

JIŘÍ TRNKA'S GARDEN II

EXHIBITION CONCEPT

authors: Jan Trnka, Matyáš Trnka, 2016



The ambition of the *Trnka's Garden II* project is to revive *The Garden*, the most beloved and successful of Jiří Trnka's children's books. The story of five little boys who on their way to school discover an ancient garden, full of unexpected encounters and happy adventures, is as entertaining as it is inspiring. Aside from over twenty editions both home and abroad, it has also been adapted for the stage several times, and made into a five-part animated film. This project conceives *The Garden* as a multimedia installation for museums and galleries, as well as other exhibition spaces. But as the subtitle (ingenious cyberscope) suggests, it is no ordinary exhibition. The authors of the script and graphics fully respect the author of the book, and at the same time they are aware that merely extracting the characters from the novel and moving them into the exhibition space would not be enough to satisfy today's young generation and children, which is why they incorporate modern technologies to develop the main characters' story, making the visual and literary quality of the source text fully stand out. Emphasis is placed on interactivity, activity, and action, with plenty of animation and audiovisual effects. Still, those who know and love the original Trnka book will not be disappointed. On the contrary: they will meet all of the

book's main characters: the gnome who is made of plaster, the malicious tomcat, the good-hearted elephants, the wise-beyond-her-size whale, and the singing pack of dogs. The only creatures they won't meet are the boys, because the visitors themselves become the little boys. This requires no particular effort from little boys (and girls), and just a little imagination on the part of their parents and grandparents.

The following project, namely *Trnka's Garden 2*, was created with the support of Pilsen 2015, European capital of culture, and was also launched in Pilsen in January 2015. Following a successful premiere, which was visited by over twenty thousand people in 3 months, the exhibition was also executed in the Sladovna in Pisek (20 000 visitors in 4 months), and in Malostranska Beseda in Prague, again with an extraordinary response (over 25 000 visitors). In the first three years following the project's first conception we have added new stimulating attractions, as described below. Thanks to these three executions in different environments, the project has gained variability variability as well as operational stability. The project was nominated for the ARAS award (Association of directors and screenwriters) for audiovisuals.

Aims of the project:

- **reviving Trnka's work, his poetics and graphic genius**
- **developing children's imagination, shaping their taste through fun activities**
- **creating a space which necessitates active children's participation. Only they can bring the Garden to life!**
- **target group: children from 4 to 13, families, schools, and pre-schools**

Online presentation:

www.zahrada2.cz/en/

Video extract:

<http://vimeo.com/84570757>

Password:

2015

Videoreport (czech):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rapz1dJcobl>



THE GARDEN – SURROUNDINGS

situation:

When the visitors walk through the “gate,” they find themselves in a forgotten garden full of mysterious nooks and crannies and unusual props. A large chocolate crab, wrapped in tinfoil, hangs from the sky on a fishhook which the boys use to try and lure the tomcat; there is also the cast plaster gnome, standing on a flower hill. Like the rest of the props he appears to be enormous, but that’s just an illusion. In fact, the visitor of the Garden has shrunk. The adventure is about to begin...

tech. note:

The illusion of the Garden is created using stylised bushes, trees, and visually enhanced double walls. With the help of these elements, the walls in particular, the space can be divided as needed: A single-path labyrinth from entrance to exit, a roundabout leading back to the entrance, etc. The wall is composed of units; each unit comprises a board suspended between two 3D columns which ensure its stability. The floor is partly covered with fake grass to muffle the sound of footsteps. An important feature contributing to the garden’s ambience is a specific theatre illumination for which windows have to be blacked out. Thanks to its considerable versatility, the project can be executed in almost any space, in a large single room or a few smaller ones, in basements, attics, etc. The optimal size of the areal overall is about 600 square metres, the minimal space required is 300.



