In 1954 Jiri Georg Dokoupil was born in Czechoslovakia. Aged 14 he moved with his family to a small town near Frankfurt following the Soviet clamp down in reaction to the Spring of Prague. After school he enrolled in a college for art and design in Cologne. His application to do a one year exchange with Cooper Union in New York was accepted. There he was taught by Hans Haacke, among others. Dokoupil recalls telling Haacke at the end of his year that he had seen enough and was going to enrol in a mathematics course and become an engineer. Back in Cologne he had second thoughts about leaving the destiny of art in the hands of conceptualists. Who would paint pictures? In front of Cologne Cathedral Dokoupil met Walther Dahn and agreed to start making art with him. Dahn appeared at seven o’clock the next morning at Dokoupil's house and the two set out to execute their plan. They worked in several places and then moved into a studio in the Deutz part of Cologne in a street called Mjilheimer Freiheit, which they shared with four other artists (Adamski, Boemmels, Kever and Nashberger). From the start Dokoupil also had an independent production of paintings at his home. At the studio ideas were exchanged and a large amount of cross-fertilisation occurred, and this group of six artists soon became well-known under the name of the street.

The feeling of participating in a new movement in painting amongst the Mulheimer Freiheit artists was mirrored by others in Berlin and Hamburg. Internationally there was a general re-ignition of figurative painting. In Italy the Transavan guardia, which held human imagination and emotion above rational principles, emerged to challenge Arte Povera. Dokoupil recalls painting some of the Italians in Italienische Insekten, 1980 (Italian Insects). Enzo Cucchi is at top left, stroking his moustache. Mimmo Paladino approaches with what appears to be a bushel of wheat or sticks while Sandro Chia patiently sits and renders the model sitting at centre. Francesco Clemente, already finished and rolling up his work, exits right.

In America a generation of young artists was successfully championing figurative painting. Based in New York these artists showed an obvious nostalgia for the avant-garde of the past, which they hoped to put to the test and thereby prove their own value. There was a willingness to accept iconography and techniques from the past. Artists such as
Julian Schnabel, David Salle and Jean-Michel Basquiat, dreamt of a romantic role for themselves and for their work. The use of a dedicated, figurative art object, the painting, was the perfect vehicle for transmitting their aesthetic, collectively referred to as post-modernism, which historically follows a decade dominated by minimalism and conceptual art.

To choose to become a painter in 1980, as Dokoupil did, was more difficult than we may think today. There were older, more established painters in Germany. Baselitz, Lupertz and Richter, for example, were in stable situations. All the excitement, however, had been elsewhere for quite a while. There was a feeling that painting was old hat or even worse. Mullheimer Freiheit generated a large amount of interest among collectors, dealers, museum curators and critics, and within a few years the artists involved were on the way to achieving some fame and fortune. In Germany these steep careers led to questions about their true value, especially when the work borrowed from the past. No doubt some envy and jealousy crept in. History is relevant in so far as it influences the present, and the generation of young, wild painters, especially Dokoupil, forced a reassessment of some older painters who ultimately benefited because the interest that had been created also came to reflect on them. It retroactively put their work back into an historically relevant stream.

In the seventies there were a lot of good ideas going around which Dokoupil's rational side was susceptible to, but which carried in them the danger of being overdone. My Conceptual Heroes, 1980 describes some of the artists that Dokoupil found noteworthy around that time. The drawing makes reference to Smithson, Beuys, Gilbert & George, Lewitt, Judd, Morris and Picasso. Although Dokoupil's generation opposed the art of the previous decade and sought to create something expressive and personal, its precepts have found their place in his work to such an extent that he can be understood as a conceptual artist working in paint, or rather a post-conceptualist painter.

Dokoupil differentiates between know-how and style. Know-how is linked to mastering a production process which is analogous to scientific knowledge. For example, Pointillism is a know-how which
developed a new way to apply paint to a canvas so that on close inspection there are small marks of pure colour. These marks can simultaneously appear as a unified image from a distance. Pollock's drip paintings are another example of a development in know-how in which a painting is made by dripping paint onto a canvas. Style, for Dokoupil, is about producing a desired result and is not necessarily dependent on the process. Mondrian's mature work is a good example of a style. Dali's Surrealism is another. Know-how and style are closely linked, but for the artist to distinguish between them is important because he finds both in the treasure chest of art and uses them individually or jointly as starting points in his work. The phrase "arts and sciences" makes sense because the artist considers them two contiguous areas of knowledge. Dokoupil's father was an inventor, and so he is familiar with inventions of any kind and keen to harness them in his art. The artist himself is not an inventor, but one who uses them for his own ends. The inventions and innovations are regarded by him as quasi-empirical but are used to make statements in artistic terms.

