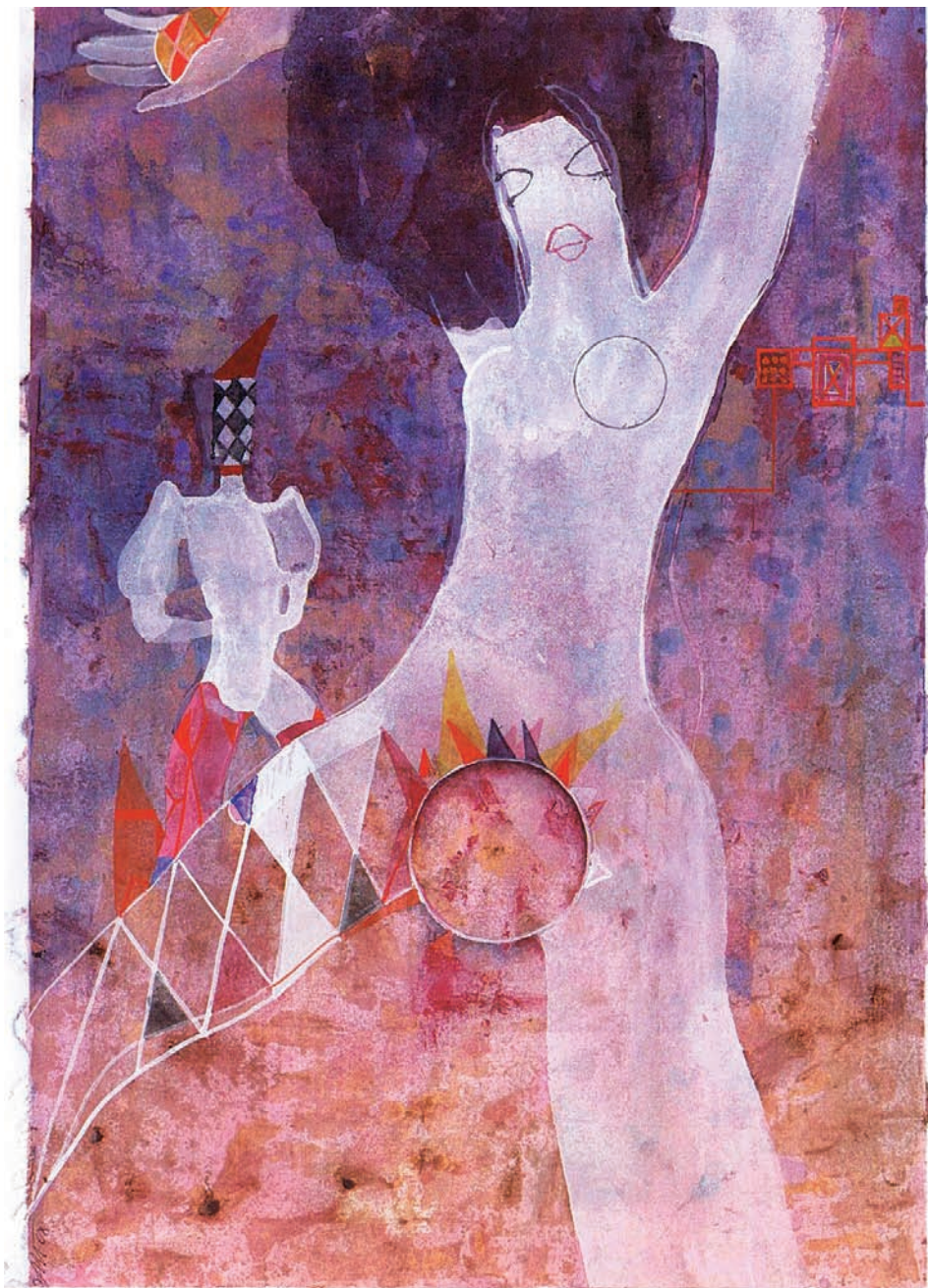


Fig. 29. *La Lupa* (poster, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre Ostrava, 2008, directed by L. Golat).

Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 30. *Orpheus Descending* (The Ohio State University Columbus, 2000, directed by S. O. Rowlands).
Photo J. Malina. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 31. *Passing by*, 1995. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 32. *War* (National Moravian-Silesian Theatre Ostrava, 2002, directed by L. Golat).