BOOKS – GUIDES

By books we mean the large double-sided boards designed in the vein of the original Garden book. This book has been enlarged multiple times and replicated, and it opens on a different page each time. The book-boards are ten in total, stationed at different places – the first one even before the entrance into the exhibition space. They serve multiple purposes. They introduce visitors to the original illustrations by Trnka, briefly summarize the story, and guide visitors through the exhibition space to the individual attractions. If an attraction proves too difficult to figure out, the books give advice on how to activate it (e.g., how to wake up the tomcat sleeping in the barrel).



ATTRACTIONS

The attractions are the key installations. They are the backbone of the exhibition, and simultaneously present the main characters from the book – the gnome, the tomcat, the elephants, the whale, etc. There are eight of these key installations, and their exaggerated pseudoscientific names should point to the fact that these are serious fun machines, which to an extent they are. These inventions are an innovative combination of material, audiovisual, and interactive elements. They have been designed so that the child is occupied mentally as much as physically, and so that different senses are engaged. The Racecat engages physical ability and dexterity, the Barkphone engages hearing, the Handmaze engages touch and spatial orientation, etc.

tech. note:

The Handmaze is a fun tool for the child to try out their journey to the book's characters before entering the space proper. This is why it should be placed right after the entrance into the exhibition space, or, if possible, in front of it.

1



HANDMAZE

situation:

The Handmaze is a stylized map of the Garden in the shape of a large, horizontally installed, finger-walkable labyrinth. This journey is enhanced by the element of play. The goal is to find the right way to the five shining pictures with the abovementioned inhabitants of the garden. To get to the end, the handwalker needs to be dexterous, and have good spatial orientation. It is not easy, also because the tomcat will jump at you and scare you if you choose the wrong path, you could “drown” in the lake on your way to the whale, etc.

tech. note:

The Handmaze is a fun tool for the child to try out their journey to the book’s characters before entering the space proper. This is why it should be placed right after the entrance into the exhibition space, or, if possible, in front of it.



2.

SKYWATCHER

situation:

Visitors find themselves in the shadows of colossal trees. The surroundings are peaceful, inviting, drowsy like a summer evening. The garden buzzes with insects, the leaves whisper through the breeze. The visitors sit or lie down in the grass, and when they look up through the colossal trees' branches they catch glimpses of a cloud-sheep, birdie, butterfly, dragonfly, bumblebee or a paper kite floating by.

tech. note:

This is a musically underscored animated video, projected onto a circular screen which is suspended underneath the ceiling. If the height of the ceiling allows it (4m), the projector can be placed right in one of the bushes. If the ceiling is lower, the mirror (the well) can be used to reflect the projection, which will also create the optical illusion of the ceiling being much higher. Unlike other attractions, this one is relaxing and slow, without interactive elements.



3.

