



Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague

17. listopadu 2, Prague 1

Press Release)

Josef Koudelka awarded the *Artis Bohemiae Amicis* medal

Prague, 18 May 2010

Today, photographer Josef Koudelka received the *Artis Bohemiae Amicis* (Friends of Czech Art) medal from the hands of Prof. Václav Riedlbauch, Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic. This is an event of major importance for Czech culture, as over the decades Josef Koudelka (b. 1938 in Boskovice, Czechoslovakia) has been recognized as an accomplished and much-respected photographer of international stature. He is particularly noted for his humanistically-oriented themes (his series 'Gypsies', stills of theatre productions) and his breathtaking series of images from the military invasion of Prague in August 1968, but also for his extensive photographic work after he had left Czechoslovakia (his series 'Exile', panoramic images). Koudelka is a member of the prestigious Magnum Photos agency. In 1990, in collaboration with art historian PhDr. Anna Fárová, Koudelka presented at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague his first retrospective exhibition after returning from exile.

Since 2007, Josef Koudelka has been discussing the idea of donating an extensive body of photographs to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague. The donor has made his gift contingent on professional legal, technical and administrative security provisions for the collection, conforming to international museum standards. The donation is expected to be presented to the museum before the end of 2010. Currently, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague is beginning to construct a new modern central depository in Prague's Stodůlky district, financed from the National Treasure grant programme, which will also provide funds for the upcoming reconstruction of the museum's own historical building.

The Photography Department of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague houses the largest holdings of Czech photography, regularly showcased at numerous exhibitions both at home and abroad. Josef Koudelka's donation is one of outstanding significance; it comprises a vast selection of the artist's photographs, ranging from his early pictures dating from the late 1950s to his contemporary panoramic images that are in fact identical with those presented in the retrospective exhibition 'Josef Koudelka: Photographer' at the Trade Fair Palace art gallery in 2002. The ensemble is made up of extremely valuable and unique period

enlargements from the artist's private archives – photographs that have never been released for sale to galleries, museums or private collectors. Together with the collections of photographs by František Drtikol and Josef Sudek, which were likewise donated in the past to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Josef Koudelka's photographic work will constitute yet another highly-acclaimed assemblage of masterpieces by world-renowned photographers in Czech art collections.

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