

# A Heart for Václav Havel



**naznačení pauzáku**





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## The Story of the Heart





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This is the story of the heart at once strong and fragile. The tears and sorrow caused by the departure of Václav Havel, the sea of candles lit in his memory, were followed by an unexpected idea. Following the daring idea of two artists an unusual sculpture in the shape of an open heart was realised. The emotions of people stayed as if sealed in the wax. Every lit candle was after all good energy, a nice thought. And there were tens of thousands of those candles; the wax for the realisation was collected in many places throughout the Czech Republic. The outcome is that the Heart weighs over two tons and rises to a two-metre height. It grew from the esteem of a great personage.

Its creators felt themselves to be part of a sudden current which has its goal and uses their potential to realise its own intention. They were "used"... And they accepted the challenge. They were not alone in carrying out the great project; they relied on spontaneity, on grassroots initiative – and people helped them, obliged them; the theme of Václav Havel was the strongest at the time. For the time being their monument is still on the move – the heart to hearts. Although wax is quite transitory and vulnerable, it survives. As if the authority of the sculpture itself helped, as if it remained the sole measure of its quality... And of the power and times that Havel's character represents.







# Introduction

Shortly before Easter 2011 Václav Havel (75), a man whose words and actions found reverberation all over the world, a prisoner of the totalitarian regime, the last Czechoslovak and first Czech president, died in his sleep. He had struggled with serious health problems for a long time and he had escaped death so many times that people refused to believe the news of his departure at first... In November 1989 he became the “king” of the teeming Wenceslas Square in Prague and in a few weeks he – up until then an invisible dissident – was designated as the only possible president in the turning situation of the country. At that time Havel’s most famous quote was often to be heard: *“Truth and love must prevail over lies and hate...”* People of all generations remembered him for his previous fight for democracy and human dignity, for his stance during the Velvet Revolution, for the years spent at the Prague Castle, but also from the period following, as always true to his ideals. Until his very last moments he wanted to offer people the alternative of a better life, of beauty and humanity; in his speeches he spoke of the respect for one’s country.

President Václav Havel’s departure provoked innumerable spontaneous memorial events, people brought and lit candles, the symbol of the heart also appeared – the relay of the flame seemed to unite the whole nation. In the hours filled with emotions at the statue of St. Wenceslas at Prague’s central square there also appeared a young man, visual artist Lukáš Gavlovský. Taking shape in his mind was the vision of a monument cast out of the wax from the candles lit in the memory of Václav Havel. Soon he convinced his lifelong friend Roman Švejda, a visual artist as well, to join the project. The unusual story of the unique wax monument’s birth took place in several feverish working weeks. As Lukáš Gavlovský stated: *“We did not want to rest content with merely mourning over Václav Havel’s departure and so we created a memorial sculpture cast out of the nation’s grief. We rather sensed the idea which transcends the emotion of loss. That is why in choosing the shape of the monument we decided for the symbol of the heart. It is not*



*something that Václav Havel made up, he merely frequently used this symbol with his signature...” The shape of the monument itself carries yet another meaning – to enter the heart with an open heart, similarly as the memorial sites after Havel’s departure...*

Condolences after the death of the first Czech president came from all over the world; for example US President Barack Obama declared Václav Havel to be a great inspiration for himself. The Czech Government passed a bill on the merits of the former president; a state funeral with all the honours took place; the ceremony in the cathedral was attended by thousands of people at the Hradčany Square; in Prague, Havel’s coffin was accompanied by applause and by the symbolic jingling of keys.

The story of the creation of the wax heart to commemorate Havel is interesting. Its idea and realisation took place between the last December days in 2011 and February 2012. And the connection of both designers with the created work – with its further fate – continues to this day.

#### From the Media

*Václav Havel and Jiří David, in an interview for Czech Radio, 2002 (after the lighting of the neon heart by visual artist Jiří David above the Prague Castle):*

**Václav Havel:** “I am very pleased that the heart was glowing above the Castle at the time of the (NATO) summit, because this as well may have emphasised the fact that here we are indeed dealing with the protecting of elemental human relationships, love for one’s neighbour, human freedom, and if one wants to see this symbol in the heart one can.... The heart is a sign that has accompanied our

## About the Origin of the Wax Sculpture

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** I considered Václav Havel’s personality like most of us – I can’t say I am a good reader of his books and I admit that I haven’t seen any of his plays staged in theatre. In spite of that I was always aware that he was around; whether as a president or a citizen with a positive impact on society. Then came a moment before Christmas 2011 that deeply affected me.

I was sitting at the computer in the morning listening to Czech Radio when the host suddenly announced that Václav Havel “is no more” – a strange silence followed. I remember that I remained sitting motionless for a while. The stream of my thoughts and acts was interrupted. I was flooded with emotion and sadness, but also with something supra-personal, something magnificent that I can hardly express in words. The energy related to Václav Havel’s name suddenly filled the thoughts and hearts of many people. And this emotion did not evaporate – many of us remained immersed in it for several weeks.

When I spoke to Roman about how he had experienced the moment he expressed himself more aptly. He said that when his favourite actor or painter dies, he feels sorry that their work is finished, that they will not be able to make anything new, but the death of Václav Havel surprisingly touched him personally, as if he was a member of the family. A huge number of people probably experienced the same feeling.

**Roman Švejda:** I think that Havel’s film Leaving, or its creation and primarily its reception, had an impact on the former president’s health. In this sense, the word “leaving” brought about associations that no one had probably thought of before. For that matter, the former president had dealt with the meaning of this concept in his reflections on eternity. He was a creative man and he knew what he gained by work. Especially his dramatic work had greater significance and meaning for him than political involvement did.

*so-called Velvet November non-violent revolution. We drew them everywhere and I kept it with my signature. But that is not the reason why it’s there.”*

**Jiří David:** “It is possible that the heart as the symbol of Václav Havel’s persona is a bit vulgarised, but I doubt whether his kindness together with certain modesty could find a more suitable symbol.”

**Prague, ČTK Press Agency, December 18, 2011** – Only several dozen minutes after the media published the news of the death of Václav Havel, people started to organise, most often through social networks, gatherings in the streets of towns across the country to honour his memory... The traditional place which witnessed important moments of modern history was filled with hundreds of people who after lighting a candle and a minute of silence headed through the centre of Prague towards Kampa. At 6 o’clock precisely on the instruction of Archbishop Dominik Duka, church bells across the country started ringing out.