Invention is important to the art-viewing public because it acts as a surrogate for originality and quality of expression. Dokoupil likes to subvert this view and makes us aware that no man is an island and that new ideas must come from somewhere. Art is not about invention but about artistic quality and his many uses of know-hows and styles often praise and recognise but also ridicule and critique artists who have found "their" invention. The Soot paintings, 1989 to present, are the most developed of his own inventions of know-how. The Soap Bubble and Tire paintings of the early nineties are innovations of the same kind. The Children and Theoretical Paintings of 1983/84, by contrast, are clear examples of Dokoupil developing ideas to come up with a recognisable new style.

Borrowed images, styles and know-hows act as points of departure, doors through which the artist passes to reach new creative dimensions. Dokoupil's work is often ironic, although he feels that it can also be equally sincere at the same time, and therefore makes a paradoxical impression. Irony allows him to approach certain issues which he would find very difficult to get close to otherwise. He recognises that it is not possible to treat every topic with irony,
because it develops into a blindness and stops being effective as a tool.

In Dokoupil's work sensibility is often replaced by a constant (self-)critical attitude. His paintings are not designed to fill us with wonder for his artisan skill. In most cases they make their point quickly and easily. The time invested in execution corresponds to the idea involved. Once the idea has been clearly expressed, the artist moves on. Dokoupil tries to convey to the viewer an amount of information with all the clarity that he could have wished for if the roles of artist and viewer had been reversed, and in this sense he uses a completely honest process. He avoids overstatement, except to use it as a tool in his work. Dokoupil's favourite artists are Picasso and Matisse. There is a naturalness in their approach to making pictures. Their painting is a completely natural, enjoyable everyday activity. For Dali, the images in his head and as a consequence in his painting were a prison from which he could not escape. For Dokoupil painting is the precise opposite, an act of freedom each time.

Dokoupil does not think there is a grand unified theory of art or life. He believes instead in fields of energy which wash over him and demand his immediate attention. When a field drifts on, his own involvement slowly ebbs away to make room for the next energy field which will grip him, enthuse him, and so keep his interest fresh and his intellect sharp. Dokoupil likes to refer to this as "Begeisterismus". This is the way most people behave in practice in their normal lives and large trends in society can be explained with this theory of reaction. Dokoupil finds himself in a constant state of arousal. He feels that his potency as a man and as an artist are linked and that they are both urges which need to be satisfied again and again. Many of his pictures have imagery which link the creative and sexual act.

In his art Dokoupil tries to create systems which express what the artist is doing without him knowing what it is. He is a Houdini who sets himself in chains only to escape in ever more stunning ways, giving hints to his procedure but leaving things open enough to allow each viewer his own interpretation.
Dokoupil uses painting to record the ever-changing myriad of images which are happening inside his head. At one stage in Mulheimer Freiheit Dokoupil tried to make a totally different type of painting each day. Later new ideas were built into larger series which sometimes overlap chronologically. There is really no way of telling that the same artist is the author of all the works. The only enduring feature is constant change. This is not unique, however, and is true of many artists, from Picasso to Picabia.

As a person Dokoupil is sharp and quick witted, exchanging new information freely. Often a comment is wrapped in a joke or a short story which might temporarily obscure the true meaning of what he is saying. He gravitates towards understatement about himself and his work. He is not afraid of trying things if they feel right but involve big risks. His work can often become the vehicle for his cutting humour, which sometimes lands him in trouble. Ricky in Dusche, 1981 (Ricky in Shower) by Rainer Fetting had been acclaimed as a masterpiece in the early eighties and in response to this Dokoupil and Dahn painted a series of almost 30 paintings of different objects in the shower, ranging from umbrellas to toothbrushes to finally a large stove (Fig. 2). Fetting never spoke to either one of them again.

The hectic development in Dokoupil's work, and the speed with which he sometimes works, is linked to his early perception that life is short. In West Germany in 1980 there was a lot of anxiety as the Cold War culminated. Tactical nuclear weapons were developed and a large military presence was established to provide a bulwark against similar forces to the east. A clash of superpowers in Europe would almost inevitably have taken place on German soil. Treaties and agreements to reduce nuclear armament were proving to be without any practical effect. Films like Kubrick's Dr Strangelove were pastiches of this situation and exorcised some of the fears harboured at the time. Feeling like he was sitting on a ticking time bomb made Dokoupil want to produce a large, rapid and varied output. He has a thirst for life. The artist wants to reincarnate in his own lifetime and so to live many different lives at once. The habit of working on several different series of paintings and living in four different places at once all reflect his wish to live more.
Dokoupil is wary of the trap of his own originality, in which he would continue a proven recipe even after it has gone stale. For the artist this is the opposite of being original. The longer an artist allows himself to be a victim of this weakness of repeating what he already knows the more difficult it becomes to retreat to the original point of departure and take up a fresher and more artistically profitable path. For Dokoupil it is important not to become complacent with a signature style but to continue to explore uncharted territory, often pursuing ideas he has wrung from other people's work and developing his own insights.

