

Viktor Dedek: Walking Speed, Table Height



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Today I dreamed of an object. I remember it precisely. It was similar to the low tables they use for tea ceremonies. It was made of varnished light yellow wood. The block was about forty by twenty five by ten centimetres, only the side walls protruded, like when you press down on a block of gelatine. The top surface was bordered by a small wooden ledge, about two centimetres high; essentially a little fence. It was interrupted in the middle of the longer side, and in the gap lay a green plastic card. Thanks also to its colour, the low quality cast covered in cylindrical rods resembled a carpet imitation of grass. It was no larger than a business card and it fit into the gap precisely.

It does not happen very often that the precise form of an object I have never seen in physical reality is imprinted so firmly into my memory. I desired to encounter it again. I did not, however, know its inner workings; its construction. That is part of the reasoning behind the decision to leave its construction to someone else – have him do what I remember and nothing else.

At first, the carpenter was flustered by my demands. I recounted the entire story twice over. He spent a few moments in amused consideration

and finally decided to get on board with “my game”.

I had to describe the object to him many times. Words were not enough, so I gestured: I showed him the object with my empty hands, as if I were holding or touching it. The carpenter stopped me to take measurements, writing everything down. I didn't underestimate the choice of wood, colour, and surface finish – I wanted it to be perfect. Just the way I'd seen it in the dream.

As I was leaving the carpenter's workshop that evening, I believed the matter would proceed according to plan – not only had I supplied the most detailed information I could, but I even managed to transmit some of my enthusiasm to the carpenter.

It worked. The precision was almost unbelievable. When I first saw the object, I felt as if I might be in a lucid dream. I was suddenly uncertain. It was him. I was even holding him in my hands, as if

he'd stayed in them after I'd woken up. No imitation, this was him!

I took him home and placed him on the floor. I started calling him the little table. I walked past him, enjoying the confusion of my consciousness.

If I stood above the little table, I felt too far away. I sat down and stared at him, half absorbed, half in thought – what is this?

The problems appeared eventually. Dust. I didn't know how to care for the little table. After only a few days, the shine had gone, especially on the top surface with the fence. I realised I hadn't even touched it. The idea of – for example – wiping it down, however, made me uneasy; it would be like wiping down a surface of water.

The grey layer of dust kept drawing my gaze. It bulked up. It was beautifully whole and no longer bothered me in the least – I successfully put the entire cleaning affair to rest.

Today, upon closer inspection, I discovered that the dust surface inside the fence – so far untouched – is not seamless. Kneeling, I attempted to identify the cause of these imperfections. At first I thought of fauna, perhaps insects. But the irregularities lacked the system these traces usually possess. I was inspecting the situation from up close, and even though I was breathing carefully, I saw movement on the velvet surface. At that moment, I realised that these aren't traces on dust – they're traces of dust. Whenever I walked by, opened the window, or did anything else that caused the air to move, the dust was set into motion, its thick layer soon cracking. The most recent cracks allowed one to see the glistening wood; the older ones were already dimmer.

Thanks to the cracks, the dust surface displays several hues. A day is enough to make the light's path to the wood considerably more difficult.

Today, I washed the plastic card in the sink. When it dried off, it was new and beautiful once again. I put it back. Its cleanliness was in contrast to the dull rest of the object. It seemed like a dam holding back the dust surface. I decided to use a wet rag and wipe down at least the bulging side walls and the fence. The notion of a dust reservoir became even clearer.

I kept returning to the object. Its fluid form fascinated me. I stopped calling it the little table – it wasn't appropriate.

Whenever I walked past, I was nervous. But it was no longer the pleasant confusion of the beginning – there were specific reasons now: I was trying to avoid any intervention into the dust surface, but the higher it got, the more sensitive it became to the flow of air. I decided to move the object onto my work table. It's right by the window, but that can stay closed until a different solution is found.

In addition to the calmer air, this new position also offers other advantages. When it was on the floor, I had to bend over and kneel down uncomfortably. Many times, I had to interrupt an observation due to discomfort. Now it's the other way round: the chair at my table is so comfortable I often lose track of time. The world below the surface level of the table seems to disappear. Thanks to the adjustable seat height, I only need to move a finger and my eyes are suddenly at a different level of the object. It began to seem that one's height is not defined by the length of one's body – if I am sitting at a table, I feel smaller, and de facto I am, as my size is defined by the distance from the surface on which I am operating.

