

Art Interview: It is kind of amazing to me that at your age you've been able to produce so much large-scale work.

David Cerny: According to the calendar I'm 37. So I don't think that this is amazing; Damien Hirst is maybe two years older than I am. So I don't think that I would be called a new, young, emerging artist. I'm old, a bit tired and I should have some kind of career instead of having uncertainty, no gallery and having things still floating. Your assessment seems to me to be a bit too optimistic.

Art Interview: Well, what I find interesting is that you began creating large-scale work even when you were still in school.

David Cerny: Yes, but all of those things were done in fiberglass, so in terms of production it was the cheapest way and I was doing it by myself.

Art Interview: The facilities that you were using; were those at the university or were they your own facilities?

David Cerny: I didn't use anything at the university. We didn't normally have any facilities and I think that in the time I was at the university I probably used the school for 3 months out of the 6 years I was there, when I was carving a piece of sculpture. To be honest, I'm not complaining about the University of Applied Arts, which I attended. But there were no facilities. About 2 months ago I answered a questionnaire the university sent me - the answers are going to be published in the anniversary catalogue of the university. They asked me what I missed when I was at the school and this was my biggest complaint. I deeply missed real facilities and workshops, which would have helped me.

Art Interview: Were there any professors at the university that were of assistance to you or anyone that could help and guide you what you were doing?

David Cerny: No, no, no, no, no, nothing.

Art Interview: So you were pretty much left on your own?

David Cerny: I was on my own. We had this discussion like a zillion times. My second biggest complaint about the school was that it did not teach you that after those 6 years you're going to be nothing. Many school colleagues had the feeling that because they were going to the school they were artists and that once they were finished with school the world would be waiting for them and everybody would bow down in front of them. But then when they got out of school nothing happened. Then it is like: oh, aha, well now what?! Then they were stuck earning money in some stupid bullshit job and after 10 years they could forget about being artists.

Art Interview: Did you realize while you were at school how difficult the art world actually is? Most students don't go and produce really large-scale work like you were doing.

David Cerny: You know what. I did not think that school meant anything. Look at this. During those 6 years at school, I spent 2 years in New York. I don't know, the school was a place where I could meet with some friends and have a couple of good parties. There was nothing serious about it. College years for me don't count at all. I applied for Industrial Design at the school first and after one year of studying I realized I didn't want to do it for political reasons. I said, ok, I don't care about what's going on at school. I don't want to do some stupid designs of whatever. So I switched to the sculpture because a friend of mine was professor there

Art Interview: Were you doing sculpture at that time by yourself?

David Cerny: Yeah, of course. But before I was 17 I never really considered being an artist. This was probably because my parents were artists and I refused. I just felt like, you know; the art world – I don't want that shit. So that was why I decided to study electronics in high school. After I finished high school I decided I didn't want to continue electronics. I realized that electronics didn't really fit me. I thought about what I wanted and I realized that ever since I was a child I cared about design or, let's say, visual things. So I asked myself what my options were.

I tried getting into the university three times after I finished electronics high school in 1986. The first two times they told me I had no talent. After my exams I decided to enter the industrial design program because this was still during the Bolshevik period and if I wanted to make sculptures I didn't want to be under the pressure of the communists' sculpting requirements, which were dominant at that time in the university. I realized that if I studied industrial design there was no way anyone would tell me: "For the next half year you will design a vacuum cleaner in a Stalinist way." But even in the industrial design program I immediately had problems because we had the task to do a souvenir for Prague and I ended up with something that was unacceptable. So then it became like a game for me.

After the end of the communism, a guy named Borek Sipek, a well-known architect and designer of furniture and glass, who immigrated to Holland, came back and became a professor at my university. So I spent another half year doing design and then I decided, I don't care about furniture. So I quit and went to the sculpture department.

Art Interview: What projects had you done before you switched from design to sculpture?

David Cerny: I won a prize in Japan for design and I had a design in a furniture biennale and won some special prize there. So, I was trying seriously during that year and a half. I had been doing performance art in public spaces as well. In terms of sculpture I began my statue “Quo Vadis” which was a Trabi with legs.