Dokoupil wants to avoid being a superficial artist, in whose work there is some kind of special twist which, once the viewer "gets it", makes him nod comfortably with his head. He does not want to be an "aha" artist. He feels that artists who constantly attempt to come up with the next "aha" idea should be found into what he refers to as "Impressionist Concentration Camp", in which they are forced to sit down outside with no more to work with than an easel, canvas, brush, palette and a handful of colours. They must then simply paint what they see to get back to nature, the real point of departure for any artist. When seeing Dokoupil's work it is important to know the technique and the ideas with which a painting or series of paintings was made. With such a key it becomes possible to start reading the work, but it does not provide any final solution.

There is a risk that an artist spreads his efforts too thinly and consequently the paintings may lack focus and intensity. The constant development of the soot paintings, which Dokoupil has worked on in different iterations over the past eleven years, shows how deeply he can delve in an artistic concept as long as it continues to throw up issues which he finds interesting.

Consistency is a positive trait which is much admired and rewarded in artists (and people generally). Dokoupil's widely varied and inconsistent approach, however, warns us not to rely on automatic consistency in our own judgements but to keep our eyes open. Consistency becomes automatic and therefore a negative characteristic when we use it to resolve problems or situations simply by referencing what we have done or subscribed to in the past in a
superficially similar situation rather than coming up with a new solution based on fresh fundamental thin-king which a new set of information would require. As Sir Joshua Reynolds once observed, "There is no expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labour of thinking." 4.

Automatic consistency provides us with a "foolish fortress" 5 where we simply follow the results of prior conclusions. In an attempt to lure us out of our foolish fortress Dokoupil's appropriations present information very even handedly. They allow us the intellectual and emotional space to come to a new conclusion about the facet of the artist's work that Dokoupil chooses to show. His paintings can work through the stomach, an imprecise and insensiti-ve instrument, which might make us suddenly aware of the full extent of a nagging problem that we had already appre-hended but not comprehended. Qther paintings appeal to our "heart of hearts". When presented with any painting we experience a split second of pure, raw emotion, just fractionally before the cognitive apparatus sets in. This moment can tell us everything about a painting but often it flashes by without registering consciously in the mind. Dokoupil's paintings aim to activate that initiiil impression to get at the underlying truth. By doing so they allow the viewer to escape from his own pre-conceptions, prejudices and to isolate the cognitive and rational mechanisms which usually help in perception but can go wrong when we use them to deceive and kid ourselves.

Dokoupil's paintings could be split into four loose groupmgs which inform us of some general issues that have occupied the artist at different times.

From 1980 to 1985 Dokoupil's main focus could be called expressionist "surreality", for want of a better term. In Madchen mit Schuppen und Schnupfen, 1982 (Girl with Dandruff and Cold), for example, there are contorted, invented shapes which represent figures which only become apparent after some time. In other works the images are more realistic, but there is a juxtaposition of lighting, size and colour. The Pacifier paintings of 1984 show a pacifier that bathes everyday objects around it with bright orange light. They recall the inversely lit landscapes of Magritte and the metaphysical paintings of de Chrico
with their references to fish and horses, two striking images in the series. In the Children paintings, 1984-85, a dumbfounding simplicity manifests itself. In other paintings fantasies are made tactile, as in the Theoretical paintings, 1983. In all of these, there is a very painterly atmosphere, sometimes with powerful gesturality visible on the canvas.

Starting in the mid to late eighties Dokoupil turns to photography to provide him with new ideas. Only the Madonnas in Ecstasy series, 1985-87, culled from painstaking research consisting of flicking through thousands of pornographic magazines, actually uses photographic images in the finished work. "There is this notion of absolute freedom, where people live in a kind of paradise, where relations between them function smoothly. You find that today in pornographic films.'

In later work, a photographic image is projected and then painted on a canvas. Paintings which are made using this technique include the Christ, Co(s)mic, Zodiac, Soot and Unfinished paintings. The Soot paintings go on to become a mainstay of Dokoupil's artistic output, and the more colourful work acts like a foil to the expanse of white canvas and black soot of which this series consists.

Almost from the beginning Dokoupil creates abstractions such as Blick ins 21. Jahrhundert, 1982 (Look into the 21st Century). For the sake of argument I would include the Terry Cloth paintings of 1983 in this group because the minimalism of the assemblage, which is their essence, makes them look abstract at first glance. It is clear that these works actually symbolise anus, testicles and penis at the bottom and ejaculate at the top of the composition, with the triangle and zip representing the corresponding female parts in other compositions. The Fruit paintings and sculptures started in 1990 have figurative component images which are used repeatedly to make paintings which are easier to understand as abstractions than representations. The chronologically very close Tire paintings of 1991 -92 and Soap Bubble 1992-93 paintings are pure abstractions.

