

Council of the European Union, Brussels, Belgium
12th July – 31th December 2022
National Gallery, Prague
10th February – 7th May 2023

The project was conceived by: Jan Brož, Barbora Fastrová,
Johana Pošová, Jakub Choma, Jakub Jansa, Valentýna Janů,
Martin Kohout and Overall Office (Karolína Juříková and Kristýna
Nováková).

And was produced by National Gallery Prague, as part of Czech
Presidency of European Union 2022, Curated by Michal Novotný

Flower Union



As a part of this year's Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, nine young Czech artists and designers created decorations for two buildings in Brussels. These artists decided to use their work to express the values that the European Union embodies for them and which they believe it should continue to embody in the future. They also tried to highlight the idea of Europeanism rather than to simply present the Czech Republic as one of the member states. Their collective project, as well as their individual endeavours, are linked by the concept of a community of plants sharing a single piece of soil, thus also stressing the environmental agenda, which will reverberate strongly during the Czech Presidency.

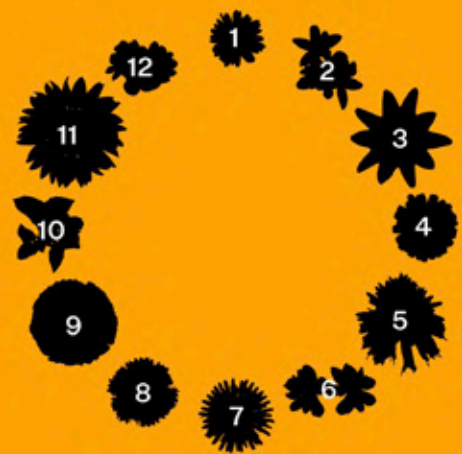
The main symbol of the Czech Presidency is a wreath of twelve medicinal plants, and this has been incorporated in the design of the large, ecologically-manufactured carpet installed in the main area of the atrium in the building where Council meetings are held. The weaving of wreaths is an ancient, not only Slavic, tradition. Young unwed women cast wreaths into the river during the solstice to guarantee their romantic future. This symbolised not only the vitality of youth but also the natural continuation of life after leaving one's home hearth. In keeping with the main symbol for the artistic presentation of the Czech Presidency, the artists chose to replace the twelve gold stars on the EU flag with twelve medicinal plants from different European regions. The resulting wreath, in which the stems of each plant are twisted around those of the previous one to create a more interwoven and stronger bond, embodies a gesture promoting a stronger European togetherness between all of the EU's unique and distinct regions. A union, which does not exclude local identities, folklore, or traditions.

The floral motif is, however, also an ecological appeal, particularly within the context of Russia's war on Ukraine and the approaching energy crisis, which has become one of the main themes of the Czech Presidency. The blue background of the flag has thus been replaced with a green one. The history of the flag of the European Union dates back to 1955, to the time of the European Coal and Steel Community, which had only six member states. And so the motif has been transformed from glowing stars in a distant sky





to a community of flowers in a buzzing summer meadow. The metaphor of the wreath is also pointed at the Czech nation itself, and its tendency to be sceptical towards big ideas from outside. The substitution of flowers for the stars is a gesture, intended to help the Czechs to plausibly communicate the European concept of “unity in diversity”. It should also facilitate a better understanding of ecological transformation through the warm and positive relationship Czechs have with nature. At the same time, since the Czech Republic celebrated its eighteenth year of EU membership this year, it draws attention to the country’s transition into adulthood and its ensuing responsibilities. Even in the distant past, in the “Prague Appeal” of 1985, Václav Havel and other Charter 77 signatories spoke about a Europe unified through a common spiritual foundation as of a beam of hope for all the citizens of totalitarian countries. This hope is once again very pertinent today and, given the current Russian aggression, maybe even the most pertinent since the fall of totalitarian countries in 1989. It was also Václav Havel who spoke about the need to sacrifice a part of one’s personal happiness for the benefit of higher ideals, and it was he who reminded the world of the worsening state of the environment. He also repeated that it can only be the “European spirit” that will help Czech society to overcome the deep-rooted fear of other people. In one of his last interviews, one of the things he mentioned was that the admission of Ukraine and Belarus to the European Union might be one possible future development of Europe.



Flower Union project, created an allegorical concept of the official flag of the European Union. The circle of stars transformed into a wreath on a green background leads to a reflection on the power of the natural world over the human one. In the superpower of plants to be reborn only from their underground part, this realm rises in some ways high above human society. The wreath of flowers joining together to save the world may be equivalent to a more natural version of a supernatural grouping like the Guardians of the Universe or the Fellowship of the Ring, but in this case it is not seeking to destroy the ring of evil, but rather to create a floral ring of goodness encircling our planet.

