

GISÈLE FREUND and TIMM RAUTERT

HAVEL, KUNDERA, SUDEK THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' EYES IN 1967

6 November 2018 – 3 February 2019

Prague City Gallery

House of Photography

Revoluční 5, Prague 1

Open daily except for Monday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.; Thursday: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Exhibition Curator: Noemi Smolik

In 1967, the German-born French photographer Gisèle Freund visited Prague during the legendary Fourth Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers, held between 27 and 29 June. At this congress, Václav Havel, Milan Kundera, Pavel Kohout and the film director Miloš Forman stood up in the defense of Věra Chytilová's film *Daisies*, giving speeches that are considered to be the initial impulse of the "Prague Spring". Gisèle Freund met with the writers and photographed them, creating many portraits of Václav Havel and Milan Kundera, the philosopher Karel Kosík and also the translators Jan Vladislav and Adolf Kroupa. She also visited the photographer Josef Sudek, whom she portrayed as well. Her free-form series of 51 portraits has never been exhibited or published before, so the viewers in Prague can see it for the first time. The German photographer Timm Rautert visited Prague in 1967 at almost the same time as Gisèle Freund, compelled by his fascination with Josef Sudek's work. Rautert began photographing Sudek in his studio at Prague's Úvoz, taking more than 40 photographs including several views of Prague. Although this photographic series has already been exhibited in two major foreign institutions and published in a monograph in Germany, in Prague it will have its premiere.

Gisèle Freund (1908–2000)

The portraits taken by Gisèle Freund are world-famous. She photographed André Breton, Paul Eluard, Colette and Romaine Rolland already before the Second World War. Her color portraits of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin in contemplation, or a seated James Joyce leaning over a book with a magnifying glass, became iconic – as did her portraits of Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Samuel Beckett taken during the 1950s. Freund, a German-born French photographer and photojournalist, is one of the most prominent figures in the history of photography and in the theory of photography. Her thesis *La Photographie en France au dix-neuvième siècle (Photography in France in the 19th Century)*, published in 1936, is a milestone in the development of a materialistic view of a photographic portrait. Her portraits began appearing in prominent French and American magazines such as *Life* and *Time* in New York, *The Times* in London and *Paris-Match* in Paris.

The fact that Freund was in Prague in 1967 where (just like in Paris in 1935 at the First International Congress in Defense of Culture) she photographed the Fourth Congress of the Union Czechoslovak Writers, has not yet been known to the global public. During this congress, the writers Václav Havel, Milan Kundera and Pavel Kohout as well as film directors headed by Miloš Forman took part in the defense of Věra Chytilová's film *Daisies* with speeches that are considered to be the initial impulse of the "Prague Spring". It is not known exactly how much time Freund spent there, but her presence in Prague in 1967 was also



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confirmed by the writer Milan Kundera. Freund shot his picture in the streets of a gray Prague (as it was at that time) standing before a wall graffitied with a Hussite chalice drawn in chalk and the inscription "The Truth Prevails"; she also photographed him in front of the House of Czechoslovak Writers together with the literary theorist and Marxist philosopher Karel Kosík. Several of her portraits feature a young Václav Havel wearing a necklace and looking like a rock musician. The series closes with portraits of the legendary Czech photographer Josef Sudek. The discovery of this series is a small sensation and it is high time to show these photographs to the public so they can join the ranks of her other internationally acclaimed portraits.

Gisèle Freund was born in Berlin in 1908. In her youth she studied sociology in Freiburg and then at the legendary Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main under Theodor W. Adorno, among others. In 1933, she fled to Paris, where she befriended the German philosopher Walter Benjamin. After the German occupation of Paris she managed to emigrate to Buenos Aires. In 1950 she made a photo story about Eva Peron, the wife of the Argentine President, showing her not as a socially engaged politician, but a luxury diva. The Argentine public was furious and Freund had to escape from Buenos Aires. Then she lived in Mexico, where she associated with the painters Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, returning to Paris as late as 1952. At that time she shot her world-famous portraits of Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Samuel Beckett. Freund became one of the first women to have a career in the photographic medium. In 1977, her photographs were exhibited at the *documenta 6* in Kassel. In 1991, a large retrospective was devoted to her by the Georges Pompidou Centre. Prior to that, in 1981, the newly elected French President François Mitterrand chose Freund to take his official portrait. Gisèle Freund died in 2000 at the age of 91 in Paris.

Timm Rautert (*1941)

Timm Rautert became known during his studies at the Folkwang School of Design in Essen with his series *Bildanalytische Photographie (Visual Analysis through Photography)*, which came into being between 1968 and 1974 and deals with the basics of photography. However, his main photographic interest has been the social issues. In 1974 he created the series *Menschen in Uniform (Men in Uniform)* exploring the social significance of professional attire. In 1975, it was followed by a series shot in asylum centers for the homeless entitled *Unterwegs in deutschen Obdachlosenasylen (Homeless Shelters)*. In the 1980s, Rautert devoted himself to the social transformation of institutions, for example, in the series *Neue Universität (New University)* from 1983 and 1984. His most important work includes *Gehäuse des Unsichtbaren. Bilder von der dritten industriellen Revolution (Housing of the Invisible. Pictures of the Third Industrial Revolution)*, 1986, documenting the change in working conditions caused by the implementation of electronics.

