



Karel Kuklík / A Photographic Dialogue with the Landscape

Prague City Gallery

House of Photography, Revoluční 5, Praha 1

7. 2. 2017 – 14. 5. 2017

Tue–Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Thu 10 a.m. – 8 p.m

Curator, exhibition concept: Pavlína Vogelová

Karel Kuklík (*7 March 1937, Prague) projects into his photographic oeuvre his personal relationship with the landscape, art, and life, a relationship transformed into a metaphysical parable of a fantastic association deserving respect, concentration and time. The sections of the landscape captured by Kuklík's photographs and large-format contact prints radiate a field of force charged with energy, as well as the awareness of a permanent oscillation of matter taking place outside any human efforts. The images accentuating an eternally restless landscape in its natural state, purity and interiority count among important milestones of Czech photography.

The exhibition focuses on Karel Kuklík's photographs influenced by a close connection with the Czech art milieu of the 1960s. It evokes a period packed with stimuli when Kuklík sought and eventually found his place in the world of photography. He moved among a circle of art historians and theorists František Šmejkal (1937–1988), Jiří Padrta (1929–1978) and Miroslav Lamač (1928–1992), as well as among artists such as Jan Koblasa (*1932), Jiří Valenta (1936–1991), Aleš Veselý (1935–2015), Čestmír Kafka (1922–1988), Jiří John (1923–1972), Antonín Tomalík (1939–1968), Zbyněk Sekal (1923–1998), Eva Kmentová (1928–1980), František Hudeček (1909–1990), Emila Medková (1928–1985), Mikuláš Medek (1926–1974), Dagmar Hochová (1926–2012) and others. He photographed works of art, portraits of painters and their studio environments for both artists and the art journals *Výtvarná práce* and *Výtvarné umění*. In addition, Kuklík devoted himself to the photographic documentation of events unfolding on the art scene at the time. For Karel Kuklík, this period spelt a time of heavy concentration and consistent work, an absolute immersion in photography.

Karel Kuklík's journey to photography was far from straightforward. He was apprenticed as a car mechanic, and in 1959 joined the ČKD Stalingrad club of amateur photographers the roots of which went back to the legendary Nekázanka Czech Club of Amateur Photographers, the first club of its kind in the Czech lands established on 19 August 1889 and headed by Jindřich Eckert (1833–1905) and Jakub Husník (1837–1916). In the 1950s it changed its name to the Photoclub of the ČKD Stalingrad Prague Revolutionary Trade Union Movement. Its members included Jan Lukas, Miroslav Jodas, Dušan Šimánek and Ivo Gil. In 1960–1964 Karel Kuklík got an opportunity to work in the photographic laboratory of the State Institute of Heritage Care in Prague where, among others things, he copied negatives created by Karel Plicka (1894–1987) and other renowned photographers. In 1964 Kuklík officially acquired his photographic education: he was

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apprenticed with the *Fotografia* cooperative and subsequently embarked on the career of a freelance photographer. Throughout Karel Kuklík's life, the focal point of his interest has been the landscape of Šumava and the Třeboňsko region, followed by cityscapes, cemeteries, yards and things of transcendental nature. However, his freelance occupation also meant that his work involved commissions of a documentary and commercial character.

Kuklík's dialogue with the landscape can be described as a deliberate, lifelong concept of a photographic approach. Revising his own thinking, the artist modifies elements of understanding in the internal relations of being. He cloaks his photographic landscapes in mystery, and gradually, through hints, reveals and presents to the observant viewer their meanings hidden below the surface. The artist pursues a dialogue between a photographic vision and a view into spatial and mental landscapes.

For Karel Kuklík, the landscape represents a conceptual spiral in an approach to photographic cycles that he has developed for all his life. He sees these cycles as an open space of the principle of being, the time of the world, truth and beauty as such. His photographs illustrate a quest for an inner balance in fervent and vain hopes in observing from a close distance; see, for example, the cycles *Polluted Landscape* (1959–1964), *The Landscape of Hope* (1963–1964), *The Landscape of Knowledge* (1964), and *Shipwreck* (1964). Kuklík's photographic imagination of the landscape is provided in these series with a philosophical dimension. Minimal action, impressions and the seen reality are often depicted down to the tiniest detail where every shape and scene have a specific meaning. The motifs of forests, grass and fields capture the intimacy of the landscape in changing atmospheric conditions. They resonate with the psychologization of the given time and space. Karel Kuklík later took similar excursions to the landscape with his friends from the *Český dřevák* group established in 2000 by Karel Kuklík, Jaroslav Beneš, Bohumír Prokůpek and Jan Reich. Tomáš Rasl joined the group in 2002 and Petr Helbich in 2003.

