



Spiritu
Fitness

Jakub Jansa, *Spiritual Fitness*,
2016, Mixed media
(video, installation, video cases).

Videos:

Two Minutes, video, (6:00), 2016

One Touch, video (2:00), 2016

Three Floors, video (2:00), 2016



Click for Video 1



Click for Video 2



Click for Video 3

Abstract:

Spiritual Fitness is a physical practise developed for Academy of Art, Architecture and Design in Prague (AAAD), presenting its complex self- development programe, in a form of public seminary. It is based on three video lessons (the first part talks about the development of self-confidence, second one is about the strengthening cooperation in working groups and third is summary). Lessons can be purchased at a special video cases, which are part of the gallery installation.

The *Spiritual Fitness* deals with the topic of manipulation and personality cult and remixes marketing techniques of companies offering instructions and training for a better life. Jansa's material is an account of living in capitalism, nonetheless, he touches upon other themes as well such as commodification, the lability of trendy aesthetic values, psychopathic society and human desire to dominate nature and humanity itself.

In this project, Jansa anticipates that the audience will be affected, which is why he builds his own impressive environments. His project is not trying to warn us, nor is it trying to mock the themes in a simple manner. It is very careful to find its balance in expression. Not giving clear instructions to adore, reject or mock, enables him to pull the spectator in his zone. Therefore, the conclusions we draw from these situational games are purely ours.

www.thespiritualfitness.com





Video cases for lessons 1-3
with SD card, booklet and manual inside





Spiritual Fitness

intro:

Day is night, water is fire, cocaine is not enough, depression does not exist. People are flying in the sky propelled by their own confidence. Everyone is going the same direction; to a brilliant day after tomorrow, and the work week begins and ends on Friday. The initial skepticism is like a plague, failure is prohibited and the winner is you. The path to self-confidence, positive thinking, success – that's Spiritual Fitness. An originally inconspicuous student movement has become today a possible model of a future studio at the School of Applied Arts, where weak individuals are being transformed into strong and resilient creatures. All this with with minimum effort invested. Two minutes and one touch is enough to mechanically reprogram the human body into a confident and solid mass. The movement of Spiritual Fitness aims to transform unconvincing presentations (by the weak voices of fragile shells) into indescribably wonderful lectures boasting punchlines from the dominant Supermen. At the beginning I also did not believe, but thanks to two minutes of sophisticated exercise, one is convinced about himself and his limitless choices and own brilliance. Achieve self-confidence and healthy self-esteem is, in today's accelerated virtual world (which lacks empathy) incredibly difficult. Even creatively or technically talented individuals have problems making a mark because of strong doubts. Thanks goes to the laboratory of scientific studies that verifies various mechanical movements, and our highest hawk Jakub Jansa, who has discovered the secret source code of the human psyche. Day is night, water is fire, cocaine is not enough, depression does not exist. People are flying in the sky propelled by their own confidence. Everyone is going the same direction; to a brilliant day after tomorrow, and the work week begins and ends on Friday. The sun rose in the east and will no longer set. The initial skepticism is like a plague, failure is prohibited and the winner is you.

When it comes to power...

Essey by

Alexander Campaz

Spiritual Fitness is a physical enhancement program created by artist Jakub Jansa. The intentions of this program are never explained nor it's ultimate objective found. Perhaps the most interesting and intriguing aspect of this work of art is that the viewer is left to question the motives of the project, which situates itself between a self-help curriculum and social identity program that evokes an alienating yet communal experience akin to a religious mindset. Although this program is a reflection and perhaps a critique of the rise and evolution of many of the physical enhancement communities that are prevalent today, the program is also a reflection of other aspects that are shaping global politics. Examples of contradicting rules of governance and control by contradiction are themes explored. From a historical point of view these questions are not new but they point towards an evolving and uncertain landscape of world politics today.

The world of Spiritual Fitness is a three part video series that unlocks the potential of the participant. As the viewer is introduced to the world of Spiritual Fitness a contradiction emerges that is inherent within the system. This duality is present in every action and every action can have two meanings. The opening lines of the first video titled Two Minutes starts with the lines "We smile when we feel happy but also when we are forced to smile it makes us feel happy so it goes both ways. When it comes to power it also goes both ways".

From the opening lines the participant is asked to sacrifice the self in order to benefit from the rewards of the collective. Thus the act of smiling is meant as a social marker to connect oneself to the collective mind in physical form if not in mental form. This communal participation is reinforced in the second video installment titled One Touch where emphasis is given to scientific and mental powers of touch. As the narrator informs the viewer the very act of touch creates stronger bonds between those who adhere to the Spiritual Fitness ethos.