Rautert has been noted for his portraits of artists, including Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Blinky Palermo, James Tyrell, Robert Ryman, Gerhard Richter and Neo Rauch. Timm Rautert visited Prague in 1967 at almost the same time as Gisèle Freund, compelled by his fascination with Josef Sudek's work. Rautert portrayed Sudek in his small, overcrowded studio at Úvoz, where Sudek lived and worked from 1959 until his death in 1976. In the portrait, Sudek can be seen sitting at a table that is collapsing under the weight of his books and papers. Rautert also captured the lyrical corners of Sudek's studio, such as shelves crowded with bottles and phials, or an unmade bed with pillows piled on a chair beside it. Baroque statues of saints and crucifixes are interspersed with all these things. Rautert also photographed Sudek strolling through Petřín Park with a huge camera and tripod on his back. Although Sudek always wished that these photographs were shown in Prague, so far they have been exhibited in prominent foreign institutions only; in Germany,



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they were published in a monograph. This series of photographs will have its premiere in the Czech Republic.

Timm Rautert was born in 1941 in Tuchola, West Prussia (today part of Poland). From 1966 to 1971 he studied photography at the *Folkwangschule für Gestaltung* (Folkwang School of Design) in Essen under Otto Steinert. In 1970 he started to work as a photojournalist and documentary photographer. From 1993 to 2007 he was a professor of photography at the *Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst* (Academy of Visual Arts) in Leipzig. In 2006 and 2008 his retrospective exhibitions took place in the *Museum für bildende Künste* in Leipzig and in the *Sprengel Museum* in Hanover, respectively. In 2008, he was awarded the Lovis Corinth Prize for his achievements in photography.

In 2016, the *Staatliche Kunstsammlung* in Dresden exhibited his series *Bildanalytische Photographie (Visual Analysis through Photography)* and purchased it for its collection. Rautert's series *Deutsche in Uniform (Germans in Uniform)* forms part of the collection of contemporary art of the German Federal Republic. Timm Rautert lives and works in Essen.

Noemi Smolik

Exhibition Curator: Noemi Smolik

Architect: Ondřej Čech

Graphic Design: Tomáš Trnobranský

Media Partners: Art&Antiques, Art for Good, Artikl, ArtMap, A2, Český rozhlas, Literární noviny, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, XANTYPA

Entrance Fee: CZK 120 full (adults) / CZK 60 reduced (students) / CZK 30 (senior citizens)

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ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM

Guided tours with the exhibition curator Noemi Smolik:

Thursday, 22 November 2018, 6 p.m.

Thursday, 24 January 2019, 6 p.m.

Saturday Art Workshops:

Saturday, 10 November 2018, 1 – 6 p.m., Portraits of Famous People, House of Photography

Saturday, 26 January 2019, 1 – 6 p.m., Meeting Places, House of Photography

Within the framework of educational activities we will focus on two topics: the portrait and environment. We will complement and reinterpret selected portraits of famous people using various techniques and procedures (such as drawing, collage, retouching, mixed media, spatial art, etc.) and interconnect them with texts. We will cover the portrayed faces with ideas, quotes, fragments of texts and the key words, voiced by these people. The resulting artifact will be partly inspired by visual poetry and Lettrism, which also appeared in art in the 1960s. The second topic will be the environment and context. Using the form of photomontage, we will try to place the presented people in interesting and stimulating places, premises, and interiors and exteriors of Prague (cafés, studios, libraries, streets, etc.), capturing the culturally stimulating atmosphere of 1967.

Saturday workshops are intended for children, families with children and other interested parties of all ages, including the elderly and disadvantaged. The arrival and departure is optional – i.e., whenever within the scheduled time.

Art Workshop for Adults and Senior Citizens:

Friday, 16 November 2018, 3 – 6 p.m., Photogram I, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sunday, 18 November 2018, 3 – 6 p.m., Photogram II, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Thursday, 17 January 2019, 3 – 6 p.m., Photogram III, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Friday, 18 January 2019, 3 – 6 p.m., Photogram IV, Education Center, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Visual reflections on the photographic series will focus on experimenting with the photographic technique of photogram. The participants in the art workshop will work in a darkroom and will get acquainted with the basics of creating a photographic image – made by placing objects onto the surface of a light-sensitive material and then exposing it to light. By so doing, we will follow from the principles of classical photography. The participants will conceive their work as art with creative aspects or purely as an informative record of the character of the objects.

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

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

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