In parallel with natural subjects, Kuklík's camera sought cityscapes and faith-based themes expressed in cemeteries, tombstones and derelict, damaged sculptures. With a few exceptions (for example, the *Na Františku* photo from 1955), Kuklík has completely eliminated people from his photographs. He points his camera at the scenes of the city magic of shabbiness and decay, at states inside the imaginary time of the city, yards and ordinary things. The complete absence of story-telling, stories one can think into the photos, discloses new, profound relations between the senses and the imagination.

The landscape of Art constitutes an important protection against spiritual and moral decay. The intertwining of art trends and photography that had been prominent since the 1920s avant-garde was modified by the post-war time and space to structural and expressive photographs. A common denominator for the young post-war generation of the 1950s and 1960s was existentialist anxiety and an apparent inclination to spirituality, a quest for an individual expression and overlaps of one's personality. For Kuklík, imagination in the mode of natural lyricism became the key subject. In the parallels of his photographic maturing and perception of the blending of photography and art in the 1960s, the artist did not conceal his admiration for, creative resonance with and inspiration by Jan Zrzavý, Robert Piesen and Jiří John: for example, like Jiří John he explored the subject of the states of the soul. Kuklík was fascinated by the matter of nature, by the photogenic character of the nuances of shapes, lights and shadows of the landscape in the natural sequence of the harmony of reason – craft – emotion and imagination, as well as patience and thoroughness.

The Prague art scene of the 1960s was steeped in surrealism, abstraction and metamorphoses of matter. In contrast, Karel Kuklík subscribed to structural non-figuration, the informel and imaginative art. Informed by both surrealism and post-surrealist approaches, for example, those of František Muzika (1900–1974) and

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Zdeněk Sklenář (1910–1986), he arrived at a personal repertoire of visual communication. He centred on natural symbolism enabling an escape into a fascinating inner freedom, the artist's own imaginary landscapes. Nonetheless, Kuklík transcribed these into his own transcendental mode when accentuating the image of nature bearing the signs, symbols and traces of the sacred. He imprints into his photographs the innermost images of reality such as the detail of the folding of a rock, blades of grass, reflections on a water surface or mysterious structures of city walls, nooks and crannies: all of them are marks of the concrete, i.e. marks of transcendence, as well as evidence of a lived reality through which time flows on both a material and spiritual level in its concrete form, photographic faithfulness and the depth of communication objectivity.

The exhibition pays tribute to Karel Kuklík on the occasion of his 80th birthday. It celebrates life, the present, humanity and harmony with the laws of nature. It testifies to a valid view of the world, of the environment and time in which we live, and of the need for muses around us. It bears witness of the light and darkness of man in a counterpoint to the civilization of new and other landscapes.

Pavλίna Vogelová

Biography of Karel Kuklík (*7. 3. 1937, Prague)

1954 apprenticed as a car mechanic

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- 1954–1959 car mechanic / Transport and Communications Office
- 1959 member of the ČKD Stalingrad photographic club
- 1960–1964 specialist laboratory worker / State Institute of Heritage Care and Conservation, Prague
- 1960–1969 collaboration with the journals *Výtvarné umění*, *Výtvarná práce*, *Literární noviny* and others; photographs sculptures, paintings, exhibitions and art studios, and portraits of artists
- 1962 final exams at an evening secondary school
- 1964 apprenticed as a photographer in the *Fotografia* cooperative
- since 1964 freelance photographer
- 1967 member of the Union of Czechoslovak Visual Artists
- 1970s collaboration with the *Odeon*, *Panorama*, *Pressfoto* and *Obchodní tiskárny Kolín* publishers
- 1985 award of the *Panorama* publishers, honorary mention of the Ministry of Culture
- 1986 member of the Union of Czech Visual Artists
- 1989 member of the Association of Free Photography (PHP)
- 1990 member of the Photographers' Association, in 1991–1998 vice-chairman of the executive board
- 1990s centres on photographs of architecture and landscape: Šumava, Český kras, Třeboňsko region, Slavkovský les forest and others
- 2000 founder member of the *Český dřevák* group of photographers (2000–2008), with Jan Reich, Jaroslav Beneš and Bohumír Prokůpek; the group was later joined by Tomáš Rasl and Petr Helbich

Representation in collections

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Museum of Modern Art, New York

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Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