Art Interview: What was that made out of?

David Cerny: It was made out of fiberglass.

Art Interview: How did you acquire the necessary means to create large-scale sculptures in fiberglass? Where did you have your facilities and where did you learn to work with fiberglass?

David Cerny: I made it in a courtyard. I had borrowed some money from friends and some money from my parents. I was doing it by myself. It did not cost much. I got the car for free from the scrap yard and I think I only used about 40 kilograms of fiberglass, so it wasn't expensive. Of course, I involved a lot of friends of mine to help carry it because we had to move it from the courtyard where I was working on it.

Art Interview: Where did you store it? I know storage is always a big problem for young sculptors. How did you deal with the fact that you had a very large object to contend with?

David Cerny: (Laugh) You have a large object and you have to move it somehow. So I told my friends we're going to move it during the night to the old town square, and I need your help. That was it. So, around 10 people lifted it up onto the truck and we held on to it all the way down to the central square.

Art Interview: Did you have permission to put it where you put it?

David Cerny: We had permission because it was the part of an exhibition, which was called the Old Town Yard. But that was back in '91, so even if it hadn't been in the exhibition we wouldn't have needed permission, because the first 2-3 years after the fall of the communism were kind of free.

Art Interview: How did you get into that show? Was that something you had to apply for?

David Cerny: I was asked because I had done a couple of things before. So people knew my name or the organizers knew me.

Art Interview: In '91 you did a permanent installation at the Andy Warhol family museum in Slovakia. It is very unusual for a student's art to become part of a permanent museum collection. How did you do that?

David Cerny: I knew the guy who was in charge of the museum. Back in the spring of 1990 he gave a huge party, which was called the Andy Warhol-something or other. I had made 6 big tomato cans for him and he asked me if I would like to cooperate on putting up the installation in the Andy Warhol Museum in Slovakia. I proposed this thing called “Draught of Air”. I did it myself with the same process I had been using. You make a mold and work with the fiberglass.

Art Interview: The contact to the museum came during this huge party?

David Cerny: No, no. There were two guys who were doing the installation in the Andy Warhol museum, Rudo Prekop and Michail Cihlar, and they were known graphic artists. One is a photographer and the other is a graphic artist. They both work in sort of a Warhol poetic, I would say. And they began to work on the museum where Andy Warhol’s family came from in Slovakia. So we already knew each other – in Prague everybody knows everybody.

Art Interview: Just through being friends with these people you were able to get into the collection.

David Cerny: As I said, I did one thing in terms of Andy Warhol: I did those big cans for the party. They knew of a couple of things I'd done previously. I was somehow involved and they asked me if I would like to cooperate by contributing something. So I said, ok, why not.

Art Interview: Since then you have been involved in several projects in the United States. When was the first time that you went to New York?

David Cerny: I think it was around 1993 or 1994.

Art Interview: Was it then that you made your gallery contacts in New York?

David Cerny: The first time I was there I decided, ok, I would try to promote myself. So I decided that while I was in New York I would go around to the galleries as much as I could. By complete coincidence I ended up meeting Ronald Feldman. I said that I’m looking for a gallery and that I am an artist from the Czech Republic and he said: Oh well, and you want to show me some slides, don’t you? I said: YES! I pulled up one sheet of slides and he said, OK this is interesting, maybe. Two months later he called me and said OK you can do a show here.

Art Interview: What projects had you already done that he looked at?

David Cerny: I had a show that was in Vaclav Spala Gallery, which is a small three-floor gallery, but it is on Národní Street, the main street in Prague. I had a one-man show there, so I had to fill up those three floors, that was the stuff I showed to Feldman.

Art Interview: Filling three floors seems like it would be an enormous amount of work.

David Cerny: No, it wasn't. I had those four guns and I had my kit series, those snapped-off sculptures.

Art Interview: Weren't four of your guns shown at the World Trade Center in New York?

David Cerny: Yes, they were part of the show "Celebration Prague" at the World Trade Center in New York City.

Art Interview: Did you have to pay for the transportation of those large guns to New York?