## ROMAN ŠVEJDA



When Václav Havel passed away the barriers between those who liked him and those who did not disappeared for a while. This was evident in the subsequent hours and days when tributes were organised spontaneously across the country. My situation was the same as Lukáš's, I was not a "Havelite", though he was a positive figure for me, a great personality in politics and culture. And similarly to Lukáš, I was affected by his death. For that reason Christmas 2011 was different than other years. We became witness to an "anomaly" which was respected on all sides. It reminded me a little of the euphoria from the revolutionary days of 1989. Thousands of people lit candles in town squares; they stood for hours in a procession that greeted Václav Havel's casket. All that was a prologue to the following weeks which were to be filled with work for us, but we didn't know that then.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** I consider human society as one being formed by individual units – families and heads. During that advent time I realised that Václav Havel's "head" stood out among others. Little do we realise how privileged a nation we were thanks to him, for example in the form of frequent visits of the Dalai Lama here. And also how exceptional his last visit to Václav Havel only a few weeks before his death is... I have heard that the Dalai Lama





gave Havel a special blessing which was transferred to us after his death. When I looked around me then and reflected on all the feelings I had to agree.

Just a few days before Christmas I went to Prague and I went to look at Wenceslas Square, to the statue of St. Wenceslas. Whenever a landmark moment happens in our country, this place becomes its natural centre. This is where people gather and demonstrate their opinions – it is an extremely lively point. In the afternoon of 20 December 2011 the whole square was submerging into dusk, but the monument of the equestrian statue was standing in the centre of a ring of light from lit candles. The space of flickering and warm light was surrounded by people. They stopped and fell silent. I couldn't compare the light and the atmosphere to anything I had ever seen or experienced. It was only two days after Havel's death, but the statue's pedestal and the space surrounding it was full of flags, messages, flowers and various objects. The whole image was an extraordinary live mandala that absorbed me.

## LUKÁŠ GAVLOVSKÝ

From that moment on I went to Prague every day and looked for other memorial sites such as the Prague Castle, Národní třída Street, St. Anne's church in the Old Town where Václav Havel's remains were exhibited, Dělostřelecká street where the Havels lived and so on. At the memorial to Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc, close to the St. Wenceslas monument, there were also thousands of candles.

**Roman Švejda:** The large carpet of candles behaved like a stream of lava, inside it was fading and cooling, but people kept bringing new candles and thanks to that the circle of light kept glowing. It was necessary to feed the flame.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** Once I witnessed the Tibetan ritual where monks filled the sacred mandala with coloured sands for many days. The fascinating thing about the ritual is that the monks in the end sweep the image with brooms and throw it in the river. They don't cling to the idea that the perfect piece of work that they have been working on for perhaps a whole week needs to be preserved. I realised that once the mourning is over, the burnt-out candles will also face a squad with brooms who will clean the place and take the candles to a waste dump. But I need to go back to the first day. Before leaving Prague in that evening, I went to Wenceslas Square again. I was surprised how fast the candles mount. At that moment an idea came to my head. Wax! There is so much left of it in the candles. If I wanted to I could collect it after some time, melt it and create a work that would be reminiscent of the uniqueness and greatness of this time. My own idea first shocked me. I was searching for courage inside me. I knew that my feet and my heart are now lodged in a huge current that transcends my self. I also knew that I just need to find the courage and a chain of events will set off that will overcome many of my limits. I went back home and with a little bit of worry I confided in my wife.

In the morning I got up and I knew what I had to do. My family was supportive, but it was necessary to find another ally. I guessed that this task far exceeds the strength of one person. I called my friend Roman Švejda; surprisingly he quickly understood my idea and accepted it. I say surprisingly,







because Roman lives further away from Prague and he couldn't have had the experience from Wenceslas Square that I did.

**Roman Švejda:** When Lukáš approached me, I was at home, in Moravia. Of course I knew about the islands of flames in towns. When he told me his idea I replied that Havel's memory is not only a matter of Prague, but that it's a nationwide affair. If we collect wax from the whole country, the whole project will take on a different dimension. Now I know that I could get this idea only thanks to the fact that I didn't see the incredible amount of "material" on Wenceslas Square with my own eyes – so the volume didn't frighten me.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** My original idea was to work only with wax from Wenceslas Square. I thought it would be logical to make the statue right here where it would continue to stand. I thought that I'd just get together a sufficient number of people for some time, with whom we'd clean the area and collect the remaining wax from candles. We'd gradually cast it into a simple form. A colourful multilayered heart-shaped pillar would be created in this way, whose height would depend on the amount of candles that people had brought here.

**Roman Švejda:** Really only few artists had the honour to work with such material. It was loaded with energy of individual people who came with a candle and a thought. It accumulated in the matter. When the candles were in shops, or when people had them at home, it was just paraffin. The transformation occurred on the squares. By the number of people, their emotions and fire. It was enriched by people's ideas about decent society, there was hope prayed into it that it is possible to follow one's best conscience and not lose hope that everything that is political must be dirty. In the end, we did not follow in the Tibetan monk ritual, we did not have this "mandala" thrown in the river... We diverted the road to destruction onto a different track and we decided to create something new from the colourful candles.

**Prague, ČT24 TV Channel, December 19, 2011** – Václav Havel is a symbol even for young people who did not know him so well and so it is time to commemorate his great merits. Trust is an important asset for democracy, and it has been in steep decline in the Czech Republic. If Havel's "moral tradition" was followed, living in the country could be much better, as theologian and philosopher Tomáš Halík, who knew Havel closely, said in an interview in Studio 6. According to him, Havel's personality was marked primarily by deep human decency, desire for knowledge and truth.

**lned.cz, December 29, 2011** – The thousands of candles that people have brought to Wenceslas Square to honour president Václav Havel could be turned into a monument. Artist Lukáš Gavlovský plans to create a two-metre heart-shaped sculpture from the wax. It is not yet clear where the object would be placed... just the candles from under the St. Wenceslas monument could yield two cubic metres of wax. The material would suffice for a 2.4 metre-high pillar with a base, shaped like a heart. The candles should be removed from Wenceslas Square on Saturday morning because of the coming New Year's celebrations. Gavlovský said that because of the time pressure he had made an arrangement with the cleaning squad to keep the wax for him. After that he would like to melt and create the sculpture directly in Wenceslas Square with the help of those who would like to participate.



