

## DEVĚTSIL 1920–1931

11 December 2019 – 23 March 2020

Prague City Gallery

organised in cooperation with the the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague  
Stone Bell House

Staroměstské nám. 13, Prague 1

Open every day except Monday, from 10 am to 8 pm

Curator: Alena Pomajzlová

**The first and only exhibition of the Devětsil Art Association took place in 1986, i.e., more than 30 years ago. František Šmejkal prepared it for Prague City Gallery in collaboration with Rostislav Švácha and Jan Rous. The current project returns to this topic not only in a wider range and with new research findings, but also using richer possibilities of presentation. It focuses on what was essential to Devětsil's concept of art and its activities, in particular the visual character of the modern world, the blending of art genres and the combination of poetry and rationality. The aim is to offer an exhibition as a vivid and dynamic spectacle that fully corresponds to Devětsil's elements of style.**

The entrance hall sets the tone for the exhibition, featuring the modern world in the form of an advertising light column, film footage of the nightlife of the city and photo reports of contemporary life. The excitement with modernity was probably reflected to the greatest extent in the production of Devětsil architects. The often reproduced American skyscrapers and ocean liners influenced the exterior of designed buildings, animated on top of that by neon signs. The advertisements also formed part of Jaromír Krejcar-designed Olympic Department Store, whose large model dominates the architectural part of the exhibition. Technical innovations allowed Zdeněk Pešánek to implement his exceptional art projects based on the use of electricity and kinetics, which are presented at the exhibition not only in drawings and models, but also by means of computer simulation. Thanks to the collaboration with the National Film Archive, there are several sections with screenings, including a charming advertisement for the Dada Theater. These are complemented by a series of slideshows with pages of magazines and books, and photographs of theatrical performances. Czech Radio provided sound recordings of E. F. Burian's Voiceband. Poetry, strongly advocated by Karel Teige, was one of the key forms of expression for Devětsil. In his manifestos of Poetism, Teige saw poetry as the future integral concept of art and life, of a new sense of life. The poetry features not only in the form of actual collections of poems by Devětsil members and excerpts from them, but also in other areas which it had touched, especially in fine art, where it manifested itself most emphatically in pictorial poem collages and the Artificialism of Štyrský and Toyen of a later date. "Classical" visual art (represented by selected key pieces only) will not, therefore, be put in the forefront, but live performance of the visual will be prioritized as Devětsil itself preferred.

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue in Czech and English, created by the collective effort of a team of authors, namely Jitka Ciampi Matulová, Karel Císař, Lucie Česálková, Petr Ingerle, Alena Pomajzlová, Jakub Potůček and Jindřich Toman. Although it is structured according to individual fields (fine art, architecture, theater, photography, cinema) and themes (the role of magazines and the performative character of the Brno section of Devětsil), in many places the texts complement and permeate each other (fine art refers to film and vice versa; architects also designed theatrical sets and forms of new theater; the significance of photography is intensifying and changing when reproduced in magazines; the optical character of poetry is co-created by Constructivist typography; poetry is visualized through modern expressive dance, etc.). A number of contributions include reflections on the fusion of art and "non-art" (especially in film) or the combination of artistic genres resulting in a new synthetic, experimental form of artwork (intermediality, theater). The fusion involved not only art forms, but was also reflected in the international character of avant-garde activities, as evidenced mainly by magazines that take over each other's reproductions and articles, often in the original version.

# G PRESS RELEASE HMP

Devětsil's extensive activities were driven by the hopes for the restoration of life after the First World War. The short but intensely-experienced decade was filled with optimism, endless creative invention and great openness to the outside world. Much of this can still be an inspiration today. The Devětsil exhibition is, therefore, not just looking back at one important stage of Czech art history and was not meant as a retrospective only.

