CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKERS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THE SCHOOL OF ART | SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKERS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

An Exhibition organized through the cooperation of Art Centrum, Prague, by Professor Robert Marx, Syracuse University

JOE AND EMILY LOWE ART CENTER
Syracuse University
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Introduction by Laurence Schmeckebier, Dean

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY | THE SCHOOL OF ART
Syracuse, New York 13210
"... Many thanks for your kind invitation to exhibit at Syracuse University's School of Art. . . . We are delighted to exhibit in the United States . . . especially since we had the opportunity in Prague and Bratislava this year to admire an eminent collection of original prints by American artists, their great art and technical perfection . . . We hope that through our exhibition we will come into closer contact with American artists to develop discussion and cooperation believing that our works will give you some idea of how we are working and express our artistic feeling as well . . ."
The cordial response of the Czechoslovak artists to our invitation to exhibit their prints reflects the new spirit of cooperation and cultural exchange that has been developed so effectively in recent years through the United States Information Agency programs.

In this case it was the direct result of the visit by Robert Marx, distinguished American printmaker and Associate Professor of Art at Syracuse University, to Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1965 as artist-coordinator of an exhibit of Contemporary American Prints sponsored by the United States Information Agency. The genuinely enthusiastic response by Czechoslovak artists to the American show caused both surprise and satisfaction among Washington officials; surprise in that this was the first art exhibition of any kind that had been sent into Czechoslovakia since the war, and satisfaction in the success of one more phase of the general program of cultural exchange through the arts sponsored by government agencies.

What impressed the Czechoslovak artists in the American work, as indicated by Jaroslav Šerých's comment and as reported by Robert Marx, was the high degree of technical competence and refinement, the great sensitivity in the use of ink and paper, and the profusion of new ideas in the development of visual form. They were surprised at the renewed interest in the figure and deeply respectful of the skill with which it was handled. Attendance figures during the three weeks of the exhibition in Prague ran well over 163,000 while the daily attendance in Bratislava averaged over 2,000. A large portion of these were artists.
The selection of Czechoslovak artists was made by Professor Marx from the leading printmakers whose work he had seen during his visit there. The choice of the individual prints was that of the artists themselves and the coordination of the project was handled by Mr. Šerych of Art Centrum, the Czechoslovak Fine Arts Center in Prague.

This exhibition demonstrates to the public what has long been known to the few, namely that the Czechoslovak artists have not only achieved a position of prominence in the world of contemporary art but have maintained an individual character that is a tradition of the centuries. Alongside the official aesthetic of Social Realism and the exploitation of popular folklore themes, there has been a strong persistence of the Surrealist tradition which was so prominent before the war. The abstract and experimental forms characteristic of the 1950's took on an introspective, spiritual quality with an interest in the imagery of symbols, and the mystery of actual materials which reflect not only the Surrealist, but also the older tradition of Czech Baroque. The younger generation has carried the Neo-dadaist revolt against the classified modes of formal expression in a manner somewhat parallel to that of the 1960's in other centers of Europe and America. Its particular interpretation of brutal objects, however, has raised them to a mysterious and cruel hierarchy. There appear archaic totems, assemblages and raw material which are transfixed in another world, sometimes bizarre and exotic, yet always sensitive and highly refined. They convey a spirit of adventure and mystery which embodies a great and poetic promise of the future.

LAURENCE SCHMECKEBIER | DEAN
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Albin Brunovsky—Bratislava.


EMIL SEDLAK—Bratislava.


