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Markéta Luskáčová (Czech b. 1944)

Markéta Luskáčová is a Czech-born photographer who spent much of her life living and working in the UK. She is famous for her documentation of life in remote Slovakian villages and the East End markets of London. Luskáčová is considered one of the best Czech social photographers of her time.

Luskáčová was born in Prague in 1944 and grew up in Czechoslovakia under the Communist Party rule. In 1963, whilst studying Sociology at Charles University in Prague, she encountered a group of Pilgrims that were travelling to the city of Levoča. She documented their cultural and religious traditions, which were under the threat of disappearance, and wrote her degree thesis on the Pilgrimages in Slovakia. Wanting to record her project visually she took photography courses at Prague's FAMU Film and Television School. Luskáčová graduated in 1968. However, her thesis project became the catalyst for her shift from a purely academic analysis of communities, in favour of an exclusively photographic approach.

As a young photographer in Czechoslovakia, Luskáčová went out to visit remote villages which were so poor that the collectivisation imposed elsewhere by the Communist Party was not viable. She witnessed and recorded a way of life that had barely changed for centuries in breathtakingly beautiful pictures, first exhibited in Prague in 1971 and later shown at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1983.

In 1970, Luskáčová moved to London, where she continues to live and work. In London, Markéta found a whole new inspiration for her work in the city's markets, since these were forbidden under Communist rule in her own country.

In particular, **Brick Lane and Spitalfields markets**, with their **immigrant communities**, fascinated Markéta, both as a subject for her photography and a source of cheap produce. Later, when her son was born in 1977, she would push him around the streets in his pram and take photographs of the people and places she encountered. She would spend as much time as possible with her subjects, winning their trust and really getting to know them. "I was poor," recalled Markéta, "so I needed to do my shopping there as it was the cheapest place to buy things. I could identify with the people in Brick Lane because they were immigrants and they were in need of cheap goods. Once I had done my shopping, I would leave my bag with a stallholder while I took my photographs."

Luskáčová first visited the **North East of England in 1976**, and quickly fell in love with the soft sands and craggy cliffs of Whitley Bay, a seaside town just eight miles east of Newcastle.

"I liked the people in the North East, I liked their faces. The sense of community is so strong there," says the Czech photographer. "I was very touched by it all: the families with children, old women in their best hats, elderly couples with grandchildren, teenagers courting shyly or boisterously, the ponies and donkeys walking patiently to and fro on the beach," Markéta recalls. "The dogs and children were everywhere, dogs enjoying themselves as much as the children did. The fairground and the omnipresent tents, fortresses against the wind and rain, the seaside cafes selling sandwiches, apple pies, custard pies, ice creams and teas, of course.

But they also sold boiling water to women who brought with them from their homes their teapots and teabags, because to buy tea for the whole family would be too expensive."

In the **late 1970s**, Luskáčová's focus turned towards the **photographing of childhood**. She has extensively photographed children in Britain, and in 1989 her photographs from this body of work were exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green. In 1998, a larger selection of her series On Children was exhibited at Stills Gallery in Sydney and at the Open Eye Gallery in Liverpool.

Since the return of democracy, Luskáčová has been returning annually to the Czech Republic to photograph the carnivals happening around the country in an ongoing series of work.

Luskáčová's work has been exhibited at Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool; the Victoria and Albert Museum and Whitechapel Gallery, London; Tate Britain, London.

Collections (a selection)

- British Arts Council, London
- Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
- Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Slovakian Nationale Gallery, Bratislava,
- National Portrait Gallery, London
- National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Seaside 1978-1980



Whitley Bay, 1980

Bricklane & Spitalfields 1974 - 2014



Club Row. Knave of Clubs Pub
London 1979



Man with the chicken. Leyden Street
London 1976



Man with kitten. Christmas Eve.
London 1975

Bricklane & Spitalfields 1974 - 2014



Edward with clock. Off Cheshire Street Market
London 1983



Woman and man with bread. Spitalfields
London 1976



Man selling trousers.. Petticoat Lane
London 1974

In an era when imagery is so ubiquitous, it is easy to doubt its classic value. Classic documentary photography as practiced by the likes of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans and Marketa Luskacova - whose photograph this is - retains its power to move, change and enlighten us.

Rachel Spencer, FT, November 16 2018
Marketa Luskacova: an eye for the real



People around a fire, Spitalfields Market. London 1976

London Street Musicians 1978-1990



Ginger with homemade Sax. Cheshire Street, Spitalfields. London c. 1975



Man singing on Brick Lane, London 1982

Pilgrim. Slovakia Poland 1964-1971



People sitting outside church during mass
Trhoviste, Slovakia. 1965



Sleeping Pilgrim. Levoca, Slovakia. 1968

One Woman Shows (selection)

