**PRESS RELEASE**

**JOSEF ACHRER: NO SLEEPS IN THE FOREST**

12 September to 12 October 2019

Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář

Schönkirch Palace

Mikulandská 7, Prague 1 – New Town

Tuesday to Saturday from 1 pm to 6 pm

[www.zdeneksklenar.com](http://www.zdeneksklenar.com)

**Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář is pleased to present Josef Achrer’s solo show *NO Sleeps in the Forest*. In this exhibition, Achrer, known mainly for his focused exploration of the relationship between information and data in today’s information society, presents an entirely new position of his art. For this show at the Schönkirch Palace, the artist has created a series of paintings with the theme of looking for refuge in a tropical forest in the effort to find lost serenity and, ultimately, to also find oneself. Achrer astounds with the striking colourfulness of his canvases and an open preoccupation with traditional painting techniques. This is also the first time spectators will be able to see a cycle of larger photograms, which are new for Achrer and a true surprise for those who love his work. This photographic technique, known chiefly from the work of artists such as Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy, is, in this case, used in a new painterly respect. In relation to this, Achrer himself says that it is a true realisation of the term photography in the sense of drawing with light.**

The inspiration for making this series was the chance viewing of a documentary about Charlie Chaplin, who, in 1932, when he was already a famous Hollywood celebrity, fled to Indonesia’s tropical landscape in search of inner peace. In the middle of was then still only the little know paradise found on the island of Bali, Chaplin took black and white photos of the landscape and the people, shot silent films, and captured his experience away from Western civilisation in a very vivid manner. Within the context of this effort at inner depersonalisation, Achrer also mentions Paul Gauguin and his escape to Tahiti, as well as the story of the little-known Austrian sculptor Susanne Wenger, who went to Nigeria in 1951 to live in the middle of the virgin forest and create organic concrete sculptures reminiscent of forest temples.

Achrer’s paintings are inspired by unknown hiding places in which stands a lone individual who has renounced civilisation. “This inner NO takes on many forms. These include travelling through the forest at night, the life of a hermit, or the solitude of an artist. I am interested in the fates of people who are forced by circumstances and their sensitivity towards big NOs in their lives in their desire to go further, to those places where people who let themselves be carried by the stream never reach,” says Josef Archer about the idea behind this exhibition. In this same sense he adds that he often escapes from the city into the countryside and the silence of his studio. It is no coincidence that the symbol of a tent often appears in his paintings – it is a reminder of the escape of an individual who hides in the forest, in a place where he is an uninvited guest. An element of geometry, with which are familiar in Achrer’s work in relation to his previous, strictly geometric cycle *No Data*, enters into the painting together with the morphology of the tent.

In his series of photograms, Achrer works with photographs in a painterly way. He places various templates on paper, playing with light and shadow.

Achrer believes that the photogram has appeared in art history multiple times.
He considers it important to rediscover this technique, and, in this way, to draw attention to the significant possibilities for manipulation that photography offers, but, at the same time to avoid photographing the real world. According to him, he senses an antithesis to the substance of photography in this approach, which is today a maximally high-quality and super colour image that distorts our concept of reality. “The reason why I am following the path from painting to photography using the original analogue technology as much as possible is because I feel the need to come to terms with photography in
a painterly abstract way, and to thus go against the documentary nature of a photograph itself.”

In relation to Josef Achrer’s latest creations, the gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář says: “For me, Josef Achrer is an example of an artist whose moral responsibility is inspirational. After his previous paintings, which gave rise to the term ‘infomanic society’, he is now introducing himself with some that are entirely new, which spring from his previous periods and indicate the artist’s move forward.”

**HOMAGE TO MIKULÁŠ MEDEK**

12 September – 12 October 2019

Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář – Bird Salon

Schönkirch Palace

Mikulandská 7, Prague 1 – New Town, CZ

**Another show with which Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář is opening its autumn exhibition season is *Homage to Mikuláš Medek*. Seven paintings, which are a part of Czech history have their origin in Mikuláš Medek’s early works, which are associated chiefly with the 1950s to the 1970s. Without a doubt, the main highlight of the exhibition is his legendary *Cranachesque Supralyric with an Imperialist Flower*. The painting was preceded by a photograph of his wife, Emily, taken in 1950, which bore the same title but included no flower. The other displayed paintings are also linked to very personal, often even fateful, stories from the life of an extremely significant artist – in fear of the Czechoslovak State Security forces, Medek hid some of his paintings in a sofa, others in a pile pf coal, and some he even sliced up with a knife.**

“My personal memories relating to the exhibited paintings have been passed on to me by others. It was only the creation of the painting *Angel of Evil Birds* that I actually perceived personally as an adult. Two often-used motifs came together in this work – birds and angels. However, this angel’s wings are only schematic; the large bird’s head in the centre with right-angled elements also appears in other works. Conversely, the angel has an empty cuboid-shaped head. Threatening spikes, reminiscent of the shards on the wall in the painting *Scream* from the 1950s, also make a reappearance,” says Mikuláš Medek’s daughter, Dr. Eva Kosáková.

