

# EXHIBITION PROGRAMME OF THE PRAGUE CITY GALLERY FOR 2023

*"An image does not show, but rather causes something."*

Miroslav Petříček

The exhibition programme of the Prague City Gallery for 2023 is characterised by a greater number of thematic exhibitions that have required long preparation and whose time has now come. *Miroslav Petříček: Thinking through Images* is a key project that will bring a completely different view of contemporary local art than is usual in galleries, and will focus on the analysis of visual language and the manners in which it affects the viewer.

We also have two **strong female personalities** in the programme who could not be more different: Jitka Svobodová, a contemplative personality who is systematically subtle in her expression, and Margita Titlová, whose work engulfs us in a whirlwind of energy.

We are also continuing with our long-standing interest in older experimental work, represented this time by Dragoljub "Raša" Todosijević, an artist of international renown who, together with Marina Abramović, is among the most outstanding artists of former Yugoslavia and today's Serbia.

We pay considerable attention to the "moving image", in not one but two projects. In the first case, it relates to inspiration by film art and various modifications of its perception in the work of contemporary visual artists (*Thinking through Film*). In addition, our House of Photography will present the works of Maria Lukáčová and other prominent women video-artists. Amongst other things, the artists reflect on the stages of their life in relation to contemporary social and global challenges.

Two personalities of Czech photography will also be presented: Karel Otto Hrubý and, a few generations younger, Jaroslav Beneš. The former was not only an outstanding photographer but also an important figure on the Brno cultural scene. This exhibition is a variation of one that paid tribute to him at the Brno House of Arts a few years ago. Jaroslav Beneš is a photographer with a different habitus, and his works are inspired by the essential forms of minimalism, though they are created in the urban environment of large cities and thus reflect their environmental reality.

Magdalena Juříková, GHMP director

## **MIROSLAV PETŘÍČEK: THINKING THROUGH IMAGES**

Term: October 2023 – January 2024

Municipal Library

Curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

Co-authors of the concept: Miroslav Petříček, Jitka Hlaváčková, Kateřina Štenclová

**Miroslav Petříček is a leading Czech philosopher and aesthetician who has been systematically reflecting on visual art for decades. He has summarised his thoughts on aspects of the language of art in a number of texts, including his book *Thinking through Images*, which became the main stimulus for this exhibition. Our most important aim is to highlight Miroslav Petříček's fundamental contribution to the development of Czech visual art and to attempt to illustrate the key ideas underlying his philosophical discourse. The basis is his statement that an encounter with an image is an event.**

The languages of words and images are close but their material is different: one cannot simply translate an image or an expression into concepts. An image does not show but causes something. It is neither an illustration nor a visual mediation of an idea but a specific way to stimulate thought – to think what is painted. Thinking in images is the response to an encounter with such a visual event.

Miroslav Petříček's commentary guides the viewer through a labyrinth of artworks, representing various forms of "visual events", ranging from an abstract sensory perception through the search for form to the construction of an idea or a system of thought. In addition to Miroslav Petříček's original commentaries, the viewer will also be able to encounter the ideas of other philosophers on which Petříček's philosophy is based or with which it is in harmony. This level reflects the fact that thanks to the hundreds of important philosophical texts that Petříček has translated into Czech or interpreted in his lectures, after 1989, Czech art and aesthetics were able to consciously join the stream of postmodern world thought (e.g. Henri Bergson, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy, Henri Maldiney, Dieter Mersch, Alfred N. Whitehead).

The graphic designer of the exhibition is Adéla Svobodová; the architect is Richard Loskot. A publication will be produced for the exhibition and a varied accompanying programme will be prepared in which all of the authors of the catalogue texts will participate: Miroslav Petříček, Jitka Hlaváčková, Václav Janoščík, Milena Bartlová and Jiří Přibáň.

## **JITKA SVOBODOVÁ: RETROSPECTIVE**

Term: April–August 2023

Municipal Library

Curator: Helena Musilová

**We are preparing the first retrospective exhibition of the legendary artist Jitka Svobodová, which will take place in one of the most attractive exhibition halls in the Czech Republic. Her life's work could be characterised by a few terms – drawing, object, sensibility, quintessence, concentration and time. Each of these summarises a huge number of messages and possible interpretations.**

In the first half of the 1970s, the artist decided to move away from painting and focus on drawing. Through this medium, in her 2D and 3D works she touched upon fundamental issues related to both creation itself and the process of knowledge.

The forthcoming exhibition for the space of the Municipal Library, as well as the printed guide to the exhibition, will summarise all the important approaches of Jitka Svobodová's work to date and indicate the starting points of her future art. That is, the world of existing objects (tables and chairs, trees), phenomena (for example, moving curtains), including such important themes as trees depicted in various media.