Successively, I tested all the available levels. I opted for the one in which the table is at the level of my nose and mouth. After all, the only thing I occupy myself with at the table is the object. From this perspective, I couldn't see the dusty surface. Only the rounded sides; wooden walls covered by a thick and transparent layer of varnish. I could examine the drawing of the wood from close proximity. The bright yellow strips whitened in the sun; the darker lines seemed to glitter with mica. I felt the sunlight getting through. It reached under the varnish, sinking in and heating up the wood. The closer my hand got, the more I felt the heat, until suddenly my hand touched the cold and hard surface of the varnish.

I sit still, my mind moves instead of my body. So far, I had paced back and forth in front of the object, barely touching the arched wall. Occasionally, I would walk along the illuminated wall running to the back and then turn around again. But today, for the first time, I ventured further out – past the back corner along the wall side. The sun lays heavily into the wood there; I was looking forward to the heat reaching my face from both sides. I stopped mid-journey: I realised that I had found myself in a place which I couldn't see with my own eyes.

I continue. Every time during my walk when I reach the gap in the fence, I stop and look in. The plastic plate is level with my eyes, my hands resting on top of it. I look through its green leaves into the dust. I can stick with it for a long time, even if nothing is happening. From time to time, I'll take a wet rag and wipe down at least the top of the side walls. I can barely reach the top of the fence, so I've stopped trying.

Today, something strange happened. I was observing the dust through the leaves as usual, when suddenly, the dust surface moved. I got a fright, but I continued observing tensely. I got up

on my tip toes and pressed the palms of my hands to the plate to hoist myself up. Nothing happened. I began doubting whether I had really seen the movement. But of course, as I stared into the surface, I discovered it wasn't the same as I remembered it. I persisted, but I couldn't figure out what had changed. I dropped down onto my heels, removed my hands from the plate, and spent a moment simply observing my fingerprints as they evaporated from the green plastic.

I can't help it. I have to set all of my mind to it. Continue. I look through the leaves. I draw them apart. I approach the grey sea. The high grass of the plastic leaves has closed up behind me; I'm on the edge of the shore. I am now waist deep in the sea – I don't even know how I got here. It is neither hot nor cold. I can't see the bottom, nor can I tell what I am standing on. I try to take a step forward. I descend and the shiny stones reflect the sound of my footsteps...

Viktor Dedek

Text edit: Lukáš Csicsely



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2. 8. — 2. 9. 2018

opening:

1. 8. 2018,
18:00

curator:

Eva Riebová

Galerie Kostka

The description of a dream is an opening line of Viktor Dedek's literary text, which together with sculptural objects and video projections creates thoughtful and poetic exhibition. The resultant installation operates in a multi-level space. Fully awake, Dedek walks through the memory path of his dreams, observing their environments from a number of angles: marshes covered in mist, metro stations, abandoned buildings reminiscent of market stalls. The artist has an entire collection of dream environments – or rather, a digital archive. Rather than having pencil and paper lying on his bedside table, Dedek records his dreams into 3D software immediately after waking up. The dream settings, which borrow aesthetic features from computer games and virtual reality, are then transferred to the gallery space. The table is the central motif of the exhibition. Dedek ascribes to it the symbolism of work, of a concentrated state, but also entertainment in the form of video games. The table is multiplied and transformed across the exhibition space. The workspace gradually transforms into less specific objects reminiscent of game-play elements: metal ramps, platforms, footbridges, arenas. Simply moving about in the exhibition space evokes movement in a virtual environment, the direction and progress of which is precisely delineated by its author, while the speed of movement and angle of sight can be determined by the visitor.



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Viktor Dedek's exhibition project was chosen as part of an international open call, one of over 250 registered proposals for the Kostka Gallery.

Viktor Dedek (*1993) studies at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague (VŠUP), in the sculpture studio led by Dominik Lang and Edith Jeřábková. He has also spent time as an exchange student at the Universität für angewandte Kunst in Vienna, at the Academy of Visual Arts in Prague in the studio of Tomáš Vaněk, and at the visiting artist studio at VŠUP with Marie de Bruynerolle. His work brings together sculptural principles with interests reaching over into literature, theatre and performance, computer games, and virtual reality.