But as soon as the viewer is introduced to the strong communal nucleus of the system in the second video the contradiction within the system emerges once more in the third and last installment titled Three Floors. Where as in the first video we are introduced to the multiplicity of an action like a smile and in the second the bond of a touch in the third video we are introduced to the alienating aspect of the program. As the video beings the

narrator instructs the viewer towards an ambiguous action with no clear intention. This cryptic order, which separates those that understand the message and those that do not ultimately allow a person to attain further knowledge within the system. Although what must be done to unlock this action is never informed, the viewer is asked to practice in an empty elevator. The narrator explains that this is the best place to practice but it is upto the person to decide how much time is spent here. The danger and balance of this training can be both beneficial and detrimental. In the end the narrator warns "But think carefully, more practice makes your business".

Ultimately the world of Spiritual Fitness creates a community that connects and yet alienates its practitioners with the promise of a deep-rooted knowledge of the self and of others. The actual steps to this knowledge are laid out in contradicting terms and in the end leave the practitioner vulnerable. Thus the system of Spiritual Fitness behaves like its title suggests, a spiritual journey within a somewhat vague and faithful path towards enlightenment. Much like the cult fitness programs that are prevalent today, Spiritual Fitness taps into the psyche of the middle class urbanites that litter the social media sphere with their Soul Cycle or Cross Fit selfies. Some describe these programs as borderline cults that have become alternatives to religious communities. What makes Spiritual Fitness much more encompassing is the fact that there are no rewards within the system. The only reward is to be immersed further within a system that contradicts its purpose. To this end Spiritual Fitness becomes a more eerie and dark reality and without much notice a more sinister program of control.

The Historian Sergey Karaganov and politician Vladilav Surkov share similar views on certain destabilizing forces that govern world politics today. Karaganov's impactful essay titled Contradiction of Contradictions questions the creation of the first truly global economy in the 21st century with a slow collapse of global governance. The destabilizing agents of this collapse are giving way towards factors that are being used to further interrupt the system in order to control it. One such theorist that is using this vacuum of control is the politician Surkov who is part of President Putin's inner circle of power within the Kremlin. He recently penned a short story titled Without Sky under the pseudonym Dubovitskiy. It was published days before the formal annexation of Crimea in 2014. In this story the first evidence of Surkov's theory Non Linear War is described. As Dubovitskiy writes, "Some provinces took one side, some took the other," and "it

was a rare state that entered the coalition intact.” They fought for disparate means yet seldom for traditional victory – “war was now understood as a process, more exactly part of a process: its acute phase, but maybe not the most important.” Thus Surkov’s position describes a bewildering constantly changing stance that is not meant to win a war but rather to use a conflict as a destabilized agent in order to control the outcome.

In a more subtle way the world of Spiritual Fitness behaves in a contradictory manner of to control much like the world of Without Sky. Although Spiritual Fitness is obviously not a system of warfare or a reflection of world politics, it’s system of governance is reflective of a state of contradiction. In this sense the artist Jansa has created a universe that promises to liberate and expand a participant’s awareness of oneself in a larger community that in the process aims to alienate and create a vulnerable state of unknown factors. The bigger question then becomes, what is the intention of Spiritual Fitness? Is it a reflection and critique of the various systems of control based on contradicting terms? Or is it a project aimed at questioning the materialistic collective ego of self-help and communal fitness programs? Perhaps the project is aimed at reflecting on both issues. Ultimately the question then becomes is this still a work of art? A possible answer is that perhaps this was never meant to be an art project at all.

Jakub Jansa

Jakub Jansa’s work aims at exploring archetypal phenomena and situations and exposes their presence in our culture even there, where they are no longer remembered. Moreover, he also explores his own position, that is the position of a supermedia artist, a digital-age counterpart to a renaissance creator.

His projects are set in the present day world of the ubiquitous announcers of progress and foolish visionaries, where the permanent revolution of building elements has become an everyday reality. He thus asks about the meaning and necessity of revolutionism which leads him also to coming to terms with the archetypal role of a supermedia artist.

