

Miroslav Tichý
Jiri Svestka Berlin
21 November 2009 – 16 January 2010

Jiri Svestka Berlin is pleased to present a survey of the life and work of the extraordinary Czech photographer Miroslav Tichý. The genesis of these remarkable photographic works was in the little town of Kyjov, southern Moravia, where Miroslav Tichý (b.1926) was raised. Dissatisfied by the rejection of his works and rising state censorship, Tichý abandoned his formal studies of drawing and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague shortly after the Communist take over in 1948. He returned home to live a life of artistic solitude, focusing instead on his favorite motif, women. Over the next thirty years, with homemade cameras in hand, Tichý managed to produce a body of unique mixed media works, that yielded not only his penchant for voyeuristic fantasy, abstraction and embellishment, but also an innate understanding of the painterly potential locked within the photographic medium.

In his hometown, Tichý was considered a mad man. Dazed and dreamy, he walked through the streets taking photographs. Whether strolling through the city, at the public swimming pool, sharing a neighbourly chat, shopping, or appearing on TV, the women of Tichý's works were photographed completely unaware of his gaze. Ankles, waists, and faces; Tichý loved to explore the feminine physique. At his own admission these were "just a motif", a classical form which allowed him to explore and express his own creative voice. Tichý took hundreds of photographs each month, some of which he coloured and retouched, others he inserted into painted paper mats which acted as homemade frames. Each photograph he developed was a one-off original, each complete work a unique elaboration of the underlying image.

For the majority of his life, Tichý's works went completely unnoticed by the art world. Though his work was produced in a small village locked behind the iron curtain, it was more Tichý's Diogenian way of life that kept him an outsider artist. As such, his works speak from a shockingly non-postmodern perspective. Unaffected, unabashed and daringly non-self referential, his entire oeuvre is completely unique in terms of concept, atmosphere, and content. There is no comparable category in contemporary photography.

The Swiss/Czech psychiatrist Roman Buxbaum, has known Tichý since his own childhood in Kyjov. His introduction of Tichý's works to the curator Harald Szeemann led to their inclusion in the 2004 Seville Biennale. Having quickly gained an international following thereafter, subsequent exhibitions of Tichý's works have taken place at Kunsthaus Zurich (2005), Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt (2008) and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2008). This survey exhibition at Jiri Svestka Berlin will present a substantial body of Tichý's works, a selection of his homemade cameras and accessories, as well as photographic and filmic personal portraits of Tichý that explore his extraordinary character.

The exhibition is held in cooperation with the Foundation Tichy Ocean, Zurich and Kewenig Galerie, Cologne.

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