In the second half of the nineties Dokoupil adds a distinct decorative note to his artistic vocabulary, returning to a fondness he has for filling
out space which is apparent in the Imperative of the Baroque series of 1982 and the Therapeutic pictures of 1984. The Green paintings, the red Slavic paintings and the Blue drawings, as well as some of the Pigment paintings have a decorative element reminiscent of the Pattern painters of the seventies, which can be understood as a reaction to the conceptually oriented, strategy based work that had gone before. In the decorative work Dokoupil is seeking a release from his own ideas in art for art's sake, while the Impressionist series of 1995 recalls the solid colour blocks and awkward but accomplished composition of Matisse.

It is not possible or useful to write something about every work in this catalogue, but some specific comments, mostly distilled from conversations between the artist and the author; will confirm (or, in the spirit of Dokoupil's work, refute) what has been said above.

Rettungsringe II, 1980 (Lifesaver II), shows a goofy man on the left dressed in suit and tie decorated all over with life-belts. He is looking out across a sea of drowning individuals. The question is: why can't he help them? The blue figure on the right, based on a sculpture by Kolbe, cannot help either, although it reappears in Gestapelte Schildkodten mit Akt (Piled-Up Turtles with Nude), 1980. Dokoupil recalls that at the time a lot of people were trying to do work with bad ideas but great execution, so he tried to paint terrible ideas and match them with the worst execution.

Fruhlingssturm, 1981 (Spring's Storm) shows a possible progression of Dokoupil's career from a lonely dreamer (I) to committed warrior duo (III) and then to the useless posturings of a body builder (II). The last panel acts as a warning to himself The figures are quickly painted and float above the surface, especially the thinker on panel I. In the third panel two naked men hold the handle of a broadsword. In the background there is a large pile of skulls. The two figures are meant to depict Dahn and Dokoupil who are waging their war of aesthetic development, while the skulls represent an army of vanquished foes. Dahn and Dokoupil hold hands on the canvas because their great mutual love is painting. On panel II, three body builders stand on a beach. A wave splashes over the bearded figure's foot and is transformed into a
rainbow which ties the last figure's feet. "The rainbow is a metaphor for the beauty of the attempt, rather than of the final execution. Painting is the act of a fearless hero, and totally desperate, because the final goal, to make something of significance equal to the content, is quite unattainable. The subject is so much larger and of so much more importance that the painting cannot hope to come close. In this sense a painting can only say some-thing real about the physical properties of the canvas, paint and brushes used to make it"7.

Fruchtwasser 1-11,1981 (Amniotic Liquid I-II), contains many references but no clear narrative. The two figures hark back to sculptures of Soviet realism that Dokoupil would have seen on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but also to the official art of the Nazi era in Germany. Maybe the man cries because he felt best at his mother's breast. The background is the semiotic fluid that gives the painting its title. It is dripped onto the canvas, and the teardrop coming out of the man's eye asks the same question as the dripping of the red paint: is it con-trolled or not?

While still at Mulheimer Freiheit, Dokoupil and Dahn set up what is referred to as the Central European School of Painting. There followed a movement termed the New School of Cologne. The number of artists involved "increased" to three: Jiri, Georg and Dokoupil. The paintings show the subject at centre. Light comes from outside, and from one source. The subject is painted at or close to life size. The paintings are essentially vertical, but always contain a horizon in the background, blue above for the sky and brown below for the earth. Nothing else should interfere with that plan, which is intended to ate a striking image that will enter immediately and indelibly into the memory of anyone that sees it. For Dokoupil the New School of Cologne is the solo continuation of the style he developed with Dahn in the Central European School of Painting. It was this type of painting that Dokoupil showed in his first one-man exhibition in 1982.

Die unheilbare Metamorphose des russischen Volkes, 1982 (The Incurable Metamorphosis of the Russian People) is a painting in this style. It was painted in seven hours, wet on wet, using a know-how that Dokoupil had appropriated from Jorg Immendoff. It consists of
painting to the shape but not painting the shape itself, allowing drops of paint to show, and by pressing the shapes together. Dokoupil uses it to create his most striking image, alive with many possible meanings.

Leben und Tod (Life and Death), a triptych from 1982, is an allegory showing the position that Dokoupil, and every artist, finds himself in. In the centre panel the memento mon of a skull hovers over the artist, reminding him that there is little time. In the left and right panels there are receptive apparatuses which look like the tops of a violin, an instrument which is empty itself, but resonates beautifully with sound when played right. On the left there is an erect phallus shape which is the source of some of the information that Dokoupil uses in his paintings. On the right side there is a similar receptive apparatus with a brain on top of it. It symbolises the thought and concepts that go into painting. To make art you must have balls and be smart for the result to be great.

Eine friedliche Hand umgeben mit Formen, 1982 (A Peaceful Hand Surrounded by Forms) is another example of work from the New School of Cologne. The hand is forming the peace sign that Churchill transformed into the V-for-Victory. Attached, by nails, are all sorts of forms so that the entire image looks like an open Swiss Army penknife. It alludes to the saying that to the man who only has a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. In the context of the visual arts the image conveys the idea that it is necessary to have many tools, many ideas and many solutions to fit the endless problems that our complex world throws up.

