

Václav Cílek

Inner and Outer Landscape

Bohemiae Rosa or Monastery like Louse and Scavenger

As a geologist and a man focused on landscape I have participated in actions connected with Bohemiae Rosa for three years. I have slowly got out of a hole like a spermophile. In the Czech Karst I dedicated myself to the landscape of a large quarry where I was supposed to propose two new preserves. In the night I was drawing on a ledge with a piece of a wood and I was looking at birds bravely flying above the massif. In Bechyne I was quarrelling with a cloister and I was touching my life like earth. Many months after the return I felt deep in myself that the training was an influence, which I cannot name, so it had to touch the area of spirit where we cannot call things with their names yet. I stopped buying art and instead of this I started stamping my feet on papers placing them into the landscape and looking at their colours. I put aside the history of art by Beuys ("don't be afraid of Beuys"), whom I have not understood, and whom I called "Mensch - Natur - Kosmos".

Coming closer to the landscape

At the end of the summer holiday in 2001 there was a lot of action in the Minorite Cloister in Bechyne. "Bohemiae Rosa - The Exploration of the Landscape and the Body" took place, led by professor Milos Sejn from The Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and by Dutch dancer and choreographer Frank van de Ven, who was on with the Japanese ensemble of Min Tanaka for ten years. What do a professional dancer of modern symbols and an abstract artist have in common with this landscape?

The main function of the artist in the 19th century was to make a work of art which could be put in a golden picture frame on the wall. Gradually the second function of art appeared - to teach people to be sensitive to colours and things. In the 20th century the importance of art is to get to know the world. As can be seen in documentary photography, which can symbolize the essence e.g. of sociology. Modern art is similar to modern science - both learn about the world and both do this often in a way not common to ordinary people. More than half of the work of science is never quoted and a big part of contemporary art is not needed. But this is a normal way of life.

The architect Christian Norbert-Schulz, the author of the famous book about genius loci, says that contemporary man is led to pseudoanalytic thinking by education and that their knowledge is made of so called facts. Their life is losing purpose..."*Art education is needed today more than before and a work of art as a place*

that gives us identity, should be the basis of our education.” As if putting part of a landscape instead of pictures in the National Gallery and teaching people how to look at it.

Something similar took place in Bechyne, where people from many countries came together. The main concentration was on the body and landscape as tools of perception. No lasting work of art came into existence here. Water statues were the closest to traditional art. Few drawings were focused on the river slowly passing by. An eye was not looking at paper and a hand was moving as fast as nature. The dancer Frank van de Ven was doing the simplest trainings – for example slow, fifteen minutes long 360 degree single rotation around our vertical axis, while watching the line of the horizon. A strange experience was picking up natural objects – like mushrooms and mud and mosses – and highlighting and giving names to their colours. It was a new dimension in perceiving the artist role in landscape. *“And I heard two big silences...”* said Irishman Fergus after night training.

Early 19th century artist Josef Manes was aware of the fact that he couldn't express everything in the picture just by colours so he wrote notes to his sketches. He was fascinated by flowers and his painting brush helped him to know the landscape. He wanted to do more than just paint a good picture. What can an artist (or a layman) do if they refuse a traditional way of drawing? Milos Sejn's way is using natural pigments, drawing with black berries or with leaves. The aim is not to make “art” but to catch the feeling from a particular place often with eyes closed. The result is still very often aesthetic. It is a long process of going through the landscape reading K.H. Macha or H.D. Thoreau. The question is whether this is the continuation of e.g. Kosarek's way of painting landscape – but not in the sense of evaluation of the work but the relationship with landscape of home. The seminar was partly the return to the experience of peasantry who knew from touching the earth if there was good harvest. *“I learnt something from my father, something from a horse...”* used to say a peasant.

Waiting for serious changes of climate we understand how important is education and that we need to know languages and computers. But it happens that a student who wants to study ecology at the university has never seen a goat before. He or she will use Internet and will learn everything they need about animals and landscape without experience of life, colours and shapes. Through time we learn to award all the folk courses where we used to touch real materials and colours. If we would now fight against globalization we would probably choose the landscape of our heart, we would step inside

and look around us for a long time to know what we do not want to miss. This is a very human way of art which breaks the boundaries between a picture in a gallery and everyday life.