Photo B. Macháčová. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 33. *The Smile II*, 2012. Collection of the Artist.

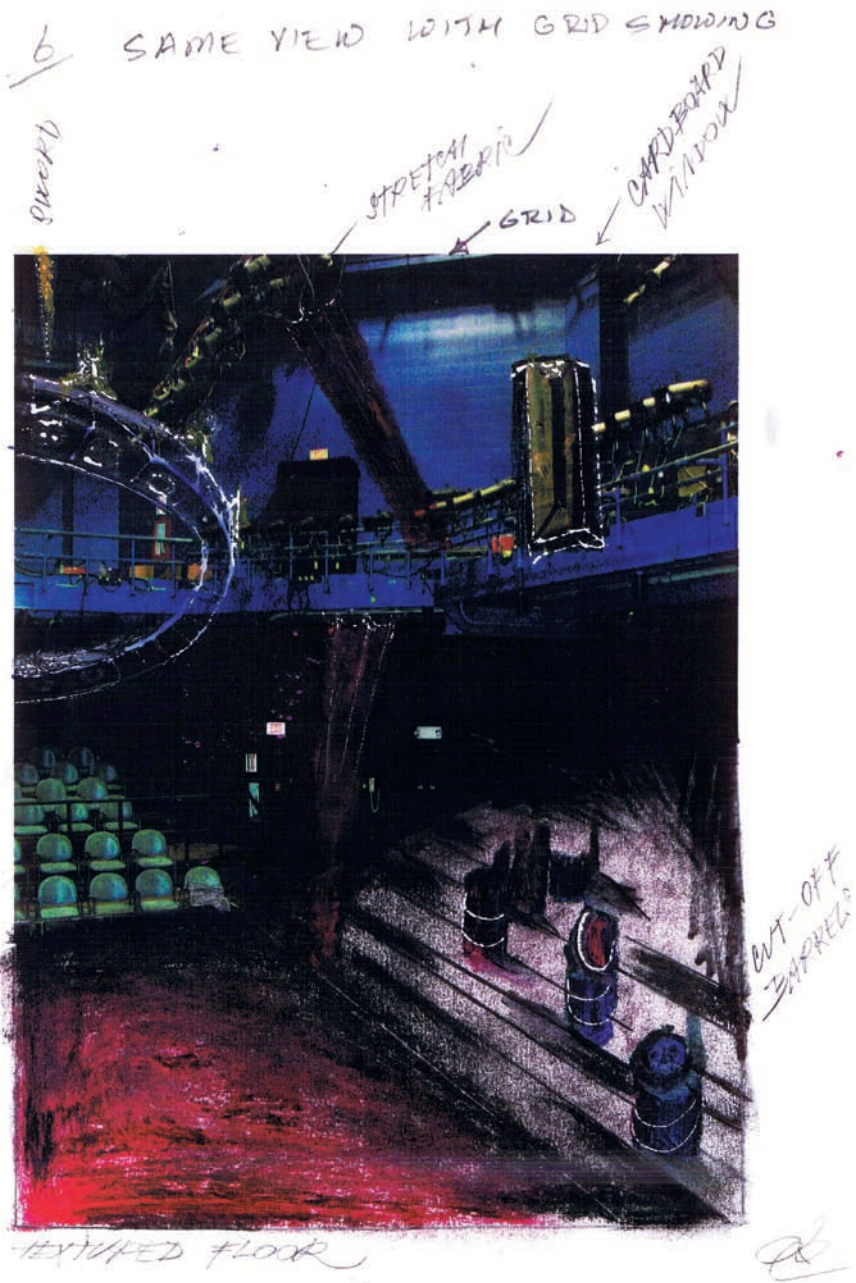


Fig. 34. *Richard III* (Center Theatre, University of Toledo, 2004, directed by S.O. Rowlands). Private Collection.



Fig. 35. *Richard III* (Center Theatre, University of Toledo, 2004, directed by S. O. Rowlands)

Photo Jakyung Seo. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 36. *Cherry Orchard* (The Ohio State University Lima, directed by J. Brandesky, 2004).

Photo M. Pravdová. Collection of the Artist.