In Tod und Kreation, (Death and Creation) 1982 we see a sequence of events, happening from left to right. There is a creative spark which comes from above, carried by a hefty cable, which is wrapped around and nailed to the receptor's phallus. The axe in the skull describes the creative act, because it has to do with eternity and therefore death. The green double helix attached to the axe is the sign for infinity. The right panel shows an attempt to nail down a shape with many different tools or objects and thereby describe it in painting - an almost impossible task when the shape is a turret tomado.
The series of approximately 30 Blue Paintings About Love, all done in 1982, were originally shown with a matching blue ceramic sculpture on a white base installed just in front of the canvases. The painting and ceramic share the same subject matter. The Blue Paintings About Love incorporate Pop-type images using a technique borrowed from the Berlin painter Helmut Middendorf. They are an attempt to solidify the pictorial space in the painting and fill it out in an interesting way. Some of these paintings were shown in the Zeitgeist exhibition, 1982, in the Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, which was certainly the most interesting survey exhibition of new art done around that time. Dokoupil recalls being confronted by the annoyed Middendorf who said that people kept on congratulating him on his new blue paintings. In the Berlin of the early eighties Dokoupil saw what seemed to be an honest and heartfelt nostalgia for the past, a return to the expressionistic painting of Die Brucke which had developed in Berlin before the first World War. The Berlin painters meant to skip seven decades to get back to the point at which they felt that art history had been derailed. After all, history itself had been derailed for a time, especially from a German perspective. Dokoupil admired the courage and the naivete of the Berlin School of painters, but felt that they could take it if he redid some of their paintings for them.

GotA zeig mir Deine Eier, 1982 (God, Show Me Your Balls) was shown in Dokumenta 7, Kassel, in 1982. It makes a reference to Julian Schnabel, who had several exhibitions in New York in which he showed paintings done on backgrounds of broken plates. Instead of using crockery, however, Dokoupil uses books which he glues to the wood support. Dokoupil has painted over the image several times, even after its exhibition in Dokumenta. The faces in the painting are of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Ronald Reagan, among others. It is an over-exaggeration of a typical Schnabel know-how and intended to draw attention to an important contemporary artist who had not been invited to the exhibition.

At the Dokumenta Dokoupil also showed a triptych of highly stylised portraits, Dokumenta II, 1982. The figures are depicted in a wild, science-fiction way, constructed from disjointed tubes, spheres and rods and coming together to form a barely intelligible result. In
Dokoupil's mind there is a connection between Surrealism and puberty. It is then that hormones kick in and our perceptions start to get warped. As Dokoupil has said, "I'm growing into a pubescent girl". There is an enormous amount of creativity and energy that such girls have, and many other attractions. He means to unlock these qualities for himself.

Some elements of a composition are elongated in height and others expanded in width in the Theoretical paintings of 1983. In Liebespaar vom Vater erwisch, 1983 (Lovers Caught by Father) the protagonists are embracing each other at centre, but they are so thin that they look like no more than two intertwined strings. The father, by contrast, is enormously expanded with eyes that stretch almost to the edge of the canvas. The moment of surprise is captured perfectly. In a group of three paintings, Theoretische Bilder, all 1983 (Theoretical Paintings) often shown together; the vertical elongation and horizontal expansion are performed on the same figure. Elongation gives way to expansion in the eyes of the figure on blue ground. A widened radio is balanced on top of the thinned figure on red ground. Most strikingly, the thin nude on yellow ground is lengthened to look tall and slim, but widened in a place where a girl would least want to be. This group uses the three primary colours. The circle seen in the background gives an idea that the co-ordinates of the figures are being stretched over fixed points on a sphere. An early acquaintance and friend of Dokoupil, George Condo, has done drawings and paintings which sometimes depict similar distorted and comic figures and he has painted in several instances has worked on the theme of the expanded line.

The Pacifier paintings of 1984 continue to conjure up unreal scenes. The figures are perfectly recognisable although their meaning remains enigmatic. They are dreamscapes with a starry night in the background indicating that it is night-time. The everyday objects in the foreground are waiting eagerly for attention - the telephone seems to be ringing off the hook and the lit cigarette waits to be smoked while the sardines wait to be eaten.

The Children paintings, started in 1984, show children with globes and toys, sometimes in conjunction with butter-flies and flowers or other porcelain duty-free gift shop shapes. These paintings were shown in
Dokoupil's second New York exhibition, at Leo Castelli Gallery in 1985 Generational logic, the hope of rebirth through children, is illustrated in The Generations, 1985 one of the artist's favourites of the series, in which three different ages sit, each holding on to their own world. Although apparently female, the figures have an androgynous quality. Two small paintings, Boy with Locomotive and Girl with Tunnel, both 1985, form a pair. They are signed and dated 2034 at bottom right. The earth will be inherited by today's children when their moment comes, in this case at about age 55. It is also the year that Dokoupil will be 80. The toys that the children hold are charged with sexual innuendo, the locomotive being held like an erect penis, and the girl has four fingers inside her tunnel. The paintings are double challenges, in their kitsch sweet appearance and in the imputation of masturbation to five year olds. Yet they have a classical feel in their execution.