Bohemiae Rosa

Milos is a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts; otherwise he is better a mole or a slug who dips into the ground to be a part of it. Formerly he was drawing realistic pictures of landscape, then he began to understand it as clusters of colours, then he laid aside the drawing brush and since he has been drawing with leaves and mud. I think he continues in merging together with landscapes using contemporary tools.

Frank is a cosmopolitanist from Holland. He lived with Min Tanaka in Japan for ten years and he devoted much of his time to Butoh – a modern dance of expression. He does not like technicians, he hates guru's, he does not believe in words, he doesn't call his work "Butoh", because it is his life and not a discipline. He drinks beer and he likes to laugh.

I am here because of words and landscape. I pay attention of not meeting silent Frank but on the other hand, we – Europeans – need words. I took my daughter Kristina to M. cloister or she took me because she is home there; she goes drawing there to Honza's place two times a week. Milos created Bohemiae Rosa from the map of the Czech Republic which is done as a rose and is in Balbinus "Miscellanei". The Bohemiae Rosa workshop takes place every two years. The aim is to understand colours and shapes of this world. There are about fifteen participants every year. The following text is from my diary which I wrote right after my return home. I met Milos a week ago and he said: "I am still half in Bechyne." And I am too. My wife went on her life tour to Ladakh and if I should compare our experience we go to south Bohemia next year.

The diary

Day after day I was writing what was happening at the workshop not to forget my thoughts. I am writing now right after I came home when I am still full of darkness, people, stones, structures.

The most powerful moment was when I, in the same instinctive way, in which we later touched the earth, touched life.

Monday - arrival

We look at a panorama of the town from Bechyne bridge. We slowly go down, watch each other and prepare tea. There are fifteen of us. A slim dancer Salta and Kim from Kazakhstan, Fergus from Ireland, Ema from Australia, Czechs and Slovaks. Smiling Frank van de Ven and Milos Sejn. It gets dark and so does the cloister. We whistle to each other from different places, the sound goes through the air.

We live in a cloister, the number of us is the same as the number of Minorites years ago, we eat in the same place as they did. We go through the cloister and maybe speak about similar things as they did. We do training in the monastery.

Tuesday - expectation

We start with cleaning the rooms, we learn to live together. We whisper. We expect. First we walk for an hour, then we jump and then I have cramp and I can't do anything else the whole day.

Basis of walking:

The flat of the foot feels the three parts.

Knees leads the movement.

The axis of a leg goes through the second toe.

Firm stomach, more loose backs.

Then we make short and long steps, mixed, in different speed, backwards. The axis of the body is fixed to the ceiling.

In the afternoon we go along the river, we stop and slowly turn around for 15 minutes looking in front of ourselves. Landscape goes inside of us. *Reflection: the measure of familiarization with landscape is getting bigger - first it's just a horizon then details appear as ways, stones. And then we want to know it just being tourists.*

In the evening in the church. We look at a CD-rom with Thoreau, amazing, everything free on the internet. Milos says there is something similar about Shakespeare.

Wednesday - On the road

We go to Tyn nad Vltavou by bus and then we go to the confluence with the Luznice, nice place, a small chapel is here. A highwayman was executed here; there are many sites of a settlement, right at the confluence was a settlement from the Bronze Age, which is not common in this area.

Training: Two persons opposite each other, one a leader, repeat movements after each other. I don't have a partner so I try the same with a grass in wind. Then the roles change.

I watch the river and think of rafts.

We go through the forest to Kolodeje, where we want to pick up pigments for drawing. It is a long way around. We have lunch in the forest which is covered with lichens.

We go down to the Jude's ditch. We pick up natural objects. The Jude's ditch is beautiful, big yellow lichens, violet heaths.-

Training: to watch one square meter for ten minutes. Very hungry and in a good way exhausted we reach the cloister. In the evening we install the nature objects which have become La Tour's hybrids, lovely.