David Cerny: The transportation was taken care of by the exhibition. I was staying in New York at the time but when the guns were shipped back almost all of them were completely ruined, like really ruined. I had to reconstruct them for a show 7, maybe 8 years later.

Art Interview: They didn't manage to come back in one piece!?

David Cerny: No – they came back in many pieces, many pieces.

Art Interview: That must have pissed you off; it meant a lot of work.

David Cerny: Yes, of course. Especially because there was no insurance, so I was just fucked.

Art Interview: Your most famous sculpture is of the babies on the TV Tower in Prague. How did that project come about?

David Cerny: That project started with a single baby sculpture that was shown in 1995 at the Museum of Modern Art in Chicago in an exhibition called "Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe". The exhibition traveled to Oberlin's Allen Memorial Art Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia and Omaha's Joslyn Art Museum before closing in the spring of 1997.

Art Interview: How was contact started with the Museum of Modern Art in Chicago? Wasn't that a big step for you?

David Cerny: It was put together as a traveling show starting in Chicago, but the curator, Laura J. Hoptman, was from New York. She had spent 1993 and '94 doing fieldwork for the show and she contacted me to ask whether I would

include my kits, which she had seen at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York. Then she asked me whether I would be interested in including other works and so I proposed the project with babies crawling around the outside walls of the museum building. I actually proposed a couple of more projects but she chose this one. So I made the first baby and then they realized that half of their budget was spent on the catalogue and that they didn't have enough money to complete the project. So I just had one piece and it was exhibited as an interior piece during that show which I did not like. In 1997 after traveling round the States it was sent back to Europe in pieces. Two years later I was asked to do a piece for the Prague Culture City of 2000 or something like that. I said OK.

Art Interview: So you proposed the babies then for the TV Tower?

David Cerny: Yeah. It was a sort of a recycled project.

Art Interview: How did you get that contact?

David Cerny: Everybody knows everybody.

Art Interview: Yes, Prague is a relatively small place.

David Cerny: The world is a relatively small place.

Art Interview: So by simply by creating interesting things you automatically gain connections?

David Cerny: I'll try to answer your question. If you are a caretaker of a certain kind of mammoth you will probably end up hanging out with other people who are interested in these mammoths. You know, or I could be talking about some weird lizard with two tails. I think that the art world is a similar thing. The people who care about these weird creatures called artists want to hang out together.

Art Interview: When you were beginning as an artist how did you survive? Did you work part-time jobs?

David Cerny: This is an issue I think about fairly often, especially about the future: how will I survive. Sometimes something is sold, like small pieces; I did work a couple of times. I remember, when I was 20 I did maybe like one or two stupid jobs for I don't know what anymore. When I was 25 or maybe before I went to New York I just decided I didn't want to spend a life because of the need to earn money. I'd rather reduce my needs than work for money – that was the decision, a simple decision. Of course, I ended up a couple of times borrowing money and then I had to pay it back.

Art Interview: So do you live off of your art now?

David Cerny: I have to say yes. Sometimes it's really tough and to be honest – you never know.

Art Interview: How exactly do you manage the sale of your work? Are you currently selling pieces directly or are you getting commissions or do you have dealers you are currently working with?

David Cerny: I sell maybe one or two pieces a year by myself and I get a few commissions. I can't say that in the beginning I was living off of my art. I was living grand after the first year I was in New York. During that time the gallerist Ronald Feldman sold two of my pieces. So the second year I was living on my own.

Art Interview: How do you price your work? Do you let the gallery set prices for you or do you decide how much your work will go for?

David Cerny: It's my decision, of course. Basically what I'm doing is following financial politics: I cannot sell a new piece for less than what I sold the previous piece for because that would cheat the previous buyer. This is the only rule I have: if I sell one piece, the second copy is more expensive.

Art Interview: What do you mean by copy, do you make copies of your work?

David Cerny: No, not copying in that sense. I may make up to 5 pieces of the original.

Art Interview: So you produce more than one at a time?

David Cerny: Yes, certain things I make more than one of.

Art Interview: Whatever happened to the body kits that you produced?

