

arising amongst the experts as well as the general public with regard to the formation of the landscape and architecture.

A number of painted and photographic posters, on for example ecological agriculture based on the principle of permanently sustainable growth, Southern Bohemian ecology, Temelín... were also presented at the conference. The engaging features of this south Bohemian conference without doubt contributed to the

unusual regard for both Czech and foreign participants (well-organised meals, an efficient refreshment stand, information service, two receptions, visits to the Hluboká chateau and Český Krumlov), and, last but not least, a considerable attendance and participation of women in today's ecological and political problems.

Jan Kamaryt

Both in Honor of the Photographs of Jindřich Štreit and a Plea for Sociology

The catalogue texts on Jindřich Štreit's exhibitions lay emphasis on the content of his photographs – the „altogetherness“ of his view. Naturally, only quite a superficial observer would suppose Štreit's photographs to be reportage, or assume that no compact life stance is adopted, no underlying philosophical statement by the author. Some writers, however, contrast this quality of Štreit's photographs with their sociological value. In their opinion, Štreit is not one of those photographers „concentrating on a certain social phenomenon or some aspect of social being“. This I can no longer agree with, since it seems to me the greatness of Štreit's photography consists in the very „altogether“ life attitude bound with the precise recording of certain social phenomena and with some aspects of social being.

It is probably a question of a misunderstanding, the question of what sociology in fact is. With this question I will move to sociology's defense: sociology is not sociography, it is not a science which *describes* social reality; nor is sociology public opinion research, as the editors of Czech Television would have it. Sociology is the beautiful sister of philosophy. Recently, one of my colleagues, Mr. Petrusek, wrote that „social problems worth their name carry an immense and profound humanitarian dimension“. In this context, sociology discusses cultural universalia, sociocultural or sometimes anthropological constants. Hence sociology's objective cannot reside in the simple description of people's behavior. Its intention and its goal is to critically reflect the

human being's place in the world by means of concrete observation.

Does not Jindřich Štreit do the same? My conviction is he does exactly the same. Like a sociologist, his starting point is concrete social situations. His camera is not familiar with those artistic somersaults, picture infiltration, collage, it knows no color either, it does not prop itself up with names – elements to communicate the mood and the view backgrounding the photograph. In the first plan of Štreit's phrasing is a bare statement of social reality: televisions, „typified“ new grocery stores, potatoes in commercial packaging meandering to the rural housing block, the party surrounding the pig's slaughter in front of a concrete-slab house, artificial materials wherever one casts one's eye, women in „male“ work situations, „knickers“ as the universal summer home dress of „modern“ men: all this comes to our minds, such frequently recurring motives in Štreit's photos, that they have to be recognized as the concrete indicators of something more general and more fundamental. In the given examples, it is the sad fact of the „merging town and country life styles“ or the question of the social consequences of civilization in general, that constitutes the common denominator. And here the matter has serious roots and results, the question nobody doubts being: what for country people is this attraction of city objects, city dwellings, city clothing and behavior hold? Is it something which brings greater happiness? And further: this inconsistent and sometimes picturesque acceptance of city patterns draws attention to the value of the socio-cultural constants of the country.

As well as the given example (the relationship city – country) we can identify in

Štreit's work a number of other concrete sociological subjects with a serious philosophical core: the weakness and glory of our church, the monstrous silent militarization of the nation, the senseless industrialization of agriculture, the vain attempts at brain-washing during the countless „trainings“... We would have to discard a great deal and fear calling things by their names (the way sociologists do) to let ourselves to be swept off our feet by the mere experience of „authenticity“ or „existentiality“ when visiting Štreit's exhibitions. The philosophical implication of Štreit's pictures is so strong we cannot overlook it.

I am wholly convinced that with a thorough understanding of sociology, we could take Jindřich Štreit to be an outstanding spontaneous sociologist. (I would like to point out, that for those interested in methods of sociological research, a photograph being the one of them, Mr. Štreit's access to the heart of Sovinec households, the people's acceptance of his camera will remain the subject of everlasting envy. At the same time, I know this cannot be the cause of envy, for the unprecedented situational possibilities open to his camera are the result of years of dedication on the part its master and his trusty co-existence with inhabitants of Sovinec.) Is Jindřich Štreit a sociologist then? I do not think it is possible to bestow upon him the rank of scientist, the reason being that he has some weaknesses in this respect. His is still an artist: he lacks, thank God, the implacable objectivity of science. This is what constitutes, in my eyes, the heights of his creation. In this context, his „consideration“ for the people is of primary importance. Nobody can tell me that the photographer seeking sensation will not find dramatic or naturalistic situations in Sovinec. Of course I haven't forgotten that Mr. Štreit belongs to the Sovinec community, they very body which controls the publication of his photographs. But on the other hand, would not the photographer with such an interest and intention find a way? In addition, we should note Jindřich Štreit's compassion for women – for which he is the fair opposite of Milan Kundera or Vladimír Páral. And his camera refuses to see the suffering of animals (I have seen one drab exception in a catalogue from Cheb). Let's have a look at how happy

dogs and other animals are in Sovinec - if only it were the same in reality! However, I'm afraid it's not the same in reality, it is the sign of the noble inobjectivity of Štreit's camera: Jindřich Štreit is too much of a knight too much to show unfortunate beings in his pictures (be it women or animals). Hence this photographer could be characterized in many ways, not only as a so-called merciless critic.

There is one more point in which I see the glory of his photography and the selection of photographs for his exhibitions: it is the almost Victorian austerity taboo of so-called delicate themes with a suspicion of the erotic. I believe even here, if one felt the need, one could identify a crack in fellow-citizens' control. Yet Štreit presents the relationships between men and women with the purity of last century's rural life.

How could we fail to take delight in it today?

In conclusion, let me – as a sociologist used to thinking of life concretenesses – draw your attention to the environment the author of our exhibition lives in, photographs in and works in. Life among the inhabitants of Sovinec ultimately brought Mr. Štreit national and international glory. But none of us should think Mr. Štreit could have foreseen such an outcome when he decided to become a teacher in Sovinec's „combined class“, when he settled in the village and chose the life style they used to call „alternative“ in the West.

His life choice was one of the more difficult alternatives - he stepped into handicapped and handicapping conditions. However, it would be an oversimplification to evaluate it only as an act speaking out against last regime and as an act of opposition against totality. Indeed, it was this very decision which comes from the category of „socio-cultural constants“ already mentioned. It was a decision of such universal import, that it is not less eloquent and critical even in contemporary terms. Štreit's work in handicapped conditions, in a region historically and socially disadvantaged as in other ways, is in fact quite contrary to the current orientation to human success, to competition between the efficient and the less capable, to economic activity at any price.

Hana Librová