Later we talk at the river side and we watch the moon going through the tree branches, a hangman's house and a mill, exactly the primitive romanticism I like. It would be possible to write more but it isn't. *How were the older careful! Like when we cross the frozen river in winter.*

Thursday - colours

In the morning we stretch and then I go to see a palace. Then wonderful handling training, which I still feel after several hours. The training is also about learning about the body of someone else and about learning about my own body from reactions of others. Then we bring the tables with nature objects. We are supposed to name them without consideration. One thing is to see colour, the other to name it. There are many colours but there aren't so many names for them. Some colours are possible to name only by our own language.

Colours: think for a while that I don't need colours that the only thing I need is to name the thing I see that I don't need the colour that it serves only to recognize an object. I can't name the colours so I write to a bird feather "silence", to a mushroom "secret life", but secret life is violet and I by this act change the yellow mushroom into the violet.

Dinner, we see the museum of ceramics, listen to parrots in the garden and go back to the cloister. Don't think about Abion.

I. Training: Skeleton standing, stand for ten minutes, watching each other, first relax, then don't think about anything. It is a nice training, Fergus loves it, it is possible to do it in twos, the atmosphere changes, Frank calls it implosion. Fergus says that he heard two big silences.

II. Training: we are empty; we wait for an animal and then become it.

Then a storm arrived, the Luznice is Chinese again. Long supper, strong end of the day. Everybody gets a plate with clay and made tree sculptures:

- With the right hand squeeze, the moment of grasping - knowing.
- Slow flow through (5 minutes) fingers of the left hand, interface of a man and clay.
- Clay between

In the evening long walk through Bechyne by night, fog and trees, flowing river, sitting in the corner at Abion, I can't sleep at night, I look for cloister keys. I find them in the morning in my pocket in which I looked many times.

Friday - stairs

Morning training on Bechyne stairs, everybody has a feeling that they stretch well, that they like it. We go up and down in different ways. In a fast way, slowly, other way round, blind.

Then stairs in the cloister. Bodies are going down the stairs. Very emotive. We have half an hour to get down from the first floor. Then we move as quickly as one centimetre a second. I lie on a well.

Next: we choose an object and watch it for a long time and walk on it.

In the afternoon we walk along the river, which is very beautiful. We sit down next to the side of the river and then we swim, blind, for 20 minutes.

Talking and feedbacks. Having beer with Frank and Milos.

Saturday - a cellar

We are having breakfast and we try to walk on a thread placed on the floor. Easy trainings are better like letters from the alphabet, everything is possible to make from them.

One training: short steps, nod our heads, slowly, more and more, the movement moves to the spine, down and down.

Trainings in a cellar - too many and too complicated.

In the afternoon there is a discussion over projects: Frank says that a project should be a group work, it can be individual but it should come back then and help everybody. Otherwise it would be possible to set the project by mail. Frank sees individual training as forming the group. We work as individuals but still as a group.

In the evening: drawing with Milos, long watching an object (10 minutes) then paper on breast, don't watch it and draw in one line. One can sit, lie, walk.

Evening walk to the confluence. Talking about long term loan to the National Gallery. Once an artist will sit in a gallery, people will come and he

will draw with them or dance or make golden dwarfs. There won't be any pictures.

Sunday - earth

In early morning the sun rises on the Bechyne bridge, we go down to the weir, we draw without looking continual line anti movement of level of the river and morning fog. A hand moves as quickly as the nature. I am not able to do it.

Then I dip the paper into the water and I draw objects in the river. That's better.

Tim looks for snakes, we are having a bath in the morning river.

Here my notes are not complete, I gave them to Milos.

Short talk about gardens.

Something strange happens to me. I lean against the rock and I smash a slug. I have two bands on my T-shirt - one grey, very nice and the second orange and yellow with green ending. Both have the "Sejn" poetics and I was the closest to it as I have never been before.

Night from Sunday to Monday

I am very tired, I didn't sleep more than three hours and I was three times interrupted. At about eight in the evening we go to the Jude's ditch. We sit on a small bridge over a ravine. Beautiful silent place, I have a feeling of danger and angriness, I don't have it very often. R. starts to cry, he must go back.