Dokoupil spent long hours sanding down and reworking the surface until the effect is so striking that it recalls the surface of Picasso's pink period, which is held in higher esteem than the more radical Cubism by many people. We notice the same high appreciation of the Children paintings in Dokoupil's public compared to his more conceptual works.

The Self Portraits with Bleeding Noses were done in 1984. They are honest to the point of frightening us with their utter frankness. The medium used is very attractive and the self portraits are full of colour and wit. There is a touch of repulsion in them too. Because of the nose bleed, other injury, or the polished surface of the head one feels a witness to an intensely personal moment in which the artist seems naked, even when he has clothes on. There is a sexual undertone in them. The device of the bleeding nose works because it makes the artist seem injured and therefore vulnerable, while the look of serenity on his face intimates that this is his normal condition. The portraits show the inside of the man, his actual blood. A form of male menstruation is documented in this series.

The Corporation & Products / Museum & Banks works of 1985-86, partly paintings and partly bronzes, are full of paradox. There is a yearning for recognition by luxury products and financial companies and art institutions, bodies that for Dokoupil might seem closer to mainstream desirability than an artist would ever be. There is a wish to become institutionalised, to be absorbed by the machine. Although
One life is not enough

this is a sincere wish, Dokoupil nevertheless realises that somehow it can never happen – and that he does not want it to happen. The work would be of no interest to the companies and institutions represented in it. The rendition as art of all those labels and trademarks alienates them from the context in which they are usually seen, and they cease to be quickly recognisable. The companies and institutions depicted are involved in promoting art and in the hope that art will in turn promote them, and Dokoupil questions their motives. There is ridicule in this series and one cannot help but be touched by this impressionist rendition of pop.

The Green Oxidation paintings from 1985, also referred to as Gruunspan (Verdigris) paintings, are blue-green monochromes. They use the same oxide as Warhol's abstract oxidation paintings of 1986. This hue of green is the artists's favourite colour, if any colour can claim this honour. In a handful of paintings from this series a big surprise is waiting for the viewer. On the originally white canvas Dokoupil writes, in large black capital letters, some insult or swear words. They cannot be seen from the front but as one moves around the painting the differing reflections on the surface can allow the viewer to read the text beneath.

The Christ paintings of 1986/87 are Dokoupil's confrontation with Christian religion. On arrival in Germany he was sent to a Catholic boarding school in Konigstein. In Czechoslovakia education had been used for indoctrination to the socialist cause. Dokoupil now found himself in a different environment, with an indoctrination of a quite different sort. He went to church every day, and although he did not take communion, he started to pray on a regular basis. The confusion this change must have created inside the boy's head is totally understandable. He accepted the church with respect, but like a spectacle, without fully understanding or subscribing to its content. Jesus im Ei, 1987 (Jesus in Egg), shows Christ in front of the cross, symbol of his death, but in an egg, a sign of (re-)birth. The image is difficult to make out at first, which applies equally to Down, 1986, where the face of Christ gets angel wings but where the orientation of the wings and the face are opposed, neutralising the original content of the images to use them more for their formal qualities. In Goldener unvollendeter doppelter Jesus, 1986 (Golden Unfinished Double Jesus)
the images are not completed and the expanse of gold colour seems as attractive as the partly painted figure. By doubling the image attention is drawn to the repetition and away from the image itself, thus reducing its previous didactic force. In these paintings the artist tries to make pictures of Christ which are neither blasphemous or empty. The gold in the paintings suggests Orthodox icon painting but also the religions of the far east. At night the paintings glow because there are phosphorescent components in the paint. Before embarking on this series Dokoupil immersed himself in the Bible and Buddhist scriptures. Some of these paintings show Christ as Buddha.

The Cosmic Series - Esoteric Pictures done in 1987 deal with the role of chance and esoteric knowledge in art. In 7 kosmische Formen, 1987 (Seven Cosmic Forms) the text at the foot of the painting plays on our reading that a Cosmic law has dictated that the artist produce some forms spontaneously on a given date. The supposed spontaneity of the shapes are negated by the specificity of the date given in the painting. The images look printed, even though they are painted from a projection on the canvas, thus further removing any spontaneous quality claimed for them in the text. The print look is a comment on the huge difficulty of introducing real chance into the artistic process.

