

JAROMÍR FUNKE

AVANT-GARDE PHOTOGRAPHER

Jaromír Funke's Life in Dates

- 1896 Born on 1 August, in Skuteč, east Bohemia, to the Kolín lawyer Antonín Funke and his wife Miloslava.
- 1908 Received his first camera as a present from his father.
- 1915 Graduated from grammar school in Kolín, and began to attend the medical school of Prague University.
- 1919 At his father's request, quit medical school and began to attend the law school of Charles University, Prague. He graduated in 1922, but decided not to sit the final exams. From 1919 to 1922, also read philosophy and art history at the Faculty of Arts at Prague, but did not finish this course either.
- 1920 Began to devote himself intensively to making photographs. At first, focused on matter-of-fact shots of Kolín and its suburbs, romantic landscapes, and out-of-the-way places in the city, working in the pictorialist style.
- 1923 Made his first Avant-garde photographs, mainly still lifes influenced by Cubism, New Objectivity, and abstract art, but also made genre photos in the spirit of purist pictorialism. Eighteen of his gelatin silver photographs were included in the First Exhibition of the Association of Czech Camera Clubs (Svaz českých klubů fotografů amatérů) in Prague.
- 1924 Began to publish articles on photography, including theory. Showed his works for the first time in international photographic salons in Paris and Toronto. Continued to send works for exhibition in salons until the early 1930s. His photographs were shown, for example, in Birmingham, London, Turin, Stockholm, Saragossa, Ottawa, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Antwerp, Brussels, Glasgow, Seattle, Warsaw, New York City, Tokyo, Manchester, Montevideo, and Vienna. On 17 March, became a member of the Prague Camera Club (Fotoklub Praha), but was expelled in four months, together with Adolf Schneeberger, Josef Sudek, and Josef Šroubek, after writing highly critical remarks about a set of photographs from a camera club outside Prague.
- 1925 In January, became a member of the Czech Photographic Society (Česká fotografická společnost), which brought together forward-looking young photographers who made their works as gelatin silver prints, rejecting pigment processes.
- 1927 Made the first works of the Abstract Photo series, which are among his best.
- 1929 With the series Glass and Reflection (later called Reflections), became the first Czech photographer to react to Atget and to make works in a Surrealist spirit. In a production of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* at the National Theatre in Brno (directed by E. F. Burian), the stage designer Zdeněk Rossmann projected slides of Funke's abstract photos onto a screen that was part of the Constructivist scenery. Began to publish in the Avant-garde periodicals *ReD* and *Index*.
- 1930 Worked with Alexandr Hackenschmied, organizing the New Photography exhibition at the Aventinská mansarda (the attic exhibition space of the Aventinum publishing house), Prague. It was the first group exhibition of Avant-garde photography in the Czechoslovak capital. Made photographs of modern architecture for Bohuslav Fuchs's book *Masarykův studentský domov Brno* (The Masaryk Hall of Residence, Brno).
- 1931 Beginning on 1 September, taught photography part-time at the Vocational School and the School of Arts and Crafts (Škola umeleckých remesiel) in Bratislava, at first only for

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- evening courses. Began to work with the periodical Nová Bratislava (New Bratislava). In Kolín, in autumn, had his first solo exhibition.
- 1932 Participated in The Modern Spirit in Photography, an important exhibition organized by the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, which included works, for example, by André Kertész, Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, Edward Steichen, Henri Cartier-Bresson, František Drtikol, and Josef Sudek.
- 1933 The Ministry of Education approved Funke's being a part-time teacher of advertising photography at the State School of Graphic Arts in Prague. Lubomír Linhart included Funke's works in the Exhibition of Socially Engaged Photography (Výstava sociální fotografie), which opened at the Metro Centre, Prague.
- 1934 On 1 September, was made a professor at the School of Arts and Crafts, Bratislava.
- 1935 On 1 February, began to teach at the State School of Graphic Arts in Prague, working with Josef Ehm until the end of the 1943–44 school year. Ehm had already been following Funke's syllabus in his own teaching. Together with the head of the school, Ladislav Sutnar, Funke edited the publication Fotografie vidí povrch (Photography sees the surface), comprising works by teachers and students. On 28 November, married his fiancée, Anna Kellerová of Kolín.
- 1936 On 19 November, became a member of the Mánes Society of Artists. In December, together with Jiří Lehovec, Josef Sudek, Jindřich Štyrský, and František Vobecký, became a member of the newly founded photography section of the Mánes Society.
- 1937 Took his first photographs in Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the eastern-most province of Czechoslovakia. Participated in the Exhibition of the Czechoslovak Avant-garde, organized by Burian's D 37 theatre at the Industrial Arts Centre (Dům uměleckého průmyslu), Prague. On 14 December, his daughter Miloslava was born.
- 1938 Participated in a Prague exhibition of photography by six members of the photography section of the Mánes Society of Artists.
- 1939 In autumn, together with his friend Eugen Wiškovský, began to work together intensively on the periodical Fotografický obzor (Photographic Review), whose new editor was Josef Ehm. From the beginning of 1940 until March 1941, Funke, together with Ehm, was an editor of this monthly. In 1940, published a special issue on Avant-garde photography, which includes Funke's now famous article 'Od fotogramu k emoci' (From the Photogram to Emotion).
- 1940 On commission from the town council, photographed the north-west Bohemian town of Louny, and later also Kolín.
- 1942 Otakar Štorch-Marien published the first of several portfolios of Funke's original photographs of Prague churches.
- 1944 After the State School of Graphic Arts was closed down by the Nazi authorities, Funke, as of October, was employed by the Dorka industrial arts co-operative.
- 1945 On 16 March, was taken to hospital with what appeared to be acute appendicitis, but could not be operated on immediately because an air-raid was expected. After the operation, it was determined that he had been suffering from peritonitis caused by a burst duodenal ulcer. Jaromír Funke died on 22 March. He is buried in Kolín.

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Funke's photographs are in the collections of the following museums (selection):

Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze; Moravská galerie v Brně; Muzeum umění Olomouc; Regionální muzeum v Kolíně; Oblastní muzeum v Lounech; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; IVAM, Valencia; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge (Mass.); Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Denver Art Museum; Cleveland Museum of Art; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; George Eastman Museum, Rochester (NY); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo.

Bibliography:

- Lubomír Linhart, Jaromír Funke, Prague: SNKLHU, 1960.
- Ludvík Souček, Jaromír Funke: Fotografie, Prague: Odeon, 1970.
- Daniela Mrázková and Vladimír Remeš, Jaromír Funke: Fotograf und Theoretiker der moderner tschechoslowakischen Fotografie, Leipzig: Fotokinoverlag, 1986.
- Antonín Dufek, Jaromír Funke (1896–1945): Průkopník fotografické avantgardy / Pioneering Avant-Garde Photography, Brno: Moravská galerie, 1996.
- Antonín Dufek, Jaromír Funke, in Czech and English, Prague: Torst, 2003.
- Antonín Dufek, Jaromír Funke: Between Construction and Emotion, Brno and Prague: Moravská galerie and KANT, 2013.
- Gabriel Fragner, Funkeho žáci na Státní grafické škole v Praze, Opava and Prague: Institut tvůrčí fotografie FPF SU and KANT, 2016.
- Vladimír Birgus, Jaromír Funke. Avant-garde-Photographer, Prague: KANT, 2014.
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Portfolios / Editions with gelatine-silver prints made from Funke's original negatives:

Jaromír Funke: Portfolio 1995, Prague: Pražský dům fotografie, 1995
Jaromír Funke: 12 Avant-Garde Photographs, Prague: Fotoart, 2014