David Cerny: One was sold to the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego where it is on display. One was sold in New York to a private collector and the rest were exhibited around the world and then came back 3 years ago. I still have them.

Art Interview: The pieces that were sold were sold through your gallery then?

David Cerny: They were sold in New York while I was there through the Ronald Feldman gallery.

Art Interview: Now, the shark piece which you just recently produced has received quite a bit of notoriety. How did you come to that idea?

David Cerny: I think it's obvious. I will try to explain my thinking. The sculpture has two connotations. One points to Damien Hirst's sculpture "The Shark". I remember when he first presented it there was discussion about the question of whether it is okay to kill a living animal just to exhibit it as a piece of art. Of course, then I added to my sculpture the issue of Saddam Hussein. I probably came up with the idea because I was in Baghdad a year ago as a journalist. Some feelings grew out of my experience there. So I tried to realize within the sculpture the underlying sentiments against Iraq in those days and the underlying reality of how the semi-help/not help of the US occupation/not occupation was being accepted.

Art Interview: Who you were doing journalism for in Iraq?

David Cerny: I was doing my own TV program for Czech television. It was a monthly magazine about contemporary art and it ran for a year-and-a-half before it was canceled.

Art Interview: Did you go to Iraq because of the war?

David Cerny: I was asked by a friend of mine to go there, so I said ok I will and I will try to do a report about the Iraq art scene.

Art Interview: Is there an Iraq art scene at this point?

David Cerny: No, I didn't see much of a scene, to be honest. There's no art scene but it was a really good experience that was sort of tough.

Art Interview: Do you know Damien Hirst personally?

David Cerny: No. Ok: so not everybody knows everybody.

Art Interview: I was wondering whether he might have contacted you since you have created a piece which comments upon his art?

David Cerny: This was the first time; I've never done that before. I personally don't enjoy playing with the art of someone else. But I realized that this piece of Hirst's especially was an icon in itself. I don't want to say it is a masterpiece because I think it's kind of stupid and I personally do not like Damien Hirst's work; but it became masterpiece, not as the genius piece, but a masterpiece in reference to all those Britpop things. I just used it as a reference.

Art Interview: A lot of your work is really on the edge, so to speak. It's very confrontational and a bit rebellious. It's a fine line that you are walking. I think that that is what gives it its power. How do you manage to walk the line between being accepted and going too far?

David Cerny: Do you mean how do I manage to remain alive? This is a question that I ask myself pretty often since a bunch of my friends and I conduct activities that fight the old/new communism, which is trying to take back power in my country. I have a lot of public enemies, especially in my country.

Art Interview: Is that physically dangerous for you or politically dangerous?

David Cerny: I'm not in politics directly so it is not politically dangerous for me, but an example of what I am up against will show you: There is the story about the memorial for the Czech Resistance during the Second World War. There was a competition for a commission for the memorial that I was asked to take part in, last year. The mayor of Prague 1, which is the main part of Prague where this monument is going to be built, asked me. I said, this is not my cup of tea but I can try. I'd never done anything like it before. I did the design which you can see on my website and surprisingly I won. Everybody was surprised, including me, but I won and it was announced that I was the sculptor who would be doing it. Three weeks later I did an interview where I was asked what my thoughts were about doing a sculpture that also memorialized some of the communists that had been active in the Resistance. I said ironically; "The only good communist is a dead communist". Of course, you know that General Custer said the same thing about the Indians: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian". It became a huge scandal because they used that for the headline of the article. And even though it was announced everywhere that I had won the competition they changed their minds and gave it to the second place winner. Why am I telling you this? When you ask if it's politically dangerous – no, it's not politically dangerous but in this country politics does matter because politics and art often touch each other.

Art Interview: Do you think that things like that actually help your career or do they hurt your career?

David Cerny: Well, I probably lost several million dollars. (Laugh) So, you decide if you think this was helpful or not. This was the first competition in 10 years for a big project: a memorial in the city after the fall of communism. So it was a good job. But I was asked if I would have changed my mind if I had known that I would lose the job and I said no. I went on record and I said I wouldn't change a single dot in that article. So I definitely said "No, fuck it!" It depends on your point of view whether this is helpful or not helpful to my career.

