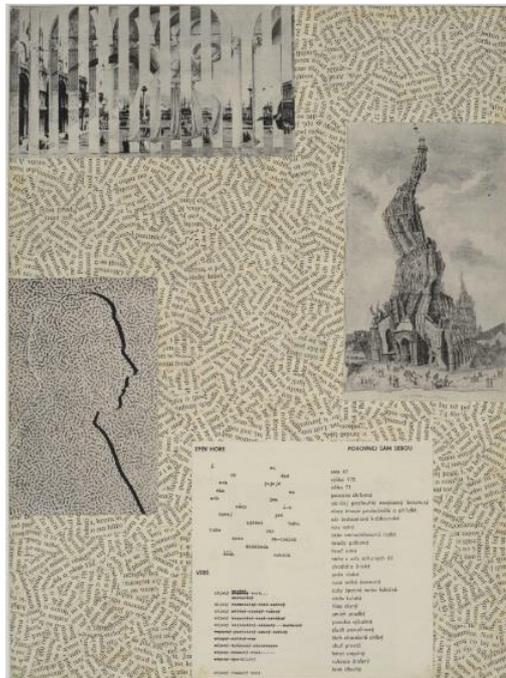


## The National Gallery is exhibiting *Diary 1968* by Jiří Kolář that maps the drama of the August 1968 events

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Soviet military occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the National Gallery in Prague holds a major solo exhibition of the artist Jiří Kolář. A collection of 66 collages exploring the dramatic August events, as well as numerous less-known works by one of the most distinctive artists of the 20th century are on view in Kinsky Palace from May 16.

*“The exhibition is intended to present Jiří Kolář as a strong personality known for his caustic commentaries on the times he lived in. Divided into eight chapters, the exhibition enables visitors to acquire a new understanding of the open, multifarious and radical nature of his creative output, in which he blends a raw testimony to the crisis of values in contemporary society with the experimental legacy of avant-garde art,”* says the art historian Marie Klimešová, one of the exhibition’s curators.

The exhibition “Jiří Kolář: Grimace of the Century” that received its name from the homonymous collage of 1961 attests both to Kolář’s artistic career and the history of the 20th century. *“Kolář’s output speaks of the horrific experimentation with the human spirit during wars and dictatorships, of the extermination of human beings, their dignity and their desire to live,”* observes Milena Kalinovská, Director of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art of the National Gallery in Prague and co-curator of the Kolář exhibition.



## Poems, Collages and Diaries

Initially, Kolář was recognized as a poet. In 1950, during a period of widespread political terror, he wrote a collection of poem entitled *Prometheus' Liver* that later earned him nine months in prison. His poems, plays and other texts began to be published only in the politically more relaxed sixties, when he could also exhibit his visual art.

In the late 1950s, Kolář started systematically to create collages, often using material from publications that reproduced artworks in the National Gallery's collections. He subjected the values of this "national treasure" to artistic revision which, however, was little understood by the Czech public at the time. *"For this self-taught artist, working with photographs, or rather with reproductions, was a natural choice,"* notes Marie Klimešová.

Diary-form art was an integral part of Kolář's lifelong creative career. His great many collages have precisely recorded dates of creation; in this respect, his extensive collage-form *Diaries* dating from 1967, 1968 and 1970 hold a special place. At the time when Jiří Kolář was working on his *Diary 1968*, he was deeply affected by the dramatic events that shook up Czechoslovakia.

*"Throughout that year he used a huge amount of material, whether newspaper articles, announcements, Old Master paintings, reminders and invitation cards, or his own texts and other found written matter. The cycle of diary collages is comprised of sixty-six independently existing and presented pages. Many are composed of several layers that attest to the power of the events in the given week or particular day,"* adds Milena Kalinovská.

The exhibition hosted at Kinsky Palace presents to the public more than 220 works by Kolář from the artist's posthumous estate and Czech and foreign art collections, including the Neues Museum in Nuremberg – the institution that loaned *Diary 1968*. Visitors are able to enjoy a wide range of the artist's collages, one of them being his three-dimensional collage entitled *In the Beginning Was the Word* (1969), created using the technique of chiasmage.

## Grimace of the Century

The National Gallery in Prague has published a homonymous book to accompany the exhibition. It is mainly intended to underscore the urgency of Jiří Kolář's reflections on the world he lived in and the art he held in esteem. Besides essays by Marie Klimešová and Milena Kalinovská, the book contains over one hundred reproductions of little-known or completely unknown works created in different creative periods and techniques that are divided into eight chapters, along with images from his famed *Diary 1968* series. The publication, with a full English translation, is provided with an inventory list of the exhibited artworks, a biographical details and selected literature. The book design is the work of the successful "2018designers" graphic studio.





**Jiří Kolář: Grimace of the Century**

Date: May 16 – September 2, 2018

Venue: Kinsky Palace

Curators: Marie Klimešová and Milena Kalinovská

Exhibition architects: Josef Pleskot, Norbert Schmidt, Michaela Zucconi

Exhibition graphic artists: Petr Bosák, Robert Jansa, Adam Macháček

The exhibition has been made possible thanks to the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. The event is held as part of the celebrations commemorating important anniversaries of 2018 related to the country's statehood. For further information on all the commemorative events, please visit [www.spolecnestoleti.cz](http://www.spolecnestoleti.cz) .

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