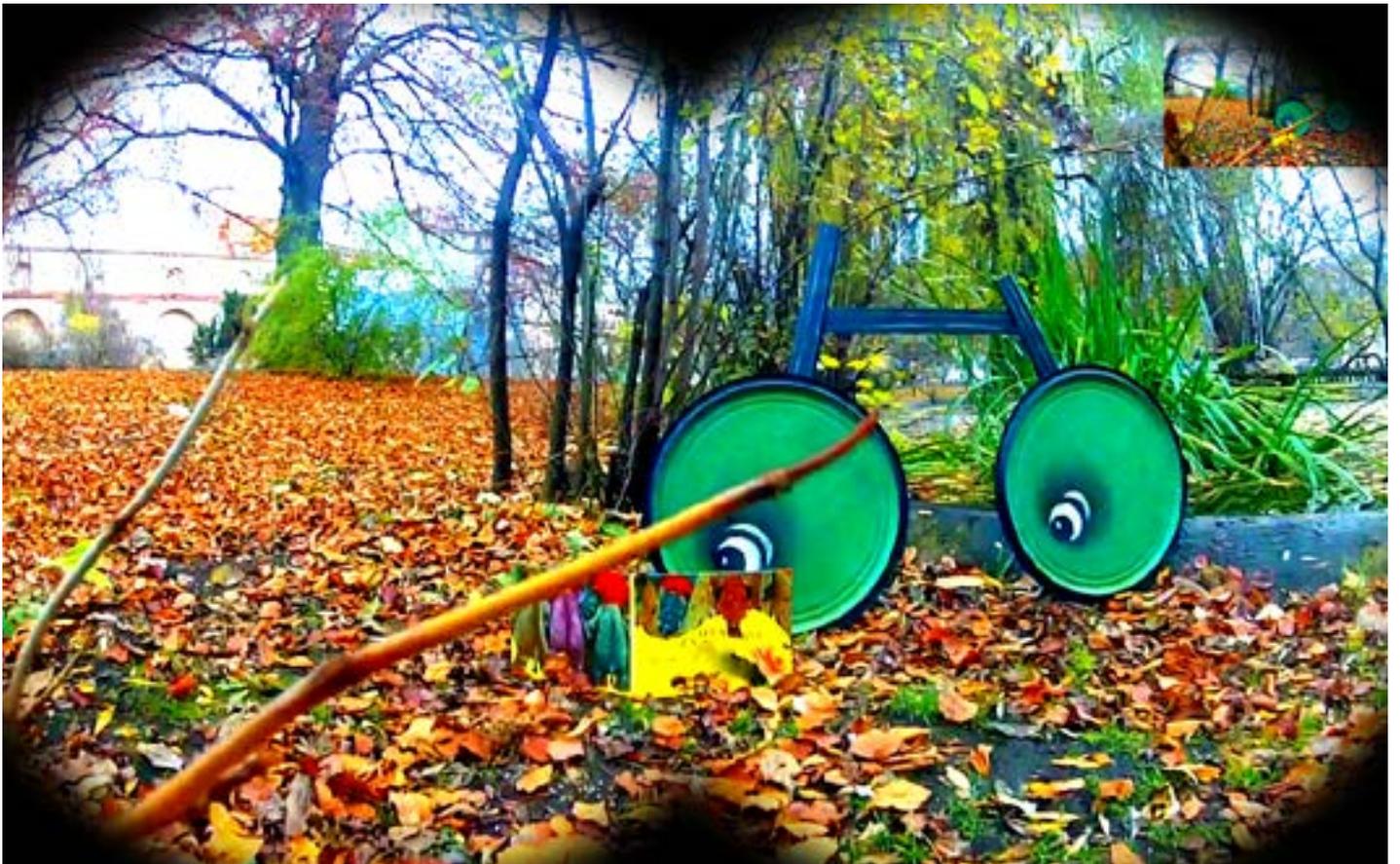
GNOMESCOPE

situation:

There is an absent-minded cast plaster garden gnome standing on a flower hill. He stands motionless, as a garden gnome should; in his cast head, however, a dream unfolds about freedom, movement, life. Literally. The gnome can be entered from the stairs behind him, and visitors can see inside his head and join him on a lively gnome run through the real, unanimated garden and beyond.

tech. note:

The gnome's dream is a cyclical video filmed using a 3D camera in a real environment. It is a hectic run through a real garden, where the gnome finds enlarged artefacts from Trnka's illustrations: lost buttons, wind-up keys, whale glasses, a rusty garden gate, and so on. In this case, visual poetics is preferred over comedy. The visual experience is enhanced by the screening of the film into the stereoscopic glasses in the gnome's head.



4 ●

RACECAT

situation:

The child finds herself at the edge of an open space, a meadow, in the middle of which there is an old barrel with a sleeping tomcat, and a few tricycles lying around. After the child wakes him up, the tomcat hops on a tricycle and tries to escape. The children's task is to catch the tomcat on tricycles or on foot. If they succeed, the roles change and the tomcat starts chasing them. It is a paraphrase of the children's game of tag.

tech. note:

Based on the children's feedback this attraction can be considered quite adventurous. It is basically a computer game, with some of its elements materializing in the exhibition space. The garden, the tomcat, and his tricycle are animated, while the barrel and the children's tricycles are real. The game is simple and peaceful, but requires dexterity, quick action and a bit of thinking, too. (The child should be able to figure out that she needs to shout into the barrel to wake up the tomcat.) Spatially, the Racecat is the most complicated of all installations. The animations are projected onto the floor using two projectors, the screening itself takes about 6 x 4 metres.



