

Lubo STACHO

Modlitba Prayer

The exhibition is a chronological projection of five decades of the artist's creative work in thematic dialogues with an accent on spiritual motifs, in genres ranging from classical photography to new media. The exhibition reflects upon the spiritual essence of Stacho's art and his interest in the depiction of religious themes in selected cycles which are dominated by metaphor and the passage of time, but also a spiritual and artistic richness of faith. The exhibition is presented as part of the Year of Sacred Art and to commemorate the artist's 70th birthday. The exhibition is presented as a part of the *Theme* dramaturgical cycle.

"If we are to understand and evaluate correctly, we must create an oasis of silence, immerse ourselves within ourselves and in prayer." — John Paul II. —

Since 2010 the Gallery of Spiš Artists has presented a series of exhibition concepts titled **SACRAL ELEMENTUM** which have interpreted sacral tendencies in contemporary fine art through thematic and profile projects. **PRAYER**, a selection of works by the photographer Lubo Stacho, is the sixth exhibition in this series and reflects the spiritual foundations of Stacho's work and his interest in the depiction of sacral themes. It forms a chronological narrative of the artist's spiritual quest, with works dating from the 1970s to the present day reflecting spiritual and meditative themes.

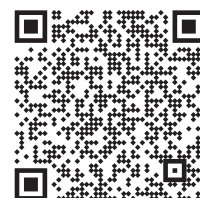
The classical black-and-white photography of the cycle titled **CONCEPTUAL DIPTYCHS** (1980s – 1990s) is emblematic of the typical focus of Stacho's work such as the passage of time and metaphor. The selection of work in the chapter titled **LIGHT** (1980s – 1990s) corresponds to the praise of light and sensitive photographic layers. Despite the conceptual variety of the projects, they are connected by the relatively short period of time in which they were created, during the hectic blossoming which occurred shortly before and after the Velvet Revolution of November 1989. The spiritual record of the movement of light in the photographs created as part of the project *Northern England in North Slovakia* presented under the title *In Praise of Light* (1993 / 2019) is accompanied by the screening of a documentary film and Stacho's videos with spiritual themes.

Three further cycles were created in collaboration with Monika Stacho. The photography of **TWO HOUSES OF ONE LORD** (2018 – 2010) presents places of worship as spiritual spaces and sites of meditation and contemplation. The artistic and documentary colour photographs represent an effort to awaken historical memory and collective responsibility; not only for the events which took place during and after World War II but also for the current state of spirituality in modern society and within each of us. The diptychs titled **RUINS** (2012) are a series of large-format photographs which map derelict churches, synagogues and industrial sites, standing as a reflection of the decimation of the spirituality and also the culture of the country around which the artist has travelled for many years. As always, ruins are a memento. The most recent cycle, **SACRAL STORIES** (2022), maps the story of Slovak places of worship from their origins to the present day; the subjects are artefacts which have been captured photographically, presenting part of the spiritual and artistic wealth of faith. The exhibition presents selected works from the project which is divided into five chapters, *Sorrow, Beauty, Rituals, Culture and Consumption*.

Mgr. Lucia Benická, Mgr. art. Monika Stacho, ArtD.,
exhibition curators

téma
theme

Curators: Mgr. Lucia Benická – GUS, Mgr. art. Monika Stacho, ArtD.
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Vyznanie alebo pohľad späť / A Confession (or Looking Back)

"It was my younger brother Pavol who first introduced me to photography, and together we started a photography club in the Cultural Centre in Nováky. We received our initiation into the mysteries of the medium from Lajči Bugár, who would visit us from Partizánske on his Pionier motorbike. This was the heyday of the analogue approach, when film was developed in darkness in tanks and photos materialised in trays under the dim light of a darkroom lamp. At this time my brother and I prepared a photo lab in our basement where we would spend not only all the hours of the day but also entire nights. And then came my studies in photography at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Bratislava and at the B-Klub photography club. Every year we organised a show in which we exhibited recent work and invited guests such as Vladimír Vorobjov, Ľudovít Hlaváč, Zuzana Mináčová and Oľga Bleyová. In 1976, we collaborated with Tibor Škandík on an exhibition of fifty 1 x 1 metre photographs of the architecture of Bratislava. The show opened at the Faculty of Architecture in Sofia (BG).

I was accepted to the Department of Photography at FAMU in Prague in 1979 after completing my basic military service at the Military Art Studio. FAMU was one of the most liberal schools during the period of normalization in Czechoslovakia. After this, I worked on architectural photography with the Association of Slovak Architects in Bratislava. Our studio was based in a cellar on the street now known as Mariánská. It was there that I first started my documentation of light and my Obchodná Street project. Then it was the Municipal Cultural Centre, where I prepared the dramaturgy for the Profile Chamber Gallery and devoted myself to the development of amateur photography. In 1990 I joined the Academy of Fine Arts and Design and established the formal study of photography in Slovakia.

I am not the kind of artist who expresses feelings, who seeks out beauty in abstractions. I am more interested in content, ideas, in analysing society. I have always worked on individual projects in which I look for messages for both the present and the future. I hold up a mirror to society in the hope that I can bring about change."

Ľubo Stacho (*13. 8. 1953, Handlová) studied at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Slovak Technical University (SVŠT) in Bratislava (1976) and at the FAMU in Prague (1985). In 1990 he established the study of photography at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava and led the Photography Laboratory there until 2003. He was appointed professor in 2010. The scale of his work is remarkably wide, ranging from documentary photography to creative projects, performance, installation, intermedia intersections and email art projects.

Stacho has received many awards: the Gold Petzval Medal (1974), First Prize in the UNESCO World Heritage Fund in Prague (1993), a prize at the Photography Biennial of the Metropolitan Museum of Photography in Tokyo (1995), Personality of Slovak Photography (2021) and many more. His work has been the subject of dozens of solo exhibitions and has featured in more than 300 group exhibitions, including Mattress Factory Pittsburgh, 1995 (USA), Foto Fest Houston, 1996 (USA), Vienna Photogallery, 1997 (AUS), and shows in Ljubljana, 1998 (SI) and Tel Aviv, 2000 (IL). He has been a visiting professor at the universities of Ghent (BE), Amsterdam (NL), Budapest (HUN), Nottingham (GB), Providence (FR), New Jersey (USA), Jerusalem (IL) and Lahti (FI). His solo exhibitions have been held in Pittsburgh (USA), Vienna (AUS), Tel Aviv (IL), Tokyo (JP), Berlin (DE), Warsaw (PL), Kaunas (LT) and other cities and countries. Stacho's photography also features in numerous international collections. Since 2008 he has collaborated with his wife Monika Stacho on many projects. He lives and works in Bratislava.



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