Galerie hlavního města Prahy

Národní galerie v Praze

Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze

Moravská galerie v Brně

Národní muzeum fotografie, Jindřichův Hradec

Muzeum Šumavy, Kašperské Hory

Selected solo exhibitions

1959 Karel Kuklík – Oldřich Tocauer, Prague, Klub fotoamatérů ČKD Stalingrad

1963 Karel Kuklík's Photographs, Mladá Boleslav, Výstavní síň na Karmeli

1966 Karel Kuklík's Photographs from 1958–1965, Prague, Československý spisovatel

1967 Karel Kuklík Brno, Kabinet fotografie Jaromíra Funkeho

1968 Karel Kuklík, Prague, Mánes - Galerie mladých

1979 Karel Kuklík, Prague, Galerie hlavního města Prahy

1980 Karel Kuklík – Photographs, Roudnice nad Labem, Oblastní galerie výtvarných umění

1981 Šumava, Kašperské Hory, Muzeum Šumavy

1984 Šumava, Prague, Foma

1987 Karel Kuklík – Photographs, Brno, Dům pánů z Kunštátu

1991 Landscape, Prague, Foma

1992 Šumava Landscape, Germany, Freyung, Galerie Wolfstein

1996 Šumava, Germany, Esslingen am Neckar

1996 Portraits and Studios from the 1960s, Prague, Galerie Atrium, Žižkov

1997 Landscape According to Kuklík, Prague, Pražský dům fotografie

1997 Photographs from 1959–1996, Prague, České muzeum výtvarných umění

1997 Karel Kuklík – Prague Grant 1997, Prague, Komorní galerie Domu fotografie J. Sudka

1997 Karel Kuklík – Bohumír Prokůpek. Landscape as a Space of Intimacy, Prague, Pražský dům fotografie

1997 Karel Kuklík's Photographs from 1959–1996, Cheb, G4

2004 Karel Kuklík. The Landscape of Return, České Budějovice, Alšova jihočeská galerie

2007 Karel Kuklík. Memories of the USSR, Kladno, Malá galerie České spořitelny

2008 Karel Kuklík, Prague, Klub Koníček Ivana Havla, Lucerna restaurant

2009 Karel Kuklík and Richard Homola, Prague – The City of Return, Cheb, G4

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- 2011 Karel Kuklík, The Yard I and II, Kladno, Malá galerie České spořitelny
2012 Karel Kuklík, The Landscape of Return, Kladno, Malá galerie České spořitelny

Selected group exhibitions

- 1960 Confrontation II, Prague, Ateliér Aleše Veselého
1964 Exhibition of Czechoslovak Applied Art, Finland
1965 Confrontation III, Prague, Alšova síň
1966 Current Trends in Czech Art, Prague, Obecní dům
Surrealism and Photography, Brno, Dům pánů z Kunštátu
Surrealism and Photography, Germany, Essen, Museum Folkwang
1968 Three Czechoslovak Photographers (Emila Medková, Čestmír Krátký, Karel Kuklík), Poland, Krakow, Nová Huť
1982 Current Photographs, Brno, Moravská galerie v Brně
1988 The City, Brno, Dům umění města Brna
1989 Visual Artists in Photography (1848–1989), Prague, Národní galerie
1989 Czechoslovak Photography 1945–1989, Prague, Valdštejnská jízdárna
1991 The Czech Informel, Prague, Galerie Václava Špály
1996 Surrealist Incidences, Prague, Pražský dům fotografie
1997 Detail, Prague, Národní technické muzeum
2000 Metamorphoses of Prague, Prague, Staroměstská radnice
2001 The Face of Our Country, Prague, Pražský hrad
2001 Český dřevák, Cheb, G4
2001 Photography as Art in Czechoslovakia, Brno, Moravská galerie v Brně
2002 Familiar Faces, Prague, Staroměstská radnice
2003 The Art of Abstraction – Czech Visual Culture of the 1960s, Prague, Jízdárna Pražského hradu; Brno, Moravská galerie v Brně; Olomouc, Muzeum umění
2003 Golden Collection 2003, Jindřichův Hradec, Národní muzeum fotografie
2004 Český dřevák, Kladno, Malá galerie České spořitelny
2005 Czech Photography of the 20th Century. Prague, Městská knihovna
2006 Český dřevák, Cheb, Galerie 4
Czech Art of the 20th Century, Hluboká nad Vltavou, Alšova jihočeská galerie
2007 Český dřevák, Austria, Vienna, Galerie auf der Pawlatsche

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- 2008 Český dřevák, Hradec Králové, Foma Bohemia
Unregulated. Primeval Forest in Photography, Brno, Moravská galerie v Brně
The Third Side of the Wall, Brno, Moravská galerie v Brně
- 2009 Český dřevák, Mělník, Regionální muzeum
- 2010 Český dřevák and Guest, Poland, Katowice, Galerie Pusta
New Acquisitions in Alšova jihočeská galerie 2000–2010, Hluboká nad Vltavou, Alšova jihočeská galerie
- 2011 Rothmayerka: Karel Kuklík, Jaroslav Beneš, Richard Homola, Tomáš Rasl, Tomáš Balej, Kladno, Malá galerie České spořitelny
- 2014 W Ogrodze Rothmayera: Karel Kuklík, Jaroslav Beneš, Tomáš Rasl, Tomáš Balej, Wojciech Zawadzki, Poland, Jelenia Góra, Galeria Korytarz