Begegnung mit dem Fuchs, 1986 (Meeting the Fox) makes a reference to a childhood occurrence which profoundly marked the artist. On the left we see a smiling boy holding a huge bunch of flowers which form a grimace in profile. On the right we see the fox as a traveller, suitcase in hand. The furniture in the background might indicate the room in which the meeting took place, and the complementary white and yellow spirals highlight the importance of the event. "Suddenly, little Jiricek is standing in the doorway, two enormous eyes under wavy blond hair: -Mommy, Mommy, a fox was here! A fox? As far as animals go, we have already had various adventures: an ants' wedding in the bedroom, an exciting night with mice, in which father finished off 17 mice from the bed with an airgun ... but a fox? How could a fox get into our attic flat? -Yes Mommy, a fox, and he was real nice to me and we talked together and then, then, he told me a secret. But it's just for me ... I'm not to tell anyone else.- All attempts to calm the excited child are in vain. Again and again we talked about the fox, but the child keeps the secret to himself. To this day, you have not revealed
that secret, but I sense that it was a key experience in your early childhood".9.

The Zodiac paintings of 1987 continue an examination of esoteric knowledge and are perhaps the most accomplished of any series by Dokoupil. They are full but not busy. The allusion to the Zodiac is interesting because Astrology is used in a wide variety of contexts and levels, from the low-brow tabloids to the serious followers with computer programs and books to the cabalistic grand wizards who no doubt control the knowledge and its interpretation. The "personal" horoscope is transformed in the same way that Pop-art appropriated everyday media imagery. The high brow can meditate on the fusion of content and form and the veracity of the ideas that went into making the paintings10. Then there are those who control the system. In this series the artist creates the impression that he is the magician behind it all, that art in his hands is made to work. Like art, the efficacy of Astrology can only be measured by the reactions of the people who come into contact with it. Probably its biggest contribution is the identification of different human types which help us recognise different behavioural patterns in a person and our interactions with those around us. It is an ideal subject for a series of paintings. Dokoupil is Gemini with Leo in the ascendant, but his many personalities span all the different character types described in the different signs.

Dokoupil's Soot paintings started in 1988 are probably his best known works. Making images with soot is a know-how that he has invented almost from scratch and pioneered in many iterations. Canvases are hung upside down from the ceiling and an image is projected onto the surface from below and slightly from the side. The source of the images varies. Often they are newspaper cut-outs. With a candle Dokoupil blacks out the darker areas. The result, despite the necessarily irregular application of soot, has a (photo-) realistic look to it and the image is quite distinct. We recognise the image because it is completed in our minds. It is an effect not unlike Seurat achieved when he depicted individual parts of colour which fused in the process of seeing. Seurat looks to the eye, the perceptive apparatus, for resolution, while Dokoupil looks to the brain, the cognitive apparatus. As in a Monet, where it is possible to see the flickering of what the
painter's eye beheld, so in the Soot paintings the flame flickers to give
an impression of the subject.

Espado entre dos coches 11, 1989 (Space Between Two Cars II), and
Telefonzelle, 1991 (Telephone Booth) (Fig. 13) both show everyday
scenes. These seemingly meaningless images sometimes make it
possible to describe a whole system or state of being. Dokoupil wants
to show that absurd things like waiting to use a telephone are
situations in which importance and unimportance are equally present.
The space between two cars is inspired by similar conceptual pieces
that Nauman had done in the sixties and seventies, which involved
casting empty space. This casting adds a twist to the historical
development of perspective and the creation, sometimes illusionist, of
three-dimensional space in painting, architecture and sculpture. Empty
space is the connector between one object and another. It allows
objects their separateness and thus makes their existence possible.

A striking recent painting close to the artist's heart is Una, 1999, in
which a girl can be seen drinking from a gushing tap. The relative
sparseness of the image creates tension between the large white and
small blackened areas. Two elements struggle for supremacy: the
water which is depicted and the fire used to make the depiction. The
canvas acts as the ground and helps the water while the air transmits
the soot and thus helps the flame.

The latest variation in soot that the artist has just started work on is
the Arrugadic Soot paintings. They are made by finding an image and
making a photocopy of it. The artist then scrunches up the photocopy
in his hand. While still holding it in this way he presses it onto the
photocopier to make further copies. The copy that seems most
interesting to him is executed as a painting. The result gives views
from many directions in a two-dimensional image, as in analytical
cubism. In Tenerife a certain kind of wrinkled potato is a speciality,
and because of its surface it is called "arugado", the shrivelled, and
hence the name of the series.

The Mother Milk paintings of 1990 are done by soaking a child's
garment in milk and then pressing it to a canvas. The canvas is then
heated and the milk turns brown. There was a medical fashion that
babies were not given their mother's milk, and these paintings are intended to show an alternative use for it. "Thou shalt not cook the lamb in his mother's milk" is a directive in the Old Testament from which the Hebrew Kosher laws are derived.

The Fruit paintings, 1990-92, use the same know-how as the mother-milk paintings, although there is no need for a fluid or to find an appropriate object to print on the canvas. They are a rendition of Warhol's stencilled and silk-screen repetitions. Where Warhol uses everyday and media images which are specifically American, Dokoupil uses nature, in the form of fruit, which is everywhere, to create a more global image. In the same way the artist thinks that today's global equivalent of Warhol's Coca-Cola imagery could be a glass of water.

