

A PIECE OF LAND II, 1974  
Black and white photograph,  
61 x 43 cm,  
Edition 3/3  
Courtesy Gandy gallery



A PIECE OF LAND III, 1974  
Black and white photograph,  
61 x 43 cm,  
Edition 3/3  
Courtesy Gandy gallery



CENSORSHIP, 2015  
Mixed media – oil painting, cardboard,  
golden tape, 50 x 100 cm  
Courtesy Gandy gallery



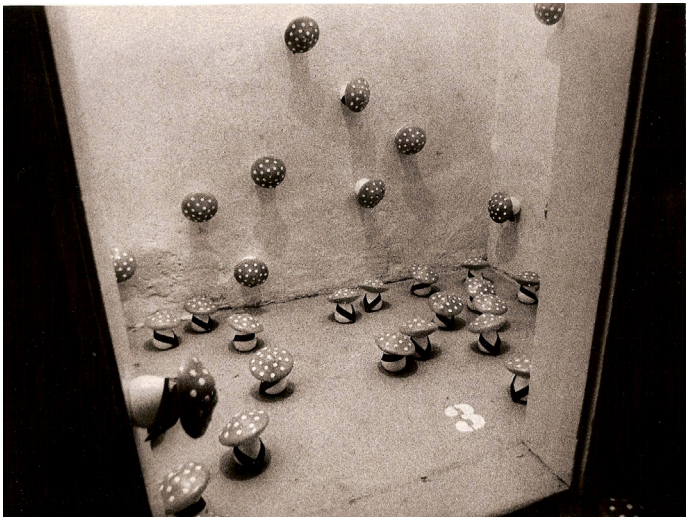
UNTITLED, 1991  
Charcoal on canvas, 70 x 145 cm  
Courtesy Gandy gallery

**JANA ŽELIBSKÁ - GANDY GALLERY**  
ARCO 2016 (Booth 9 F16)

CITATION AMANITA MUSCARIA, 1970  
Installation of two mushrooms, 40 x 20 x 20 cm  
5 black and white photographs, 17 x 23 cm (each)  
Edition 1  
Courtesy Gandy gallery







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### Mirrors, Stones and Grass The Art of Jana Želibská

Želibská entered the Czechoslovak art scene of the end of the 60s period in two respects: social political one and, particularly due to the openness of her art program of sexuality, female sensuality and erotic iconography, gender one at the end of the 1960s.

From today's perspective we can clearly see that Jana Želibská works from the 1960s have taken their place in the wide range of international female pop art. In this regard the shift in viewing the pop art phenomena around the globe has been changing radically in the past 20 years. The new interpretation of the female pop artists' works led to the new field of research which has been ever since raised at conferences, exhibition projects, etc. The second wave feminism of the 1970s practically neglected or ignored the work of the female pop artists within the American and Western European art as well as in the Eastern European art. The oeuvre of these artists has eventually become a subject of the new contextualization leading to the ground-breaking changes of the canon. The image of the female body In Želibská's first solo show titled Possibility of Discovery (1967) was presented in a new way using the tools of the afore-mentioned art tendencies. Some of the objects were created as 'anthropometries' (resembling the works by Yves Klein from the female perspective) - created by the contour line along the living body, and thus also containing an element of action and performing the body.

The flatness, wallpaper-like character, ornamentality and an overall stiffness and lifelessness of the naked or gradually exposing body or its fragments juxtapose with their origin in the act of recording in the imprinted living body – emphasizing the moment when the female subject passes through the petrifying act of the anesthetisation and objectification. Želibská's open minded approach to sexuality and the body reminds us of the surrealist Meret Oppenheim and her attitude to the body, female sexuality and women masquerades. The environment as a synthetic artistic form has invited visitors to take part in it. In Triptych (1969) which Želibská exhibited at the exhibition Current Tendencies in Slovak Painting, she thematised the important subject of the Slovak art – the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968. A trio of female figures with assemblage objects is based on the pop-art figuration, composition and flatness set around the central axis resembling the gothic altar-pieces. In the environment Kandarya Mahadeva (1969) at the Gallery of V. Špála in Prague, the handmade parts of work with an original artefact were consciously replaced with the concept of multiple reliefs based on simultaneously developed graphic work.

The scope of work of Jana Želibská, who began to actively participate in the art scene in the middle of the 1960s, extends from graphic art, drawing, painting, object, environments and installations, to the video and hybrid media expressions. The artist's later swing to nature in the 1970s was due to her tendency to work in solitude and to a kind of tabula rasa movement towards nature – the swing typical for a significant part of the radical neo-avant-garde of the 1970s in Czechoslovakia.

In the happening Betrothal of Spring Želibská set up the collective game of for the initiation – a ritual referring to the pagan cult mysteries as a celebration fulfilling primordial and mythical content with up-to-date meaning as an opposition to the game-celebrations in an intentionally profane spirit (Alex Mlynářčík, Zorka Ságlová). Želibská participated at the First Open Studio in the house of Rudolf Sikora in Tehelná Street in Bratislava (1970) with an intervention made up of the accumulated objects of plastic coin saving piggy banks in the most pop-art mushroom form with the inscription 'amanita muscaria – the possibility of saving for the entire year 1971.' The action Small Fashion Show (1980), which she assembled as a synthetic work based on the pop-cultural genre par excellence, was Želibská's culmination of the 1970s. By this she also uniquely reacted to a certain exhaustion of conceptual art in which photography gained ground in the 1970s as a post-media quasi non-artistic instrument. Želibská consciously acted in multiple roles: creator of the concept and action, costume designer and ironically as the creator of traditional woman's handiwork. Želibská's installations in the 1980s were built mainly on the artists experience with the nature, or on the typical postmodernist contrast of the urban and natural. Even here, similarly to her objects and environments in the 1960s and photographic work in 1970s, the artist often included elements shaped as instrumentalized fragments of the female body (Growth of the Breast, 1991).

She closely connects the objects and installations with photography and natural materials; the hybrid elements and media in them are composed in a hierarchy of well thought-of puzzles or riddles and in many she returns on a different road to her iconographic system of the Piece of Land (1974) in the Temple of Breast, 1992), to land and protecting its continuity and man's expansion in it. She also returns to taboo and ban Warning, Do Not Excavate!, 1991; No Touching, 1992).

In her videos and video installations the body became central both as a medium and as a subject to the works. Puberty and virginity that interested her in the land art events in 1970s appeared again in her video art in a monumental demonstration of "girl power" (Sisters I-II, 1997, 1999). On the other hand, Jana Želibská referred also to later stages of the woman life, accompanied by changes to her body (Cash on Delivery, 1978; Last Feeding, 1992). In her installations She is Everywhere (2000), Underwater (2003), RED No. 1 (2009), 2014 (2014) she returned to her "own room" of woman as her mental space filled with the overlapping of media, shapes, colors, lights, sounds. She often uses the imagery of media, advertisement and popular culture to express herself towards political and social issues - the protagonist of her installation Maybe Alien? (2012) is a subverted character of the contemporary mythology between the Little Prince and the small Anakin Skywalker – the blue boy Lucifer with golden genitals worn as a jewel and a neon light seems to have accidentally landed on our planet... or not?

Lucia Gregorová Stach