

The Museum of Modern Art

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JOSEF KOUDELKA PHOTOGRAPHS TO BE SEEN AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Forty-three photographs taken over the past ten years by Czech photographer Josef Koudelka, including a number of prints from his extended series on European gypsies, will be on view from February 28 through April 30 in the Steichen Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition, Koudelka's first one-artist show in the United States, has been selected and installed by John Szarkowski, Director, Department of Photography.

Born in 1938 in the Moravian town of Boskovice, Josef Koudelka took his degree in aeronautical engineering and worked in that field until 1967, when he began working as a photographer exclusively. His earlier work concerned itself largely with the theatre and included a book of photographs of a production of Alfred Jarry's "Ubu Roi" and considerable work for the magazine "Divadlo" ("Theatre"). During the past decade his work has been focussed primarily on the gypsies of Europe. Koudelka left Czechoslovakia in 1968 -- the year of the Soviet occupation -- and has since traveled in England, France, Ireland and Spain. He became a member of Magnum in 1974.

The Czech critic Anna Fárová has stated that there is a prevailing antithesis in Czech photography between the documentary and the expressive functions. She points out that Koudelka's work does not fit neatly within either category. John Szarkowski notes that while Koudelka's subject matter is appropriate to photojournalism -- exotic people in unfamiliar places -- his intention is more "formal and interpretive" than reportorial.

Mr. Szarkowski further states: "The character of the visual patterns that identify Koudelka's work is reminiscent of Cartier-Bresson, but these structures serve a very different sense of life. Koudelka's pictures seem to concern them-

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selves with prototypical rituals, and a theatre of ancient and unchangeable fables. Their motive is perhaps not psychological but religious. Perhaps they describe not the small and cherished differences that distinguish each of us from all others, but the prevailing circumstance that encloses us."

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