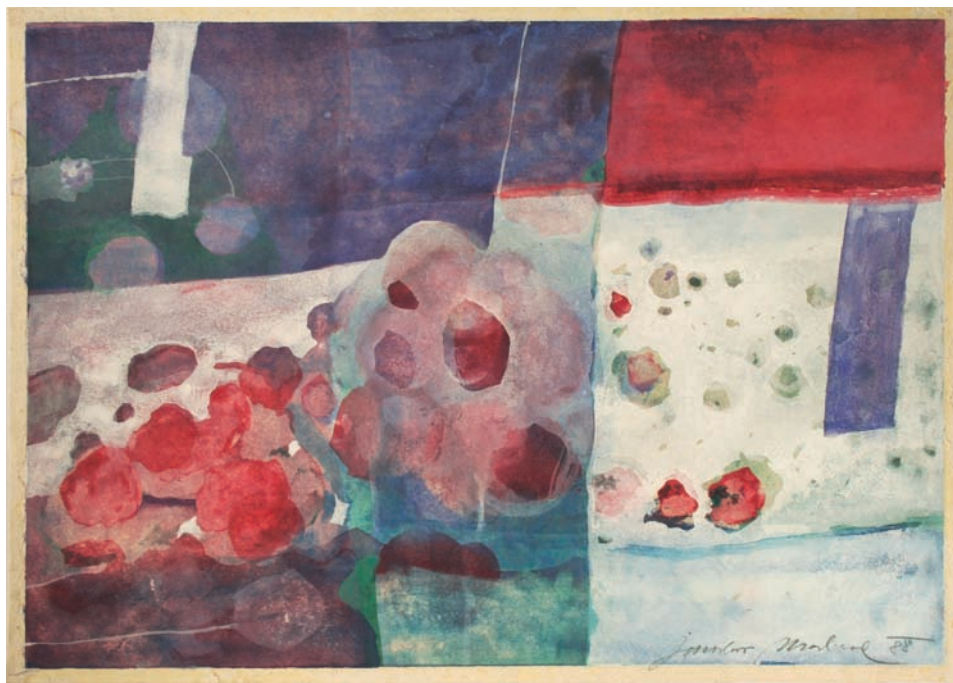


Fig. 37. *Mid Day in June*, 1988. Private Collection.



Fig. 38. *Cosi fan Tutte* (National Moravian-Silesian Theatre Ostrava, 2006, directorial concept by L. Golat, directed by C. Or). Private Collection.



Fig. 39. *Cymbeline* (City Theatre Zlín, 1996, directed by I. Balada). Photo J. Regal. Collection of the Artist.



Fig. 40. *Rusalka* (Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, 2007, directed by L. Golat).
Photo M. Pravdová. Collection of the Artist.