#### Looking back...

**Blanka Čermáková, Trafačka,  
civic organisation, Praha**

*"When in those cold January days Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda turned to us searching for a base for the creation of their Heart installation, I knew that the idea of what was going to be made and how it was going to be made was only just being born, but their enthusiasm and psychological and physical need to participate in the memorial events and to create a valuable object crystallised into a successful aesthetic and memorial object at the same time. In the almost meditative atmosphere of the cold factory hall of our former transformer hall there were groups of people standing or sitting quietly, often they didn't even know each other, they hardly communicated with each other and like in a manufacture with the help of warm clothing and hot drinks they prepared the remains of candles to be melted again. But in the midst of them a monument was being created that warmed their hearts. The wave of helpers of all ages, health conditions and even from distant locations outnumbered the expectations of all those involved. Like for all those who came to help, for us too it was a welcome opportunity to help a little in those sad days and bid farewell symbolically to the unforgettable person of Václav Havel and at the same time create something to commemorate him and please us all."*

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** We did not want to rest content with merely mourning over Václav Havel's departure and so we created a memorial sculpture cast out of the nation's grief. We rather sensed the idea which transcends the emotion of loss. That is why in choosing the shape of the monument we decided for the symbol of the heart. It is not something that Václav Havel made up, he merely frequently used this symbol with his signature.... maybe as a sign of certain idealism. In the places of mourning among the candles, there were various hearts of all shapes and sizes.

We only had a rough estimate of how much wax we will have. We needed to make the cast and guess its size. However, my original idea very soon turned out to be unfeasible, perhaps even naive. I underwent intense negotiations with the local authorities and I came across several serious obstacles. As an average citizen, before I'd get all the necessary permissions, the space would have been cleared. At one point it looked like we would get direct support from the city authorities, but it soon turned out that there isn't a political will. We called it initiative from underneath. We went for spontaneity – in the end, it was spontaneity that set the character of the process from the beginning – and today we can say that it was a good bet which turned out well. We preserved the greatest amount of freedom. Although we had no official support from institutions, nor any financial backing, but everyone was obliging; a topic related to Václav Havel was the strongest at the time.

**Roman Švejda:** We knew that we would not be able to avoid being noticed by the media. On the one hand, it can have a positive effect, but it was risky for us, everything could have ended up with disgrace. We both knew that we wanted to engage our names and egos in the whole thing as little as possible. We only felt to be part of a current that has a certain direction and an end and that uses us for the realisation of its intention. We were "used". We needed the media, it was necessary to address volunteers and helpers, it was necessary to promote the project to find support easier. And media reacted very fast, Václav Havel was their topic number one. Whatever happened around him enticed interest. It was enough to publish a simple press release and in the evening we were in the TV news cast and in the morning in the papers.



**Lukáš Gavlovský:** For both of us it was a new experience. I realised that in some way our situation was similar to what Václav Havel must have experienced when he was about to become a president. What he, as a creative person, had to put aside and change. It certainly needed some courage, leaping into the unknown. In comparison to that the idea to collect wax from around the country and cast it into a monument seemed easy to me. This comparison helped me decide. And we needed to make decisions constantly... I received a message that the cleaners were to remove all the candles during the night before New Year's Eve, only those on the pedestal of the St. Wenceslas monument were to remain in place. The plan to do it at night was intentional, it was still a very sensitive issue. Our race against time began. We immediately realised that our original idea – to work with the wax on the spot – cannot be realised. Now the task was to save the material. There were tons of it that needed to be put in bags, transported and deposited somewhere.



#### From the media

**iDnes, February 10, 2012** – The two-ton heart made of candles people lit up after the death of Václav Havel was installed in the open space by the National Theatre in Prague. The original monument was created by Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda. It will remain in the centre of Prague until April. The installation of the huge heart took place on Friday from morning till afternoon. Gavlovský, Švejda and several volunteers put together the two-metre-high monument from 115 blocks. The monument, entitled *A Heart for Václav Havel*, is hollow and people will be able to enter it. The wax heart weighing 2.3 tons will remain by the National Theatre until April. After that it should be transported to other towns. The creators of the monument processed candles in the second half of January in the cultural centre Trafačka.



The situation of the night before the New Year’s Eve, at one o’clock in the morning: at a so far untouchable place a large group of journalists was waiting for four guys from the cleaning squad. The first one took a shovel and started sweeping. An extraordinarily strong moment. At that moment, the sacred pattern started to become material. At four o’clock in the morning I counted one hundred and forty large black plastic bags, which were transported to Prague outskirts.

**Roman Švejda:** At the same time I was trying to preserve material from other parts of the country. In the end about a dozen towns actively joined in. I received a few answers with an expression of regret that they had cleaned

the place already, or that the candles burnt completely and only empty cups remained... Despite all the effort we unfortunately missed some significant locations. Even so we reckon that with all the improvisation we managed to collect about half of the candles from the whole country. Only several months afterwards we realised that we forgot Slovakia, where Václav Havel had many supporters too! Now we had dozens of bags full of wet material, but we still had no idea when, how and where we were going to transport them.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** We were not alone in this slightly desperate situation anymore, though. Gradually, a chain of people who were willing to do something on top of their everyday obligations formed. We started to call them “hearters”. When I look back I see that we should have had a third person, who would organise communication with the public. The two of us had constantly something to do about the technical or artistic side of the project... A group of students took on a part of the work that we had no chance of managing. They had sparkles in their eyes, just like we did in 1989...

**Roman Švejda:** In the meantime the final shape of the work was ripening. At first it was supposed to be a wax column with a heart-shaped cross-section which was to be made directly on Wenceslas Square. Later, we started to enjoy the idea of a square column with a hole the shape of a heart through which it is possible to look. And how about walking through it? That is how the idea of an open heart came to us. The shape itself has another significance. To enter a heart with an open heart, just like in the memorial sites after Havel’s death. If there is enough wax, the Heart will be taller than the person who enters it. They will not see anything else but wax and the sky above their head. The object might weigh several tons, so it can’t be monolithic, but should be made from several parts.