We continue in almost complete darkness through the ravine, we go back, the moon is still on the sky, there are lighting beetles everywhere. We find a ledge and with difficulties make fire. We talk and then do the training: We sit close to the river but there is a fire in front of us

We breath only with the tip of a nose, we are not separated from the environment

The air becomes dark, original water, we fill the world

We change into a fish, big happiness from the movement, some large shapes are moving next to us, we are not afraid

We come closer to the bottom, silver sand, not bright light, there is the understanding, we drink water but don't care of understanding, we eat nuts

Then we continue, water is thinner, we are among stars

We are happy in clean room

We swim to the end of the universe, it is the surface

We see people under the ledge

We feel the earth under our legs, we now about the stone ceiling, we can smell the smoke of the fire we hear the water

We know that we should care about the stars in us and we know that we should care about monsters in us, we open our eyes and slowly get up

Frank says, go to the forest to the water, sit for five minutes, look around you, put off your clothes, go to the water, do what you like. Don't forget where you have put your clothes. Then I whistle. I have hallucination, I hear Kristina calling me with a child voice.

In the forest I find naked Fergus who found nettles instead of clothes. I have a light, I find the clothes. The speciality of this training is again its individual - collective sense.

We sit next to the fire, we drink one homeopathic bottle of wine for 14 people. Two o'clock in the morning, silent way home.

In cloister we find R. broken down, he can't speak well, he can't walk well. Frank talks to him, Radka takes care of him. Marcela comes but Fergus is lost. We are 22 hours awake and we have two problems, the cloister is silent we are afraid. A short talk with Frank, Milos, Marcela, Radka. I know what I want to say and I say it and I am afraid.

Milos and Marcela go to look for Fergus, Radka looks after R., I with a light lie next to the gate, I sleep and wait.

Milos comes back at five, Fergus after six - Thanks God! - Dasha with food after eight. I get up and go to the railway station. Without connection with the situation, the moment I leave the cloister I think of **Sádlí** rhymes:

You love life,

But I say to you,

That string of pearls on your neck

Will once strangle you to death.

I think the cloister forces them to appear to me as a goodbye. You beast, I will be watchful next time! Or I will go to see a mass.

Happy end

I call home to Eliska from Tabor. She says that our cottage has been burgled and that they took everything including my books and pictures. I had there almost 2.000 books collected all my life, Rilke, Nerval, Holan, Francis James, and many loved books. I feel it is logic, it is the continuation of the workshop. This year it is my second death of what I have been. Last shock of this kind came last week.

Sad happiness - how many beautiful books will come to people's hands.
But also freedom and relief (I write in a train). I think of people more now than of letters.

Regret over my books comes in the evening; I read my books in my memory: Kafka, Hrabal with dedication, books with Šíma's illustrations, many poems, almost all books by Holub, Vrchlicky, Macha. Sore I call my grandfather if something remained. It appears that my library is intact and that only an arbour was burgled.

In my life I like this sense of humour. I can't be blind after these two weeks.

Saltanat techniques:

Iškala - mabudala, iškala is a heart sound, man and woman say that, but man answers mabudala more often. They sit opposite each other and speak with each other by this two words in different keys.

Two sit opposite each other and speak to each other in language that doesn't exist, they provoke each other, they speak more and more loudly, they shout.

Two sit opposite each other, they make a bow to each other, they say saláma alejkum, they pound their heads at the ground.

They hold each other's hands, they make a circle, they dance, and at the same time they kiss their own hand and then the hand of the second person.

I don't read it for the second time, it is evening 27th August 2001, I go to sleep, the house is hot, maybe a storm will come. A tom-cat throws down a flower pot with blue glazing

It is from Silezia: *I don't believe in death - I have to die in every minute - meanwhile - did I live in a better way?*

Translated from czech by Radana Jakubcová

The Touchpeople

Essay on National Museum, soul considered as a collection and on bowls of Miloš Šejn

*“I shall never reach the place
Where during July night a tree extends
I know that and the summertime night still teaches me”*

Jan Skácel, Czech poet

Caution and distrust are a good start in a world where every detergent cleans whiter than another, where every bank believes it is the model of security and the authorities speak a language which first has to be translated from Czech to Czech, than cleared of promises and the deadlines have to be multiplied. After all, why should we believe Miloš Šejn more than the State Bank governor? And what actually is the Conceptual Media School led by Miloš Šejn since 1990 at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, until recently managed by the suspicious character of Milan Knížák?

