

ANTONÍN KRATOCHVÍL: PHOTO ESSAYS

12 June 2020 – 24 January 2021

Prague City Gallery

The Stone Bell House

Staroměstské nám. 13, Prague 1

Open daily except for Monday from 10 am to 8 pm

Exhibition Curator: Pavlína Vogelová

This retrospective exhibition presents a cross-section of a highly expressive, suggestive photographic oeuvre by Antonin Kratochvil (born 1947), one of the world's most prominent and significant representatives of social documentary photography and photojournalism on the nature of contemporary human society. He affects our emotions, upsets us, transforms images with sophisticated effects, and dispenses an exact dosage of the intended resonance of the labyrinth of the forms of humanity and its averted faces.

Kratochvil's photographs accentuate images of deprivation, despair, alienation, pain, sadness and misery, as well as the arrogance of power and its consequences in various parts of the world. They present historical evidence of modern social and civilization problems of the world and military conflicts (Afghanistan, Bosnia, the Philippines, Haiti, Iraq, Rwanda, Zaire) and capture the tragedy of humanitarian and natural disasters or the escalated social problems of human society as such (epidemics, disappearing cultures, devastation of the landscape, the criminality of drug dealers, and an insight into the lives of contemporary "golden youth" in Moscow).

Kratochvil imprints his own personal style onto portraits of show-business celebrities as well as completely unknown, anonymous people, which taken as a whole represents an allegory that has a special meaning for him. By interconnecting well-known figures such as Bill Gates, Willem Dafoe, Keith Richards, Patricia Arquette, Priscilla Presley, David Bowie, Milan Hlavsa, Pavel Landovský, Jean Reno, Bob Dylan, Billy Bob Thornton, Vittorio Storaro, Kyle MacLachlan, Judith Godrèche, Amanda Lear and Debbie Harry with unknown faces of people from diverse backgrounds, living through numerous reversals of fortune and gaining experience, Kratochvil reflects the state of the human soul in today's world. These photos do not celebrate specific people, heroes, or celebrities. Kratochvil relativizes beauty and relationships to seek and find an adequate visual form for his profound statement about the perception of humanity as the essence of our being, our personal and social space, and finding fulfillment in life.

Antonin Kratochvil (born in 1947 in Lovosice, Czechoslovakia) is a Czech photojournalist of international renown. After five years of exile in Europe (1967–1972) including lifelong lessons from his time in a refugee camp, in prison, and in the French Foreign Legion, he was humanized by his studies of art and photography at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and went to the United States in 1972, where he later rose to become one of the top photographers in the world as a photojournalist and war photographer. A crucial moment in his career came with his own book, *Broken Dream: Twenty Years of War in Eastern Europe* (1997). He has worked for prestigious American newspapers and magazines including *Rolling Stone*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Mother Jones*, *Smithsonian*,

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Condé Nast Travel, GEO, Playboy, Penthouse and Vogue. He has received many international awards for his documentary photographs, such as the Dorothy Lange Prize, the Ernst Haas Award, the Golden Light Award, the Gold Medal for Photography from the Society of Publishing Designers in New York, the Gold ARC Award for the Best Annual Report, the Lucie Award and World Press Photo. In the Czech Republic he was named the 2014 Personality of Czech Photography.

Pavλίna Vogelová

The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive catalogue, *Antonin Kratochvil: Photo Essays*

Pavλίna Vogelová (ed.)

The catalogue accompanying the retrospective exhibition *Antonin Kratochvil: Photo Essays* represents a cross-section of this highly expressive, suggestive photographic oeuvre of one of the world's most prominent photojournalists and portrait photographers of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Kratochvil's selected photographs reflect his lifelong themes of man's relationship to nature, man of conflict in the world perverted by wars, and man from the perspectives of repression and his own visions. The texts written by Pavλίna Vogelová and Michael Persson divide the book into two parts. Pavλίna Vogelová puts Kratochvil's photographs into the context of the burning problems society is facing today and emphasizes the value of the photographic record, while giving priority to the moral and artistic integrity of the photographer. Michael Persson, who collaborated with Kratochvil on his previous monographs, *Broken Dream: 20 Years of War in Eastern Europe* (1997), *Vanishing* (2005) and *Persona* (2006), in his essay *From a Friend to a Friend* provides an almost belletristic insight into Kratochvil's uniqueness, modesty, empathy and special personality, when describing the joys and sorrows of what it takes to become a world-class photographer.