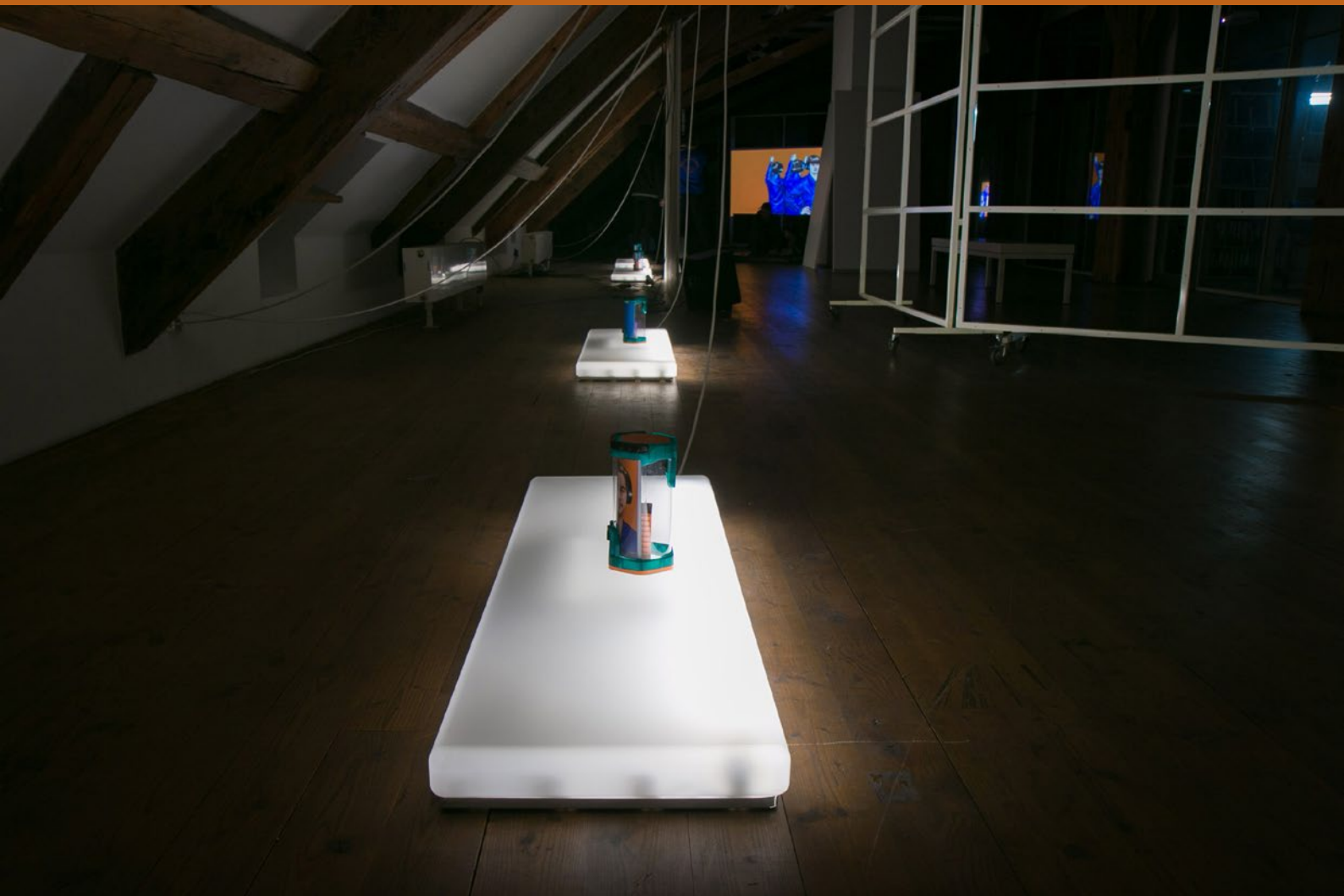
His diploma thesis Spiritual Fitness deals with the topic of manipulation and personality cult and remixes marketing techniques of companies offering instructions and training for a better life. Jansa’s material is an account of living in capitalism, nonetheless, he touches upon other themes as well such as commodification, the lability of trendy aesthetic values, psychopathic society and human desire to dominate nature and humanity itself.