We were looking for a hall where the material could be transported as soon as possible and processed. Finally, we overcame the stress that we would not be able to clear all the places in time. After several meetings in Prague we got to the “Trafačka” Hall which is a centre of alternative art. They lent us the place free of charge for a whole month. One day we got the keys and soon trucks could start bringing in the material...

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** When I first arrived in the former transformer hall, I was surrounded only by raw, unheated space. This is where the “hearters”

#### Looking back...

**Dagmar Havlová, widow of former president Václav Havel**

*“I thought that I would not be able to come in time for the unveiling of the Heart, I was finishing filming the Sanitka TV series. I was standing there hoping no one would recognise me... I was thinking about how much Vašek wanted me to come to Hrádeček, how much he wanted to be sure that I would stay with him until Christmas. It was 17th December, I had finished all my work duties, except the theatre performance of Mary Stuart for the evening of 21st December. We were holding hands until late at night and talked, we didn’t want to go to sleep. I was thinking about sitting at his bedside on the 18th December. All night... Then I had “our” St. Anne church opened, the church our foundation VIZE 97 has been using for sixteen years. Everything seemed unreal, incomprehensible, unbelievable and unexpected. A few days later, on 21st December, I was not able to play the role of Mary Stuart, I was delivering my husband to the Prague Castle in the same way they carried St. Wenceslas from the St. Adalbert Rotunda (today’s St. Anne). The way I wanted it to be. On Christmas Eve I went to all the memorial sites. I lit up many extinguished candles, and now they were turned into a heart and I was not able to enter it... And I could not enter it even now...”*





are to meet? It was necessary to make the place more homely before their arrival. And so we built temporary tables, we put a white geotextile “carpet” on the floor. The bags started coming in... Apart from separating the brought-in material the wax needed to dry. There was a huge fan lying in the corner of Trafačka, we just needed to add a source of heat, to build a construction, a grate, and the drier was finished! While the preparation work for making the monument was going on, many things were solved as if by miracle. There was no lack of strokes of good luck...

**Roman Švejda:** So for example, when we were supposed to start filling the cast, there suddenly appeared a hole in the roof of the hall right above the prepared cast – melted snow started leaking in. Next to me at that moment was a young man who was able to get a huge party tent for us within two hours that we put up above the cast. All of that was free of charge... And the media constantly wanted information about what was going to happen next. We had the space, but we needed enough people to process the material. We announced a date when volunteers could come to help us.

Before the actual start of casting it was necessary to prepare the wax manually. The material needed to be separated by hand and various types of wrapping needed to be removed from the candles, the wax needed to be dried. This work was done by volunteers. They processed the candles emptied on the floor from bags with axes, chisels and screwdrivers. As in an anthill natural roles of people started to form: some were great at cleaning, others at drying. Sometimes Lukáš’s wife and kids came here, she showed newcomers how to work and participate in the process. Even some relatively precious things such as a Czech flag stained with wax fell out of the bag. The hall resonated with work – the whole creative process, when I think about it now, was full of smells and sounds.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** We lived in a kind of trance... and worked ceaselessly. For the casting itself we made a tin mould with partitions, installed on a wooden desk and one layer was made every day. We had to estimate the size of the ground plan against the future height. There were ten layers in the end, which fulfilled our vision that the work should be taller than an adult. The procedure was this: we filled the cast with material and poured



#### Looking back...

**LUDĚK VELE,**  
**National Theatre Opera soloist**

*"Artists Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda's idea to collect the remains of candles that people had lit around the Czech Republic to honour the late Václav Havel and turn them into a heart sculpture is so self-evident that one wonders how come it was not one's own idea. However it is also a truly original idea: to make use of something that would at best end up in a waste incinerator to create something that uniquely symbolises Václav Havel – a heart, the symbol he added to his name, the heart of ours, open to all hope that the Velvet Revolution in 1989 had brought. Last but not least it is an idea whose realisation demanded a lot of daring from its authors: using material none of them had worked with before and had no experience with. That is why I supported both the artists, Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda, from the beginning, I continue to support them and I will support them in the future!"*



melted wax on it. For melting we had two large cauldrons in the courtyard which were heated with burning wood, in the hall we used handheld propane burner... Fire turned all the candles from the streets into one monument. Throughout this time people were coming to us who had heard about the Heart offering their help or asking if they could put in the wax something from their personal memories. For example keys that became a symbol of the Velvet Revolution, a thin candle from an old trip to Jerusalem, stones.

**Roman Švejda:** Overnight the layer hardened and when we came back to the silent Třafačka in the morning we took out the individual blocks from the cast and marked them. And again we prepared another layer. Bags of material changed every day into wax bricks, each was unique, full of colours, it smelled nice... The smells still evoke in us the euphoria and the atmosphere of creation. The Třafačka space was a ship on which we were sailing together and none of us wanted to disembark. The helpers – co-creators worked with dirty, greasy material; tough work you'd say... Yet they thanked us for it!

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** We are the "authors" of the monument, but if you lift the first block of the first layer, you'll find in it a red heart the size of a palm. I found it right at the beginning by the St. Wenceslas statue – I picked it up and carried it in my pocket as a charm.

**Roman Švejda:** We had been searching for a suitable place for our Heart for some time. We were walking along the National Theatre and we noticed that the large piazzeta between its two buildings is used also as an exhibition space. How about here? Václav Havel was not linked to the National Theatre, but the nature of the place corresponded to the nationwide effect of our project. The events that take place here are normally authorised six months in advance, but they were helpful during negotiations, they liked our idea. They offered us a term for installation in February 2012.





**Electronic mail between the monument's authors and Doubravka Svobodová, the Managing Director of Na Zábřadlí Theatre – February 2012**

Hello,  
I'm also sending an email invitation to the unveiling. If you think of someone who would like to see the Heart or who should be at the unveiling, please forward it to them. Thank you (also for the coffee) and greetings from Roman Švejda

Dear "hearters",  
I walk past the Heart to the theatre every day and so I want to report that people keep stopping at it, entering, walking, thinking, talking, chatting, debating, jumping, examining, stroking... and that the heart still looks nice.  
Have a nice day,  
Doubravka Svobodová

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** The whole cooperation with the National Theatre and the near-by New Scene (each with its own management and structure) was not easy. After an understanding consent our spontaneity met a complex institution. In the borderline situations of our negotiations another significant "heartier" in the whole story appeared, the National Theatre opera soloist, Luděk Vele. He helped us move things forward. We found out about his charity projects in the gothic castle of Grabštejn aimed at its restoration. A few people warned us that the National Theatre piazzeta is a very turbulent place; they expected that the monument would not survive the attacks of vandals. However, we stubbornly defended our idea. We thought it absurd that someone would approach a wax Heart with a bad intention, when everyday from morning to dusk we were surrounded by so many passionate people.