Photographic portfolios

The Yard 1976–1978, 1979

The Landscape of Return II 1973–1980, 1981

Grébovka 1974, 1993

Šumava – Variations on the Theme, 1995

Publications

Karel Kuklík: *Šumava*. Praha, Panorama, 1984

Karel Kuklík: *České a moravské rybníky*. Praha, Pressfoto, 1988

Karel Kuklík: *Český Krumlov*. Praha, Pressfoto, 1992

Karel Kuklík: *Šumava*. Praha, Kuklik publishers, 1996

Jan Kříž: *Karel Kuklík*. Praha, České muzeum výtvarných umění, 1997

Karel Kuklík: *Praha 1997–1998*. Catalogue of the Prague Grant, 1998

Karel Kuklík: *Krajiny návratů*. Praha, Kuklik publishers, 2004

Karel Kuklík / A Photographic Dialogue with the Landscape

Exhibition curator, concept: Pavlína Vogelová

Coordinator: Olga Malá

Graphic and exhibition design: Filip Skalák

English translation: Irma Charvátová

Language consultant: Kateřina Tlachová

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Installation and production executive: Diana Brabcová
PR and marketing executive: Michaela Vrchotová
Educational programmes executive: Lucie Haškovcová
Framing and mounting: Věra Parkánová, Blanka Škodová

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Opening hours: Tue–Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Thu 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Admission fee: 120 Kč full price (adults) / 60 Kč reduced (students) / 30 Kč (senior citizens)

Media contact: Michaela Vrchotová, +420 725 818 721, vrchotova@ghmp.cz

Further information: www.ghmp.cz

Accompanying programme:

Wed 1 March, 6 p.m.

Evening with Karel Kuklík and guests Jaromír Zemina, Jaroslav Beneš and Tomáš Rasl: on photography, landscape and the *Český dřevák* group; hosted by Pavlína Vogelová

Guided tours:

Curator's tour of the exhibition with Pavlína Vogelová

Thu 6 April, 6 p.m.

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Thu 4 May, 6 p.m.

Weekend art workshops:

Sat 4 March, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m. Fantasy of the Landscape, House of Photography

Sat 8 April, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m. Between Photography and Drawing, House of Photography

Selected artworks will be used to reflect upon the artist's output and his characteristic subjects (landscape, city, yards and things of transcendental nature). We will create artistic confrontations of Kuklík's landscapes and works by artists that influenced him (Jan Zrzavý, Robert Piesen, Jiří John, Marc Chagall) resulting in fantastic associations between photography and drawing (e.g. in the form of filling a missing section of a landscape, horizon and sky with one's drawing). The blending of art trends and photography will be developed through expression experiments. Transparent colour screens used on the principle of photographic filters will modify the overall effects of the photographs. Drawing in colour pastels will create variations on selected photographs on which we will test the effects of changing atmospheric conditions. The Saturday workshops are designed for children, families and all those interested, of all ages including senior citizens and the disabled. Arrivals and departures are individual, i.e. any time within the set time limit.

Art studio for adults and senior citizens:

Sun 2 April 2017, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. Things, Structures and Details, Education Centre, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 9 April 2017, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. Shapes, Lights and Shadows of the Landscape, Education Centre, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Artistic reflections of Karel Kuklík's photographic oeuvre focus on two theme aspects: a personal relationship with the environment and things, and a relationship between man and landscape. The interactive workshops will centre on experiments with the photographic technique of photogram. We will work in the dark room and the participants will get acquainted with the basics of creating the photographic image: work with cast shadows and exposition with light, following the principles of classic photography. The first session will be dedicated to the creation of photograms. The participants can approach their work at the art level with creative aspects, or as a purely informative record of the character of objects. The second workshop will focus on natural symbolism taking place in photographic images in the form of sections of the landscape and fantastic associations.

Interactive tours of the exhibition for all types of schools and other age and interest groups with possible responses in the form of individual artworks. The events are planned individually to suit the needs of every school in terms of time, themes and level.

Booking necessary.

Price: children under 10, art school students, teachers– 5 Kč; children over 10 – 20 Kč

The listed events will be supplemented with further educational activities for other target groups such as the underprivileged and parents on maternity leave with children.

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

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