

## Fossilized Sunlight, a visual poem on Blood of the Earth

*"You don't have to search for new images, ones never have seen before,  
but you do have to utilize the existing ones in such a way that they become new."*

Harun Farocki

Robin Sperling's personal life-path and artistic oeuvre can be characterized in the constant search for alternatives. Unlike in science where research is the tool for achieving scientific progress, in the artist's life, the search for new ideas is more valid. One of the key turning points in Robin Sperling's life was his decision to move from the epicenter of global capitalism-London to the flat fields of the Carpathian Basin, the empty world of the Hungarian Pusztas, space where the fields of new ideas can arise. As he stated in one earlier interview to London Revue: *"a principle in my painting is to venture into the void of one's canvas and see what one will discover."* or *"the empty canvas is also to be understood as the endpoint of determination, that is, the logical development and differentiation of the material to the point of its absolute the (de)specification."* as stated by David Roberts in his book *Art and Enlightenment: Aesthetic Theory After Adorno*. Art Theory and its extensive analysis play a key role in Robin Sperling's artistic process. References to philosophical, mythological, alchemical, astrological concepts are not unknown to his praxis, and represent a crucial step towards his artistic expression, or better to say his artistic language. A few thousand years ago at the beginnings of our civilizations, there were the crossroads, as represented by the city determinative hieroglyph, the ancient Egyptian Niwt symbol. In Sperling's *Baghdad I*, it constitutes the ideological backbone of the installation. References to the Rosicrucian movement are also intended, promising a spiritual transformation at a time of great turmoil as in the early 17th century Europe. Sperling's recent installation with the title *Baghdad I*, continues the development of aesthetic research of materials such as oil, plastic, rubber or even blood. Exactly through these materials, he finds his subject of aesthetic enjoyment. In some respects, crude oil really does resemble blood. It scabs on exposure to air. It is organic and viscous not to mention similar color tones. In ancient Greek, it is called κελαινός (kelainefh) also an epithet of Zeus, as the god of the dark clouds. The symbolic emanation in *Baghdad I*'s case is the sparks, mini-thunders generated by a Tesla coil radiating into the film canisters holding oil, water, and yellow rubber ducks. Sperling's passion for found objects, objet trouvé is undeniable, but unlike in Tamás St.Auby's *Bloody Film* 1968 – 2010, consisting similarly from film, film reels, chicken blood, insulation tape, paper, (courtesy of Ludwig Museum - Museum of Contemporary Art Budapest) Sperling's use of film canisters questions the imagery deriving from technical media such as film. In John Michael Greer book *"The Blood of the earth: an essay on magic and peak oil"*. Greer writes, *"industrial culture is in collapse. There is no infinite growth on a finite planet and oil, our most critical resource, has passed peak. We have entered a period of radical flux, and magic must respond to the world in which it operates, or it is nothing but empty escapism."*

Is it a duty, or a task for an artist to look for alternatives in the time of global crisis? Sperling's reference to Tesla and his amazing electro-magnetic inventions could be only understood in a broader context where technology, art, society, economy, ecology are in synergy. This principle of cooperation is also persistent in Sperling's collaborative artistic praxis with Zénó Monory and Vító Vojnits-Purcsár in this exhibition. We may conclude either it is a duty or challenge for artists to reflect on the current crisis, but wouldn't it exactly be the role of art to be speechless, or at least to raise its voice also in the field of politics, or technology to interfere in events, rise above its generally acknowledged role and point to unacceptable situations and conditions? When should the art and the discourse around it comply with daily political tensions, conflicts, issues thus ignoring the aesthetic component? In my view Robin Sperling is opting for the artwork, and its aesthetic aspect, and is against political actionism, but we should not forget the benefits of by-products evolved from such a creative artistic process in a search for alternatives.