

A Quarter of a Century: The Institute of Creative Photography, at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Silesian University in Opava, 1990–2015

Prague City Gallery

House of Photography, Revoluční 1006/5, Praha 1

31 May – 18 September 2016

Tues–Sun., 10 am to 6 pm; Thurs., 10 am to 8 pm

Curators of the exhibition: Vladimír Birgus and Josef Moucha

Until teaching began at the Institute of Creative Photography, Opava, in the autumn of 1990, it had been possible anywhere in the former Soviet bloc to take a separate course in photography except at the Film and Television School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU), Prague, and the Academy of Fine Arts, Leipzig. Today, eight universities in the Czech Republic alone offer such programmes. The second oldest of them, in Opava, is by far the largest in number of students and teachers.

The current exhibition of the Institute of Creative Photography at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Silesian University in Opava, which is being held in the House of Photography of the Prague City Gallery, presents the best end-of-year and final-year projects handed in during the first twenty-five years of its existence. The installation, on both floors of the House of Photography, includes not only works by current students and recent graduates, but also by earlier alumni of the Institute who have already made their mark internationally, including Dita Pepe, Rafał Milach, Bára Prášilová, Andrej Balco, Roman Vondrouš, Pavel M. Smejkal, Tereza Vlčková, Mariusz Forecki, and Tomáš Pospěch. In addition to photographs, the exhibition includes book dummies of photographic publications and BA, MA, and PhD dissertations. The exhibition is accompanied by audio-visual projections and a large catalogue. The exhibited photographs, covering a wide range of styles, motives, and themes, reveal how the differences between digital and analogue photography, between so-called high and low art, and between documentary and staged photography are today being wiped away, and how profoundly personal testimonies and subjective views of the photographers are now coming to the fore.

The Institute gradually received accreditation to offer a master's and then a doctoral programme. It built up a professional studio, darkrooms, an IT centre, a specialized library, and a large archive. Interest in attending the Institute has grown continuously, not only among Czechs and Slovaks but also among students from neighbouring Poland and to a lesser extent, for example, from Germany, Italy, France, the United States, Luxembourg, Japan, Russia, and Croatia. Today, the Institute is truly an international school, **Prague City Gallery** is one of the most significant galleries in the Czech Republic. Its exhibition activities mainly focus on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally elaborates art collections of the City of Prague. It presently exhibits in eight buildings: The Stone Bell House, The Golden Ring House, Municipal Library of Prague – 2nd floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, House of Photography, Villa Bílek, Troja Château and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

where more than a third of the students come from abroad. Though several other Czech institutions of higher education offer photography programmes, the number of applicants to the Institute of Creative Photography has continuously far exceeded the number of those accepted. Even though art photography forms the core of the programme, the students are also taught how to master a number of areas of commercial work, to think critically about photography, to express themselves in writing and speaking in the broader context, and to be well oriented in the history of photography from the beginning of the medium right up to the present day. All the students' theory-related works are published by the University Library in Opava and are on the Institute website (www.itf.cz), and thus accessible to the general public. Some of these works have also been published as books.

Instruction at the Institute of Creative Photography does not use the studio system, where a student goes through the whole programme with only one teacher. Every student at the Institute comes into contact with the whole range of creative opinions that are held by its nine full-time and eight part-time teachers and also by a number of other photographers who run workshops or come as guests to lecture or lead seminars. No particular kind of art photography is given preference at the Institute; quality and originality are what's important.

During the quarter of a century of its existence, the Institute has had many graduates who have found fulfilling employment both in art and in commercial photography and also as teachers at art schools, as curators, employees of museums and galleries, photojournalists, journalists, and employees of auction houses. Some of the students have received important international prizes, including the Leica Oskar Barnack Award, the European Central Bank Photography Award, the Grand Prix of the New York Photo Festival, the Grand Prix BMW of the Lyon Septembre de la photographie Festival, the Grand Prix of the Photo Festival Łódź, and First Prizes in the World Press Photo competition, as well as countless awards in Czech, Slovak, and Polish photojournalism competitions, including, several times, Photograph of the Year. Seven students of the Institute of Creative Photography were chosen by the Musée de l'Élysée, Lausanne, for the previous two years of the travelling exhibition of works by young photographers from around the world, 'reGeneration – Tomorrow's Photographers Today'.

