



ARTO CALYPSA DAVID ČERNÝ

6.5.–6.11.2026
Cannaregio 5013, Venice, Italy



Artocalypsa — Absurdity gives birth to meaning.

Cerný's work confronts us with violence in its most brutal — and absurd — form.

The path of the tanks begins with a kiss of inspiration from Leonardo da Vinci,

and ends in swamps of human flesh in which the tanks themselves drown.

leads to the thousands of aircraft carrier, meticulously crafted and designed to

be the most powerful leviathan humanity has ever brought to life. Against itself.

tools? Are we bound to violence since time immemorial? And are we bound to

it forever?

Where do the beginnings of violence lie? In Cain and Abel? Or in monkeys using

ourselves already? What balance is this evil?

The aircraft-carrier floating-war-city travels this ancient path into today.

If violence is natural, will art lead us into the artificial world free from violence?

Or will art only create more and more of artificial, mechanical Leviathans?

Artificial destroying (natural) life. What is the meaning of this absurdity?

Next to David Černý, another great Bohemian, comes to mind: Václav Havel.

Both battling with absurdity and meaning in their own way. For Havel, unlike

many thinkers, absurdity is not an endpoint. On the contrary: Absurdity is

a trampoline toward meaning.

If absurdity exists - and it clearly does - so must meaning! In a truly meaningless

world, absurdity could not exist. The role of art is to point to this absurdity.

It is the individual's role to find their own path through it. To find meaning.

For meaning surely exists.

(re)solution, the hope, the hint of an answer, the liberation seem to be missing.

No way out.

But it is missing only seemingly. The hope, the solution, is actually present.

Where?

It is literally „hiding in plain sight“. The way out is behind the „way out“ sign.

It's Europe, it's us.

Yes, we are Entropa, we are bureaucratic, we are a cacophony of Kafkaesque

voices of the powerless. But we are not violent.

Absurdity gives birth to meaning.

Tomáš Sedláček
Philosopher, economist and author

The exhibition Artocalypsa examines the weapon as an ambivalent cultural

principle, a site where the human capacity to create intersects with the

possibility of destruction. In David Černý's work, the weapon is not reduced

to an instrument of violence; rather, it emerges as a model of power,

a moment in which an idea becomes an act and a creative gesture begins

to bear ethical and historical consequences. Here, the weapon also functions

as a dispositional (apparative), an arrangement of body, space, and attention

that prescribes relations of dominance and vulnerability.

At the exhibition's core stands the key installation *Pistol / Guns*, in

which monumental revolvers are directed at one another, closing into a

self-contained circuit of aggression. The image reveals the fundamental

instability of dominance, reminding us that force projected outward always

carries with it the latent possibility of return. Violence is thus presented

not as an anomaly or rupture, but as an underlying logic, a structure that

perpetuates itself through institutions, images, and language. In tracing this

logic, the exhibition examines not only the ways in which power is exercised,

but also the processes through which it becomes acceptable, normalised,

but also the processes through which it becomes acceptable, normalised,

behaviours, and technological regimes of vision.

Newly created works extend the exhibition's inquiry into problematic political

figures while simultaneously examining the seductive power of contemporary

technologies. They reveal that power today is exercised not only through

physical dominance, but through images, information, and technical systems

that shape attention and guide decision-making. In this context, the weapon

is no longer understood merely as an object, but as an infrastructure,

a constellation of processes that organise the conditions of agency,

determining what is permitted, thinkable, and feasible, while concealing

their own operation through naturalisation.

A significant layer of the exhibition consists of portraits of Robert

Oppenheimer, Werner von Braun, and Leonardo da Vinci. They remind

us that the weapon precedes its materialisation, first emerging as thought,

calculation, and sketch. Creativity and destruction here arise from the same

source: the human capacity for abstraction and construction, that is, techné,

a mode of making that does not distinguish between tool, artwork, and

instrument of power until it is situated within a specific framework of values.

The exhibition is framed by a looped projection of the opening scene

from 2001: A Space Odyssey. The transformation of the thrown bone into

technology connects weapon, tool, and technique within a single continuity,

recalling that between survival, domination, and self-destruction there lies

only a slight, yet decisive, shift in consciousness. It is within this continuity

that the question of responsibility emerges: whether the creator remains the

originator of their work's effects, or becomes merely a link in a chain in which

innovation evolves into an autonomous force.

Artocalypsa does not offer an image of the end of the world; it probes

the conditions under which such an end becomes thinkable. It asks what

responsibility the creator bears at the moment an idea becomes a force

that exceeds their control, and where the boundary lies between critique

and the fascination that the weapon so persistently generates.

Art historian
Otto M. Urban

When the name David Černý is mentioned, most people think of provocation.

His art is often read as irony, satire, or mockery. But behind all of it, I see

something deeper and more intimate. David is a master at revealing the inner

tension we prefer not to acknowledge. His works function as a psychological

mirror. They show where we are rigid, stagnant, conformist, blind, narrow-

minded, and settled in our small world. That is precisely why so many

people claim he is provocative. It is not he who provokes — it is we who are

startled by our own shadows. Because I know David well, I understand — and

appreciate even more — that his work is not about an egocentric "look at me,"

but rather about an experiment: what happens if I disrupt the ordinary rhythm

of reality? Whether you have been around him for years or meet him only

once, you inevitably become part of his experiment. A philosopher might say

that David rejects a one-dimensional world. A psychologist would add that

he rejects a one-dimensional human being — in himself and in others. Černý

does not need to persuade. It is enough that he exists — and by that alone,

he changes trajectories around him. The avoids straight lines, because even

truth is not always straight forward.

When speaking with David in person, one sometimes has the impression that

his thinking leaps abruptly — at times even scattered, nonlinear, chaotic, full

of unexpected shifts. Yet in reality, every leap has its coordinates, and every

to run two minutes ahead of the surrounding world. And above it all is an

infallible technical logic, the same kind one needs when holding the controls

of a helicopter or piloting an airplane. Turbulence is not an error — it is his

way of navigating.

Sometimes I feel that his work functions like a laboratory instrument:

it measures deviations in our collective consciousness. When some people

react irritably, it signals something about their way of thinking and about the

nature of social responses. It is very instructive to observe these reaction

patterns closely — not to relish scandal, but to understand. The inner logic

of his work is, in fact, therapeutic: it brings to light what is hidden and gives

us a chance to do something about it.

I am immensely glad that it has been possible to organize an exhibition in

Venice that opens up the laboratory field of his mind in its full nakedness.

His leaping rhythm is present in it, but also the invisible equations that

hold that rhythm together. The viewer has the impression of watching an

experiment whose protocol comes into being during observation itself.

To enter it is like stepping into a cockpit where chaos is piloted by precision,

and precision allows chaos to fly.

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Opening Hours
Tuesday–Sunday

May–September
11:00–13:30 and 14:00–17:30

October–November
10:00–13:30 and 14:00–16:30

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Lorenzo Polo
Initiator of the exhibition

