**Zdeněk Sklenář Solo Exhibition: Prints**

14 June to 24 June 2018

Prince Kung’s Palace

Anshan Hall, Prince Kung´s Palace
No. 17, Qianhai Xijie, Xicheng District, Beijing, China
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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**The artwork of Zdeněk Sklenář is being honoured yet again – Prince Kung’s Palace and the Times Art Museum in Beijing, in collaboration with Galerie Zdeněk Sklenář and under the patronage of the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Beijing have organised the exhibition** Zdeněk Sklenář Solo Exhibition**.** **Specifically, the exhibition presents a selection of the graphic works made by the painter, graphic artist, and illustrator Zdeněk Sklenář (1910–1986), whose artworks are clearly linked with Chinese culture and art.**

This solo show, held in the historical Prince Kung’s Palace located northwest of the Forbidden City in Beijing, presents sixty-two of Zdeněk Sklenář’s prints that are mainly associated with the artist’s Chinese period. It was specifically Sklenář’s interest in the culture and art of this ancient region that took him to China, where he travelled in 1955 as the head graphic artist for the exhibition A Decade of Czechoslovak Culture in Beijing, which was shown in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangzhou. Whilst in China, Sklenář became friends with a number of prominent individuals of the Chinese art and cultural scene – the painter Ye Qianyu , the poet Ai Qing, the poet Li Keran and the legendary Qi Baishi.

These personal meetings – and his entire stay in China overall – had a great impact on him. Sklenář was interested in Asian art even as a child. He was captivated by calligraphy, logograms, art, philosophy, religion and gastronomy. China ultimately became his destiny and, after his return to Czechoslovakia, he transferred his experience into his artwork. Sklenář became a much sought-after illustrator for books with Chinese and Asian themes. He made prints using techniques that displayed the experimental use of multi-colour processes and extreme numbers of colours in a way never seen before. His paintings – and his entire oeuvre – changed. Today we speak of works from his “Chinese period”. His China experience empowered the way in which he used colour, and the paintings from this Chinese period formed the basis for his most significant works of the 1960s and 1970s, when he interlinked Eastern and Western principles in a harmonious whole. As far as this direction is concerned, he was unique.

Professor Fan Dian, who organised the extensive exhibition *Zdeněk Sklenář’s China* at the National Gallery of China (NAMOC) in 2009, says the following about the artist and his artworks: *“Zdeněk Sklenář was able to creatively and ingeniously incorporate his Chines experience in his oeuvre and increase its value. It is specifically in his Chinese illustrations that we find many formal Chinese elements, shapes, symbols, motifs, and stylisation; however, the style and the techniques used are typically Sklenář’s, not Chinese. In his graphic works, I see the European tradition as I know it. Nevertheless, what is most important is that, as a modern artist, he creates a very modern work of art through the ingenious linking of elements from both traditions*.”

The current exhibition is primarily a retrospective of Sklenář’s graphic works, and 62 of the 110 prints that Sklenář created over the course of his life are on display. Also included are fourteen of the original illustrations the artist made for the well-known book *The Monkey King*, which were a part of the exhibits at the Czech pavilion at EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, where they were seen by millions. This attention has earned Zdeněk Sklenář the soubriquet “the 73rd transformation of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King”, and he has become a symbol of the new image of *The Monkey King*, a Chinese national hero who has successfully mastered 72 transformations.

Jiří Příhoda designed the exhibition installation, and a number of accompanying events have been planned.

The exhibition is a part of the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Czechoslovak state.