Art Interview: Is there a reaction from the West when situations like that happen?

David Cerny: I found one or two articles about it somewhere but nothing really happened. Nobody cares about this fucking country.

Art Interview: But I think the controversy probably makes your name interesting to collectors!?

David Cerny: Well, I don't know.

Art Interview: Perhaps it will payoff in the end, financially.

David Cerny: If you are talking about having a larger name as an artist I don't think it really makes a difference because this was a very local case, which really wasn't known abroad. In terms of living in the Czech Republic as an artist and trying to make a living out here I am being optimistic if I say that there are twenty serious art collectors in this country and they already know my name. So the controversy doesn't really matter. Everything I ever sold in my life was sold either abroad or to foreigners living here. I haven't ever sold anything to a Czech citizen. The first commission that I had in this country was the bus stop, which I finished a month ago.

Art Interview: How did your bus stop project come about?

David Cerny: A person who was doing a project in Liberec asked me four years ago if I would like to do something. They actually said: Ok, we're doing this project. We are aiming to install new public sculptures every year in an open space in Liberec. Right now we only have one location. We have an old bus-stop, which has to be turned into something or it will be taken down. Would you like to do something with it? And I looked at them and said: What, a bus stop!? What the hell are you talking about!?

She said, Ok, this is what we have, so think about it. I couldn't really think of how I could turn a bus stop into art and I told her that. But later an idea suddenly came to me – it just happened. So I gave her a proposal and she presented it to their board. They decided, yes they liked it and they wanted to do it. It took three years to finish the project, so in terms of money it was a financial fiasco for me. My honorary was 8,500 Euros for all that work. Not 80,000. It was really only 8,500 Euros. But I understood from the beginning that there was no money in and that they had to spend another 8,000 Euro for public relations, which they did. But 8,500 Euros is ridiculous and that pisses me off. But I tried to be satisfied with the opportunity to make a public sculpture. I didn't become an artist to make it rich. I am an artist because I want to realize sculptures. But personally getting 8,500 Euros for my honorary when they publicly announced that they were spending 200 000 Euros on it pisses me off! But that is life.

Art Interview: Did you propose a price for that project and they gave you what they had left over?

David Cerny: They said: And in terms of the honorary, we do not have any money. That was it. The casting cost them between 80 000 - 100 000 Euros. So I guess that somebody probably paid money under table because they publicly announced that the whole project cost them 200 000 Euros. But I counted with the guy who was doing the casting and we realized that there were still a couple

of million crowns floating around somewhere. So it seriously looked like there was some fraud going on.

Art Interview: The bus stop was cast out of bronze?

David Cerny: Yes.

Art Interview: And you ended up getting 8,500 Euros?

David Cerny: Yeah, that's correct. I got 250,000 crowns, which turned out to be around 8,500 Euros or something like that.

Art Interview: The foundry ended up getting much more money than you did?

David Cerny: At least eleven times more.

Art Interview: That must be frustrating.

David Cerny: That happens. In the end the project was realized. So I'm quite satisfied with that. In terms of visual site.

Art Interview: How does one go about organizing such a large project? You have to deal with the transportation and with positioning the piece, which involves trains and cranes and so forth. Do you do this yourself or do you have a group of people that help you?

David Cerny: I organize it, of course. But I didn't do the installation of the table because that was the job of the guy who was doing the casting. I did the art part: creating a model. And he did the realization part, so I didn't have to think about anything except the art. But of course, I was at the site for a week when we were installing it, so I was present there with all the cranes and we worked on it together. That is a strange question because if you're working on a bigger scale and if you're able to make a big piece, you automatically know how to move it.

Art Interview: How did you begin working in large-scale sculptures? I mean that's a feat in itself, to be able to even start producing large-scale work. One has to have many things in place including a studio large enough to produce such a piece.

David Cerny: I don't have a studio! You'll be amazed, perhaps, but I do not have a gallery and I still don't have a studio because it costs a fortune. I wouldn't be able to pay for a studio to do large pieces in.

