

Czech Routes:

Selected Czechoslovak Artists in Britain from the Ben Uri and private collections

Open daily from 8th – 21st April and the following 4 Mondays to the 20th May



Frederick Feigl, *The Restaurant*, Ben Uri Collection ©Frederick Feigl Estate

Czech Routes is the fourth in Ben Uri's series of exhibitions designed to highlight the contribution of émigré artists to Britain since 1900, succeeding previous exhibitions on German, Polish and Austrian artists (2017-18). This occasion also marks the opening of the museum's extensive art library and archives to the public. All are key components of the Ben Uri Research Unit (BURU) and its accompanying extensive research programme exploring and recording the contribution of Jewish and immigrant artists to Britain since 1900.

Featuring the work of 21 painters, printmakers and sculptors, many of whom fled to Britain as racial and political refugees from National Socialism, *Czech Routes* marks the 80th anniversary of Hitler's

invasion of Czechoslovakia on 15th March 1939 (the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia's northern frontier, having already ceded to Germany on 10th October 1938). Nazi occupation resulted in mass displacement and by December 1939 nearly 12,000 refugees from Czechoslovakia were resident in Britain. Of those registered with the Czech Refugee Trust Fund some 67% were Jewish.

Portraitist and pioneering printmaker Emil Orlik made his first trip to Britain in 1898, however, the majority of Czechoslovak artists exhibited, along with Austrian expressionist Oskar Kokoschka and German photomontagist, John Heartfield (both also featured), made forced journeys to the UK immediately prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. These include sculptor Anita Mandl and painter-printmaker Käthe Strenitz, just two of the 669 *Kindertransportees* rescued by British humanitarian Nicholas Winton.

Also represented are works by subsequent generations of Czechoslovak artists including Irena Sedlecká, who fled her country's totalitarian Communist regime in the 1960s, as well as those who, between the 1970s and 1990s, have made the positive decision to immigrate to Britain to study and develop professionally.

The exhibition showcases work drawn primarily from the Ben Uri Collection alongside external loans from important private collections. **Featured artists include: Franta Bělský, Jacob Bornfriend, Dorrit Epstein (aka Dekk), Frederick Feigl, Leo Haas, Walter Herz, Anita Mandl, Emil Orlik, Irena Sedlecká, and Walter Trier, in addition to contemporary multidisciplinary artists Tereza Busková, Mila Fürstová and Tereza Stehliková.**

Curated by Nicola Baird, Research Officer at the Ben Uri Research Unit, the exhibition will be accompanied by a publication and programme of related talks and events.

Opening Tuesday 9th April from 6.30pm at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, 108A Boundary Road, off Abbey Road, London, NW8 0RH

For high-res images and further information please contact Nicola Baird- nicolab@benuri.org

Ben Uri Gallery & Museum, 108a Boundary Road, London, NW8 0RH.

Standard opening times, outside special exhibitions as above, is every Monday, 10-5.30pm and by appointment.

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