



## Editorial

Eva Šlesingerová, B. Nadya Jaworsky

‘I thought I made a mistake once but it turned out it was a creative moment.’

*Scott Fleming*

On 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013, the second annual visual studies conference named “Science, Art, Institutions – Encounter Imagination” was held, with the participation of about 60 people: scholars, students, academics, artists, and journalists, amongst others. The conference was organised in cooperation with the Department of Sociology at Masaryk University, Faculty of Fine Arts at Brno University of Technology and the Moravian Gallery. The idea to bring together such varied groups of people arose from our interest in images, fine art and the discipline of visual studies. We were working on the assumption that an overview of current developments in convergence, mutual inspiration or collaboration of the social and natural sciences, art or new technologies in visual studies points to an interesting “turn to cooperation” or a “turn towards/against imagination.” This turn manifests especially in the conceptual but also in the methodological sphere, where the permeation of artistic and scientific creation is most evident. The background of visual studies rooted the conference, which aimed to cross the boundaries of different disciplines and to prove that visual studies – its methodology, research and popularization – is not only an interdisciplinary space in which researchers from miscellaneous intellectual worlds can meet, but also a place for them to share diverse interpretations and critical discussions.

In this monothematic issue of *Sociální studia*, we are pleased to invite you to explore texts based on conference presentations that have undergone the review process successfully. The broadness of the topics mirrors the broad range of visual studies itself.

Many favourite topics in visual studies are related to maps. *Ján Kralovič*, in the first text, works in a compelling way with the map as an image of places and spatial relationships, images of power and socially constructed knowledge. The map is described here as an objective technical transcription of topographic structures, but the rendering can be imaginative and create the image. The text portrays this duplicity as “maps image.” Kralovič is interested in personal artistic intervention, creating artistic cartographic records of the physical and mental movements of the author. He utilises examples and image maps from 1970s Czech-Slovak art. Through the “pedestrian map” and the walking of the artist, he seeks to reflect various artistic works.

In the second text, *Iva Šmídová* addresses intriguing and crucial topics for visual studies – the body and medicine. She analyses the visual materials provided at the annual

conferences of the Czech Obstetric-Gynaecological Society and demonstrates how visual data and the background of this event can be analysed as a problematic representation of femininity and women in the professional setting of Czech obstetrics and gynaecology. This text describes the visual stereotyping of women's bodies as objects.

In the third text, *Gábor Oláh* focuses on the everyday practices of Hungarian national identity in relation to collective memory. He reflects theoretically upon issues of memory, spatial localization, nationalism and the performative practices of national identity. Oláh also offers an empirical case study of symbolic geography in south Slovakian villages and visual representations of Hungarian mythological symbols such as statues of *turul* birds, Transylvanian images (*kopjafa*), and runic letters.

Questions of mythology or national iconography arise in the fourth text as well. *Monika Brenišínová* writes about the signs used in this metro system, specifically on the iconography of the three oldest lines. She offers interpretations of the symbols and icons used in the context of (1) the history of the city and the state (both pre-Columbian as well as pre-modern and modern), (2) the local aesthetic standards and customs, and (3) the urban environment which is mirrored in the underground structure.

This issue also contains one review by *Michal Šimůnek* concerning the five volumes in a series of books dedicated to the countryside of the Dražanská Highlands. This series was prepared and published by Pavel Klvač in collaboration with his students from the Rural Sociology course taught at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno.

We would like to thank all the authors for their texts, all the reviewers for their critical and supportive notes and suggestions, and all the conference participants. We also extend our appreciation to the Department of Sociology at Masaryk University.