At the beginning of each of Jitka Svobodová's drawings is a concentrated observation – of an object, a phenomenon or a situation – which allows the absorption of what is essential. Both in the smallest detail and the awareness of which external characteristics of the object or phenomenon can be omitted. For this exploration, she has chosen the seemingly simplest motifs from the outside world; however, the drawings of chairs or mugs are not drawings of actual chairs or mugs, they are not transcriptions of reality. They are the essence of the object, they are the result of the union of its external and internal being, they are their irreversible appearance for they refer to their phenomenological essence. The obviousness with which the drawings of the objects are presented by the artist arouses, at the same time, both unease and tension in the viewer, who is forced to think about the seen world through a different lens, to work with their own memory and their own impression of the things themselves.

The exhibition and publication project will present a selection of Jitka Svobodová's work, complete series as well as thematic groups of her artworks that are not in chronological order, in order to show how the artist continuously transforms a single theme.

Jitka Svobodová (\* 1941) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1961–1967 Monumental Painting Studio, 1973–1976 Restoration Studio). She worked as a freelance restorer and artist, then, after the Velvet Revolution, she was appointed professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1991 and until 2012 she headed the School of Drawing studio. She has prepared a number of solo exhibitions in the Czech Republic and abroad and participated in many collective exhibitions; her works are represented in important public and private collections. She is one of the most distinctive and original woman artists on the Czech art scene.

The architect of the exhibition is Jiří Pleskot, the graphic designer is Matěj Bárta. A comprehensive monograph on Jitka Svobodová's work was published by Arbor Vitae in 2022; a guide to the exhibition, accompanied by photographs from the installation, will be published as part of the exhibition at the GHMP.

## **MARGITA TITLOVÁ – PURPLE VERTICAL**

Term: February–May 2023

The Stone Bell House

Curator: Magdalena Juříková

**Margita Titlová is an action artist, performer, creates installations, teaches art and experiments in the field of combining sound, instrumental recordings and artistic techniques. At the beginning of her work in the 1980s, she carried out minimalist actions outdoors as well as indoor performances, the measure of which was her own body. The investment of energy in the final accomplishment of her work has remained her long-standing characteristic even during her period of large-scale ritually realised drawings. The exoticism and signification in these works is intensely personal and not derived from familiar sources.**

The exploration of physicality in interaction with the environment and the energy that the body emits and radiates while revealing the inner secrets of its psychodynamics, all of this preoccupies and inspires her to this day. Her work has been valued for its continuity and coherence of thought, which in many ways accentuates feminine elements and attributes with a naturalness and without ideologising. Her now extensive body of work is imbued with authentic and fierce expressiveness, but, on the other hand, also with revised relations to scientific and technical experiments.

The exhibition traces a considerable part of her work, from actions to large-scale drawings and paintings, installations involving light and the use of magnetism, drawings using a Kirlian device, so-called thermal imaging paintings, manipulated photographs and a number of works that will be seen again after many years.

Margita Titlová (\* 1957) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1977–1983.

She was a co-founder of the Behémot Gallery and one of the first women to hold the position of studio head at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Brno (Graphics and Visual Communication, 1998–2011). She also worked as the head of the Painting Studio at the Institute of Art and Design at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and has been a lecturer at the UJEP university in Ústí nad Labem since 2013. Margita Titlová has been exhibiting her art since 1983 (unofficially) and subsequently has had almost thirty solo exhibitions both at home and abroad.

She, of course, contributed to the concept of the exhibition along with Miroslav Jiřele, who is responsible for the first comprehensive treatment of Titlová's work. The exhibition will be accompanied by a three-volume catalogue devoted to each decade of her work, co-

produced by the GHMP and ETCETERA Auctions.

## **DRAGOLJUB "RAŠA" TODOSIJEVIĆ**

Term: June–September 2023

The Stone Bell House

Curator: Jakub Král

*"Like the famous Slovenian band Laibach, his work also represents a walking of the very thin line between moral and perverse interpretations of history and contemporary global events, which are not clearly distinguishable at first glance."*

Jakub Král

**Dragoljub "Raša" Todosijević (born 1945) is a Serbian artist belonging to the first generation of neo-avant-garde artists of the so-called New Art Practice of the 1970s. Together with Marina Abramović, he is one of the most prominent artists of the former Yugoslavia and today's Serbia. The themes and strategies of Todosijević's works from the 1970s correspond to the interests of our artists (Petr Miler, Petr Štembera and Jan Mlčoch) in working with their own bodies in a political sense. His later conceptual works relate to rudimentary questions of history and our relationship to ideologies in the broadest sense.**

The exhibition will be conceived in the space of the Stone Bell House, the lower floor being dedicated to his earlier works from the 1970s and relating to the analogous domestic production of action art. The upper floor will focus on a selection of his watercolours (*Gott liebt die Serben*, *Depresivna apstrakcija*) and *Diary*, a variation of which was exhibited at the 2011 Venice Biennale, with which he won the main prize for the national pavilion. His installations will be represented by a massive work from the *Gott liebt die Serben* series, which consists of tables forming a giant swastika – the installation includes a performance of a communal dinner.

