**PRESS RELEASE**

**Exhibition title:**  New Normal

**Exhibiting artists:**  Blažej Baláž

**Venue:** Ján Koniarik Gallery in Trnava, Zelený kríčok 3, Trnava

**Curator:**  Miroslava Urbanová
**Exhibition opening:** September 26th 2024, 6pm

Blažej Baláž's exhibition *New Normal* refers in its title to the term denoting a newly established status quo in society or the economy that emerges after a period of crisis. It’s a phrase we’ve grown accustomed to in public discourse, especially in connection with the recent pandemic. We've become used to the "new normal" of new normals – and with that, also the overuse of this term, which simultaneously highlights the relativity of the meanings of words like "normal" or "a norm" – a construct dependent on who determines its content. At the same time, *New Normal*, in the context of Baláž's work focused on words and graphemes, provides a space for associative play that connects different layers of reading or even periods of our history. And last but not least, it serves as a loose link with the parallel exhibition at the Synagogue – Center for Contemporary Art, titled *NotNormal*.

At the Koppel’s Villa, we will present a selection of Blažej Baláž's works from 2018 to the present, created after his last major solo exhibition *ghOstwriter* at the Praetorium of the Central Slovak Gallery in Banská Bystrica. In this selection, we will trace both the tireless continuity of his critical observations and his relentless naming of things and societal phenomena, as well as his authorial correspondence in an ongoing dialogue with the world. Historical memory and recollection of events that shaped not only history but also the fates of specific individuals appear in Baláž's work, which at first may seem easy to read, but are layered with information. This unfolds on the background of inherited traumas passed down through generations, which literally and painfully seep to the surface of the visual surface.

Blažej Baláž (\*1958) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava from 1977 to 1983 and currently teaches at the Faculty of Education at the University of Trnava as a professor. Over the last thirty years, he has exhibited his works in the fields of political, environmental, activist, participatory, and neo-conceptual art. The media spectrum of his work includes painting, actions, performances, events, drawings, objects, and graphic art. He has received several domestic and international awards, including the Prize of the Union of Visual Artists of the Czech Republic at the 9th International Drawing Biennial in Plzeň in 2014, and the Special Award by the Jury at the Osten Biennial of Drawing in Skopje in 2016.