

In 2018, Kunstmuseum Basel acquired the installation *The EGO Room* by Stano Filko (1937–2015) that comprises 29 objects made by the artist between 1995 and 2010. A year later, the museum received an anonymous donation of further works: *Associations*, a portfolio of 36 graphic works made between 1967 and 1970, half of which are displayed here in vitrines; a hanging work consisting of seven connected PVC panels; two sculptures in the form of a ladder and a rocket; and a drawing. This is the first time these works have been exhibited since their arrival at the museum.

Filko is a key figure in Slovakian conceptual art. In the second half of the 1960s, he began making so-called pneumatic sculptures, as well as designing utopian architectures. In 1965, with the artists Zita Kostrovà and Alex Mlynàrčik, he co-authored the *HAPPSOC Manifesto* on the connection between happenings and society. In the 1980s, he lived in Germany and the United States.

Filko's cosmological visions are portrayed in large-scale environments and installations, in multipart visual and text concepts, and in "cosmograms". The diversity and scale of his output are beyond all measure: architecture, murals, archive materials, videos, kinetic objects, sculptures, drawings and text pictures, prints and graphics, works using found everyday objects, and much more. He is also legendary for the way he dealt with collectors and gallerists: he once refused to open his door to a prospective buyer; instead, he drilled a hole in the wall from inside, through which their conversation was then held.

Beginning in the 1960s, over a period of decades he turned his house in the Slovakian town of Snežienková into a kind of total artwork—like Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*, but twenty-five times larger. Its rooms and objects are organized by color, each standing for a specific "task" with a complex system of chakras devised by the artist: *red* marks the sphere of biology and the body, *green* stands for the political and social relations, *white* is the color of ontology, dealing with philosophical questions of reality and existence, *blue* refers to the cosmos, and *black* symbolizes the domain of the subject, the ego.

Accordingly, the environment on display in a black setting here is called *The EGO Room*. It is not a faithful reconstruction of the black room in Filko's house, but all of the objects on show are taken from that room. Their arrangement, too, is partially based on the original layout. Filko himself

always saw his house as a “storehouse” and called for the objects to be dealt with in different ways based on each specific exhibition context.

The spherical sculpture hung from the ceiling, *The Brain*, contains countless tablets prescribed to Filko after a stroke in the early 2000s. Instead of taking them, he gradually wrapped them in foil because the medication impaired his cognitive capacities.

Filko subsequently extended his system of chakras to seven colors by adding *orange* and *yellow* (see the work on display here, *SF System*), and later to twelve with the addition of *violet*, *pink*, *silver*, *gold*, and *transparent* (see the free handout with the artist’s color scheme). In the exhibition, all twelve chakras/colors are represented, for example by the rungs and uprights of the *12 Chakra Colors Ladder* (2000). *Gold*, the tenth chakra in Filko’s system, can also be found on the rocket-shaped sculpture.

“I would call my work psycho-philosophy. Philosophy deals with letters and language, but the psycho part is visual.” (Stano Filko)

(Text by Søren Grammel)