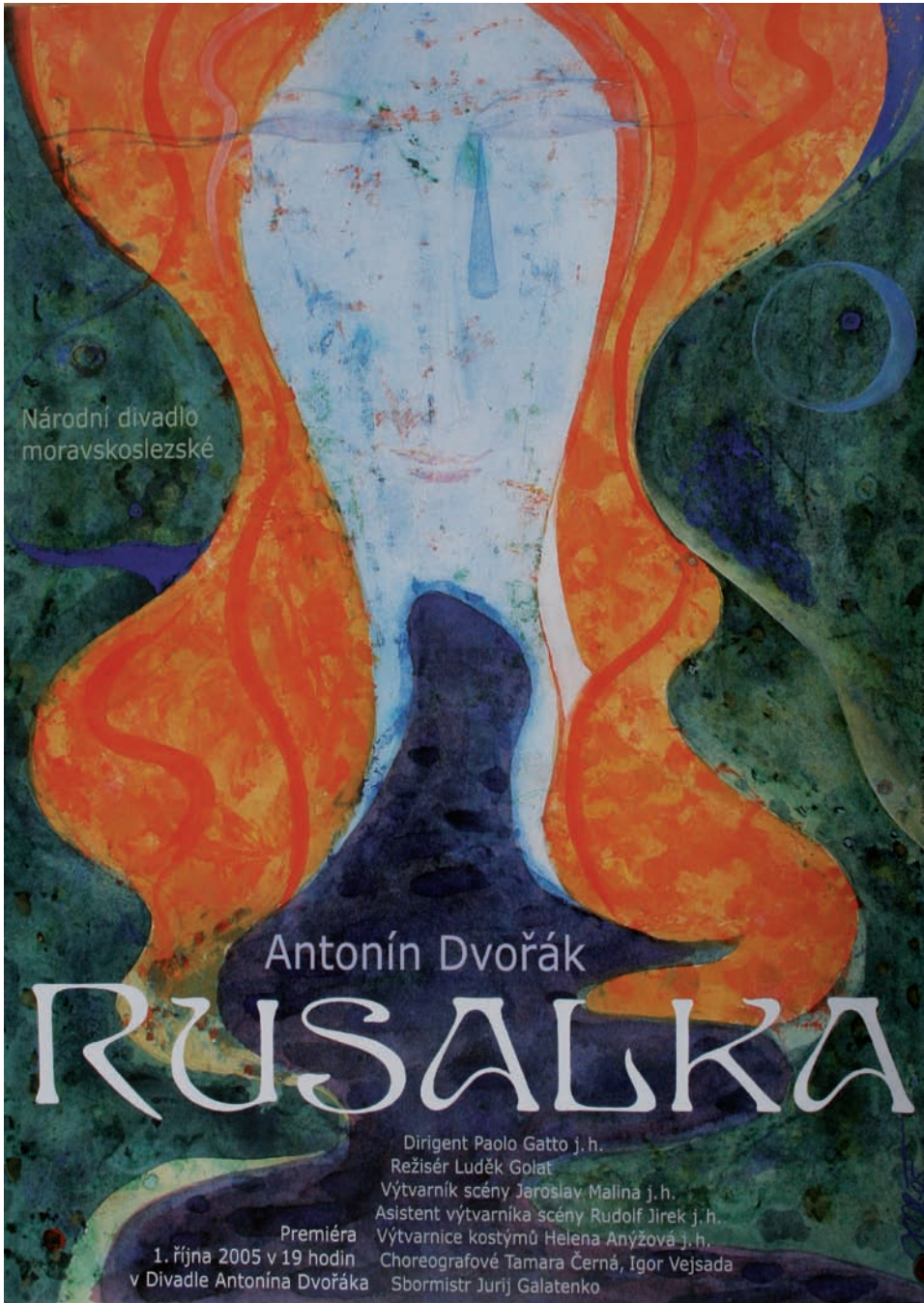


Fig. 41. *Rusalka* (poster, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre Ostrava, 2006, directed by L. Golač).

Collection of the Artist.

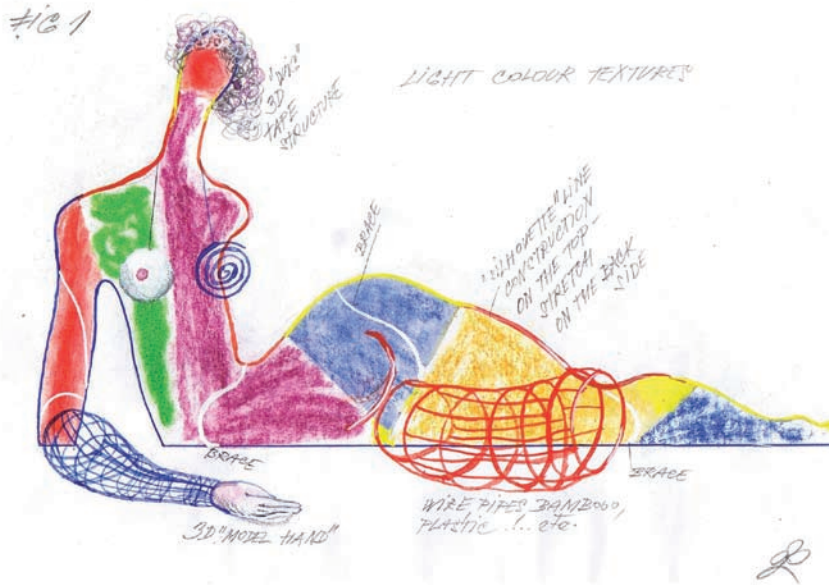


Fig. 42. fig 1. (The Prague Fringe, 2010, directed by Bruce Hermann). Private Collection.



Fig. 43. T. G. M. (Studio Ypsilon Prague, 2010, directed by J. Schmid). Photo P. Vácha. Collection of the Artist.