



## **THE RESTLESS FIGURE: EXPRESSION IN CZECH SCULPTURE 1880–1914**

**4 May 2016 – 25 September 2016**

The exhibition is organized by Prague City Gallery in cooperation with the National Gallery in Prague.

**Prague City Gallery**

**Municipal Library of Prague, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

**Mariánské Square 1, Prague 1**

**Open daily except Mondays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays to 8 p.m.**

**Authors of the exhibition: Petr Wittlich, Sandra Baborovská**

**Exhibition curator: Sandra Baborovská**

***We are all prisoners of one sculpture that is our body...***

Camille Maclair, 1900

The exhibition “The Restless Figure”, organized by Prague City Gallery, is the hitherto most extensive and most significant event presenting Czech sculpture since the abolishment of the legendary permanent exhibition of modern Czech sculpture realized by the National Gallery in Prague at Zbraslav Château. Prague City Gallery thus, after a long time, returns to exhibiting sculpture or, more particularly, to reflecting the period of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when sculpture achieved the prime stage of its development. The exhibition captures the cross-section through the most outstanding talents such as (besides the dominating personality of Josef Václav Myslbek), František Bílek, Stanislav Sucharda, Josef Mařatka, Ladislav Šaloun, Quido Kocián, Bohumil Kafka, and Jan Štursa, as well as an array of less known but decisive sculptors. The exhibition confronts the works of these artists with the characteristic examples from the oeuvres of international sculptors – Auguste Rodin, Constantin Meunier and Antoine Bourdelle who had affected the Czech development in the field of sculpture by their Prague monograph exhibitions.

The required “artistic quality” meant intensifying sensual and emotional qualities of the plastic expression in the spirit of the sought-after modernity. Modernity, however, was not based on imitation but on originality, employing art in order to express deeper experience and sense of the modern time. The present exhibition summarizes this content under the concept “expression” and is conceived not only from

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the aspect of history, but also development. Its main aim, however, is to present expression as a source and a condition of creativity.

“The Restless Figure” opens to the visitors by the 1890s academism, including the oeuvres of J. V. Myslbek and his school. This was also the period witnessing the arrival of personalities competing for the highest appraisal of their work and becoming comparing themselves with the foreign sculptural – and especially French – production. In result, figural sculpture in the Czech lands between the 1890s to the First World War achieved supreme artistic quality, completely comparable with modern European achievements.

In the introduction to the exhibition, its authors Petr Wittlich and Sandra Baborovská, along with the architect Dominik Lang, opened the blind windows in order to fill the space with daylight. As far as the large halls, presenting Symbolism, Impressionism, Expressionism and Neo-Classicism, are concerned the lighting designer Pavla Beranová worked with artificial light, trying to create a corresponding atmosphere for each period. The smaller halls introduce to decorative and monumental works, which found its expressions in the public space on new buildings and realizations of monuments.

The aim of the exhibition project “The Restless Figure” is to revive the interest of Czech public in the exceptionally high-quality part of the local cultural tradition and to highlight the examples, which can be also stimulating for the present. Architect Dominik Lang refers to the milieu of the turn of the century via contemporary upholstered pedestals. He, however, did not mean to create a replica – the architectural solution tries, with utmost respect, to learn a lesson from the inner logics of the sculptures and their contemporary context as well as the phenomenon of restlessness. Lang at the same time accentuates the rendition of a figure as the “omnipresent body”.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication of the same name, produced by the Karolinum publishing house. It contains contemporary photographs from the inheritances of the sculptors, several expert treatises and theoretical contemporary texts. The authors who contributed to the book are Petr Wittlich, Sandra Baborovská, Tomáš Hylmar and Marie Rakušanová.

**Petr Wittlich, Sandra Baborovská**

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Czech sculpture at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries experienced a period of dynamic changes. Thanks to an array of distinct personalities, this artistic field was able to cope with many stimuli that formed the arrival of modern sculpture, and it acquitted itself with honor and considerable creativity. The hitherto production, which usually employed imitation or slight adaptation of well-tried and established models, thus turned into an emancipated and self-confident genre aptly responding to inspirations provided by literature and philosophy, as well as society, and searching for a topical form of expression.

The abolished permanent exhibition of the National Gallery in Prague at Zbraslav Château presented the given period rather synoptically. However, there has not yet been an attempt at exposing the era in the form of an exhibition project that would go beyond mere noting of the obvious and would as extensively search for some specific aspects and roots of the contemporary developments as in this new exhibition. Professor Petr Wittlich, who has been pursuing this subject for many years, and Sandra Baborovská, Prague City Gallery's curator, divided the exhibition according to the individual tendencies of opinion, surfacing since the overall tendency was established by Josef Václav Myslbek. The authors of the new exhibition worked with a wide spectrum of artists – including crucial foreign personalities, whose participation in the exhibition traffic in Prague was once perceived as proving the seriousness of the local efforts to arrive at modern expression.

The rich collections of the National Gallery in Prague were a basic source of material for such an extensive endeavor. The National Gallery holds numerous inheritances of eminent contemporary personalities, and could therefore provide almost 90 from its 145 works, allowing the curators to draw a picture of this turbulently changing epoch to such a convincing extent. The National Gallery in Prague and Prague City Gallery – in cooperation with Musée Bourdelle in Paris, the Hořice Gallery of Sculpture under the Giant Mountains and other public and private collections – thus, with the distance of many years, gives the wider public the rare opportunity to revisit the most significant works of the given era in contexts that redefine the individual chapters of its development from the aspect of both content and expression.