The Tire paintings, started in 1991, are reminiscent of experiments that Robert Rauschenberg and John Cage did together in 1953. The difference in the earlier case is that it was clear from the beginning that the tire print would form a straight line and in Dokoupil's work the random nature of the resulting pattern is an exhilarating freedom for the artist. At first the tires were rolled from one end of the canvas to the other, a sort of Ping-Pong between Dokoupil and Dominguez or others including Dokoupil's assistant Kupfernagel, who was working with him at that time. After a number of versions the poet Koos Dalstra came to the studio and impulsively threw some of the tires on the canvas to introduce emotion to the series. Dokoupil wanted to see what the tires would do if left totally to their own devices. To a certain extent these paintings are made for the artist by chance.

The Soap Bubble paintings, started in 1992, are European responses to the work of the American abstract expressionists. They have a light, permeated quality which provides depth and structure in a largely unpredictable way. By using the soap bubbles Dokoupil makes colourful symphonies which are orchestrated by the artist and in which chance lends a collaborative hand.

Dokoupil's Unfinished paintings, 1995, again require completion in the mind of the viewer. They rely on a small amount of visual information that stimulates us just enough to allow the recognition of an intended...
image. Each viewer will "see" a different painting, because each brain will function slightly differently in supplying the missing parts.

The Green paintings, started in 1996, have Dokoupilewa written on them, like the Slavic paintings. Ewa is Polish and spends much time with Dokoupil. She figures prominently in his work. In some of the Slavic paintings started in 1996 her profile, as well as that of the artist, is shown in the vases. The flowery images have a decorative quality which is tempered by the overt erotic imagery hidden in the graphic detail. Ewa is also the model in some of the Blue drawings of 1996 and, partly because she has green eyes, important in the making of the Green paintings, 1996/97, a series which Dokoupil worked on exclusively for more than a year. The figures have holes in them so that it is possible to see what they are doing on the other side of the painting. It is a way of showing the pictorial space behind a painted figure. All the lines in these paintings are made from points of differing size. The size of the point is inversely related to its location in the composition. Dokoupil uses the simple mathematical postulate that a line is a sum of the points in its path to make these paintings.

The Impressionist paintings of 1995 are an attempt by Dokoupil to literally get as far away from his paintings as possible. They were made using a brush which is 120cm long, somewhat like Matisse in later years. Dokoupil arrives at a resolution and quality that make us wonder that he so easily overcame this self-imposed restraint. Already as a boy he yearned to be an Impressionist painter. With these paintings he can become one. Impressionism was the last authentic painting based on ... nature. What is incredible is that the world is still full of terrible painters who insist on continuing to see nature not through their own eyes, but through impressionist works. The impressionists developed a precise point of view, a distance in accordance with their intentions. They worked on nature, how could you say with hammer-strokes. Their style was powerful, but, in the long run, style turns into an illness. The problem that I face now is, precisely, to define the contemporary point of view in relation to nature. Is it still possible today to do something interesting taken from the direct observation of a plant or a fruit-bowl? I think so, but nature is so complex, so changeable, the volume of information that we control today is so large that, when we finally manage to liberate
ourselves of all our prejudices, and situate ourselves on the margin of the History of Art, and settle ourselves there in the middle, alone, we feel impotent, like a little animal, lost..."15

The Pigment paintings, started in 1999, belong to the most recent series that Dokoupil has worked on. The know-how is borrowed from an old colleague, Gerd Keever, who uses the technique to make very detailed, pointillist paintings using funnels to apply the pigment. Keever also uses a computer to separate colours to make sure his compositions are perfect. In Dokoupil's hands the process is more crude. The artist uses spoons and his hands and even a cake slice to apply the pigment or throw it onto the surface. The paintings are then sometimes dragged face down through the streets. The composition of flowers and the Spanish subject matter of the bull-fight are complemented by the roughly treated, unprimed canvas, which in some cases has been torn and stitched together. In these compositions Dokoupil investigates the modulated surface in much Spanish painting of the post-war period. There is also a naive quality in those scenes in which the torero and bull are shown simultaneously at different stages of the bull-fight. The Pigment paintings continue Dokoupil's experiments in making paintings without the use of a brush, which include the Mother Milk, Fruit, Soap Bubble, Tire and Soot paintings.

The artist will no doubt continue to use his talent to bring us new and marvellous pictures in the future. As George Condo has said: "Dokoupil is the Santa Claus of art, always bringing us new presents"16

NOTES:
3 Rainer Opoku in a conversation with the author, March 2000.
5 ibid.
6 Jiri Georg Dokoupil in Dokoupil Catalogo, Theo A'tenberg, Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 1996.
One life is not enough

8 Jiri Georg Dokoupil in Dokoupil Catalogo, Theo A'tenber, Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern, 1996, outside back cover.
14 Bruno Bischofberger in a conversation with the author; April 2000.