Dear Doubravka,  
Thanks for the report; you have no idea how happy it has made me (and Lukáš too). The fact that the Heart lives, is a centre of attention and not a posh object means that our idea was worth it and that we succeeded. And second, and most importantly, it means that Václav Havel succeeded. The confirmation of his ideas is in that pile of wax. We are also happy that the Heart still looks good. People kept dissuading us from placing it in the open saying that it would not survive people's rampaging. The two of us believed like a couple of mules that it would protect itself. Pure idealism that proves to be right. Friday 24th February I'll be installing a small photo exhibition about the creation on the piazzeta as I think it should be there.  
Greetings, Roman Švejda



# The Heart on the Road

Where has the wax Heart been? The first time people could see and enter the wax Heart for Václav Havel was February 11, 2012 in Prague, on the piazzeta in front of the National Theatre. In April it moved to the East Bohemian town of Litomyšl, in July to castle Grabštejn in the Liberec district. On the day of the first anniversary of Václav Havel's death, 18th December 2012, the monument appeared in Brno, in the Husa na provázku Theatre. The Heart monument is always presented in a freely accessible space...

**Roman Švejda:** We had Trafačka rented until January 30th 2012. On Sunday Lukáš was pouring the last layer, cleaning the place, the drier and the fire disappeared. But we needed to reinforce the Heart from within with iron. For that we needed a dry, covered place. In the end we were able to use the underground parking lot in the National Theatre. That is where we put the monument together for the first time. It is not an overstatement if I say that it was a magical moment for us. We could see the Heart for the first time in all its beauty and enter it.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** The time of the ceremonial opening of the Heart for Václav Havel, February 10th 2012, was approaching. It was bitterly cold and frozen wax is very fragile. On the D-day we started carrying out like ants all the one hundred and fifteen blocks from the theatre's underground and putting the heart together again. In the end we wrapped it in belts of bubble foil. The monument looked like a closed "envelope" waiting to be opened...



**From the Media**  
**ČT24, June 1, 2012, Litomyšl** – Citizens and visitors to Litomyšl will be the first in the country after Prague to see the wax Heart for Václav Havel. Artists Roman Švejda and Lukáš Gavlovský made it from the remains of candles that people had brought to various locations after the death of the former president. The authors started to install it today. It will become part of the Smetana's Visual Art Litomyšl festival, in particular the exhibition of photographs of Václav Havel.

We tried to invite significant people, for example Dagmar Havlová, and also someone who would speak at the opening. Doubravka Svobodová, the director of Na zábradlí theatre where Havel worked for many years, persuaded us that we should speak for ourselves.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** As it happens we were totally immersed in the preparations up until the last moment. When I finally looked round, I saw hundreds of people, cameras, photographers and among them well-known faces. At that moment a reporter came to me and asked me to describe to him what I felt. And I was unable to say a word! Even though Dagmar Havlová originally excused herself from the opening, she arrived just before the start, and after her Karel Schwarzenberg too.

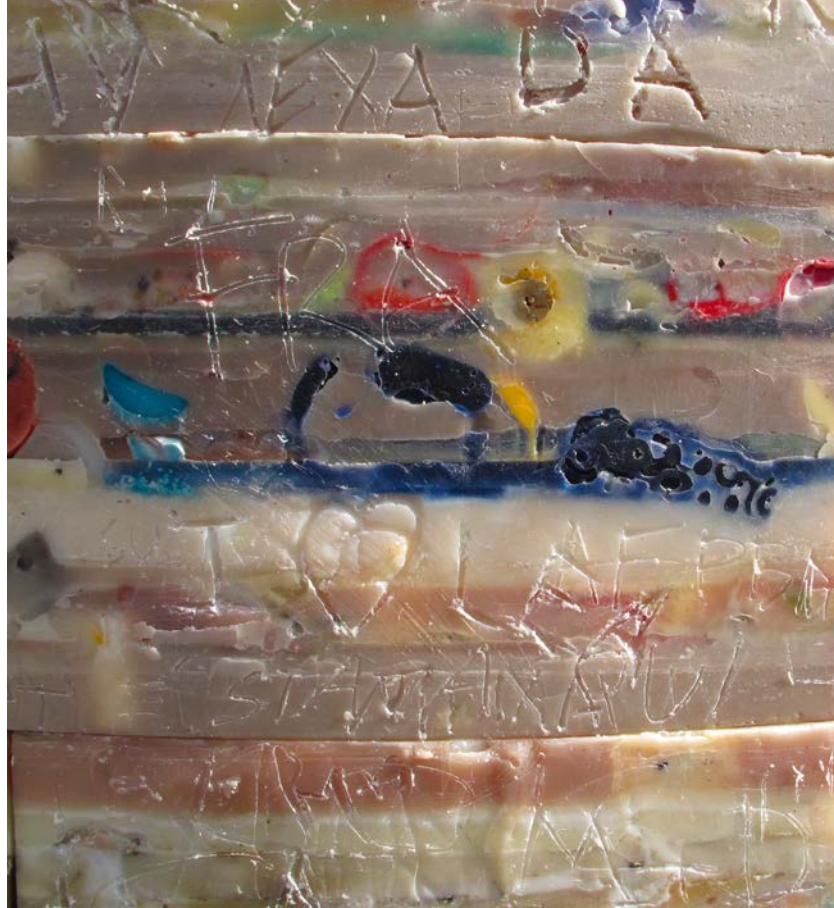
**Roman Švejda:** It was by chance again that we got a nice lighting of the piazzeta space. The evening before the ceremonial opening, students from the Film Academy wanted to shoot some footage for a documentary about Václav Havel and they needed to put halogen lights somewhere – and we had perfect lighting. The heart was on a beautiful spot and looked touching. People kept coming to it, entering it. After some time we added panels