- 1971 Divadlo za branou (Theatre Beyond the Gate) Prague, CZ
- 1978 Side Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne (+ Sirkka L. Kontinnen), GB
- 1983-1984 Victoria and Albert Museum, London. GB (catalogue Pilgrims)
- 1985 Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, GB
- 1986 Ksiaz, PL
- 1989 Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green, London, GB
- 1989 Galeria Visor, Valencia, ES
- 1991 Whitechapel Gallery, London, GB (catalogue Photographs from Spitalfields)
- 1991 Nottingham Castle, Notting
- 1991 GHMP, Prague, CZ (catalogue Poutnici)
- 1992 Municipal House in Murcia, then Madrid, Salamanca, Jerez, Palma de Mallorca, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, ES
- 1994 Staroměstská radnice, Prague, CZ
- 1994 Stills Gallery, Sydney, AU
- 1994 Divadlo Karla Pippicha, Chrudim, CZ
- 1995 Vgalerie, Pardubice, CZ
- 1996 Galerie 4, Cheb, CZ
- 1998 Stills Gallery, Sydney, AU (catalogue Unknown Remembered)
- 1999 Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, GB
- 1999 Eli Lemberger Museum of Photography, Tel Hai, Galilee, IL
- 2000 Pradum fotografie, Prague, CZ
- 2001 Dom fotografie, Poprad, SK
- 2001 The British Council, Prague, CZ
- 2001 Galerie Fait et Cause, Paris, FR
- 2001 Focus Gallery, London, GB
- 2004 Muzeum, Sobeslav, CZ
- 2011 Stredoceské muzeum v Roztokách, CZ (catalogue On Death, Horses and Other People)
- 2011 Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, MI, US
- 2013 Piper Gallery (+ Francis West), London, GB
- 2014 National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, Cedar Rapids, IA, US
- 2014 Leica Gallery, Prague (catalogue : Marketa Luskacova Photographs 1964-2014)
- 2015 Galeria 19, Bratislava, SK
- 2016 Latitude, Huelva, ES
- 2016 Musée International du Carnaval et du Masque, Binche, BE
- 2017 Czech Centre, Paris, FR
- 2017 Palacio de Pimentel, Valladolid, ES (catalogue Primero y Ultimo)
- 2018 Czech Centre, Munich, G
- 1995 Luz y Tiempo, Centro Cultural del Arte contemporaneo, Mexico City, MX
- 1995 Der Geduldige Planet, Zürich, CH
- 2000 Photography and Time, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, GB
- 2002 Česká a Slovenská fotografia 80. a 90. rokov 20. Storocia, Dom umenia, Bratislava, SK
- 2003 Les choix d'Henri Cartier-Bresson, Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris, FR
- 2006 Closed Eyes, Brandts Museet for Fotokunst, Odense, DK
- 2008 Fotogenie identity, Pamet české fotografie, Pradum fotografie, Prague, CZ
- 2010-2011 Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, US
- 2012 Another London, Tate Britain, London, GB
- 2014 Witches and Wicked Bodies, Scottish National Gallery, GB
- 2016 Feminine!, Artinbox, Prague, CZ
- 2016-2017 In Your Dream You Saw a Way to Survive and You Were Filled with Joy, touring show, Hayward Gallery, London, GB
- 2017-2018 Collected Shadows, touring show, Hayward Gallery, London, GB
- 2018 Women by Women, Baltic, GB

Group Exhibitions (selection)

- 1969 Fotografické cykly a seriály, Obecní dum, Prague, CZ
- 1972 Tri fotografové, Galerie umení Roudnice nad Labem (+ Ivo Gil, Pavel), CZ
- 1975 Women of Photography, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, US
- 1983 Personal Choice: A Celebration of Twentieth Century Photographs, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, GB
- 1985 Through the Looking Glass, Barbican, London, GB
- 1990 Spié muzeum (+ Peter ík, Janusz Moniatowicz), Levoca, SK
- 1993 An Historical Survey, Museum of Modern Art. New York, NY, US

Public Collections

- Archive of Modern Conflict, London, GB
- The Collection of the Arts Council of Great Britain, London, GB
- Art Gallery, Bene, CZ
- Arthur Andersen, London, GB
- Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris, FR
 - Brandts Museet for Fotokunst, DK
 - Bruce Bernard Collection, GB
 - Clifford Chance, London, GB
- Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, US
 - Eric Franck Fine Art Collection, London, GB
 - Foundation Cultural, Mexico City, MX
 - FRAC Rhone-Alpes, FR
- George Eastman Museum Collection, Rochester, NY, US
 - The Hyman Collection, London
 - IVAM, Valencia, ES
- Israel Museum, Jerusalem, IL
 - Martin Parr's Foundation, Bristol, GB
 - Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, US
 - Moravská galerie, Brno, CZ
 - Museum of Art, Ein Harod, IL
- Musée International du Carnaval et du Masque, Binche, BE
- Museum of Modern Art New York, NY, US
 - National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, AU
 - National Media Museum, Bradford, GB
- National Portrait Gallery, London, GB
 - Royal Festival Hall, London, GB
 - Salamanca University, Salamanca, ES
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, US
 - Side Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, GB
 - Slovenská národná galéria, Bratislava, SK
 - Spié museum, Levoca, SK
 - Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL
- Tate Britain, London, GB
 - The British Council, Valencia, ES
- The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, US
 - Umeleckoprumyslové muzeum, Prague, CZ
 - University of Newcastle, AU
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London, GB
 - Wilson Centre for Photography, London, GB

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