

## **Synopsis: "Trafáčka - Temple of Freedom"**

In the autumn of 2006, a group of artists who had all graduated from various artistic schools, leased a partly burnt factory space for a symbolic rent. Formerly, it was used as a storage place and repair shop for electrical transformers. But originally the building was erected in Prague's District of Vysočany in 1921 as a power switching and transforming unit. In 1936, on the occasion of the celebration of the 80th birthday of Nicola Tesla, it was renamed Tesla's Switching and Converter Station. In May 1945 the Allies hit the building during the bombing raid on Prague's industrial areas and thus, quite inadvertently, made it possible for the building to be rebuilt and take on the shape and appearance in which the group of young artists found it when they took it over from Prague Real Estate Administration (PSN), owned by the bankrupt banker and businessman Václav Skala.

Without any experience whatsoever, this group of five young artists took over a large industrial site. Their intention was to create a cultural centre open to all forms of art. A limiting factor was the lack of funds and, at first, the limited life of the project. Given the presumed demolition of the building and planned development of an office centre, the landlord offered a mere one year lease term.

Officially, "Trafáčka", as the space was called, was opened on December 1, 2006 on the occasion of a joint exhibition by all the residents at that time. Jakub Nepraš, Jan Kaláb, Michal Cimala, Roman Týc and Martin Káňa approached Blanka Čermáková, who became Trafáčka's producer, asking her to cooperate with them. Thanks to her participation a fixed exhibition and workshop schedule was set, and Trafáčka gradually started to become recognised as a significant centre for the presentation of young artists on both a national and an international level. The growing number of successful projects by individual members of Trafáčka contributed to the development of its local prestige in the world of art. On the other hand, the different views and objectives of the artists started to collide. It was particularly apparent in the initial period when Trafáčka used to be closely connected with the artist group Ztohoven, who shot to fame due to projects which attracted the attention of the media, such as the fake nuclear explosion broadcast by Czech Television. The growing intensity of controversies led to the departure of Roman Týc. On the other hand, the landlord extended the lease after the first year, and Citizen's Association Trafáčka gradually started to acquire free apartments in an adjacent block of courtyard balcony apartments. The original tenants were evicted by the Prague Real Estate Administration in various ways, and the empty premises, mostly unfit for housing, got altered by the Trafáčka artists into new studios or apartments for foreign artists.

A significant moment in the life of Trafáčka was the invitation of several of its members to take part in the Shanghai World Expo. Consequently exhibits by Jakub Nepraš and Jan Kaláb were included in the presentation of the Czech Republic at the World Exhibition in China.

Lasting economic recession resulted in the preservation of the building, confined between the streets of Českomoravská, Ocelářská and Kurta Konráda, and so far it has not been demolished, as the original plans for the building called Triangle have been postponed.

Unfortunately, the area in the neighbourhood of Třafačka ended up going a different way. A giant shopping centre was developed simultaneously with the growing significance of the cultural centre. It was completed in the autumn of 2010. The uncertainty connected with the future development made all the founding members of Třafačka leave their studios in 2011.