**Josef Herman: Seminář o umělecké kritice, *Divadelní noviny*, 1. října 2017.**

**The seminar on art criticism**

The Arts and Theatre Institute organized an international seminar about the state of art criticism. It took place in DOX, the Centre for Contemporary Art. Unlike the previous professional debates, the discussion on 22nd September did not have any specializations or limited territories and saw about 45 professionals, who reflected various kinds of art with a clear and useful task: to recommend how to help critics in their activities. There were four discussion tables (two Czech ones led by Martina Pecková Černá and Jana Návratová, and two in English led by Przemysław Witkowski from Krytyka Polityczna magazine and Sindre Hovdenakk, the vice-president of the Norwegian Critics’ Association.). The seminar was supported by Arts Council Norway and EEA Norway, and the main attention was paid to proposals how to utilize their economic support.

Introductory lectures did not bring in anything essential, which is not common knowledge already – Petr Fischer was the first speaker, who was followed by Karla Hofmannová (Brno), Sindre Hovdenakk (vice-president of the Norwegian Critics’ Association), Natália Kovács (PhD student in comparative literature, theatre critic and culture journalist); Suzana Jovaševićová (Centre for Foreign Assistance, Ministry of Finance, Czech Republic) and Jan Hrdlička (EEA Grants/Norway, Ministry of Culture, Czech Republic) gave a brief presentation on the support from the Norway Grants.

The state of art criticism in the Czech Republic and neighboring states in Europe was discussed matter-of-factly with erudition. I gather that debates were so successful due to the confrontation of various kinds of art – theatre, music, dance, literature, audio and visual culture, and film. The well-compiled initial theses were beneficial for the factual debate as it was possible to aim the discussion at specific issues without bland and maudlin complaints about the current situation, which is typical for a similar kind of discussions.

Let us remind the most important theses raised at discussion tables, which were generalized and organized in a panel discussion at the end. I myself liked the most when I heard that criticism should not only evaluate the work but it should cultivate the discussion about it. It is not primarily aimed at artists and professionals but those who follow art and feel the need to learn about it, discuss it and refine the opinions. The period of arbiter elegantiarum has ended, new media have undermined criticism’ authority and brought plurality of opinions. Professional criticism nowadays has to maintain the criteria of knowledgeable discourse, rectify the flood of opinions that are supposed to be critical in endless media space in the state malicious to elitism, which does not acknowledge authorities. Professional criticism has to maintain the balance of the system of production and its reflection. The most important role is played by specialized magazines; therefore, it is necessary to provide for their activity. Foreign panelists drew attention to economic and political pressures, which interfere with free articulation of critical judgments. People in academia complained of the fact that art criticism is not an acknowledged form of assessed research outputs.

The change of ways how criticism should communicate in the world of social networks was discussed widely; it seems that it is finally considered one of the essential issues in contemporary criticism. The need for professional education and the indispensability of critics to know both Czech and international contexts was discussed as well. Thus, we need money for journeys abroad. Czech and foreign professionals agreed on constant decrease of space for publication of critical opinions in mass media in particular. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain professional criticism platforms – magazines, workplaces, associations, and not to be afraid to enter social networks. So, there were enough suggestions to good use of Norway Grants.