

Digital Guide

Catalogue

Scan the QR code and explore our digital guide, which will present 20 key artworks and the context of their origin. You can swipe through all the works at once or scan individual QR codes on selected label. The digital guide is available on mobiles as well as on our website. You can use it both in the Kunsthalle Praha or elsewhere at your convenience.

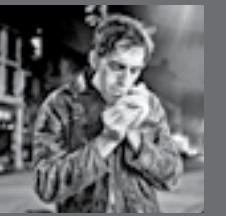


Russell Ferguson

Bohemia: History of an Idea, 1950–2000

Available at the Design Shop and on www.shop.kunsthallepraha.org

Bohemia History of an Idea 1950–2000



Russell Ferguson

Tours and special program

As part of the special programmes of the exhibition we have prepared film screenings (KunstKino), lectures, performances, and concerts. Please follow our websites and social media for up-to-date information.

www.kunsthallepraha.org/en/events

List of lenders

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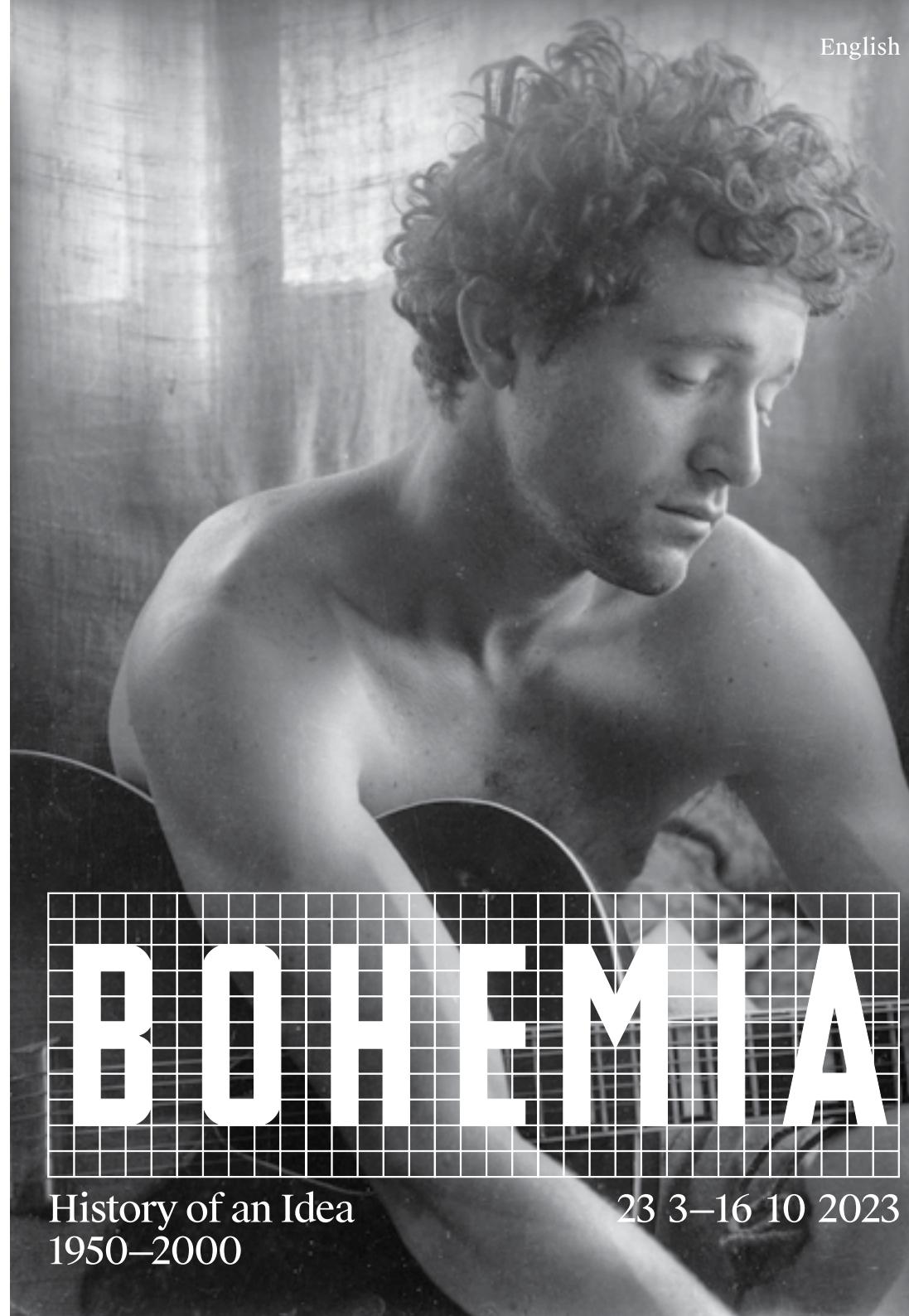
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Exhibition organised by Kunsthalle Praha

