

# HISTORIC KINGSTON TRAIN STATION AMTRAK WAITING ROOM JAN 16 – FEB 10, 2008

Featuring Video Art  
by Pavel Mrkus

a part of  
**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS**

Central European Video Art  
(from the Czech & Slovak  
Republics, Poland & Hungary)

Guest curated by Viera Levitt

## MAIN GALLERY

Fine Arts Center Galleries  
University of Rhode Island  
JAN 24 – FEB 10, 2008



## EXHIBITION CONTEXT

Dear Travelers:

This special exhibition of a mesmerizing video entitled **Seagull**, by contemporary Czech artist Pavel Mrkus, is part of a larger project organized by and taking place in the Fine Arts Center Galleries, URI. Please visit the Main Gallery at the University of Rhode Island to view other video works created by five by Central European artists. The Galleries are open to the public without charge and are handicapped accessible. See hours below and map for orientation to the Galleries only 1 mile away.

We present the exhibition called **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS: Central European Video Art** (from the Czech and Slovak Republics, Poland and Hungary), in a spirit of global inclusiveness. We value this spirit greatly in the State's own art gallery complex on the University campus nearby. By extending a part of our exhibition to this very public space, we hope to engage everyone traveling. We hope to transport travelers from the historic Train Station Waiting Room to another space - to an intriguing, fluid place where the atmosphere of the Kingston Train Station is oddly retained.

With the help of project partners in the Friends of the Historic Train Station and with Amtrak's generous approval, the public space of the Train Station becomes a promising new site for contemporary art, no longer a distant outpost. The Galleries are hoping to involve

travelers in future encounters with contemporary art, up close, just as we manage on the campus itself with what we might call "intentional" audiences. The single work presented here reaches out to all travelers. We hope that travelers, who are by nature explorers with a sense of curiosity, will entertain for a few minutes the themes of fragile and vulnerable conditions of life suggested by this video.

The current exhibition of videos, including **Seagull** being played here, is thoughtfully guest-curated by Independent Curator Viera Levitt, a native Slovakian who moved to Rhode Island. From 1997-2005 Levitt was director/curator of the contemporary art showcase, Jan Koniarek Gallery, located in the historic town of Trnava. She was the youngest director ever in a public art museum in the Slovak Republic and has been extremely active as a curator and writer internationally. Her expertise in the field of Central European video is matched only by her love of train travel and she has imaginatively curated a show in an ordinary train car in transit from Western to Eastern Slovakia, using each compartment as exhibition space for individual contemporary artists.

J. Tolnick Champa  
Director, Fine Arts Center Galleries

## CURATOR'S STATEMENT

After moving to the USA from Slovakia two years ago, I had continually to answer several questions:

Where is Slovakia? Where is Central Europe? What are people there like? What do they think about?

By organizing this show I would like to answer some of these questions and in the process, make art from Central Europe more familiar to visitors and residents of Rhode Island. In this exhibition I am including the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary and Poland. These are countries that have had similar pasts since the end of WWII: communism, the wave of revolutions at the end of 1980's and an entrance into the European Union in 2004 as democratic countries. Now, these countries are part of the so-called "New Europe." In selecting the work for this exhibition, I chose not to show "popular" or stereotypical, post-communist images. Even though these "blocks of flats" and "deadened industrial landscapes" persist, these are now joined by images that would be quite familiar to those in Western Europe and in the United States.

The central part of this show, **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS** in the Main Gallery on the URI campus, presents an additional five artists from the region. I selected those video works that concentrate on human stories, those of vulnerability and fragility, that I believe we all can share and can resonate with the American public.

Here in the Kingston Train Station, the exhibited video artwork will, I hope, help to transform 'waiting' from a passive, everyday experience, to an active, artistic one. The meditative character of Pavel Mrkus' **Seagull**, is meant to intrigue and calm travelers. Mrkus is an international digital media and glass artist from the Czech Republic represented by a gallery in Dresden. He has also taught at RISD as a Visiting Professor. His video combines a romanticized historical interior with a computer animation of a flying golden seagull. The ambience of the video setting, its mirrors and shining chandelier, strangely echoes the décor of the Kingston Station Waiting Room.

Viera Levitt  
Guest Curator

**For more information visit**  
[www.uri.edu/artgalleries](http://www.uri.edu/artgalleries) & [www.vieralevitt.org/uri.htm](http://www.vieralevitt.org/uri.htm)

**Photo credit**  
©Pavel Mrkus: *Seagull*, 2005 (video, 4 min, with music composed & played by Aziza Sadikova, continuous loop)



### Directions to Main Gallery

Turn right out of Station onto Kingstown Rd/RI-138 East. At 2<sup>nd</sup> traffic light, turn left at the entrance to the University of Rhode Island onto Upper College Rd. Weekdays: Obtain Visitors Pass at Visitors Center. Turn right exiting the Visitors Center and proceed to Fine Arts Center Parking Lot from Bills Rd. **Phone** (401) 874-2775 **Train Station Hours** Open to public during normal service hours. **Main Gallery Hours** Tues - Fri 12 - 4 pm & Sat - Sun 1 - 4 pm

Please visit the central part of **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS** **Main Gallery** Fine Arts Center Galleries University of Rhode Island 105 Upper College Rd, Kingston, RI

**Join us for a Public Closing Reception with Remarks by the Curator**  
Main Gallery, Sunday, Feb 10, 2 - 4 pm

**Special thanks**  
*In New York:* Apexart, Czech Center, Hungarian Cultural Institute, Anne Arden McDonald, Polish Institute, and Steven Rand; *in Rhode Island:* Jo-Ann Conklin, David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Courthouse Center for the Arts, West Kingston, Friends of Kingston Station, Kingston, and Mini Grant, The Rhode Island Curator, Providence.