

Jan Smejkal — biography

Jan Smejkal (born 1948, Beroun) is a Czech-German artist whose work includes painting, drawing, performance and text installations. In 1967 he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague under František Muzika, and a year later – after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia – he went into exile and continued his studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main.

Since the 1970s, his work has focused on the process of creating a work and on connecting art with everyday life. He draws anywhere – on the street, in means of transport and in the cinema – and he understands the act of drawing itself as both a method and the meaning of the work. These serial drawings form a constantly expanding library of impressions, which often become the starting point for his paintings. Many canvases are created over years through repainting and layering, whereby the author emphasizes time as an integral part of the artistic material.

Language is another key medium for him. In his text paintings, he composes words, excerpts, and multilingual notes into dense visual fields that blend reading and seeing.

Since 2000, he has lived and worked in Berlin for about two decades, where he ran the Bleibtreu Galerie with his life partner and gallerist Ljuba Beránková. The Berlin chapter has strengthened his international standing, but at the same time contributed to his remaining little-known to the Czech public for many years.

Smejkal has exhibited throughout Europe and the USA. His career is captured in a number of solo and group exhibitions from the 1970s to the present. Recent presentations in Rotterdam and Berlin have reemphasized his layered text paintings and modular double-sided works that he has been developing and perfecting for decades.

The late exhibition *Between One And Another* at Untitled Art Advisory invited a new perspective on Smejkal's work. It presented his sparing but impressive language of color fields and text and recalled the main themes of his work: art as a lived experience, the shifting boundary between seeing and reading, and the persistence of memory. It aimed to rediscover the fascinating artist who left Czechoslovakia with Beránková in 1968 and remained underappreciated at home for a long time due to emigration.

The current exhibition *Synaesthetics* at Hilgemann.Art in 2026 derived from *synesthesia refers to the philosophical concept that explores the interconnectedness of different senses and how they relate to art, experience, and even spirituality. It suggests that our perception of the world, particularly through art, involves a synthesis of various sensory experiences, not just one invites you to a new perspective on the two artists work showcasing a poetic dialogue between the cutting edge metal sculptures of Ewerdt Hilgemann and the impressive language of color fields paintings of Jan Smejkal.

Both artists formerly have been exhibiting together with gallery art affairs at Art Cologne in a duo presentation in 1993 (s.photo) and soon again with Hilgemann Art at Art Cologne Palma Mallorca.