

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Karel Cudlín (b. 1960) was born into the family of a doctor and an office worker in Prague's Žižkov district. After completing grammar school in 1979, he attended a secondary school specialising in social work and law until 1981. In 1987, he received a degree from the Film and Television School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague, where, many years later, in 2016, he was named an associate professor. He collaborates with publishers as well as television and film producers in the Czech Republic and abroad. From 1997 to 2003, he was one of President Václav Havel's official photographers. Cudlín's main interest is documentary photography, and over the course of his career thus far, he has won sixteen prizes in the Czech Press Photo competition. In 2008, he received the annual prize awarded by *Revolver Revue*, a periodical he has been working with for more than a quarter of a century. He has been an editor for the *Mladý svět*, *Lidové noviny*, and *Respekt* periodicals as well as for the Czech News Agency (ČTA). Cudlín creates his work in series, and his previous themes include the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Czechoslovakia in mid-1991, various Communist ceremonies and celebrations, events held at the Lucerna Palace in Prague, the Roma, refugees, Ukraine, Israel, and the National Theatre in Prague (the last of which came out as a book in 2005). Two of his monographs have been published by Torst (2001 and 2016).

Jan Dobrovský (b. 1960) is a photographer, entrepreneur, and former journalist. He originally studied to be a cattle caretaker, later working in animal husbandry and dozens of other manual professions. Towards the end of the 1970s, he began photographing abandoned and devastated places in Prague and then, in the 1980s, his friends helped him to organise his first semi-official exhibition. During the Normalisation Period, he was active in the dissident movement and contributed to samizdat publications. After 1989, Dobrovský worked for the editorial desk of the *Lidové noviny* daily, and later for the news services of Czechoslovak, subsequently Czech, Television. After designing investment strategies for both Czech and foreign individuals, he became an investor himself. Several years ago, he returned to full-time photography, working primarily with the black and white documentary genre. At first glance, Jan Dobrovský's work is socially focused. This seems to be valid not only in the case of the photographs shown at this exhibition, selected from his book *Families* (Prague, Paseka Publishers 2019), which takes a look at the lifestyle of Roma families living in the Šluknov Hook, a "panhandle" located in the Ústí nad Labem Region in northern Czech Republic. His series of photographs taken in rural Ukraine, which are partly included in the accompanying screening, may be characterised in the same way. However, as far as the implicit meaning is concerned, the essence of the matter also deserves attention, as so accurately expressed by Sergej Machonin at the time of the photographer's exhibition debut at the E. F. Burian Theatre in Prague. In 1988, during the opening of Dobrovský's show, this author said: "The vision of life, as shown in these small, silent photographs, makes room and time for the soul, allowing it to perceive the magical midday hours and the mirroring of mysterious things."

Alžběta Jungrová (b. 1978) began to take photographs while still at primary school. She

graduated from a secondary school specialising in graphic art located in Prague's Hellichova Street. Later, she worked for the *MF Dnes* periodical as well as for two other Prague-based dailies, specifically *Hospodářské noviny* and *Lidové noviny*. From 2000 to 2002, she lived in the United States and in London. Jungrová considers the basis of her work to be documentary photography and photojournalism, chiefly because she is interested in the lives and fates of her contemporaries. For her work she has travelled to a diverse range of faraway places and has often photographed under extreme conditions – for instance, she has waded through the largest rubbish dump in Cambodia as well as through the sludge of the world's biggest shipbreaking yard in Chittagong, Bangladesh; she has photographed armed children and civilians in the Gaza Strip and drug addicts on the Afghan-Pakistani border; and she has spent days with the Nukak people in the Colombian jungle. Jungrová received an honourable mention in the Czech Press Photo competition for her photo reports about the drug trade on the Afghan-Pakistani border. For her series about children working in a brickyard in Peshawar, Pakistan, and for her photographs taken in a Burmese refugee camp in Bangladesh, she received an award from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. At present she works freelance, represented by 4D Photo, one of the most prestigious agencies in the field of commercial photography. She is currently working on several documentary projects and does photojournalism, advertising, fashion editorials, and portraits on commission.

Antonín Kratochvíl (b. 1947) comes from Lovosice, a town in the Czech Republic's northern Ústí nad Labem Region, where his father had a photography studio, and he is one of the founding members of the VII Photo Agency. His main focus is on portraits and documentary photography, for which he has received several international prizes. In 1998, *American Photo* magazine ranked him amongst the top hundred photographers in the world. At the recommendation of the photographer Vojta Dukát, he applied to, and was accepted, to attend the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in the Netherlands, and he received a bachelor's degree from this institution in 1971. Since 1972, he has been working in the United States, splitting his time between New York and Prague. He has worked for prestigious American newspapers and magazines, including *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Vogue*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, and *Newsweek*. Starting in the mid-1970s, Kratochvíl gradually began returning to Europe – at first to capture life behind the Iron Curtain and then later the changes that took place after it was torn down, and many of these photos were published in his book *Broken Dream: Twenty Years of War in Eastern Europe* (1997). As a photojournalist, he has worked in war zones, documenting the genocide in Rwanda and its refugees in Zaire, as well as Bosnian and Afghani refugees, victims of the AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe, and drug smugglers in Guatemala. He has received many awards for his documentary photographs, including four prizes in the World Press Photo competition. He has published a number of books of his own and contributed to many others.