5.

FLYPORT

situation:

At one point the child will stumble upon a number of peculiar helmets with big insect-like eyes. He puts one on, and finds himself in the world of flies. His sight shatters into dozens of small hexagons in monochrome, and his ears ring with persistent buzzing faintly resembling a melody.

tech. note:

In the book, the friendly fly is an important “character”. She is there to help the boys find out what’s on in the town’s theatre. In *The Garden 2*, she has no such duty. The fly helmet on the child’s head is just a fun simulation of an insect’s perception of the world. Still, it is a favourite with the children.



6 ●

ELEPHANTHEATRE

situation:

In one of the Garden's corners, the visitor suddenly finds herself in a real theatre. The interiors are entirely based on Trnka's illustrations from the book, including the stage, painted curtains with peacocks, and armchairs numbered one to five. When she sits down in one of them, a gong sounds, the curtains open, and five elephants enter the stage to entertain her. The elephants are trying really hard, but they are clumsy actors beyond help. They get all of their gags wrong as they trample about and demolish everything. The spectator enjoys herself – despite, or perhaps thanks to, all of this.

tech. note:

The elephant theatre is in fact a succession of animated outcomes, sketches and gags projected onto a large screen together with the stage. The elephants don't act out the Little Red Sleeping Hood as they do in the book, instead they carry out a series of brief sketches inspired by various genres of human entertainment from the past and present. Their act is a gentle & hard parody of circus, puppet theatre, old film, computer games, and so on. There are fifteen sketches altogether, each lasts 30 to 60 seconds. The visitor plays the theatre by taking a seat in one of the five folding theatre seats with inbuilt starters.



7

BARKPHONE

situation:

The visitor finds himself in a stylized dog's den in the open air. Scattered all around are giant dog bones, toys, pink pillows to sit on. On a raised spot there is a painted closet with a large oven made from an old gramophone. The closet doors are open but you can't see inside, the insides are hidden behind boards, and through the holes left by missing knots one can see dog eyes winking. In front of the closet there is a stand with a keyboard and a Start button. Once the visitor presses Start, the boards go up, and the creaking mechanics puts eight animated dogs into the closet. The individual dogs respond to the pressing of buttons by moving and barking.

tech. note:

In this case the animated mechanics of the dog orchestra is located in a real closet. It is clear from the situation described above that this installation is mostly about hearing – relative pitch in particular. The number of keys corresponds to the number of picture dogs, whose barks have been carefully tuned by the sound technician into the eight tones of the scale, and so it is possible to play simple 1-octave melodies on the barkphone.



8.

AQWHALIUM

situation:

The whole wall area, ideally a whole separate room, is filled with a large picture of the “learned” whale snoozing in the lake, surrounded with packs of newspapers and magazines. When the unsuspecting child approaches her, the whale wakes up, blinks at him through her glasses, and showers him with a waterfall of words. The whale is a vain creature considering herself the centre of the universe, which is reflected in her speech. With an unpleasant teacher’s voice and a rather archaic vocabulary, she spews one lecture after another on the subject of whales and their biological, cultural, historical, etc., significance.

tech. note:

The ambitions of this installation are not just visual, they are mainly literary. The aim is to remind visitors that the Garden, aside from its visual merits, is also very unique in terms of language and verbal humour. The waterfall of whale speak is revived using a simple animation and collages illustrating the content of each lecture. Eight of the lectures have been prepared, each lasting about four minutes. At the end of the lecture the whale falls asleep and has to be woken up again. This is done automatically by the sensor. There are two linguistic mutations. The Czech whale has been dubbed by Jitka Molavcová, the English one by Tonya Graves.



9.