#### From the Media

##### Liberec town web pages, July 22, 2012

– The Heart for Václav Havel has been exhibited from yesterday in the castle of Grabštejn. The unveiling ceremony took place with the participation of both authors of the sculpture, Roman Švejda and Lukáš Gavlovský, whose initiative it was to realise the unique project of the wax heart. The authors created the Heart from five tons of unfinished candles that people brought and lit in memorial sites in the Czech Republic after the death of the former president. "I am glad that the Heart for the former Czech president has reached the Liberec Region. It is an honour for our region and I believe that many citizens as well as visitors to our region will go to see it and remember Václav Havel," said the Vice-Governor Radek Cíkl. The unique project of the wax heart made from candles from memorial sites was the idea of artists Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda. The two-metre-high heart was made during January and February and later unveiled on the square near the National Theatre in Prague. The Heart is arriving in the Liberec Region from Litomyšl where despite the authors' effort it was damaged by high temperatures. It will stand in the cellars of the Grabštejn castle at least until August 13.



with photographic documentation. After many hectic weeks we enjoyed the feeling of a well-done job. Everything worked out well.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** The two months of the Prague installation in an open area were without any serious incident – the bad forecasts did not materialise. Protection from above? Or is society really better than we think? People touched the monument, they smelled it, they laughed, were silent and cried. There were more and more scratches and scribbles in the colourful material, strange poetry. We saw this happen without any resentment, people always wrote into wax.

**Roman Švejda:** We did a bit of statistics too. In all the memorial sites in the country people brought approximately 12 tons of candles, of which after burning out there remained about 5 tons of wax. Of this we were able to collect 2.3 tons. The Heart is 2 metres tall, the ground plan is inscribed into a square with side length of 2.4 metres, the wall is 20 cm thick. We do not want to quantify, measure and weigh the value of the sculpture, but in this case the technical data can express the strength of emotions...





#### Looking back...

#### STUDENTS OF PRAGUE UNIVERSITIES PARTICIPATE ON THE ORGANISATION OF THE HEART MEMORIAL

*"When we think back about our participation in this art initiative, we have to remember the day when it all started. When we learned about president Havel's death on Sunday 18th December 2011 we were abroad for various reasons. Even though we knew about his bad health it was a shock at first. We think that it was in fact the first time we felt a really deep feeling of affinity to our Czech roots, to our homeland. And we knew that we had to do something. Something more than just light a candle. After returning to Prague a few days later we didn't recognise the town. It seemed gloomy, darkened, ailing. People in the streets seemed sadder, even tearful, people of various ages and origin queuing at the condolence books, enormous number of candles, flowers and messages – all that was not only moving, but also strength-giving. We were not alone in our feelings. The urge to do something more led us in the end to Lukáš and Roman whose idea to use the wax from memorial sites immediately interested us. We contacted them and we started to help with the project as far as we could. Sometimes people asked us why Václav Havel interests us so much when we can't remember him from the revolution*



**Lukáš Gavlovský:** Gallery owner Zdeněk Sklenář had the idea to place the work at the music festival Smetana's Litomyšl which takes place in the second half of June each year. During the dismantling at the piazzeta of the National Theatre there was an interesting and moving moment – the Heart was standing all the time on a square-shaped fibreboard. During the two months of walking on it people trampled in the dirt from streets as well as flakes of wax. When we removed the sculpture, on the blackened board the clean groundplan of the object shone out – an image of an open heart made by thousands of visitors who came to see the work.

**Roman Švejda:** In Litomyšl the Heart was exhibited together with Oldřich Škácha's photos in which he captured moments from Václav Havel's life. What more could we have wished for. The wax Heart in the atrium of the former brewery became the prestigious showpiece of the whole festival.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** Together with people from the local Restoration Institute we restored the surface of the most scratched blocks. Now we have considered the Heart to be a protected object. The installation in Litomyšl meant the monument had to face another danger though – high temperatures. The sculpture could not stand in direct sunlight. The local courtyard was small, surrounded by a high wall; it seemed that the Heart would not stand in direct sunlight. But it was not the case and besides there were summer heat waves in June that lasted even through the night. The wax wall started to deform. Despite various technical measures – cooling by water and air conditioning – we had to dismantle the sculpture before the end. We realised that our desire to exhibit the wax structure in the public brought us to the brink of possibly destroying the Heart. Again we realised its transience and started thinking again about casting it in metal.

*times. The answer can be shortened to one sentence: Václav Havel was much more than a revolutionary leader, he was primarily a mentor! All his life he fought against small-mindedness and pettiness, he tried to work with the nation, move it forward, to show it that it can be, despite being relatively small, a great nation. When he was still here we felt somehow safe here. We knew that there is a person out there who will raise his voice if things become tough. But now? Suddenly he was gone. Walking the streets of Prague we realised that it was time for Havel's children to grow up and take up their share of responsibility. And when we look at the events around us we are suddenly calmer – that is exactly what started happening..."*  
*Eliška Koderová (age 22, University of Legal and Social Studies)*  
*Vlastimil Kůs (age 27, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University)*  
*Jan Průša (age 22, University of Legal and Social Studies)*





#### From the Media

**KULT.CZ, Brno, December 10, 2012 –**

*The wax Heart for Václav Havel will be unveiled on Tuesday 18th December in Theatre Husa na provázku. It is a two-metre-high, open wax heart created from the remains of candles from various impromptu memorial sites that a year ago – in honour of the deceased Václav Havel – people around the country lit spontaneously. The origin of this art work and the whole initiative came from artists Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda, who got together volunteers from around the country to execute their idea. The original Heart for Václav Havel was created during January and February 2012 and it was exhibited at a square next to the National Theatre in Prague. Then there was an idea to exhibit this sculpture on the anniversary of Václav Havel's death in Brno – in Theatre Husa na provázku which is crucially linked to Mr Havel. Heart for Václav Havel will be unveiled ceremonially with both authors present in the Elizabethan Stage – a minute on the dot precisely a year after Václav Havel's death – at 10.15 a.m.*

**Roman Švejda:** We were really glad for the offer of Luděk Vele's – installation in Grabštejn. We transported the Heart into the cold space of the Gothic castle. Before exhibiting it we had to restore the sculpture, this time with Milan Koucký, an expert on candle making from the Sfixi company.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** At the Grabštejn castle the Heart was exhibited inside a vaulted room... Mr Vele got the idea that there would be a sound loop in the room with Havel's voice – excerpts from Audience, Unveiling and Letters to Olga. The Heart entertained all the senses. In Grabštejn the space was small, but with great force. I was watching with pleasure how the Heart quickly adapts to the place where it's standing and attracts attention there. And it is still moving.