1 Kopretina 2 Neroli 3 Mučenka 4 Měsíček 5 Aloe Vera 6 Třezalka 7 Smetánka 8 Kozlík 9 Aksamitník 10 Bougainvillea 11 Slunečnice 12 Portulaca





**Installation view, Council of the European Union,
Brussels, Belgium
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**A series of three photographs installed installed
in the corridors and in the presidential lounge
160 x 120 cm, C-Print, 2022**













Opening Ceremony

A film directed by Jakub Jansa, created for Flower Union exhibition produced by National Gallery Prague, as part of Czech Presidency of European Union 2022, 10min, 4K video

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Author: Jakub Jansa

Script: Jakub Jansa, Dominik Dabrowski, Alice Krajčířová

DOP: Kryštof Hlůže

DOP assistant: Tomáš Merta

Editor: Sebastian Kučkovský

Music: Oliver Torr

Costumes: Overall Office (Karolína Juříková, Kristýna Nováková)

Photography: Iryna Drahun

Performance: Jan Kostiha, Ester Geislerová, Kamil Nábělek, Trin Alt Vajd, Markéta Vutru, Dexton Kotora, Katsuhiko Iwashita, Veronika Čechmánková, Jakub Samek, Zai Xu, Linda Vondrová, Rokhaya Gueye, Anita Lubadika, Adéla Sobotková, Mary Nguyen, Linh Nguyen, Agáta Hrnčířová

CGI: Matěj Martinec

Production: Agáta Hrnčířová

Make-up: Majda Vaverková

Mask: Eliška Pitráková

Sound master: Nicolas Atcheson

Grading: Kryštof Melka

Lights: Tomáš Prajsler

Focus puller: Mihir Khulkarmi

Costume assistant: Františka Králíková

Special thanks: Plevel (Beáta Melková), DJ Bingo, Vít Svoboda, Růst Cakes, Jaroslav Gazda



What happens inside a floral puget during an important political meeting? Maybe flowers are not only decorative, beautiful and even more beautifully smelling. But what if they could be more proactive and get involved in issues of global proportions?

In the world of plants, flowers have an irreplaceable representative and diplomatic role. Now they even have their own union, an infinite union in the circle of medicinal flowers. Their garden ceremony for the opening of the presidency is given in the form of what is known as an “appreciation dinner”, a type of gala dinner, in our world, held for the elites and the media. As in the people’s world, a comedian is invited, here in the form of a “Celery-man”. Hybrid characters between vegetable and human.

The supernatural figure of a clairvoyante, no longer able to predict the future, takes over the direction of the second part of the film, activating decorative flowers in the form of an eco-sexual festive ritual. The fortune teller shows the plants that by putting pistils and calyxes together they can reach out to the public and change the course of things. So hopefully her ability to see into the future will return.

The work is also an open homage to several works of art history, such as Annie Sprinkle’s *Marriage to the Earth*, or John Baldessari’s *Teaching the Alphabet of Plants*, or Taryn Simon’s series of photographs depicting bouquets standing on tables during important political meetings.