In its broadest framework, Todosijević's exhibition and his lifelong artistic practice teeter on the edge of the possibilities of reading various symbols from history, from our present or from artistic practice itself. Like the famous Slovenian band Laibach, his work represents a walking of the very thin line between moral and perverse interpretations of history and contemporary global events, which are not clearly distinguishable at first glance. Just as it is difficult to orient oneself in the present time and its manifestations in global political phenomena, Todosijević's artistic practice, which is full of semantic contradictions, offers a possible counterbalance and contradiction to the present era and makes it possible to orient oneself in it.

## **THINKING THROUGH FILM**

Term: November 2023 – January 2024

The Stone Bell House  
Curator: Sandra Baborovská

*"Film is a form that thinks and thought that forms."*  
Jean-Luc Godard

**The exhibition project *Thinking through Film* brings film theory, analysis and language into the gallery space. Film, an independent artistic expression, has become a source of inspiration for contemporary visual artists. The exhibition and accompanying catalogue work with the deconstruction of film strips and individual excerpts from seminal films that have influenced the visual arts. The exhibition also pays due attention to an integral component of film: sound.**

The formal practices of film and video appear in the works of contemporary Czech artists. A hitherto unconsidered question is how visual artists use the language of film and how it enriches original artistic concepts. How, on the other hand, do the artists themselves transform the practices of cinema into something new that goes beyond the basic principles of film, such as space-time narration or an imaginary reflection of our reality? Where do the two artistic disciplines meet in the world of a contemporary audiovisuality that has lost its traditional fixed points? The following thematic areas will be omnipresent at the exhibition: the definition of the "dead" concepts of film and video art / the overlaps and intersections of the different disciplines / parody and caricature of the film genre by visual artists / the aestheticisation of film / the return of film directors to the possibility of individual expression while abandoning narrativity / animated film and its tradition from the point of view of film-makers and visual artists / animated film at the border with the live-action genre.

## **KAREL OTTO HRUBÝ**

Term: March–May 2023

House of Photography

Curators: Jana Vránová, Antonín Dufek, Lukáš Bártl, collaboration: Helena Musilová

**K. O. Hrubý (\* 1916, †1998) was an important figure in contemporary Czech photography, a teacher, a curator and reviewer of exhibitions, an author of literature on photography, and an organiser of lectures, workshops and exhibitions in the field of amateur photography. The concept of the exhibition is based on the main thematic areas and ideas of the photographic work of K. O. Hrubý. It focuses both on his beginnings, when he followed the traditions of Czech interwar avant-garde photography, and on the main stages of his photographic production, whose thematic scope was very broad.**

The exhibition will include live photography, portraits, landscapes, snapshots with motifs from everyday life, photographs of the city in its transformations, theatre photography and staged photography. The selection for the exhibition outlines the development and main stages of K. O. Hrubý in the context of period stylistic trends and also the current social situation.

The exhibition is a follow-up to the exhibition project of the Brno House of Arts. It is not an absolute repetition of that project but a selection adapted specifically for the GHMP exhibition space. It will be supplemented with works that were not exhibited in Brno. The graphic and architectural concept will be the work of Jan Šerých.

## **JAROSLAV BENEŠ**

Term: June–October 2023

House of Photography

Curator: Magdalena Juříková

Jaroslav Beneš (\* 1946) started as a theatre photographer in the Alfa theatre in Pilsen. Later, he became an archivist and photographer at the Prague Waterworks. He is a co-founder of several associations of photographers (Aktiv volné fotografie, 1989; Prague House of Photography, PHP, 1991; Český dřevák, 2000). He is best known for his long-term series of photographs of the Prague metro where the subject matter is mainly architectural details of the subway and the composition of light, its intersections and "animations" in empty space. He is also the author of series that deal with other architectural complexes, such as the Défense quarter in Paris, the industrial area in Katowice or the villa of the architect Otto Rothmayer. The exhibition is expected to include a selection of these series and will conclude with Beneš's most contemporary work, which, in a change from the large-scale cameras of the past, incorporates the use of digital technology. The exhibition is intended as a tribute to yet another of the founding figures of the PHP, in whose premises the GHMP is now housed, whom we are continuously presenting as part of a long-term concept at the House of Photography.