**Roman Švejda:** The Heart has been functioning like this from the start. After the opening at the castle I walked past an elderly lady who was walking out of the Heart. She was crying, she was unable to speak, but I knew exactly what had moved her, because it was the same emotion we experienced at the National Theatre. It's hard to find words for it. Maybe there are no words for it.



## The Heart today...

There is a question which comes up in relation with Václav Havel: what is the ingredient needed for a man to become a symbol? Václav Havel has overstepped a certain threshold, even though some might interpose that his case is a personality cult. However, with a positive influence on others. According to us, he was “just” a man, with vices and mistakes – the fact is, however, that he surpasses us morally. Soon after his physical departure he becomes a symbol for the transcendence. People in the world know our country through Prague and Václav Havel’s name...

The Wax Heart is striking among the various events organised in Havel’s honour, it is not only a sculpture, it is also a rather fleeting and fragile matter. But if it survives, it is an authority of itself, it remains the criterion of its own quality... Of the strength and times that Havel’s personality bears. Both the artists declare that “for both of them the Heart is an issue that has not gone stale or tedious”. Whenever they approach the wax Heart it draws them to itself again... The Heart is currently installed in the cellars of the Litomyšl Castle (a UNESCO World Heritage site). In 1994 a meeting of seven European presidents initiated by Václav Havel was held here. They discussed the expansion and transformation of the European Union. The Heart still draws public attention and especially during anniversaries of the Velvet Revolution or Václav Havel’s death it receives coverage from the media and attracts many visitors.







**Roman Švejda:** Before the first anniversary of Václav Havel's death the Heart was still at Castle Grabštejn. And then Zdeňka Kujová from Brno approached us. She dreamed that one day it would be exhibited in the Moravian metropolis. It was a good idea at the right time. For one, Brno was one of the places where we collected wax and also there is a place fundamentally linked to Václav Havel the dramatist – theatre Husa na provázku.

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** Again we loaded blocks of the disassembled monument at Grabštejn, and in Brno we layered the paving with concrete to be able to erect the memorial again. The unveiling took place precisely a year later on the hour that Václav Havel died. The accompanying programme included passages from the Cirkus Havel performance and a recording of authorial reading of Havel's last play "Leaving". In the evening we sat in the theatre club around one table with people who remembered Václav Havel as their personal friend. We were in a place where they really like him. And again there was a moment that really touched us – a friend of ours called saying that in Prague, on Wenceslas Square by the St. Wenceslas statue people made an image from candles shaped like an open heart. The symbol lives on...





# In Honour of Václav Havel

## **October 5, 2012**

The airport in Prague Ruzyně was renamed Václav Havel Airport Prague. Already in December 2011 director, screenwriter and producer Fero Fenič suggested the Prague airport be named after Václav Havel, similarly as is the case with internationally influential people in other countries. The subsequent petition for the name change was signed by over 80 thousand people; the Czech Government agreed as well. The ceremony took place on the anniversary of Václav Havel's birthday. Dagmar Havlová called the Prague airport the gate to the Czech country and she thanked Fero Fenič for the bold idea...

## **November 5, 2012**

People took advantage of the weekend following the All Saints holiday and visited cemeteries and remembered their close ones. The tomb of Václav Havel, who had died nearly a year before, shone in the flood of candles brought by relatives as well as by people who thereby commemorated the first Czech president.

## **November 17, 2012**

A collection for the construction of a Václav Havel memorial was announced. It is to be situated in a publicly accessible area and built following the design of young artist Barbora Daušová.

## **December 9, 2012**

Guests and travellers at the Václav Havel Airport Prague witnessed the ceremonial unveiling of a giant tapestry in Havel's memory. The hand woven carpet was created following the motives in a drawing by the Czech-American artist Petr Sís... The image on the tapestry is supposed to portray the person of the former Czech president made up of flying birds floating above and watching over Prague Castle. The tapestry should first of all be a symbol of Havel's thoughts and stances as well as of what he represented for many people around the world.

## **December 17, 2012**

A giant neon heart lit up on the European Parliament building in Brussels on the eve of the first anniversary of Václav Havel's death. It was the same heart that Prague citizens remember from 2002 when the first Czech president left the office. One of the buildings of the European Parliament will also be named after Václav Havel.

## **December 18, 2012**

During the memorial day of the first anniversary of Václav Havel people lit candles at many places related to the changes of the Velvet Revolution, especially at St. Wenceslas' monument. A memorial plaque was also disclosed at the Prague Na Zábřadlí Theatre on this day. It was created by artist David Černý – the plaque depicts an ashtray with cigarette butts, two spirit glasses and a pencil with Havel's miniature bust instead of an eraser.

