

KAREL OTTO HRUBÝ RETROSPECTIVE

7 March – 21 May 2023

Prague City Gallery

House of Photography

Revoluční 5, Prague 1

Tue–Wed, Fri–Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Thu 10 am – 8 pm

Curators: Lukáš Bártl, Antonín Dufek, Jana Vránová

In the history of Czech photography of the second half of the twentieth century, there are few artists as influential and yet as little known as Karel Otto Hrubý (1916–1998). He was not only an outstanding artist but was also involved in the field of photography as a theoretician, critic, curator, organiser and, last but not least, as a teacher at the Secondary School of Arts and Crafts in Brno, the Jaroslav Kvapil People’s School of Art, and the Institute of Fine Art Photography. From all these positions, he influenced and cultivated the domestic photographic scene with great conviction, even though the period in which he worked was an extremely turbulent time in our history. Maintaining energy and creative freshness through the post-war years, the period of the most rigid Stalinism, the relaxed years of the sixties and during normalisation, undoubtedly required great inner strength and passion for the cause.

The legacy of Karel Otto Hrubý, an important Czech photographer, painter, teacher, critic, curator, lecturer and organiser, is connected not only with his extraordinary work, but also many other activities that influenced the perception and position of the medium of photography in the second half of the 20th century. This retrospective exhibition is a reminder of Hrubý's extensive lifetime of photographic work across a broad thematic spectrum, including a presentation of works and materials documenting his versatility.

Karel Otto Hrubý was born in Vienna, however, for most of his childhood and youth, his family lived in Znojmo, where he also graduated from the grammar school. During his subsequent studies of law in Brno, jazz music became his passion. After the end of World War II, he embarked on a career as a photojournalist. His photographs are linked to the time of their creation, reflecting the personal interests and themes that particularly appealed to

G PRESS RELEASE HMP

the artist, period ideological trends and the social situation of the era. The beginnings of his work are rooted in the Czechoslovak interwar avant-garde and the journalistic photography of the time, the tradition of which Hrubý continued. Already as a young man, he set out the subjects he would photograph throughout his life and he quickly built a reputation as a very versatile artist.

After February 1948, when Czechoslovak art had to submit to political orders, Karel Otto Hrubý became one of the representatives of socialist realism. His works, however, were far above the below-average production of most of his colleagues at the time, and their content can often be perceived ambivalently. Hrubý's pictures of the factory floor, foundries, quarries and fields are of unprecedented quality and are almost a kind of sacralisation of human labour.

Karel Otto Hrubý was particularly close to one of the distinctive artistic currents of the post-war decades, turning to the poetics of everyday life. In this spirit, he created a number of photographs, which he then often used in pictorial publications. He himself published several of them, and in the 1950s and 1960s, he was to a large extent a prominent author of picture books about Moravian Wallachia, the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, and especially Brno. The best of them was published in 1964. Its pictorial part was created together with Vilém Reichmann and Miloš Budík; the texts were written by Ludvík Kundera and Jan Skácel.

Karel Otto Hrubý's favourite subject was the landscape; he also documented the folklore and traditions of the rural environment, and photography was a kind of diary of his life. In this respect, he was particularly fond of South Moravia and Slovakia. Above all, he went repeatedly to Liptov, often with his students. Hrubý's need to capture landscapes damaged by humans, devastated and uninhabitable, probably stemmed from his love of nature. His images are exceptional and have a powerful appeal.

In the first half of the sixties, he had already begun to devote himself to staged photography and is thus one of its pioneers. He again involved his students, but also even his family, in his stagings. Many of his students developed this photographic genre and established one of the trends in photography in Czechoslovakia around 1970. Hrubý's collages contextually follow on from the staged pictures. He devoted the last period of his life to painting images in a poetic, naïve style.



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, focusing its exhibition activities mainly on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Bílek's Villa, the Troja Chateau and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

G PRESS RELEASE HMP

Karel Otto Hrubý also left a significant mark as a teacher. For more than two decades, he worked at the photography department of the College of Applied Arts in Brno (later ŠUŘ, SUPŠ), and it was on his initiative that the School of Fine Art Photography was founded (later the Institute of Fine Art Photography, whose tradition is continued by today's Institute of Creative Photography at the Silesian University).

The exhibition is divided into several thematic units: Beginnings, A New Future, Folklore and Tradition, Everyday Life, Landscape, Staged Reality. It consists of photographs from public and private collections and archives, including reproductions of negatives from Karel Otto Hrubý's personal archive, which help provide the full picture of his work. The artist's significance in the context of Czech photography was comprehensively addressed for the first time in the monograph that was published to mark the centenary of his birth and his exhibition at the Brno House of Arts.

Lukáš Bártl, Jana Vránová

Carators: Lukáš Bártl, Antonín Dufek, Jana Vránová

Cooperation: Jitka Hlaváčková, Helena Musilová

Graphic design: Jan Šerých

Architecture: Tomáš Moravec

Media partners: Art&Antiques, ArtMap, Artalk, Flash Art, A2, Artiki, Revolver Revue, Artyčok.tv, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, Český rozhlas Radio Wave, Fotograf

Entrance fee: CZK 150 full (adults) / CZK 60 discounted (students) / CZK 20 seniors

Contact for Journalists:

Michaela Vrchotová

+420 725 818 721

vrchotova@ghmp.cz



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, focusing its exhibition activities mainly on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Bílek's Villa, the Troja Chateau and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

G PRESS RELEASE HMP

More information: www.ghmp.cz

www.facebook.com/ghmp.cz

www.instagram.com/ghmp.cz



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, focusing its exhibition activities mainly on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Bílek's Villa, the Troja Chateau and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

G PRESS RELEASE HMP

ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

Guided tours with curators and students of K. O. Hrubý

Thu, 23 March 2023, 6 pm, with curator Lukáš Bártl

Thu, 20 April 2023, 6 pm, with photographers, K. O. Hrubý's students: Irena Armutidisová, Miroslav Myška, Miroslav Sychra

Thu, 18 May 2023, 6 pm, with curator Jana Vránová

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

Saturday Art Workshops

Educational Activities

Saturday Art Workshops

Sat 25 March 2023, 1–6 p.m.

Everyday Collages

Education Centre

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sat 29 Apr 2023, 1–6 p.m.

Photograms and Photographic Blow-ups

Education Centre

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Art workshops for adults and seniors / integration and intergenerational programmes

Sun 23 Apr 2023, 1–4 p.m.

Camera Obscura I

Education Centre

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 14 May 2023, 1–4 p.m.

Camera Obscura II

Education Centre

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, focusing its exhibition activities mainly on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Bílek's Villa, the Troja Chateau and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

G PRESS RELEASE HMP

Thu 18 May 2023, 3–6 p.m.

The Black-and-White Positive and its Negative I

Education Centre

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Thu 25 May 2023, 3–6 p.m.

The Black-and-White Positive and its Negative II Education Centre

Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Reservation required: eva.pejchalova@ghmp.cz

Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups, with the possibility of a follow-up artistic response in the form of your own artistic creation. We adapt the events in terms of time, theme and level of difficulty to the specific requirements of each school.

Reservation required: edukace@ghmp.cz



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, focusing its exhibition activities mainly on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Bílek's Villa, the Troja Chateau and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.