**Magdalena Juříková**

Director, Prague City Gallery

**Jiří Fajt**

Director General,  
The National Gallery in Prague

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**Authors of the exhibition:** Petr Wittlich, Sandra Baborovská

**Exhibition curator:** Sandra Baborovská

**Architectural solution:** Dominik Lang

**Graphic design:** Robert V. Novák

**Lighting design:** Pavla Beranová

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The Museum of Stanislav Sucharda Foundation

Zlatá husa Gallery, Prague

Galerie Crears

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**Media partners:** ArtMap, Radio 1, Český rozhlas Vltava, Artalk.cz, Art and Antiques, Artmix, Literární noviny, Hospodářské noviny, Flash Art, PragueEventsCalendar, Xantypa

**Admission:** full – 120 CZK / reduced (students) – 60 CZK / seniors – 30 CZK

**Contact for journalists:** Michaela Vrchotová, +420 725 818 721, vrchotova@ghmp.cz

**For more information, please visit:** [www.ghmp.cz](http://www.ghmp.cz), [www.facebook.com/GHMP.cz](https://www.facebook.com/GHMP.cz)

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## **ACCOMPANYING PROGRAM**

### **Curators' tours of the exhibition**

Thursday, 12 May 2016, from 6 p.m.

Thursday, 9 June 2016, from 6 p.m.

Thursday, 15 September 2016, from 6 p.m.

### **Dance installation of the French choreographer Nadine Beaulieu**

Performers: Tereza Hradilková, Jan Bárta, Jana Vrána

Lighting design: Pavla Beranová, Vladimír Burian

Co-production: Prague City Gallery and SE.S.TA, the Centre for Developing Choreography

Thursday, 19 May 2016, from 6 p.m. – premiere

Sunday, 22 May 2016, from 4:30 p.m. – 1<sup>st</sup> performance

Sunday, 22 May 2016, from 6 p.m. – 2<sup>nd</sup> performance

### **Performance SUPPORTING POINTS by the visual artist Jan Pfeiffer**

Thursday, 22 September 2016, from 6 p.m.

In the framework of the accompanying program, Prague City Gallery is preparing a cycle of lectures and discussions on the subject Monument and Sculpture in Public Space.

### **Weekend art workshops**

Saturday, 18 June 2016, 1–6 p.m., The Corporeality of a Sculpture, Municipal Library of Prague, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

Saturday, 23 July 2016, 1–6 p.m., Anatomy and Canon, Municipal Library of Prague, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

Saturday, 20 August 2016, 1–6 p.m., Spirituality, Shadows and Symbols, Centre of Education, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

The artistic responses of the workshops' participants will mainly focus on the subject of human figure and its corporeality. The sculptures will become models for drawing the individual body parts and for changing their scale in order to transpose them as far as to an abstract visual form, set into a square format. The exhibited objects will be viewed from many various points of observation and reduced to mere several lines capturing their silhouettes. Emotions, body talk and gestures, too, will become interesting points of departure and will be emphasized in expressive activities concentrating on an individual experience. Shadow play will be employed in working with the stylization of the participants themselves who will render both concrete and abstract concepts (anxiety, grief, music, dance and others). The participants will try to set selected works into the contexts of their own life, thinking and experiences. Their own written records will serve them to analyze their personal experience from encountering given artefacts in connection with the unique concept of the installation.

### **Art workshop for adults and seniors**

Saturday, 21 August 2016, 1–6 p.m., Order, Beauty and Expression in Plastic Form I, Centre of Education, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sunday, 4 September 2016, 3–6 p.m., Order, Beauty and Expression in Plastic Form II, Centre of Education, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

The participants of this workshop will respond to the remarkable developments in sculpture at the turn of

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the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and to its individual representatives. Their work will focus on executing a relief which they will cast to a plaster mass. They will also be trying to find their own reflection in modelling or in impressing and transferring various small objects, as well as to find point of departure for their own realization (stylization, realistic approach). Their inspiration will either be the artistic styles presented at the exhibition – the neo-baroque concept, Realistic Naturalism, the contrast between Symbolism and Impressionism, Sensualism and Art-Deco Decorativism – or their selected representatives: the sensual corporeality of J. V. Myslbek, Symbolism in the oeuvre of František Bílek, the emphasis laid on how light influenced shape in the works by Bohumil Kafka, Cubist Expressionism of Otto Gutfreund and many other aspects. The workshop will at the same time concentrate on the issues involved in monumental and decorative works and will solve the solution between shape and composition or between décor and ornament.

The weekend programs are composed as parts of the popular cycle “Creative Dialogues with Art” and aim at children, families with children and other people interested, including seniors and the handicapped.

The individual arrivals and departures are arbitrary within the duration of the program.

Booking: until 4 p.m. of the preceding day (not required)

**Interactive views of the exhibition for all types of schools** as well as other groups of all ages and interests, providing the opportunity of subsequent artistic response in the form of individual art works. The Gallery tailors the duration, subject and level of exactingness to the particular requirements of schools.

Booking required

Price: children to 10 years, students of art schools and pedagogues – 5 CZK per person, children over 10 years – 20 CZK per person

Contact: Lucie Haškovcová, [lucie.haskovcova@ghmp.cz](mailto:lucie.haskovcova@ghmp.cz), +420 606 612 987, +420 608 216 418

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