

THE 2020 EXHIBITION SEASON AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY PRAGUE OPENS IN THE GRAND STYLE

March 4, 2020 – The National Gallery Prague opens this year's exhibition season with the names Gebauer, Kolíbal and Poe. It will elaborate the theme of Prague architecture, which was influenced by Brutalism and currently elicits enthusiasm of architects, appraisal of experts and emotions in the broad public. The ceremonial opening of four exhibitions will take place on March 5 in the **Trade Fair Palace**. They will open to the public on March 6.

Perhaps everyone knows the shining Heart for Václav Havel by Gebauer, which can be found in the eponymous square in Prague or the Pražská Křižovatka (Prague Crossroads) centre. The sculptor and teacher Kurt Gebauer explains his mission in a hyperbole with double meaning – he is a “public sculptor”.

The retrospective exhibition with the simple name **Kurt Gebauer** will present his so-far most comprehensive set of artworks. The artist has cultivated and enriched the public space for more than six decades, often at the cost of his standing. His concept of “live figuration”, which is hard to classify, confused political censors of the Communist regime before November 1989 as well the art scene. His detailed studies of the lived reality of human body – sometimes glorifications of jubilant life and the nature, at other times grotesque, ironic and sad accusations of social absurdity – rank him among the major figures of Czech 20th-century art.

“Kurt's artworks always elicit a smile, but with the typical Czech awareness of the terminal character of one's own self, nothingness, which is always within reach. His personality does not change the history by force, but with narration, subtle humour and profound humanity,” says **Michal Novotný**, curator and Director of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Gebauer has developed with focused concentration and alternating juxtaposed techniques and themes. And he returns to them – be it a floating body, the pulsating life of girls on the threshold of womanhood, the rigid and pompous gestures of the monument's conventions or the depth of his satirical allegories refined to simplicity and lightness.

Stanislav Kolíbal, Czech sculptor, artist and one of the major representatives of Czech minimalism and abstract geometric art, is another renowned figure, who has influenced the public space for years.

Prague will open the exhibition **Echoes of the Venice Biennale: Stanislav Kolíbal**. It was originally presented under the title *Former Uncertain Indicated* in the Czech and Slovak Pavilion at the 58th International Biennale in Venice, Italy, in May 2019. In 1925, when Stanislav Kolíbal was born, both the Trade Fair Palace in Prague and the Czechoslovak Pavilion in Venice began to be built. As the current exhibition's name suggests, it is not a reprise, but rather a reassessment of its echoes in the enigmatic Italian city in the Czech capital. The

installation in the interior of the Trade Fair Palace replicating the volume of the Venetian Pavilion was originally conceived in response to the structure's architecture, but includes a new work inspired by its facade. The Small Hall will be invigorated with bright wall drawings, whose motifs are based on the structure's dimensions, while one of Kolíbal's constructivist sculptures from the 1990s in the form of a model of his *Structure* emphasises the artist's vital interconnection of painting with drawing, sculpture and architecture. The visitors will get a new view of Kolíbal's profound vision.



Stanislav Kolíbal, *Wings* (1963), photo: Martin Polák

The exhibition **A Dream Within a Dream: Edgar Allan Poe and Arts in the Czech Lands** on the 4th floor of the Trade Fair Palace shows reflections of the work of the American author, poet and theoretician *Edgar Allan Poe* (1809–1849) in arts of the Czech Lands, and, more generally, the phenomenon of horror and fear. Poe still arouses vivid interest and his short stories and poems inspire writers, poets, artists, film makers and musicians. The poet *Charles Baudelaire* and his translations of Poe's oeuvre into French certainly played a major role in this phenomenon. Poe's poems and short stories inspired painter *František Kupka* and many other artists, including, among others, the contemporary painter and graphic artist *František Štorm*.

The project that seeks to demonstrate the close relationship that modern and contemporary art can have to a 19th-century writer, will present a wide range of artists, such as, among others, *Křištof Kintera*, *Josef Bolf* or *Martin Zet*, as well as the members of the youngest generation *Jan Vytiska* or *Marek Škubal*.

The **architecture of the so-called Brutalism in Prague** – the admired and hated architecture of the 1960s–1980s, both glorified and deplored – is undoubtedly a heated subject. “The buildings, which were influenced by

Brutalism in Prague are a unique architecture and peak technological and artistic works. The exhibition seeks to present these qualities to the broad public, remove the ideological detritus of its era and highlight the miserable condition of these buildings, or even their endangered existence,” says **Helena Doudová**, curator of the exhibition ***NO DEMOLITIONS! Forms of Brutalism in Prague***.

The visitors can see the buildings in Prague, which were influenced by Brutalism and progressive trends of the forbidden, yet inspiring West for architects, such as the Kotva Department Store, the former Central Telecommunications Building in Žižkov (currently earmarked for demolition), the former Federal Assembly, Hotel Intercontinental, Barrandov Bridge or the recently demolished Transgas complex.

A unique video capturing the deconstruction of the building will be an exclusive part of the exhibition. The project seeks to reveal, step by step, the spatial, compositional and constructional values of this architecture. The display presents buildings, which prominently enter the urban scene and significantly influence the quality of the communal space around them. Some two hundred and fifty original and generous architectural designs, photographs and models, of which many are displayed for the first time, mostly come from *the Architecture Collection of the National Gallery Prague*.

The National Gallery Prague has prepared a multitude of programs accompanying the exhibitions – debates, guided tours and workshops. A complete list can be found at www.ngprague.cz. Also a **site-specific performance MATMO of acrobat Eleonora Dall`Asta from Panama**, attendee of the festival *Fun Fatale 2020*, will be part of the show. This performance accompanying the programs of the exhibition *Kurt Gebauer* will take place on April 16, at 7.30 p.m. at Corso in the Trade Fair Palace.

OPENING EXHIBITION PROJECTS

Kurt Gebauer March 6 – September 27, 2020 | The Trade Fair Palace – first floor (curator: Michal Novotný)

NO DEMOLITIONS! Forms of Brutalism in Prague March 6 – September 6, 2020 | The Trade Fair Palace – third floor (curator: Helena Doudová)

A Dream Within a Dream: Edgar Allan Poe and Arts in the Czech Lands March 6 – August 30, 2020 | The Trade Fair Palace – fourth floor (curators: Veronika Hulíková, Otto M. Urban)

Echoes of the Venice Biennale: Stanislav Kolíbal March 6 – July 19, 2020 | The Trade Fair Palace – **Small Hall** (curator: Julia Bailey)

Manet in Black-and-White March 6 – June 7, 2020 | The Trade Fair Palace – Graphic Cabinet, fourth floor (curator: Petra Kolářová)

Odilon Redon – À Edgar Poe March 6 – June 7, 2020 | The Trade Fair Palace – Graphic Cabinet, fourth floor (curator: Zuzana Novotná)

Longer opening hours in all the National Gallery Prague buildings – on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. till 8 p.m.

The exhibition **Rembrandt: Portrait of a Man** will open at the Kinský Palace in the Old Town Square on **April 17, 2020**.

Press material and photographs

<http://vpn.ngprague.cz:8010/PRESS/>

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Opening hours

Tuesdays to Sundays from 10 a.m. till 6 p.m.
Wednesdays from 10 a.m. till 8 p.m.

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