## **ISLANDS OF DREAMS**

Term: November 2023 – February 2024

House of Photography

Curator: Jitka Hlaváčková

Co-author of the concept: Marie Lukáčová

Exhibiting artists: Marie Lukáčová and Pauline Curnier Jardin

The exhibition will present spectacular and eye-catching works by internationally established artists operating in the field of the moving image. Using examples of the work of women artists dealing with various aspects of primarily female themes, it will address the issue of linking the moving image with the real environment in complex video-object installations. In spectacular video-projections with multiple accompanying installations, including objects, drawings and other art formats, the issues of crucial periods of a woman's life in the current era of digital networks, post-humanism and global ecological and social crises will be presented.

Both of the artists are among the few woman artists to take on the challenges of team video art production. They work with the medium of the moving image primarily in the form of video installations with monumental, often rather architectural parameters. In their often narrative-based works they deal with engaged motifs from the fields of gender, politics, mythology, but also science – for example, geology. They move across different time planes and locations and address questions about our uncertain future through specific narratives and poetics.

## **VÁCLAV POŽÁREK**

Term: April – November 2023

Troja Château

Curator: Magdalena Juříková

The Troja Château presents distinctive sculptors across the generations whose work is displayed in the gardens and some interiors throughout the season when the château is open. The starting point of this concept is the connection between the Baroque interior and exterior and contemporary artwork.

Václav Požárek (\* 1940) is an artist of Czech origin who has been working in Switzerland since the 1960s, where he is one of the most prominent personalities on the contemporary scene. He works in a variety of media, such as drawing, collage, photography and scenography; in his sculptural work he focuses on objects on the border of art and utilitarian objects from our real environment. At first glance, most of them seem to serve some hard-to-define function. He works with found materials, yet uses them with a certain neatness and elegance. His constructive methods have led him to a minimalist expression, which has been seen many times in previous exhibitions at Troja Château and has proved to be a fitting artistic contrast to the rich decoration of the chateau halls. The exhibition will



focus mainly on his objects, which will be complemented by several conceptual collages, drawings and manipulated photographs.

## **BIOTROJA**

Troja Château and its gardens

Term: all year round

Coordination and curatorial team: Pavlína Šulcová, Zuzana Pištěková, Helena Musilová and other internal and external collaborators

At the beginning of 2020, the idea of a long-term BIOTROJA project was conceived as a response to the environmental and climate situation in general. The concept refers to possible forms of interaction and convergence between art and the natural sciences against the background of climate change. The Troja Château, with its large garden and immediate surroundings of the banks of the Vltava River and the Botanical and Zoological Gardens, offers a good opportunity for local and international dialogue between experts, lay people, as well as the local community who are interested in visual arts, music, the natural sciences, the humanities and ecology.

Here, Prague City Gallery offers a new form of collaboration with the public and with various organisations and individuals as an example of proactive thinking about the environment, nature and climate, which have become key issues of today.

For several years now, the Château's orangery has also been home to an Eco-studio run by the GHMP Education Department, offering visitors to the gallery the opportunity to develop their creativity, to reflect creatively on the visual arts and to relax in a scenic part of Prague. The studio is intended for children, all types of schools, families, adults, seniors, visitors with specific needs, as well as other groups and individuals. In this seasonal creative space, educational programmes are implemented to convey and present the exhibitions and collections of the GHMP as well as Baroque art in the context of the history of the Château. Interdisciplinary overlaps are developed and programmes are implemented with a focus on the ecological and environmental context in relation to art.

By establishing, linking and developing the activities of the Eco-studio and the activities of the BIOTROJA project, we will comprehensively develop sustainability in the city, a conscious understanding of the surrounding environment, and relaxation in the city without the need to travel too far.

During 2023, several projects will take place: creative workshops, acoustic installations, community projects, screenings, open-air cinema, etc. The GHMP will also participate in all the events taking place in Troja, i.e. World Environment Day, Garden Weekend, Day for the Troja Basin, etc.

The GHMP will initiate a significant expansion of cooperation with all stakeholders in Troja, i.e., boroughs and other organisations (the Botanical Garden, Pražské vodovody a kanalizace (Prague Waterworks), etc.).

## **Bílek's Villa**

A new permanent exhibition, prepared by Martin Krummholz and Magdalena Juříková, has been in place in Bílek's Villa since 2022. In the attic space, smaller exhibition projects take place that develop particular themes associated with the work of František Bílek.

In addition to this new permanent exhibition, the *František Bílek and Otokar Březina* exhibition, curated by Hana Larvová and Pavel Myslín, will run until the end of 2023 and will be accompanied by a number of accompanying programmes and workshops. We are also preparing a small intervention in the permanent exhibition to take place in autumn 2023.

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### **Further information:**

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