

The National Gallery Prague launches the first extensive retrospective of František Kupka in the past thirty years



František Kupka 1871–1957

Date: 7 September 2018 – 20 January 2019

Venue: Waldstein Riding School

Curators: Anna Pravdová, Brigitte Léal, Pierre Brullé, Markéta Theinhardt, Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff

The exhibition is organised by the National Gallery Prague in cooperation with the Réunion des musées nationaux – Grand Palais, Musée national d'art moderne – Centre Pompidou and the Ateneum Art Museum – Finnish National Gallery.

The exhibition is held under the auspices of Mr Milan Štěch, President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.



As of 7 September, the Waldstein Riding School will host an extensive retrospective of the art of František Kupka, the pioneer and main protagonist of the abstract art movement and one of the most prominent Czech artists. The exhibition has been designed by the National Gallery Prague in cooperation with the Réunion des musées nationaux, Centre Pompidou, in Paris and the Finnish National Gallery.

The chronological exhibition is divided by theme to allow the viewer to follow the artist's path from symbolism to abstraction, of which Kupka was an originator. The retrospective focuses on Kupka's symbolist paintings, first expressionist portraits, path to abstract art, colour verticals, vocabulary of forms and colours, machinism, and geometric abstraction. The many artworks on paper show Kupka as a satirical draughtsman and brilliant illustrator, an artist interested in philosophy, Greek and Roman art, religion, and science.

The Entire Oeuvre

The exhibition shows the entire oeuvre of František Kupka, from his early 1890s works to the abstract art of the 1950s. *'After nearly thirty years, the exhibition seeks to be a complete retrospective including all aspects of Kupka's creation. It displays the fundamental artworks of the world's museum and private collections. In addition to those in the collection of the National Gallery Prague, visitors will see many works of art from Centre Pompidou in Paris, Guggenheim Museum in New York, and Albertina in Vienna,'* says the exhibition curator Anna Pravdová.

František Kupka came from Opočno but spent most of his life in France. In Bohemia, he was first known as a merciless caricaturist. His free art creations did not win greater recognition until 1946 when the Mánes Association of Fine Artists organised a retrospective for him. Following the communist coup in 1948, his works were largely forbidden and the Czech audience had to wait until after 1989 to become familiar with it in greater detail.

'Originality of Kupka's work lies not only in the refusal of traditional depiction. It is rooted in Viennese symbolism enriched by the spiritual and philosophical legacy of Central Europe. Kupka enriched it by his interest in the latest scientific discoveries and study of the universe as well as his observations of the laws of nature and the organic world,' Anna Pravdová describes.

International Cooperation and New Opening Hours

Two institutions that boast the richest collections of Kupka's art were behind the idea to organise this exhibition – National Gallery Prague and Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, in Paris. Owing to the Réunion des musées nationaux which sponsored the project, the exhibition travelled from Paris to Prague and will continue to Helsinki where it will be hosted by the Ateneum Art Museum – Finnish National Gallery. In Paris, the exhibition was an unparalleled success, having been visited by nearly 230 thousand spectators.

Running from 7 September 2018 to 20 January 2019 in the Waldstein Riding School, the exhibition will be open daily from 10 am to 6 pm, except Mondays, and to 8 pm on Wednesdays. The National Gallery Prague offers extended opening hours in all its venues starting this September. The gallery releases an extensive exhibition catalogue for the exhibition *František Kupka 1871–1957* with many illustrations and texts by Czech and foreign experts which are published in Czech and English. In addition to the traditional guided tours and events for families with children, the public programme this time includes a cycle of lectures organised in collaboration with the French Institute in Prague.

In the Sign of Symbolism



Ballad (Joys of Life), 1901–1902, oil, wood, 83.5 × 126.5 cm, National Gallery Prague

Gigolettes



Gallien's Girl (Gallien's Taste), 1909, oil, canvas, 108 × 100 cm, National Gallery Prague

Colour Planes



Large Nude (Planes by Colours), 1910, oil, canvas, 150.1 × 180.8 cm, Guggenheim, New York

The Road to Amorpha



Amorpha, Fugue in Two Colours, 1912, oil, canvas, 211 × 220 cm, National Gallery Prague

Linear and Vertical



Vertical Planes III, 1912–1913, oil, canvas, 200 × 118 cm, National Gallery Prague

Organic Motifs



Upward Thrust II (Vortex), 1923, oil, canvas, 121 × 83 cm, National Gallery Prague

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Machinism



Music, 1936, oil, canvas, 85 × 93 cm; frame 89.5 × 97.4 × 5.5 cm, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris

Abstraction-Création



Diagonal Planes, 1931, oil, canvas, 90 × 110 cm, National Gallery Prague

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