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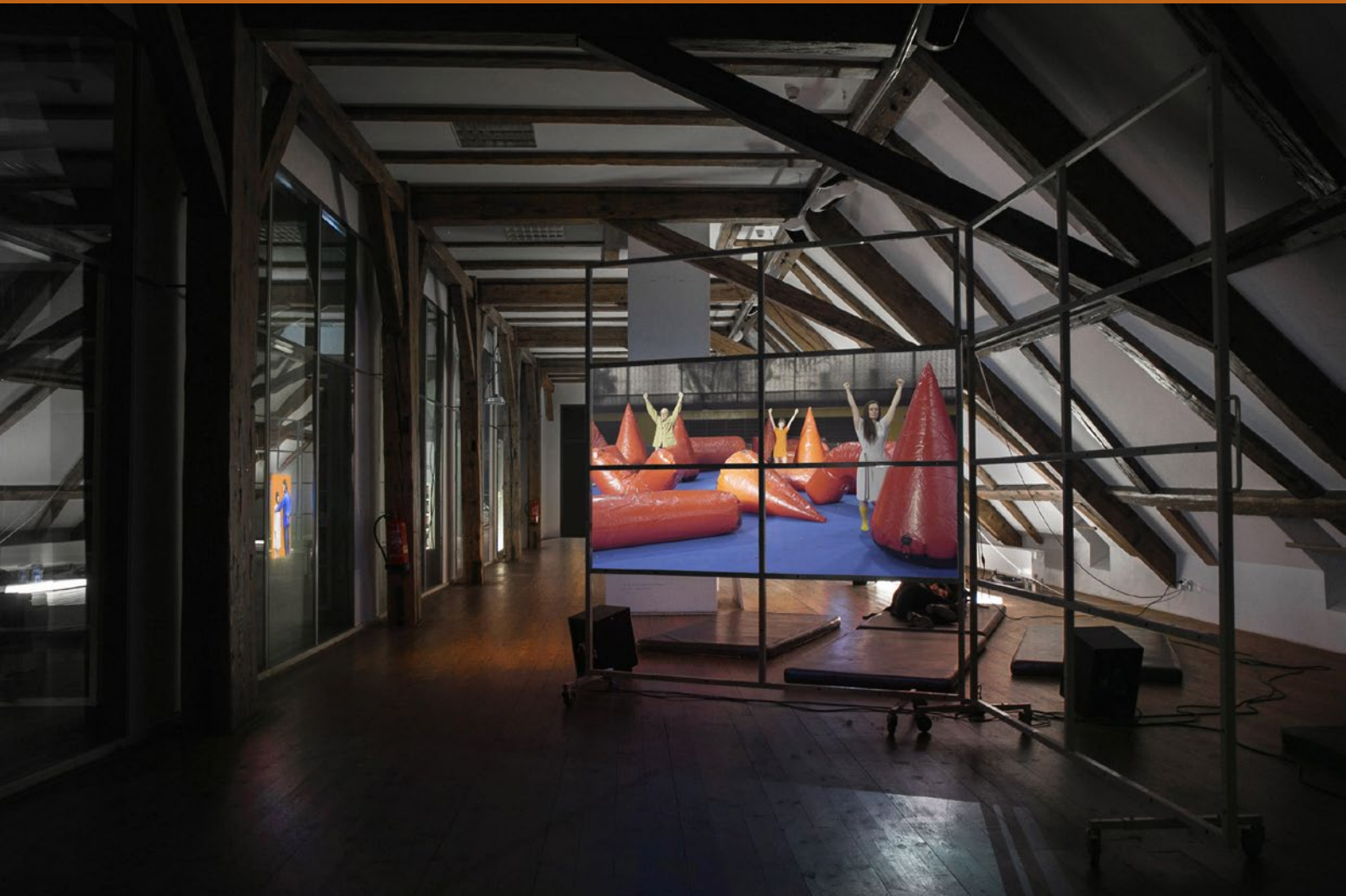














Installation view on PAF, seminar room and gestures lab with performers













Installation view on AAAD in a room 413
/ Pohled do instalace na UMPRUM
v místnosti 413



Installation view on AAAD in a room 413
/ Pohled do instalace na UMPRUM
v místnosti 413

We push the river, it flows slowly

We take control over what originates freely.
We build landscape, we modify landscape.
We rotate the planet and keep the world in motion. In order for it not to be boring, we speed everything up – we push the river, it flows slowly.
We control ourselves and our emotions the same way. We commodify our experience and pump from our intellectual capital. The age of identity adjusts our selves to a better performance and more effective abilities. What it's all good for, nobody knows. Therefore, it's necessary to test it, for instance with the BAYW format and Spiritual Fitness. Its formal features touch on one of the key terms of accelerationism “speculative action”. Their purpose is to overcome or manipulate the current conditions in order to find a new, wider or more detailed horizon of the possible.

Gamification of life

A capitalistic landscape is safe and controlled as is the life in it. We control each other and we control our selves. From dreambuilding to teambuilding. How to be successful before twenty, thirty, forty. How to make the best of menopause and age successfully. We have a manual for everything. “We'll teach you to think.” This and much more is the base for McKenzie Wark's theory of “The Vectoralist Class”. A theory of the world with clearly defined aims we want to achieve. Goals and visions, milestones and pillars. A modern religion – faith in self-development as a supreme product of capitalism.
It all resembles a game. Games have been essential for the human society for thousands of years. Gaming principles and the world of games in general have, nowadays, entered our everyday reality. Jane McGonigal describes this phenomenon in her book “Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World”. Life becomes a game in which we need to fulfill tasks, we move to further levels and thus gain higher satisfaction. It's necessary to top up skills in order to be able to continue to a more difficult level (As Spiritual Fitness proclaims). “Games gave a starving population a feeling of power in a powerless

situation, a sense of structure in a chaotic environment. Make no mistake: we are no different from the ancient Lydians. Today, many of us are suffering from a vast and primal hunger. But it is not a hunger for food—it is a hunger for more and better engagement from the world around us.”