**Screenshots from the film
Opening Ceremony**

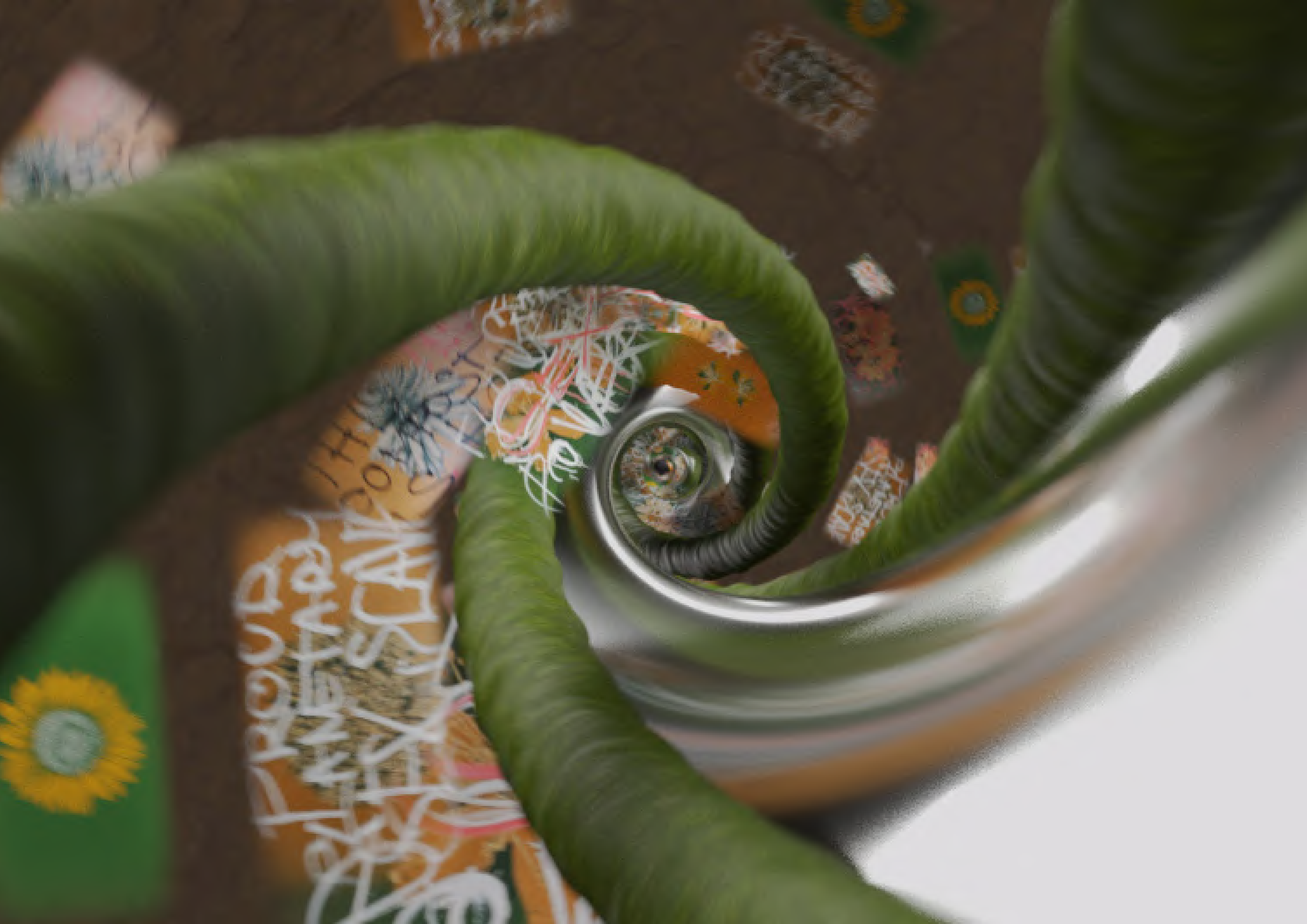






















WILD
ORANGE

THIS
COUNTRY
IS HOT

LISTEN TO
MAY
GAY FORMER

PLANET
IS
CLITORIS

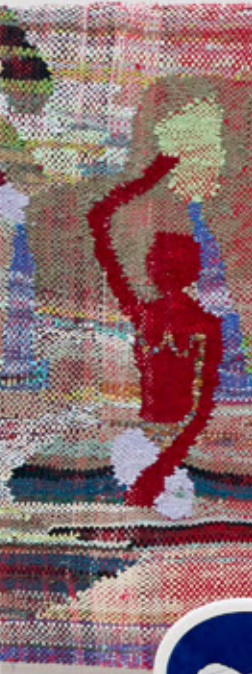


**Installation view, National Gallery, Prague
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You my dears
can be the new generation
of active flowers;







By the way here is also
the almighty Seed.

the world you
of the best thing in life



možná pro ně tak sedíte.

www.galleria.com



It is the mother of
our beloved Celerist



Záchrana planety
skrze prosazování diplomacie!



Informational text panels on the wall, including the text "at the end of the world" and "the world is not a place".

WILD ORGANISM

Flower

Flower

THIS COMPOST IS TO

LISTEN TO MY BABY FLOWER

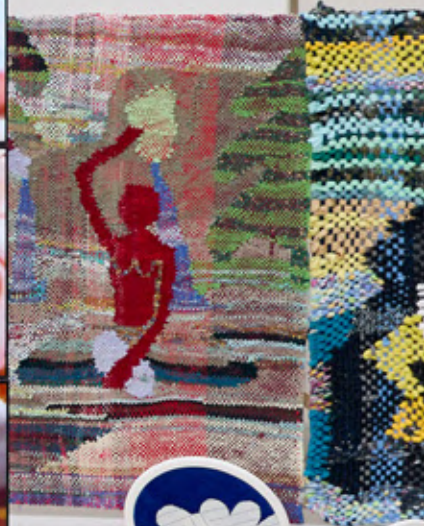
PROUD PLANETARY SLAVE

Flower





After the flowers received their voice







PROUD PLANETARY SCALE

THE CLIMATE IS HOT