A student who finally gets himself into the Academy at the fifth attempt can be an unreliable lunatic, but he can make an authentic drawing of a nose. If he doesn't draw noses, it is not because he would not be able to do it, but he has a reason that makes him draw fire lines with a burning branch in the night, or establish a private, thus incommunicable, relationship to the Japanese Cypress, the colour blue or, an extreme case, the square root of three (which has been, since the Gnostic times, as irrational a number as the universe itself). Then the student enrolls in a studio of his own choice and starts to search for himself. Each term he may change studios and professors. This is what makes the Academy special: most schools give you a qualification, some even provide education (the saturation which remains after you have forgotten all the facts), but the Academy seems to be here not only to teach the students how to recognize the proper end of the brush or pencil or to paint in ink, but also to discover themselves and know what to do with the discovery. Some often take a shortcut and find their style earlier than themselves, but this is just not the case in Miloš Šejn's studio.

The people who come here have a different or more intense way of thinking than others, or they are **the people of touch**. The classical painting or drawing is a translation of a more or less real outer or inner world into the expression

of the painting. Many artists do not find the restrictions posed by the technique and colour so difficult and some, on the contrary, are able to use it to their advantage (or use it to the advantage of the object). But for the people of touch, drawing is a barrier. **It is the same as if you were to stroke a dog with gloved hands.** This concept is about touching the unhindered by tools, making it clear without the brush. Hand, stalk, waterfall or landscape can be the tool.

However, there is another question: this is a time more clever and elegant than wise and beautiful. It prefers fast, sharp ideas to slow and uncertain self-realization, to reflections upon the stars and the summer night underneath sandstone rock shelter where Mesolithic man used to come to collect hazelnuts. This is clearly reflected in the art where an idea resembling the Spielberg movie trick or a shortcut in a computer program is often exhibited. Therefore we ask ourselves, seeing not only a standard oil painting or graphic art but rather the land-art or conceptual art, the following question: Is this as real as TV news, or as real as a stone?

Many art seekers find their way somewhere to the worlds of anxiety and sometimes vanity and do not bother with an explanation. Who should they explain it to when we are all overwhelmed by words and concern? Couples of people among the artist's friends resonate and anticipate the answer. Some art historians rise above the usual "influence-isms" and the artificial mumbo-jumbo of noise, thus showing their power over the public. The piece of art becomes known among certain groups of people, but the rest of the world is eliminated from the game of understanding and doesn't want to get in. Then the speaker or text author is entered in the catalogue and is asked to somehow explain the piece. So he asks not about the meaning but after truthfulness, but today we know that there are many ways of truthfulness and we have to seek the understanding step by step while using the trick, this deduction, that we needn't guess exactly, that it is enough if we find our own meaning of the piece.

The sad fact is that while classical art was supposed to, and often had to, work without explanation, today's artist needs his theologian, which originally used to be someone who **explained the words of Pythia** and, as you can imagine, these were rather precarious roles. But I had to give you this long introduction, as I am not an art historian. I do not collect artists like beetles and do not pin them in catalogues. If I think something is true I want to understand secrets such as the dishes of Miloš Šejn. And I am not so simple-minded as to think that I will understand in a couple of hours or days what

someone else has been involved in with humbleness and seriousness, as I have learned, for thirty years now.

The Colour of the Land

“Observe nature carefully and perceive it thoughtfully: hastiness means running aground and a step back. Take in small portions so that you can digest them entirely. Remember just today. And always keep to the truth – nature needn’t be beautified or amplified. She has enough of these qualities.”