The beginnings of **Jan Mihaliček's** (b. 1965) photographic career date back to the pre-1989 period. At that time, he was mainly taking pictures of the Czechoslovak skateboard-

ing and snowboarding community. Starting in 1987, he became involved in several samizdat projects. From December 1989 onwards, Mihaliček worked as a photojournalist for the *Lidové noviny* daily. He took photographs not only in Czechoslovakia, but also in many other countries around the world. After the withdrawal of the occupying Soviet Army from Afghanistan, he travelled through that country with Jaromír Štětina, and together they created a series of reports with which they were the first to reveal the previously unconfirmed existence of Russian POWs from the War in Afghanistan who were being held in Pakistan. Mihaliček also took part in the first humanitarian trips to war-ravaged Yugoslavia and to Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus for the Lidové Noviny Foundation, which gradually evolved to become the well-respected People in Need Foundation. In 1994, he was on the steering committee for the new *Týden* news magazine and became one of its first staff photographers. He was awarded First Prize in the Czech Press Photo competition for his photo reports from the flood-stricken city of Ostrava in 1997. At the start of the new millennium, Mihaliček joined the ranks of freelance photographers and remains independent to this day. At present, he is most concerned with social topics, both as a photographer and a director of photography. His independent photography mainly builds on the classic black-and-white documentary genre in the spirit of the traditions of humanist photography. In 2018, he became one of the founding members of 400 ASA, an association of like-minded photographers, which aims to revive Czech documentary photography.

A native of Prague, **Tomki Němec** (b. 1963) attended school in Alexandria, Egypt, and, back in the Czech Republic, in Klánovice, Miletín, and Prague. As a student he contributed to samizdat periodicals. In 1988, under pressure from the authorities, the Film and Television School of the Academy of the Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague expelled him. Beginning with the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, Němec started systematically photographing Václav Havel and was his personal photographer when Havel was President of Czechoslovakia (until 1992). He then again had the opportunity to photograph Havel between 1997 and 2002 according to the needs of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic. The subject matter of his independent work almost always consists of people in their everyday situations, providing testimony of their personal lives as well as the history and politics that bear down on them. He has twice won prizes in the World Press Photo competition. In the past, he has been represented by the Agence VU in Paris, and, since 1992, the Vienna-based Anzenberger Agency. Němec has shown his work in a number of countries and published in many periodicals, including *Libération*, *Le Monde*, *Paris Match*, *Stern*, *Der Spiegel*, *Das Magazin*, *DU*, *Geo*, *Die Zeit*, *Focus*, *Esquire*, *New York Times Magazine*, and *Los Angeles Times Magazine*. He has published three books of his own work and contributed to many others. A monograph about Němec and his work was published by Torst in 2007.

Martin Wágner (b. 1980) focuses chiefly on black and white documentary photography. After graduating from secondary school, he went on to receive a master's degree from the Institute of Creative Photography at the Silesian University in Opava in 2013. Even at the

start of his career as a photographer, Wágner was already compellingly attracted by Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, and they became the main source of inspiration and themes for his creative work. Starting in 1998, he traversed these regions, from Carpathian Ruthenia to Siberia and the Far East, discovering the lives of the local inhabitants and recording them with his camera. The photographer had the opportunity to get acquainted with a diverse range of communities – he spent time with Siberian Old Believers, stayed with reindeer herders and whalers on the Chukchi Peninsula, and experienced life in an Orthodox Christian monastery. He has taken photos along the Trans-Siberian Railway, at the sites of former gulags, and of the oil wells on Sakhalin Island, and his stay amongst volcanologists on the Kuril Islands triggered his interest in geology. Wágner's observation of how people live at the confluence of the Angara and Yenisei Rivers even influenced his personal life. It was there that he met his wife, Světlana, and now they are raising their son Václav (born in 2013) together. Martin Wágner has received many awards in the Czech Press Photo competition, and, over the past twenty years has organised a number of both solo and collective shows in the Czech Republic and abroad. From 2003 and 2006, he was the curator of his own gallery, located on the premises of the Franciscan Monastery in Prague. Between 2013 and 2018, he intensively collaborated with the Prague-based Zahradník Gallery as a curator. Wágner established and continues to operate a graphic design studio specialising in the scanning, pre-press preparation, and professional printing of photographs for exhibition.