The book has been published with the support of Martinický palác, a. s.

Exhibition Curator: Pavλίna Vogelová

Graphic and Architectural Design: Filip Skalák

Media Partners: Art&Antiques, A2, ArtMap, Český rozhlas, ExpresFM, Flash Art, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, XANTYPA

Entrance Fee: CZK 120 full (adults) / CZK 60 reduced (students, senior citizens)

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More Information: www.ghmp.cz

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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 – 2nd floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bilek, Troja Château and František Bilek's House in Chýnov.

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ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

Please check our website www.ghmp.cz for updated information about accompanying program: www.ghmp.cz

Note: The scheduled accompanying events may be affected by the development of the coronavirus situation. The program may be subject to change.

Guided tours of the exhibition

Wednesday, 15 July, 6 pm, with Magdalena Juříková, Director of Prague City Gallery

Saturday, 25 July, 6 pm, with Pavlína Vogelová, Exhibition Curator

Thursday, 17 September, 6 pm, with Pavlína Vogelová, Exhibition Curator

Tuesday, 13 October, 6 pm, with Pavlína Vogelová, Exhibition Curator

Saturday art workshops

3 October, 1 pm – 6 pm, *The Man and the World*, The Stone Bell House

17 October, 1 pm – 6 pm, *Human Photo Essays*, The Stone Bell House

During interactive tours and art workshops, we will focus on the world-renowned photographer Antonin Kratochvíl. We will draw attention to his characteristic photographic style as well as the typical attributes of his work and its key topics. We will get closer to the aspects of black and white photography, which he exclusively uses, its light abilities, variations in tonality, contrast and brightness. In his photographs, Kratochvíl works with the imagination, with abstraction, often with an intentional blur, evoking a certain movement, tension, and dynamism in the image. He employs these qualities to express imaginative nuances of reality, of fantasy and of dream, as well as the actual atmosphere of human life under various conditions. His photo essays cut through to the burning issues concerning the whole society at present, such as war conflicts and environmental, natural, and man-made disasters. In our artistic reflections we will focus on Kratochvíl's photographic portraits of artists, actors, dancers and other celebrities together with anonymous people from all parts of the world and diverse backgrounds. We will create collages and photomontages which will feature selected characters placed in different settings, complementing them with a short commentary and story. Using the resulting works, we will observe and compare shifts and changes in the visual atmosphere. We will also apply this creative principle to collages thematically focused on man and his relationship to nature.

Art workshops for adults and senior citizens (Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace)

Thursday, 23 July, 3 pm – 6 pm, *Documentary Photography I*

Friday, 24 July, 3 pm – 6 pm, *Documentary Photography II*

Sunday, 26 July, 3 pm – 6 pm, *Documentary Photography III*

Impulses for art workshops will be based on the artistic activity of the photographer Antonin Kratochvíl. We will deal with the theme of photographic archive or diary. We will focus on documenting moments of our own lives, which we will process as family portraits, a travel report or a photographic essay. During the art workshop we will learn the basics of bookbinding or experimental work with paper.



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Special event

Saturday, 5 September, 10 am, guided tour of the exhibition for the members of the Association of Art Pedagogues + art workshop

Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups with the possibility of subsequent creative response in the form of their own work. We adapt the events in terms of time, theme and performance levels according to the specific requirements of each school.

Reservation required

Price: Children under 10, students of art schools, teachers – CZK 5; children over 10 years CZK 20

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

In addition to the above-mentioned events, there will be other educational activities for other groups of visitors, such as the disadvantaged and parents on maternity and/or parental leave and their children.



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