Interface and rules

It is as though Blixa Bergeld had foreshadowed this in one of his texts: “I'm holding a plastic bag containing my future positions”. Evidently, he feels as though he's moving in a controlled environment where the coordinates of his future movements had been determined by a program. People move in the interface with the precision of drones. And augmented reality provides them with immediate feedback. “Holding a plastic bag, containing my future positions.” It is as though Blixa is just taking this program with him on a walk, voluntarily and consentingly. He's walking through a town with all of his future steps stored in a plastic bag. It's better he has it under control rather than someone else. But what if someone shuts down the control...what then? You may end up like the main protagonist of what, for me, is the most inspiring contemporary game – The Stanley Parable. Stanley comes to work day by day and on his keyboard carries out commands coming from higher places. He doesn't ponder why. He's happy. He has a job. But then something happens. Actually, nothing happens. The computer screen is empty. And Stanley is free. At that moment, the intro ends and you are Stanley. What you do after that is entirely up to you...The Stanley Parable is not a game, but rather a glimpse into the creation and controlling of game narrative and the unveiling of the construction of a fictional gaming world and storyline. The Stanley Parable works with the concept of an unfree person in a seemingly free world and the way you deal with it is absolutely up to you. Are you a coward? An experimenter? Do you bend rules? Or do you want to free yourself from pressing buttons by pressing a button that promises to free you from pressing buttons? Basically, ever since people became able to imagine fictional worlds they've been creating more or less arbitrary storylines that we've got so used to that we even see our own lives in them that can simply be a sequence of moments that we

Spiritual Fitness

have no control of. This gaming meta commentary deals with the narrativity of a medium and offers an unusual interactivity between the player and the environment and the story and yet it still has to guide and limit us in certain ways so that we follow its storyline. But what if a similar narrative appears in an undermined version of reality?

Back outside the game

In *The Glass Bead Game*, Hesse deals with a constant topic: the issue of spiritual life in today's time. The book describes a utopian future world in which the cultural elite lives in an intellectual province representatively named Castalia and cultivates knowledge and culture as a game. The game was invented by the Castalian Order in order to achieve absolute understanding and harmony among all disciplines and represents the movement to an ideal goal, a game with an all imaginable content and values of our culture. However, because this game lacks the contact with the real life, it becomes pointless (a possible parallel with an isolated life of Umprum students or any other tribe). On their own, the desire for perfection and virtuosity of spirit are nonsensical according to Hesse, as the real spirituality cannot stand outside of the world. I've come to something similar. It may seem that the knowledge and experience of the user Hesse should discourage us from the game. In fact, the opposite is true. We've got it somewhere under our skin and we feel the urge to try again and again. Of course the game is petty and foolish but life without it may not be as interesting. The question, with an open answer is, where the game will lead us in the future or what impact it will have on our own future. "The future is a political as well as an artistic issue. The limits and the forming of the future horizon itself are subject to epistopolitics, an authoritative determination of what is allowed to imagine or say. Apart from the political dimension, this space also opens up based on our ability to create alternative, in other words, fictional pictures and stories." Spiritual Fitness is one of them and the decision to use it is entirely yours.

- _Watch the next big thing
- _Do the next big step
- _Build a dream building
- _Boost everything
- _Ideas live in the body
- _Eat your resistance
- _Watch the relief
- _Overview components
- _Activate your racing sets
- _Do it till you make it _Fake it
- _Read the universal body language
- _Start Mood management
- _Start Spirit management
- _Start Karma management
- _Start Everyday-shit management
- _Control the way you feel
- _Listen to the breathing instructions
- _Be anything you want to be

Credits

Author: Jakub Jansa
Directed by: Jakub Jansa
Camera by: Kryštof Hlůžek, Kryštof Melka
Cast: Marie Jansová, William Valerián, Agáta Nowaková, Petr Jakeš, Petr Hák
Voice: Dirk Wright
Sound: Jakub Jansa, Jaromír Hávorník, Kateřina Zochová, Atom™
Case objects: Jakub Jansa
Graphic Design: Štěpán Marko
Illustration: Luky
VVVV: Jan Nálepa
Photos: Michal Ureš, Peter Fabo, Tomáš Hrozný, Helena Fikerová
Web: Florian Karsten

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