

ubu

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Frantisek Vobecky: Photomontages 1935–1938

Within the Context of CZECH AVANT-GARDE

January 8 – February 26, 2000

Ubu Gallery will exhibit the Surrealist-influenced photomontages of **Frantisek Vobecky** (1902–1991) made between 1935 and 1938 within the context of Czech avant-garde works on paper, books and ephemera of the period.

Vobecky attended evening drawing classes in Prague from 1923 to 1926 and continued his painting studies in Paris in 1926 and 1927. He took up photography in 1928 and in the late 1920s exhibited his paintings as a guest of S.V.U. Mánes (Mánes Union of Fine Arts) in Prague, becoming a regular member in 1931. Vobecky's early work featured the imaginative forms of lyrical cubism, but by the 1930s – his most fruitful period – Surrealism increasingly dominated his interests.

Vobecky originally involved himself with photography as a means of documenting his paintings. Soon he started photographing found objects and details of rocks and sculptures. From there he moved to simple still lifes of ordinary household or everyday objects and subsequently, in 1935, began his exploration of photomontage. The influence of Surrealism in Czechoslovakia was pervasive during the 1930s and it gradually replaced Functionalism and Constructivism as the principal ideology of the avant-garde. Surrealism dominated the "International Exhibition of Photography" organized by S.V.U. Mánes in Prague in 1936. Certain of the series of photographic assemblages Vobecky produced between 1935 and 1938 to be shown at Ubu Gallery were included in this important exhibition, the largest presentation of its kind in the 1930s. The 1936 exhibition led to the founding of the Photographic Section of S.V.U. Mánes, an official endorsement of photography by the most prominent artistic organization in Czechoslovakia.

Subsequently Vobecky's photographs were also included in the "Exhibition of the Czechoslovak Avant-Garde" in Prague (1937) and in "S.V.U. Mánes's Photography Section" (1938), which showcased 36 of Vobecky's photographs, as well as the work of Jindrich Styrsky, Josef Sudek and Jaromir Funke. Vobecky has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of the City of Prague (1985) and the Prague House of Photography (1996). His works have been included in many group exhibitions, such as "Czech Modernism 1900–1945" organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1990); "The Art of the Avant-Garde in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938" organized by IVAM in Valencia, Spain (1993); and "Czech Surrealism 1929–1953" organized by the Museum of the City of Prague (1996).