**PRESS RELEASE**

**Michal Gabriel: Yogis**

**Curator:** Mgr. Lucia Pangrácová

**Date:** 23rd September – 11th November 2016

**Vernissage:** 22nd September 2016 at 6 PM

**Location:** White & Weiss Contemporary Art

Grösslingová 50, Bratislava

**Opening hours:** Tuesday - Friday, 1 – 6 PM

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Michal Gabriel (1960) is an artist currently best known for his traditional figurative statues. He creates sculptural objects while lending them a classical quality. The very first works of Michal Gabriel either employ expressively energetic forms or are stylised statues that bear witness to his admiration of the sculptures of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. What is characteristic for his statues from his early days is his affinity to archetypes, nature and mysticism.

He is one of the founding members of the artistic grouping *Tvrdohlaví* (The Stubborn Ones), who left an indelible mark in the world of Czech visual arts. The grouping joined forces of a generation of graduates who desired freedom of expression at a time when there was none, but at the same time wanted to stay away from the underground scene. Their divergent creative approaches converged in their penchant for the world of myths and symbols, with a shared love of Italian Neo-Avant-Garde and German Neo-Expressionism.

Michal Gabriel has been on a mission to find a coherent form capturing the spatial relations, working with all the structures natural materials offer. Both human and animal statues are highly stylised and cast using the author’s unique patented method. The method involves a technology processing artificial resin imprinting it with the structures of walnut and peanut shells, acorn caps, peach pits and other natural materials. The structures of these natural materials not only serve decorative purposes, but create a deluge of shapes that are seemingly alike yet not identical, just as nature intended. This institutes an order close to nature upon his statues.

The author created several sculptural cycles using the structure of natural materials: pack of seven animals, nine predators, five sharks, four horses, thirteen men – players and five female figures in yoga poses. While they may stand very well on their own as individual objects independent of each other, they may also be joined into units or free sculptural groups.

Michal Gabriel uses traditional techniques to create his statues, yet does not shy away from delving into new avenues and methods of sculptural expression. At the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Technology in Brno he founded a digital sculpture studio, using 3D technologies for modelling not bound by the materials used. The technologies are not merely tools, but shape the very essence of the object and yield unprecedented results, while preserving the continuity of author’s previous creations.

Whether employing tried-and-tested sculptural methods or using ground-breaking technologies, Michal Gabriel has always strived towards capturing the substance that is permanent and forever encoded in the circle of life. Gabriel’s sculptures are a bold testimony of the times both past and future.

**Michal Gabriel** was born in 1960 in Prague. He studied at Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague’s Žižkov district and later continued his studies of sculpture at Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In 1987 he co-founded the artistic grouping *Tvrdohlaví* (The Stubborn Ones) which operated until 1991. In 1995, he was awarded the prestigious J. Chalupecký award. Since 1998, he’s been at the helm of the Sculpture 1 Studio at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Technology in Brno. He was appointed professor in 2001.

Michal Gabriel is a prominent figure among Czech sculptors, pursuing the interaction between object and the surroundings where the object has been temporarily or permanently exists. Many of his free creations are iconic examples of their times. His works may be also found in public spaces, such as the monumental entrance of Veletržní palác (Trade Fair Palace) in Prague, the statue of a winged leopard mounted above the entrance of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic at the Prague Castle, a group of four stallions adorning the cascade in Dejvice, the interior of the pavilion of the Indonesian jungle in Prague’s ZOO, the sculpture of Pegasus in Barrandov or the statue titled “The Pack” guarding the front of the community centre Trutnov.

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