The advice of Julius Mařák, a Czech painter, to his students

Miloš Šejn used to paint pictures of The Czech Paradise, gorges at the Prachov Rocks or colored structures of natural objects, but he wanted to live with the landscape and touch it directly as an archaeologist or ploughman does. He created frontages of rock surfaces, calligraphy using his hand-ground pigments and painted with ferriferous spout mud or elder sap, an imprint of the Zebín hilltop made by copying the shape of sap basalt onto a roll of paper, or paintings made with tree branches. Landscape is also lightning, a fire set alight at the top of a rock, the course of the Sun on the summer solstice. The central Czech landscape, and Bohemian Paradise especially, are highly cultural phenomena, they are proof of mutual habituation and the influence of place, man, grazing animal and climatic changes. All of this is reflected throughout the work of Miloš Šejn, although not very visible in some of the exhibits – you have to know a larger part of his work. Just think of those thousands of dishes collected since 1958. There is an exact record of each of them saying where the object was found and what it is – arsenopyrite from Kaňk, or a straw bed from the nest of the chaffinch. Most of the objects were collected around Jičín and if you remember nothing from this exhibition, **at least you will know that these are the colors of the motherland.** What František Kaván or Jindřich Prucha brought to their paintings with such difficulties and so nicely, Miloš Šejn exhibits as it was found. The point is not who is a greater artist or that the dishes are difficult to frame and hang in your room; the point is to touch nature. The touch means that you kneel down and, through an unfolded sheet of paper, you feel someone from underneath trying to find out who you are.

František Kaván, through his work, might have said this: You live in a nice country, enjoy it and don’t destroy it. Miloš Šejn says: I watched carefully and in my own way (I don’t know any other) around myself and this is what I

found. I think he is the same prisoner of landscape as were Karel Vik or František Kaván, but his character and his approach to art do not want to provoke and make slogans, such as “Protect, do not destroy, and watch carefully as I do (and you will be given the rest)”.

Variability or Composition

“Rain the pale rains

Boiling drops say “Ave”

A fertile Ave of grief.

Blissful be you who can see

The meaning of dusk and rain.

To the rainbow it will ascend

Like an arrow to the bowstring

Perhaps you know better of this.”

Josef Hora, Czech poet

A collection of dishes is similar to a collection of old legends. The chronicles of past years are **collections**. Bohuslav Balbín, who is very close to Miloš Šejn, wrote his Miscellanea or Variability of the Czech Kingdom using the same process as Miloš Šejn. He collected from many resources and archives facts, which were of interest to him – from historical data to tales of miracles. And his work has been with us up until today. This exhibition is in fact the conversion of Balbín’s Miscellanea into colour and circles. I mean this seriously, not as an allegory or a metaphor.

Our libraries, lives and souls are similar collections of miscellanea. Just notice how most people perceive their past not as a stream of changes and moments, but as a carefully kept selection of memories, articles, exhibitions, conferences or funerals. As if we had been placing pieces of our life into small boxes and made a collection which time will sort into small drawers. **And death, well, it is “the fire in the museum”**, as Jan Placák used to say. I sometimes think about what makes up the collection of our soul. I suspect that many people visit foreign countries only to improve their souls, i.e. to add nice and exotic small boxes to the collection. Of course it is indiscreet, but ask about the soul of a country grandmother hidden in one wooden trunk, or about the soul of man, soul made of duckweed, fragments of chaffinch eggs and the black earth of Dolní Věstonice.

And isn't the National Museum big enough so as to house all the ground beetles, whirls and cephalopods at the time when the soul of a modern Czech nation was born? Isn't it a nice and natural idea to make the soul of a nation from trilobites and from everything, which can be found and placed in a small dish? What sort of National Museum would we establish today? Wouldn't it be a building full of words about democratic traditions, the Pansophy of Comenius and the Europeanism of Vojtěch? If we look for the soul of a nation (called "the national identity" today), a search, which has been going on not only here but also in England, Germany or Slovakia, words do not help - they only create concepts. If you forget the fern root or **beech wood glinting in your palm early on the morning of 10/09/95 in Dobřeň, near Mšeno**, you may soon have to pay for it.

