

There were only pictures left.¹ Pages of landscapes, cityscapes, people in costumes, lepers, fields, roads, armadillos, industries, ferries - and always that same shiny silver car. One of the two travellers, maybe, examining a blade of grass or pushing their car out of the mud with the help of some locals and an ox. Perplexed and engaged, the more time we spent staring at the images, the more inexhaustible with content they became. We resisted researching at first – becoming keen listeners, spectators, jotting notes, like travelers ourselves, deep within a forest of what was inside – and outside the book. We began by cataloguing the sometimes banal, sometimes bizarre correlations that arose, such as the category of “*Solitary Man with Nature*”, a heading that contained no less than 14 images of figures posing alone within a landscape.

Later on, after commencing some tentative research, a friend explained that in post-war Czechoslovakia, the two world-travellers had been not simply explorers, but unwitting folk heroes, symbols of Czech ingenuity and resourcefulness, and their journals and films became a portal to the outside for many who felt cut off by the repressive Communist system. For us, they were captivating as amateurs² *par excellence*, and for everything we learned, we had twice as many questions. Eventually, we followed them to a small museum (which no longer exists) in Zlín, Czech Republic. We became intrigued by the museum’s curious methods of display: triangular display cases that, like odd shaped microphones or lighthouses, seemed to broadcast broken transmissions of fragmented narratives.

Like our experience of their story, this project is filled with cracks, spaces and severances. *Solitary Man with Nature* (2011) depicts an irresolvable dialogue within a photograph, between a figure and landscape that draw closer and farther from each other while seeming to stay put. Elsewhere, display units have grown co-jointly with their objects; one has metamorphosed into something like an empty book, its supporting beams appearing as book spines stripped of pages. Other interruptions can be found in nearby stop-motion animations: plywood walls whose surfaces are in focus, but whose substance is unstable; a never-ending train whose inside and outside views are made from a single modular model.

By infusing cracks into what, upon first encounter, appears to be uniform, we have attempted to create a space for a re-encounter; a breathing space with entry-points for acquaintances to develop. *P-19720* (2013) presents a number of such rest-stops, from the passenger seat of a model of an idle Tatra 87. In the foreground, photos hang in the process of developing or fading away. The breaking of reality into these measured planes of photograph/windshield/view offers the potential to consider connections between us and Hanzelka and Zikmund, film and digital photography, the present and history, etc. Or maybe what this stillness creates is a kind of a vacuum, a feeling of enormous distances, of contemplation or just thinking. Like a lookout (a designated point close to a view that keeps its distance) – it affords an opportunity for contemplation. For us to stand at the end of the road is to not know, is to not know how to proceed – it is where we want to be.

¹ Somewhere between finding a travel book in a Berlin flea market in 2010, and finding it again in our friends basement a year later, the text pages and cover had gone missing – likely a result of our work on another project that included scavenging books as materials to build miniature models of libraries. Months later we discovered the images belonged to: Südamerika; zwischen Paraná und Rio de la Plata, a German translation from the original Czech by Jiří Hanzelka and Miroslav Zikmund.

² During their engineering studies, Zikmund and Hanzelka spent their spare time reading about foreign lands, learning languages, studying maps, making plans and reaching out to contacts abroad. Upon graduation, their diligence so impressed the head of a leading car manufacturer, that they were given a vehicle – the Tatra 87 - and sponsorship for their journeys. Although un-trained in photography and journalism, over the course of their first 3-year journey through Africa and South and Central America, they wrote hundreds of reportages for the press and radio (some of which were turned into radio plays), shot dozens of short documentaries, several feature films, as well as tens of thousands of photographs. Together, they published 15 books, despite a 20-year long publishing ban and confiscation of their passports after their account of their journey through Russia in the mid 1960s.