



PRESS RELEASE

## Josef Koudelka has donated a photographic cycle done for the Vatican Pavilion to the National Gallery in Prague

On the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of major 20<sup>th</sup>-century photographer Josef Koudelka, the National Gallery in Prague presents the exhibition *Koudelka: De-creazione* in the Trade Fair Palace starting March 22. He prepared the photographic series for the first presentation of the Holy See of the Vatican at the Venice Biennale in 2013 and donated it to the National Gallery in Prague this year. In August, the Trade Fair Palace display will be followed by Koudelka's well-known photographic cycle *Invasion '68* to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968.

*"Although art cannot change the world, it can shock it – and this statement best expresses the artistic message of Josef Koudelka, one of the most distinctive artists of our time. The poetic refinement of the artistic genius in his ample photographic oeuvre transforms into an uncompromising gesture and vice versa. I am deeply grateful to Josef Koudelka for the rare generosity with which he has donated his famous De-creazione cycle to the National Gallery in Prague,"* says Jiří Fajt, General Director of the National Gallery in Prague.

Josef Koudelka did his *De-creazione* series for the first presentation of the Holy See at the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 2013. Artists were invited to render three themes inspired by the Book of Genesis: Creazione, De-creazione and Ri-creazione, and Koudelka chose the theme he had dealt with for three decades – the irreversible interventions of man in the landscape.

*"The De-creazione series consists of 18 photographs, nine large horizontal panoramic vistas and three vertical triptychs. They capture three principal ideas of destruction: the interventions of time in the history of humankind and the environment, martial conflict and nature vs. the industrial world. Koudelka's commitment and large-format pictures call our attention to the lack of balance in the relationship between man and his environment and reveal the human tendency toward never-ending destruction,"* says exhibition curator Irena Šorfová.



Josef Koudelka, Germany, 1997 © Josef Koudelka / Magnum Photos

On August 21, the exhibition *Koudelka: De-creazione* will be complemented in the Trade Fair Palace by a presentation of his unique photographic cycle *Invasion '68* consisting of large-format blow-ups in which the 30-year-old Koudelka captured the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia in seven days in August 1968.

The retrospective “Koudelka Returning”, a cross-section of the photographer Josef Koudelka’s work, is being held at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. The basis of the exhibition comprises over 300 photographs, which are part of the large set of works that Koudelka has generously decided to give to his native land. The Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague will manage it thus becoming the only institution in the world to have such a large collection of the oeuvre of this world-renowned photographer. The exhibition includes all of the well-known series of Koudelka’s work so far (*Beginnings*, *Experiments*, *Theatre*, *Gypsies*, *Invasion 68*, *Exiles*, and *Panoramas*). Included are many unique vintage prints, some of which are presented here for the first time.



*Josef Koudelka, Slovakia, 1999 © Josef Koudelka / Magnum Photos*

### **Koudelka: De-creazione**

Place: Trade Fair Palace – Small Hall

Date: 22. 3. – 23. 9. 2018

Concept: Josef Koudelka

Curator: Irena Šorfová

Free entry

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue **KOUDELKA DE-CREAZIONE** which contains all the photos presented at the exhibition. Graphic design: Studio Najbrt.

### **Details on reproducing photographs**

To advertise Koudelka’s exhibition *Koudelka: De-creazione*, a maximum of two photographs of a size not exceeding a half-page may be published free of charge. The photographs may not be cropped. Each must bear the copyright © *Josef Koudelka / Magnum Photos*. To use the photographs for the title page or any detailed material, please contact the [Magnum Photos](http://www.magnumphotos.com) agency.

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