Soul is like an exhibition in a small town museum before the arrival of modern museology (I am thinking of Netvořice, but we are still on about the dishes). If any of the locals or teachers had something interesting, they gave it to the museum. A surprising conglomerate of things, of miscellanea, was created which represented the life and breath of the country. And when the collection grew too big, it was sorted into groups: farming tools, dishes made in the local kiln, a collection of minerals, a stuffed nuthatch and also things which were impossible to categorize and these gave it a special taste.

This is one of the ways of understanding the work of Miloš Šejn. Best of all I'd like to be silent, but it is not right to present the riddle of thousands of dishes without a guide (possibly wrong). I can only be angry at the time when work is exclusive and man often enters the exhibition hall like a supermarket - help you with the explanation or buy the pre-digested catalogue.

Straw for the fire

At the time of his death in 1963 American poet Theodore Roethke left behind 277 notebooks full of miscellany of poetry fragments, entries, aphorisms. Roethke let his mind to rove freely from comic to the beautiful, from everyday notes to transcendental poetry. We hardly know about other poet whose collected a published life work is some 4-cm thick, while unpublished journals are covering at the shelves of Library of Congress almost 4 meters. What an example! David Wagoner a spiritual apprentice and poet himself selected and rearranged Roethke's fragments in a book „Straw for the fire“ (1974, University of Washington Press) and I choose few appealing quotations to illustrate the parallel movement between poet of words and poet of action and earth. Both -Roethke's visions and Šejn's bowls are important fragments,

unfinished ones and thus pointing to space where *the tree extends during July night*
and where we shall never enter in this body.

*I wish I could photosynthesize. I often laughed in the middle of night. God has even more trouble
than we do. How certain the light has become!*

*My bones whisper to my blood; my sleep deceives me. This motion is larger than air; wider than
the water; fly, fly spirit. A strange shape nestles in my nerves. Whisper back to me, wit. I am
ready to be alive.... Birds beating in blood... I came close when I talked to the seeds...*

*All I learned is what I love. I feel the weight of stars. All day, all day the wind whirled me out of
myself. I saw the sea rolling in the field. Dwell in myself, said the dark fishes: I kissed the hand
hit me... I made a last kiss to the stars, a slow touch of love to someone else. Among the up-sprung
weeds I hurt my hands...*

*The stony garden of the spirit grows
Thing never harvested in ordered rows.
Sometimes when the leaves in the elm gather the last of light,
The eternal seems to come near me.
Sweet stars Ill ask a softer question: Moon
Attend me to the end. I'm here alone.*

*If there is not another life, there is at least another way to live. We sigh before we sing. The circles
of my If and When dissolving in the rain...Reason keep away from my doors. I see what I believe.
I stay away from the death by turning toward her face. The things I steal from sleep are what I
am. I'm tired- is that maturity? I'm waiting for what I am. So much experience just flows over
me: I might as well be a stone at the bottom of a stream: any stone. I belong to my solitude; I
shall die for myself. We take from the nature what we cannot see. My memory, my prison. If it is
true that one's basic character is established in quite early childhood, then I still have a chance.
The self must be a bridge not a pit. The visible exhaust mess: I am dissolved in a shadow.*

*Myself and the air!
The gliding birds never denying their element.
It is all the same
Out of me, out of me,
The pure bird on its stone...
A pure light came
And stole me away
From time.*

All forms darken, things cannot know us. May my silences become more accurate. The angels ask but never answer. It is well to keep in touch with chaos. The only wisdom he acquired was from poetry: a special wisdom of feeling, not a refinement of feeling. Alas, he's degenerated into civilized man.

*Pardon me Apple,
Hello Worm.
Here 's the Secret
Of Pure Form.*

The feeling that one is on the edge of many things: that there are many things: that there are many worlds from which we are separated by only a film; that a flick of the wrist, a turn of the body another way will bring us to a new world: it is more than a perpetual expectation: yet sometimes the sense of richness is haunting: it is richness and yet denial, the living a half step, as it were, from what one should be. Close to the central mysteriousness of life he was, the times in childhood... in a June night, out on the sleeping porch.

(I am watching my text with the same distrust as Miloš Šejn's work. I am afraid that the text would be too nice. It might hurt work that is simple and raw)

Translated from czech by Vaclav Cílek