Alena Pomajzlová

Curation and concept: Alena Pomajzlová

Co-authors: Jitka Ciampi Matulová, Karel Císař, Lucie Česálková, Petr Ingerle, Jakub Potůček, Jindřich Toman

Architecture: Lukáš Velíšek

Graphic design: Adéla Svobodová, Tereza Hejmová

Media partners: Art & Antiques, A2, ArtMap, Artiki, Český rozhlas Vltava, Expres FM, Flash Art, His Voice, Literární noviny, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, XANTYPA

Admission: CZK 120 full price (adults) / CZK 60 reduced (students, OAPs)

**Media contact: Michaela Vrchotová, +420 725 818 721, vrchotova@ghmp.cz**  
**More information available at: [www.ghmp.cz](http://www.ghmp.cz), [www.facebook.com/GHMP.cz](https://www.facebook.com/GHMP.cz)**

## ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

**Guided tours** with the exhibition curator, Alena Pomajzlová; the art historian specializing in modern architecture, Jakub Potůček; and the curator of the Moravian Gallery, Petr Ingerle

14 January 2020, 6 pm

10 March 2020, 6 pm

### **Screenings at the Ponrepo Cinema to accompany the exhibition: *Fairbanks, Chaplin and the Cinematic Art***

Devětsil's key source of inspiration was popular culture, including American cinema and its stars. Devětsil's perception of movie stars was very physical, mainly related to the built-up body of Douglas Fairbanks and the sad eyes of the distracted melancholy clown Charlie Chaplin. The sportsman Fairbanks impressed the public by his athletic abilities in genre films, often set in an exotic environment. Chaplin's films, too, were based on a careful choreography (movements, gestures and facial expressions), although they consisted of a story composed of seemingly random events. The screening will present key works featuring both protagonists – Fairbanks in *The Thief of Baghdad* and Chaplin in *Kid*.

Introductory Remarks: Lucie Česálková

23 January 2020, 6 pm *The Thief of Baghdad* (Raoul Walsh, 1924, USA)

20 February 2020, 6 pm *Kid* (Charlie Chaplin, 1921, USA)

### **BodyVoiceBand: LOVE, DEFIANCE AND DEATH**

18 February 2020, 7.30 pm, concert hall of the Stone Bell House

"A heart burned,  
Burned on the flame.  
When it burned out,  
It turned to stone."

Concert performance of a theater-poem in three sections. Folk poetry and the breathtaking power of music. BodyVoiceBand reopens its dialogue with E. F. Burian, whom it has been referring to throughout its existence.



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally processes art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the Prague City Gallery exhibits at seven venues: The Stone Bell House, Municipal Library – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bilek, Troja Château and František Bilek's House in Chýnov.

# G PRESS RELEASE HMP

Playwright: Emil František Burian  
Director: Jaroslava Šiktancová

## **Saturday creative workshops**

18 January 2020, 1–6 pm, Greetings from the Journeys, Stone Bell House

15 February 2020, 1–6 pm, Lively Alphabet, Stone Bell House

21 March 2020, 1–6 pm, Illusive Landscape, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace (EC)

## **Art workshops for adults and senior citizens**

15 December 2019, 1–6 pm, *Visual and Acoustic Art*, Stone Bell House, concert hall

13 February 2020, 3–6 pm, *Transformation of Paper I*, (EC)

14 February 2020, 3–6 pm, *Transformation of Paper II*, (EC)

16 February 2020, 1–6 pm, *Transformation of Paper III*, (EC)

20 February 2020, 3–6 pm, *Painting and poetry I*, (EC)

21 February 2020, 3–6 pm, *Painting and poetry II*, (EC)

23 February 2020, 1–6 pm, *Painting and poetry III*, (EC)

**Interactive tours** of the exhibition for all types of school and other age and interest groups with the possibility of practical follow-up creative work. We will make every effort to meet the specific requirements of every school in terms of date, theme and level of difficulty.

Reservation necessary

Fee: children up to 10, art-school students, lecturers – CZK 5; 10-years old and above – CZK 20

Contact: Lucie Haškovcová, lucie.haskovcova@ghmp.cz, 606 612 987, 608 216 418

In addition to the activities referred to above, there will be other educational activities aimed at other target groups, such as disadvantaged visitors or parents with children on parental leave.



**Prague City Gallery** is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally processes art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the Prague City Gallery exhibits at seven venues: The Stone Bell House, Municipal Library – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bilek, Troja Château and František Bilek's House in Chýnov.