Art Interview: So when you are making a proposal do you include renting a space to produce the work in?

David Cerny: I rent a space, or use some type of facilities that are temporarily available.

Art Interview: Is that then included in the contract?

David Cerny: It's not included in the contract, but I have to count it.

Art Interview: Do you write the documentation for your proposals? What's involved with documenting a proposal?

David Cerny: It depends on the piece.

Art Interview: Are you trying to say something with your art? Is there a specific direction that you're trying to follow?

David Cerny: My hope is that I'm trying to say something with my art but maybe somebody will figure out in the future that I was saying nothing at all or the other way around. Who the fuck knows? Maybe the Chinese will be the next citizens of this part of the world or all parts of the world and they will figure out that I'm saying nothing and they will just throw it in the garbage.

Art Interview: (Laugh) Somehow I doubt it. What's your underlying motivation behind producing art?

David Cerny: That I'm not going to be bored. The whole concept is that I'm trying to please a bunch of friends of mine.

Art Interview: Do your ideas come to you quickly?

David Cerny: Quickly!?!? I dig them out! No, it depends, piece by piece.

Art Interview: I was just wondering if it's common for you to get great ideas when you're partying with some friends or if you really have to deliberate over a piece and write about it in a journal, for example, to pull out an idea?

David Cerny: I don't know. Can you answer how you get your thoughts? I don't know but that may be a question for a psychologist. Do you know how long your dreams are? They might be something like a couple of seconds or maybe a minute but the whole dream feels like you're going through days and days. So what is time? How do you want to count it? How do you want to measure it?

Art Interview: Why did you decide to become an artist?

David Cerny: As I said, I just realized that I didn't want to do design. Step by step, I suddenly realized that I was doing things that were saying something. I was always involved in political activities, not as a politician but by being a part of

the polis. I was always involved. I could not resist stating my opinion when I saw something unfair. I have to say my opinion.

Art Interview: Would you say then that your work is in reaction to politics?

David Cerny: It has been, of course, a couple of times. But that would be stupid to reflect upon.

Art Interview: Do you consider yourself a political artist?

David Cerny: To be honest I am trying not to be. I'm really trying not to be. But there are certain things I just cannot resist. I was not involved in politics but I'm often doing - let's say anti-politics.

Art Interview: Do you find yourself forced into taking a position when your work becomes political without your intention?

David Cerny: Not without my intention but it's a bit like when you're sitting in the classroom and you don't want to yell at the teacher: "Fuck you, that's bullshit!", because you know that you're doing the wrong thing by talking that way. But sometimes it just happens (Laugh) coincidentally or unexpectedly. In a way sometimes it is even against your own will because you know you're doing something that will make you look bad, but you just cannot resist your inner processes. You know, it is that moment when you're listening to some politician's speech and you yell: "Fuck you! That's bullshit! You're lying!" I don't know how to describe it.

Art Interview: (Laugh) Yes, I have the same problem when I'm listening to George Bush on television.

David Cerny: That is it. (Laugh) If you would be listening to him make his speech live and you would yell at him, even if you know that his guards might kill you because you're not supposed to yell at him, it would be a bit like what happens to me when I make my art.

(The phone line disconnects)

Art Interview: Apparently the politicians were listening to our conversation because the line just went dead. (Laugh). We were talking about your art being a reaction to politics. Do you feel your work is motivated more by the politics of the East or the West?

David Cerny: I would say I am reacting to both. It's hard to comment on that because I don't really think about it when I'm working. Ok, I think about it sometimes but it's a totally imprecise measurement.

Art Interview: What are your goals for the future? Do you have projects that you are working on right now?

David Cerny: I have a couple that I am involved in. Probably the biggest project which I have been doing for the last five or six years is trying to establish an art studio program in Prague. I had one space offered to me by the owner of an old factory, which failed. After a lot of hard work and after two years when we finished up with some diagrams she changed her mind and began to use her space as a commercial area. The city recently made the decision to give me an old factory, which is not in the city center. But it is a pretty big space. They offered it to me for three years with option on another seven. So I will establish a non-profit artist-in-residence studio program similar to what they have at the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in New York. I am going to be working as the director of the non-profit organization, which will be called Meat Factory.