Director: Ivana Goossen
Chief curator: Christelle Havranek

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BOHEMIA

History of an Idea
1950–2000

23 3–16 10 2023

Bohemia: History of an Idea, 1950-2000

Bohemia is a real place that has also given its name to a cultural movement and way of living. Since its origins in mid-nineteenth-century Paris, the idea of bohemia has been perceived as a powerful and consistent component of what it means to be an artist. Youth from all over the world continue to be drawn to what bohemia represents, which is above all a refusal of and disdain for societal conventions, an embrace of total freedom, the pursuit of art, and the willingness to accept a sometimes brutal poverty as the price of these liberties. All these elements have remained more-or-less present across the many bohemian centers that have manifested across the world, even in their widely varying forms.

This exhibition looks at the world of bohemia from the end of the Second World War until the end of the twentieth century. The displays are organized around the ways that bohemia manifested itself in cities in Europe, North America, and Asia, and the works of those who documented their respective bohemian circles. Each of these sections foreground a different aspect of what bohemia has meant at different points in history and in various social contexts.

Although the idea of bohemia has been remarkably robust, it could be said that we are seeing the end of this tradition, or at least a very radical transformation of it that now struggles with the shifting terrain of widespread gentrification, commercialization, and social media. Despite this, the idea still offers some kind of alternative to a life of conformity and for that reason exerts an enduring fascination, continuing to galvanize and inspire even from a distant perspective.

Exhibited artists

Neville D'Almeida and Hélio Oiticica, Roy Arden, David Bailey, Alvin Baltrop, Bill Brandt, Trisha Brown, Rudy Burckhardt, John Deakin, Stan Douglas, Ed van der Elsken, Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, William Gedney, Nan Goldin, Tomislav Gotovac, Bob Gruen, Richard Hamilton, Peter Hujar, Libuše Jarcovjáková, Jess, Patricia Jordan, Jules Kirschbaum, Jorge Lewinski, Fred W. McDarrah, Babette Mangolte, Alice Neel, Gabriel Orozco, Bill Owens, RongRong, Ken Russell, Bijan Saffari, Joan Semmel, Anita Steckel, Thomas Struth, Edmund Teske, Wolfgang Tillmans, Wang Jin, David Wojnarowicz, Martin Wong, Zhang Huan

Gallery 1 The Post-War Years

Paris was the undisputed capital of bohemia for more than a hundred years, but after the Second World War other cities began to challenge it for the role. The most important of these was New York, which in the immediate post-war era produced a scene that included writers, artists, and musicians whose work proved inspirational around the world. For the first time, Paris had a real rival. Of course, this was by no means completely clearcut. Americans still flocked to Paris, at least for a few years, and the New York environment was sparked by the presence of many European émigrés and refugees.

Swinging London offered a heady mix of music, fashion, and high living alongside the traditional poverty of classic bohemia, and its glamor was followed around the world. Only a few years later, the putative utopianism of the drug-infused hippie culture of San Francisco became for a while the center of the counterculture.



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¹
Alice Neel
Dore Ashton, 1952
© The Estate of Alice Neel

²
Bijan Saffari
untitled (*Davood*), 1982
© Estate Bijan Saffari, Paris

³
Fred W. McDarrah
Allen Ginsberg's Refrigerator with Pictures of E. A. Poe and Charles Baudelaire, January 9, 1960, 1960
© Fred W. McDarrah, MUUS Collection

Cover photo
Edmund Teske
Ramblin' Jack Elliott, 1952,
© Edmund Teske Archives / Laurence Bump and Nils Vidstrand, 2001

Gallery 2 The Late Twentieth Century

While New York in the 1970s reasserted itself as perhaps the last global capital of bohemianism, by the 1980s the necessity of such a center was increasingly called into question. With better communications and easier travel, bohemian milieus became increasingly possible and sustainable in much smaller cities too. We can see characteristic examples of this tendency here in work from Vancouver, Tehran, Zagreb, Prague, Beijing, Mexico City, and London.

The question of how artists have dealt with these new conditions and continued to find new forms of bohemia is an ongoing one. For some, the idea now comes with a palpable sense of nostalgia that evokes the bohemian centers of earlier decades, the records of which continue to inspire but appear less and less achievable. For others, traces of the hedonism and anti-work ethic could be found in contemporary club culture. The final melancholic works in the exhibition by Gabriel Orozco and Wolfgang Tillmans acknowledge that any engagement with bohemia today is largely reflective, but not without some remaining influence on today's world.



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