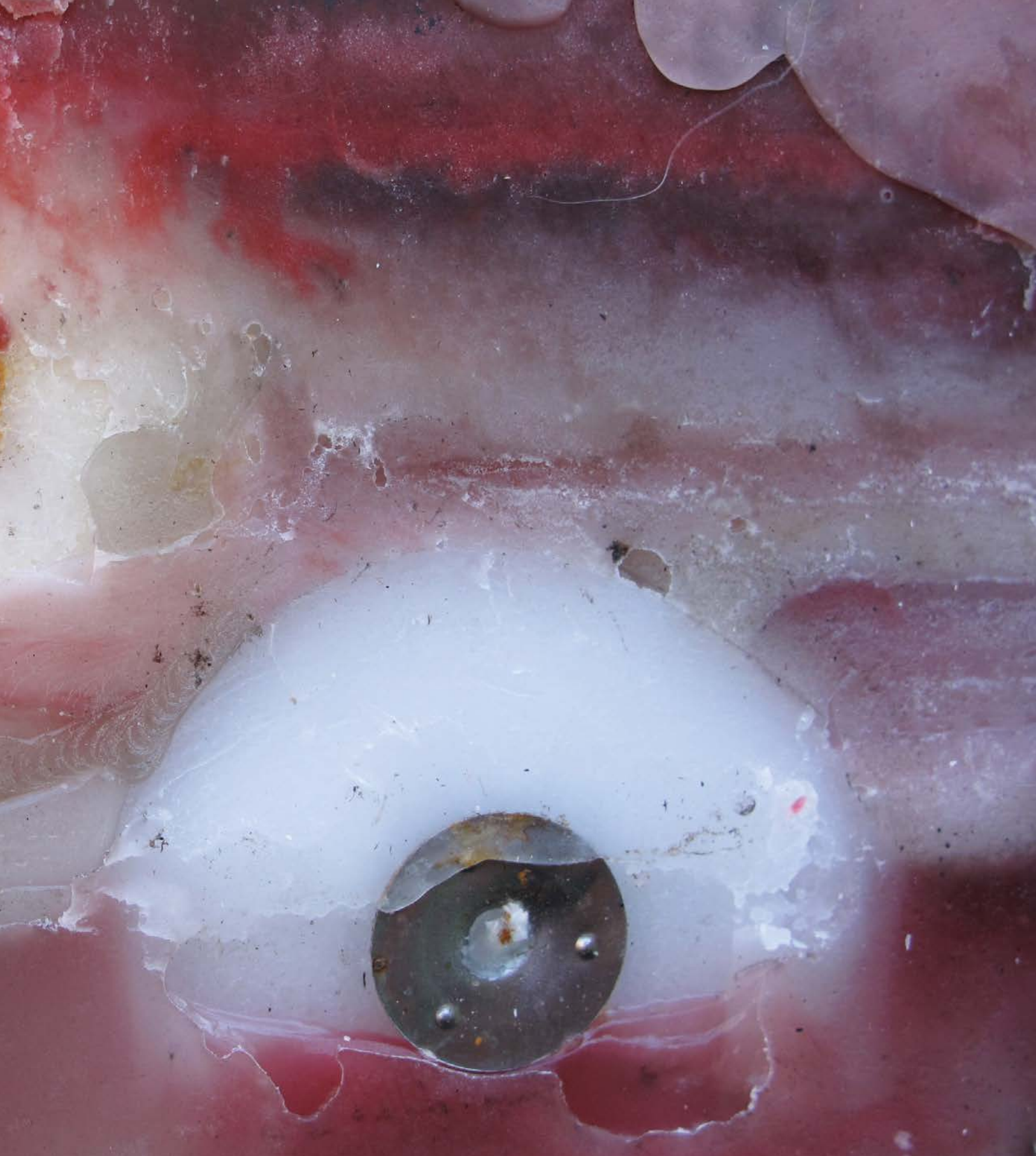
## **January 17, 2013**

The renaming of Prague Rašínovo nábreží embankment, where Havel lived with his first wife Olga, is being negotiated. Havel's address here was listed as the contact address in Charter 77.

## **January 2013**

A smaller wax copy of the Heart for Václav Havel monument by artists Lukáš Gavlovský and Roman Švejda will cross the borders of the Czech Republic – Prague wants to present a copy of the Heart to the American city of Chicago. The copy (measuring 16 x 16 inches) was created by the authors of the original work from wax from the candles lit after Václav Havel's death.





## The Heart for Václav Havel in numbers

People brought about 12 tons of candles from which, when they burned out, there remained about 5 tons of wax, of which approximately 2.3 tons were collected. The Heart is 2 metres high, the ground plan is inscribed into a square with the side length of 2.4 metres, the wall is 20 cm thick.



## About the Authors

**Roman Švejda:** Born in 1969, he studied Furniture-Making High School, later also Film School in Zlín (he finished his Bachelor's degree at The Film Academy of Musical Arts). He worked as an assistant director, he considers film directing his hobby; he filmed several documentaries and one feature film entitled "I'm Still Alive with a Coat Rack, a Cap and a Signal Disc"... He devotes his time to ceramics. He lives in Moravia with his girlfriend, a dog and a cat...

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** *"I met Roman at an artistic elementary school, where I admired him very much, because he did everything with incredible confidence. No matter if we meet once a month or after many years, our encounters are always unique and creative."*

**Lukáš Gavlovský:** (1972). He divides his work into several periods. In all of them his approach to art is very profound. He studied both the Secondary School and the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. For a long time he thought he would become a painter and that his studio would smell of turpentine. However, he turned to landscape work, he created things out of stones, planted trees and took photographs. Today he devotes his time mostly to useful realisations, he draws on natural materials and on the places and stories of people for whom he works. He likes to enter public space with his works as well. He is a long-time collaborator of the Botanical Garden in Prague Troja. He appreciates the construction of his own house made of wood, straw and clay. Lukáš Gavlovský is married, has two children, lives near Kostelec nad Černými lesy, where he remains close to the centre of Prague.

**Roman Švejda:** *"I know that the topic of recycling is close to him as it is to me. When he came up with the idea of creating a wax Heart, I knew well that it is a great idea, although he was not sure whether it fits into his world. I know that he even wanted to concede the theme to some other artist, that is how distant it appeared to him. It appeared so even to me, but in the end we took the plunge into the unknown. During the work I realised that the theme as well as the material we worked with is not so distant to us. With our project we both entered the closely scrutinized public space and the river of great human emotions."*

## naznačení pauzáku



# naznačení pauzáku



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### **Václav Havel**

*October 5, 1936, Prague - December 18, 2011, Vltčíce-Hrádeček*

Czech playwright, essayist, critic of the communist regime and later politician. He was the ninth and last president of the Czechoslovak Republic (1989–1992) and the first president of the Czech Republic (1993–2003). Symbolically, he was born in a flat with a view of the Prague Castle... His upper class origin prevented him from acquiring university education. When Havel became politically active in the seventies, he was repeatedly imprisoned. He became the most distinct personage from the dissident generation which overturned communism in Central Europe in 1989. A man of many letters and theatre plays became the president, he led his country to democracy by means of a “velvet revolution”. Havel was aware of his presidential responsibility and according to his own words he considered it a “great gift of fate that he could have lived through all this...” In the last few years he had to deal with worsening health problems that were a reminder from the times of his repeated imprisonment. When his mandate ended (2003) he dreamt of rest and travelling, he wanted to read, write and think. He was not quite successful in fulfilling these intentions. However until his very last moments he remained his own self... The extensive literary work of Václav Havel, plays, books, essays and speeches, were published by Torst publishers. For his literary work, for his thoughts and lifelong devotion to human rights observance he received a number of state medals, international awards and honorary doctorates.

[www.srdceprovaclavahavla.cz](http://www.srdceprovaclavahavla.cz)