I have one big project and then a couple of smaller ones coming up. I have two commissions, where I have to come up with some bright, nice, great, amazing ideas (Laugh) but I still having nothing really striking. One of my upcoming projects is a commission, which is going to be installed in the center of Prague but of course a private foreign investor is backing it. The second commission is from an investor who has roots in the Czech Republic. He's a part of the monarchy but he is not really a Czech resident, he sometimes visits but he's a developer in Charlottetown, North Carolina. He made me the offer to do something for the town of Charlottetown. I have to make a proposal by the end of the year. So in terms of work I have those things and I am organizing with a bunch of friends of mine an exhibition in Prague.

Art Interview: Do you have any long-term plans?

David Cerny: The studio program at the Meat Factory is probably my biggest overall goal, which I really want to accomplish. My experience at P.S.1 in New York was one the most exciting in my life and since then it has been my dream to have visiting artists come from outside of the country and stay here. It will take probably 3 years to realize, so I consider it long-term.

Art Interview: Do you find interacting with other artists and looking at other artists' work inspirational for you?

David Cerny: Do you read newspapers? Are they an inspiration for you? Do you go to the cinema? I just came back from a one-month trip throughout the western part of the United States. That was really inspirational for me. Going through all the canyon lands and the Grand Canyon and seeing all the amazing things there was very inspirational. In terms of visual feeding I will probably live on it for a while. I really enjoyed the building of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art - so I decided to see it again. I didn't see any good art there, nothing that I would consider interesting. But the building is great.

Art Interview: I find it curious how museums decide what work to collect; or even private investors. Now that your work is in the permanent collections of a number of museums, what is your overall opinion of the contemporary art being collected today?

David Cerny: It may sound as if I want to avoid your question, but I have no opinion about it. What should I say? I try to create work that is fit for open spaces and that is what I am interested in.

Art Interview: Can I ask you some questions about the techniques that you use to produce your sculptures? A lot of your work is bronze and a lot of your work is fiberglass. What's the process that you use since you don't have a studio? Or do you rent a studio?

David Cerny: I'm not renting a studio. At the moment a friend of mine owns a building, so he has offered me a space to use for the next 8 months. I have a beautiful space there where I can work and store things. But this is going to end at the end of the year. Then I have nothing, so I'm keep thinking where the hell will I move all this stuff, my tools and everything?

Art Interview: You're still dealing with storage issues?

David Cerny: (Laugh) It's a nightmare.

Art Interview: When you start to produce a fiberglass piece, how do you go about it? Do you create a mold? What's the physical process of producing such a thing?

David Cerny: It depends. Something is sculptured clay or something is carved out of Styrofoam and then covered and finished with other layers. Talking about techniques is another matter altogether. Certain things are done in certain techniques. I don't even know to how to precisely explain it all in detail. That's what should be taught in art schools!

Art Interview: Would you consider yourself self-taught?

David Cerny: Live-taught

Art Interview: How did you learn to cast in fiberglass? That's a kind of unusual process.

David Cerny: I was reading stuff. I looked at it and asked somebody who was doing it. I visited a factory where they were doing it – experience. I did it the same way I learned to speak English. I never went to school to learn it, so sometimes I speak like an idiot.

Art Interview: You just informed yourself about the process and started doing it?

David Cerny: Yes, of course. That's another thing: Before I left for the States, a friend of mine told me that there was a position open for a professorship at the art academy. I resisted the idea of applying. We began to talk about it and I said; Bullshit, no way, I don't want to do it, but he really seduced me. So then I asked a couple of other friends and they said, That's a great idea, do it, go there!!!