The exhibition at Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář includes the paining entitled *Egg*, which Mikuláš Medek tried to destroy towards the end of the 1950s. However, his wife Emily rescued it and hit it, the subsequently had the canvas glued onto a firm backing material – the knife cut us still visible. Nonetheless, the painting makes a monumental impression.

For many years the painting *Untiled (Maize)* was hidden in a sofa in the Medek’s home. According to Dr. Eva Kosáková, the sofa was used to store paintings for which there was no more space on the walls or which Medek had already dismissed. “Collectors experienced the greatest joy when they were allowed to take a look into the sofa,” she says.

The painting *Infantile Landscape* (or *Infantile Walk*) was always one of Emily Medek’s favourites, and she never allowed it to be sold, which, unfortunately, cannot be said for many other works she accumulated.

*Rabbit* is one of the few paintings Medek made using a model. The meaty bunny was a gift from relatives. Mikuláš could not stand rabbits, as they were the only meat available during the war. Family lore says that Medek decided to paint the rabbit so that he would not have to eat it. “To Mikuláš’s joy, after a few days the rabbit started to reek and so Emily took a picture of it which he used to finish the painting,” adds Medek’s daughter.

The last two paintings as well as the one entitled *The Miller’s Passion* lay for years buried under coal in the cellar of the Medek’s residence on Nábřeží Legií Street. In 1956, when the State Security forces of that time came to arrest Medek’s brother Ivan, Mikuláš determined that these paintings might make things more difficult for the family if found during any subsequent search. And so they, together with all of Emily’s photographs were hidden under the coal in the cellar. They were not taken out until the family moved, and they were not restored until the 1980s.

According to the gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář: “Medek is a phenomenon who belonged to a group of artists which another key group, led by Zdeněk Sýkora, did not adore. Today, works by both of them hang close to each other in a permanent exhibition at the National Gallery and both of them would certainly be astonished. Additionally, the shocking increase in the price of Mikuláš Medek’s paintings is heartening for all who believe in the power of Czech art.”

**JOSEF ČAPEK: EIGHT LINOCUTS, 100 YEARS**

12 September – 12 October 2019

Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář – Library

Shönkirch Palace

Mikulandská 7, Prague 1 – New Town, CZ

Josef Čapek: *Eight* *Linocuts*, Stará Říše 1919, a Dobré dílo (Good Works) Edition, Vol. 61.

Print run of fifteen copies 23 x 18 cm and thirty copies with a format of 23 x 15 cm. (Čapek colourised the individual sheets in twenty of the albums.)

**The third exhibition at Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář is *Josef Čapek: Eight Linocuts*, *100 Years*. This relates to one of the most valuable series in Czech graphic art history. Made in 1919, the series has never been comprehensively presented. The *Eight* *Linocuts* album is the first result of Čapek’s collaboration with Josef Florian’s publishing house in Stará Říše. Josef Florian and Bohuslav Reynek established contact with Čapek towards the end of 1917 in connection with his first literary work, *Lelio*, and also noticed his graphic works published in the *Die* *Aktion* revue. Reynek was so impressed by the linocuts Čapek made to accompany Apollinaire’s *Zone*, that he asked the artist to illustrate his translation of Baudelaire’s *The Flowers of Evil*, which was due to be published by Stará Říše. Subsequently, in early 1919, Čapek offered Florian several graphic works in the event that they might be a suitable artistic accompaniment to the *Nova et vetera* anthologies, but Florian actually compiled them in a separate album that was published as a Dobré dílo (Good Works) edition. Specifically, they consist of figural motifs, many of them containing references to the best-know works of Cubist painting.**

In spring 1919, Josef Čapek wrote to the publisher Josef Florian: “I am sending you several carvings, all of which are for you, but select only those that you would like for your publication and dispose of the rest. I was limited by the fairly small format; I made those tiny birds just in case you needed something to fill in empty space below a poem, or other similar cases. So please feel free to do with these carvings as you see fit and according to how best they suit your needs; I will send you some more later…”

According to the gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář: “The series is legendary chiefly from literature and individual specimens appear only rarely. They are a part of our history and belong to the main series dating back to when Czechoslovakia was first established. He goes on to add: “They are also my personal contribution and thanks to all those who keep these rarest of jewels in their entirety.”

A **guided** **tour** has been planned to accompany the exhibitions, which will take place on Saturday, **5 October 2019** starting at 11 am. Should you be interested, please register by sending an email to: event@zdeneksklenar.cz.

To download print-quality photos, click [here](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4goxgpu71yn9mry/AABW9WOxpod6aRAYCU_D5K0oa?dl=0).

The next exhibition at Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář, which will open on 17 October 2019, is being organised to mark the 95th birthday of the phenomenal Karel Malich.

For more information, please contact Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář:

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