SANDBOX

situation:

In a remote part the child finds a sandbox with scattered keys, buttons, a chess knight and other objects the boys in the book used to try and open the rusty garden gate. While the sandbox is real, the objects are a pictorial illusion. Raking in the sand makes these objects disappear while new ones appear, only to let other objects take their place, and so on.

tech. note:

If it is installed with precision, this attraction can be very impressive. A unique and sophisticated technology of multilayered screening has the effect of a magic trick. However, a license has to be obtained in order to use it, and so the Sandbox cannot be considered part of the guaranteed installation.





OTHER ATTRACTIONS AND PROPS.

The main installations described above are complemented by a number of additional attractions, most of them physical, where children can use any built-up energy. Here is the list:

CLOTH OBJECTS

– all kinds of keys, buttons, folding hats, a harmonica, a chess knight and other objects we mentioned in the Sandbox description. These have been multiply enlarged, soft so that the children can't hurt themselves, and scattered all around the exposition.

JUNGLE GYM

– A jungle gym in the shape of a stylized bush has and a tall fence around 2x2m. The child can climb inside and out, or put shaped objects (see above) in their corresponding holes.

SWINGS

– look like colourful buttons, and they only operate within a limited trajectory for safety reasons.

CHOCOLATE CRAB

– stuffed and coated with imitation leather. Same function as the swing.

WHALE GLASSES

– enormous glasses made of metal pipes, hanging from the ceiling. Can be used as gym equipment by kids, or as a two-seat for the adult visitors.

SPIDERWEB

– weaved out of strong ropes, can be climbed.



MERCHANDISING

The sale of souvenirs and objects at the stand or cash desk, this is up to the organizers. However, the authors of the Garden2 project reserve the right to participate in the decision making – the composition and appearance of objects that will be sold there. It is possible for us to fully prepare the merchandise selection on request, including:

- 1/ Supplying and installation of the sales stand-cash desk, and all the equipment needed to exhibit the goods
- 2/ Supplying the stand throughout the duration of the exhibition with souvenirs designed and manufactured exclusively for the Garden2 project (T-shirts, badges, stickers, and so on)
- 3/ Supplying other merchandise with Trnka designs, produced by studio-trnka (books, postcards, wooden cubes, etc.)



ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Jiří Trnka

Versatile artist and creator Jiří Trnka (1912-1969) is known and praised mainly as the author of many animated films. They were seen as a counterbalance to the hitherto unsurpassed monopoly of American filmmakers, especially Walt Disney. He adapted many classic works for film, such as H. C. Andersen, J. Hašek (The Good Soldier Švejk), G. Boccaccio, and W. Shakespeare. The list of awards Trnka's animated films received at film festivals in France, Italy, England and other countries would fill quite a few pages.

Unlike his work for film, Jiří Trnka's illustrations first gained fame at home. At the age of thirty he had already written over two dozen books, and was one of the most sought-after illustrators. We are not exaggerating when we say that whole generations have grown up on Trnka's illustrations, many return to them nostalgically trip down as adults and in old age. His most famous works eventually won audiences abroad, his books were translated into

all world languages, and he lived to receive acclaim abroad as well. In 1968, shortly before his death, he received the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen award, which is given once every two years, and is the highest achievement in the field of children book illustration.

The Garden is his best-known work, written and illustrated by him.

Jan Trnka

Ak.Mal. (Academy Painter) Jan Trnka was born in 1956 in Prague. After graduating from the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design (VSUP) in Prague, he worked for a while in applied graphics, contributed to film and television work as a visual artist, and did a lot of creative work, especially drawing and painting. He has exhibited in the Czech Republic and abroad (Prague, Olomouc, Bratislava, Munchen). Apart from graphic work he is also a writer and curator. Author of big multimedia exhibition *Ateliér Jiřího Trnky*

Matyáš Trnka

Matyáš Trnka (b. 1981) is a graduate of Animation at Prague's FAMU (Film Academy). He works as animator, visual artist, director and graphic designer, and is

the author of several short films, also the theme of the 11th International Festival of Animated Films, Anifest. He is also known for creating the first Czech interactive comics based on another popular children book (www.tinybut.com). He teaches at Vyšší odborná škola Václava Hollara in Prague.
Portfolio www.matyastrnka.cz