The current exhibition is being held as part of the celebrations to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of Silesian University in Opava. It is accompanied by a 384-page catalogue in Czech and English, which recapitulates the history and development of the Institute of Creative Photography, and includes an overview of exhibitions and publications as well as lists of all the dissertations, which are essential for further research.

Vladimír Birgus and Josef Moucha

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The exhibition is held by Prague City Gallery in cooperation with Silesian University in Opava.

Exhibition curators: Vladimír Birgus and Josef Moucha

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Full-time staff of the Institute of Creative Photography, at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Silesian University in Opava: Vladimír Birgus (head), Pavel Mára, Josef Moucha, Dita Pepe, Václav Podestát, Karel Poneš, Tomáš Pospěch, Jiří Siostrzonek (deputy head), and Jindřich Štreit

Regular external teaching staff of the Institute of Creative Photography, at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Silesian University in Opava: Otakar Karlas, Jan Mahr, Marek Malůšek, Rafał Milach, Miroslav Myška, Štěpánka Stein, Petr Vilgus, and Miroslav Zeman

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Media partners: A2, Art&Antiques, ArtMap, Český rozhlas Vltava, FOTO, Radio 1

Admission: 120 Kč full (adults) / 60 Kč reduced (students) / 30 Kč (seniors)

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For more information, please visit: www.ghmp.cz

Photographs released for the mass media may be used in connection with A Quarter of a Century: The Institute of Creative Photography, at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Silesian University in Opava, 1990–2015

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ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

Guided tour led by the curators

Thurs. 16 June, 6 pm

Thurs. 8 September, 6 pm

Weekend creative workshops

Sun., 2 July 2016, 1 pm–6 pm: The Layering of a Photograph as a Record of Thought, House of Photography

Sat., 10 Sept. 2016, 1 pm–6 pm: The Positive and the Negative, at the Education Centre, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

To understand better the varied and distinctive approaches that the students and graduates of the Institute of Creative Photography take towards their medium in artistic reactions participants in the workshop will reflect on the wide range of the works shown at the exhibition. Using visual and verbal analysis we will seek to decode not only the messages in the content and intellectual conceptions, but also their technical execution. We will focus on the effects of composition, format, and colour. We will thus develop a perceptual sensitivity and an ability to think about the photographs. We will outline for ourselves the variability of the topics and the possibilities and areas of overlap in the creative photography of the last twenty-five years in context. To understand layering and other postproduction approaches to the photographic image, we will work with collages of photographs.

Art studios for adults and seniors

Sun., 11 Sept. 2016, 3 pm to 6 pm: Photogram I, at the Educational Centre, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun., 18 Sept 2016, 3 pm to 6 pm: Photogram II, at the Educational Centre, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

This workshop focuses on experimentation with the photographic technique known as the photogram. The participants will work in the darkroom and will become acquainted with the basics of the technique of making a photographic image by exposing photographic paper without a camera.

The weekend programmes are intended for children, families with children, and other interested people of all ages, including seniors, and also disadvantaged people. Participants can come and go as they please at anytime within opening hours. Please make a reservation by 4 pm of the day before you wish to attend (this is not a condition of participation).

Interactive tours of the exhibition for schools of all kinds and also other age and interest groups, with an opportunity to respond to the tour by making works of one's own. Depending on the time, theme, and level of difficulty, the event will be adapted to the specific requirements of each school.

Reservations required!

Admission: children to the age of 10, students of art schools, teachers: 5 Kč; children over 10 years of age: 20 Kč

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