I thought about it for a while. I knew the deadline was in 4 or 5 days. On a whim, I decided Okay I'll try it. It was a one-second decision. I went to the commission and they began asking me questions. Coming back now to your question about where did I learn how to cast in fiberglass: I was thinking about the biggest issue for me with respect to art school. I did not really get the technical background there that I'd wanted and so what I would focus on, as a professor would be teaching people about all the available ways of producing things. When I was there and saw people trying to work with electronics I realized that those guys knew nothing about it! They didn't fucking know what a current was! Somebody wanted to work with video and they don't know the camera, they knew nothing about editing and hadn't even heard of digital formatting! There were people who wanted to work with bronze and they did things that made it harder to get a good result because they didn't know what they were doing! I figured out that it's really important to know the techniques because you then have the choice of how you want to work. Then you have a much bigger choice for realizing things because if you decide that you want to use an electric motor and know the difference between the varieties of motors you will choose the right one. You have to learn how to weld aluminum or how to work with stone, or how to work in fiberglass or whatever if you want to work in those mediums. They need people at the school who will teach the students how to create and actualize things! That was my biggest problem with the school so I said, Okay guys, I don't think that art is teachable but there are ways to teach techniques to people and ways to help students actualize their work. But, of course, I was rejected.

Art Interview: If you had to choose one material to teach techniques about what would it be? What material do you have the most experience with?

David Cerny: It depends on what you want to achieve. If you want to do outside public sculptures, you have three choices and that's it! You have stone, you have bronze and you have steel. Otherwise it's going to be ruined. If you want to work on a place which is inaccessible to the public, then you can use fiberglass, but then, of course, it depends on weather issues and all the other fucking shit.

Art Interview: At this point, are you using more bronze or fiberglass in your projects?

David Cerny: It depends. Saddam Hussein is made out of fiberglass, of course, it's not bronze. But the public installations I will be working on will be made of one of those materials that I mentioned above.

Art Interview: The babies that you created on the TV Tower, what are they made of?

David Cerny: They are out of fiberglass. There is no way of using anything else because of the weight. Imagine hanging babies made out of bronze on the side of a building! They would probably weigh two tons!

Art Interview:

How were the engineering processes dealt with for that project? You've got a fiberglass structure that could be blown off of the top of the tower. That could be dangerous!

David Cerny: Of course the building engineers take that into account. I didn't deal with the aerodynamics of the babies, but the engineers do.

Art Interview: Do you organize the engineers?

David Cerny: I have some friends who are architects and engineers.

Art Interview: And you get them involved?

David Cerny: Yes.

Art Interview: Is that all part of your written proposal?

David Cerny: It depends. Some of the proposals have pre-calculated schematics showing the feasibility of the project, some of them are calculated later. (Laugh) Some of them are not calculated at all.

Art Interview: Have the projects that you have realized been commissions where you were approached or have you sent out proposals cold to investors with an idea that you would like to do?

David Cerny: That was what happened with the tower. A guy came and asked me to do the piece. Mostly people ask me. They say okay, I've got this space, please do something with it.

Art Interview: In the beginning it couldn't have been that way because you would need to have something for people to recognize before they would be asking? How did it start?

David Cerny: In the beginning I was usually doing something for some show but I would say Okay I'm going to do it but I will probably use the open space. So that was how I started. That was the case with the walking car: I was asked to participate in that show.

Art Interview: How did your project with the gun on the building arise?

David Cerny: It was part of an exhibition in 1992 called "Edge 92". The curator who was doing the show heard about me and she asked me to take part in the show.

Art Interview: You were still going to school in 1992?

David Cerny: I was in my 2nd or 3rd year at school.

Art Interview: That was a really large sculpture?

David Cerny: It is.

Art Interview: When I think of sculpture students, most of them don't produce work that size. It is really quite a large project for a student to undertake.

David Cerny: Most people do nothing! Most people like to eat hamburgers in front of the TV and watch big brother and CBS talk shows with I don't know who the fuck!

I don't want to say that I am heroic. I was just doing things. There is nothing heroic about making art. I am not a superhero. I don't use any pills. I don't have any super space drinks from Mars. I just work a lot. I haven't had a real holiday for the last 4 or 5 years. I haven't gone away. I've just been working – but I must enjoy it, otherwise I can't imagine I'd be doing it. At school, during the summer, I didn't go water kayaking with the other students. No, the only secret is working.