

## **DRAFT VERSION**

### **Negotiations of Socialist Modernity: the Czech Glass Figurine (from the late 1940s-1960s)**

**Rebecca Bell**

Dr Rebecca Bell holds a PhD in Czech craft under Socialism from the Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal College of Art. Bell is currently Lecturer in Fashion Visual Cultures at Middlesex University and has a background in contemporary art commissioning for the public realm. Her research focuses in making practices under politically controlled conditions, looking at realisations in glass, ceramics, textiles and fashion.

#### **Abstract**

This article presents the glass figurine as means of understanding making and socialist modernity in Czechoslovakia during the first two decades of Socialism (late 1940s-1960s). Through studying the work of glass artists such as Jaroslav Brychta and Miloslav Klinger, I show how these small, apparently humble figurines offer insight into the status and hierarchies of objects made for decorative and commemorative purposes. They show us the methods through which Czech practitioners actively negotiated socialist modernities. Czech glass figurines have held a somewhat uneasy position in canonical hierarchies, impacted by their associations with souvenirs, export, kitsch and humor. However, state approval endowed them with a certain gravity conditioned by selective historical and material associations. Authorities hoped the figurines would offer a form of ideological interpretation of socialism accessible to their consumers. I present the varying roles allocated to the figurines, which were bound to key ongoing narratives concerning craft and the modern inherited from the pre-Socialist period. The figurines enable understandings of the pluralist

nature of craft in Socialist Czechoslovakia, providing a new reading of this under-attended area within international scholarship.

**Keywords:** glass, Socialist Modern, Czechoslovakia, figurine, Communism

The 1949 Czech stop-motion animation *Inspirace* [Inspiration] tells the story of a Czech glassmaker, sketching ideas in his studio. He gazes at the rain beating on the window before him and, transported by the passage of a raindrop on a leaf beyond the pane, enters a day-dream world of dancing penguins and tropical fish. The protagonist of this imaginary realm is a lovelorn Pierrot, who pursues a filmy, shimmering Columbine (Figures 1 and 2). The animation ends with the glassmaker putting aside his sketchbook and taking up his flame to hurriedly bring his daydreams into realisation, as the incidental music rises triumphantly. The animation is dedicated to “those who transform hard material glass into magical poetic images”.<sup>i</sup>

What is profoundly striking about *Inspirace* is that the characters and their setting in the main sequence, envisioned by the glassmaker in his studio, are made entirely from glass. We transition from film of his real-world setting to glass scenes and characters, all given the fluidity and movement that we do not associate with this usually hard material. Filmmaker, designer and animator Karel Zeman (1910-1989) collaborated with glass artist and professor Jaroslav Brychta (1895-1971) to create this 11-minute animation for the Film Studios in Gottwaldov (as the town of Zlín was named from 1949-1990, after the first Communist president of Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald). Zeman came up with the idea of creating moving glass figurines through replacing an arm or a

leg in each frame, progressing through sequences of different positions. Brychta then guided his glass students to create dozens of pulled glass pieces according to Zeman's detailed drawings of glass body parts in varying positions, each with a small wire that the animator used to attach it to the body.<sup>ii</sup> The binary of hard material and poetic sensibility described in the animation's dedication is a potent one, in which the flame worker is endowed with mythological capabilities of breathing life into glass. In 2005, Susanne K. Frantz and Verena Wasmuth described Czech glass from this period as "attempts at structuring transparent mass"<sup>iii</sup> and "fragile poems".<sup>iv</sup> Such vocabulary alludes to the magical luminosity of the material itself, the romantic role played by the maker or designer, and the requirements of manufacturing processes. In the post-war Czech context, these attributes of glass were entangled with the wider paradigm of socialist modernity. Makers like Brychta, and his production of glass figurines, provide insight into the complexity of these relationships.

Glass and its makers have remained at the heart of narratives concerning craft history in the Czech lands since the fifteenth-century; as important to Bohemian trade in the eighteenth century as to the economic fortunes of the Socialist period from 1948 to 1989.<sup>v</sup> During the latter era, Czechoslovak glass gained international repute at events such as the 1958 Brussels Expo, the 1959 Czechoslovak Glass Exhibition in Moscow and the Osaka Expo in 1970. The presence of Czech studio glass in the collections of the Corning Museum of Glass and the Victoria and Albert Museum has led to glass dominating recent international craft histories concerning Czechoslovakia.<sup>vi</sup> Center stage in these accounts are the large-scale engraved and moulded works of artists such as René Roubíček, Jan Kotík, and the duo Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová (Brychta's daughter), whose distinct and colourful

explorations of zoomorphic, biomorphic and architectural abstraction have won them a deserved place in international design history.

Brychta is equally important to the Czech story of glass, but less attended to in international scholarship. No academic monographs exist on his work, though a soft-bound, 24-page catalogue was produced to accompany a 1995 exhibition of his work, *Skleněný svět Jaroslava Brychty* [*The Glass World of Jaroslav Brychta*], at the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec, and he is included in other wider publications on glass figurines.<sup>vii</sup> Brychta was well known in the Czech Lands for making glass *figurky* (figurines) shaped into the likenesses of famous kings and footballers, characters from folk tales and fantastical representations of the astrological and prehistoric. Brychta's figurines, and the wider genre of which they were part, are often humorous, collectable, could be described as kitsch,<sup>viii</sup> and, crucially, were successfully exported under Communism. In 1958, writer Ivo Digrin and glass curator Karel Hetteš, writing for the *Czechoslovak Glass Review*, described them as "humor and poesy" combined with the "grotesque".<sup>ix</sup> It is perhaps this combination that makes them so captivating. Their size, whimsy and the contexts of their use and relationship to wider concerns of post-war craft in Czechoslovakia demand further interrogation, if we are to understand the full picture of Czech glass.

### **Czech Art and Craft Hierarchies and Positing The Glass Figurine**

Glass figurines - miniature protagonists of the mantelpiece - hold a somewhat contentious position in Czechoslovak historiography, illuminating an ongoing hierarchy of art and craft. Frantz states that "while the figures were charming and respected for the important economic role that they played, their acclaim should not be mistaken for aesthetic consideration within the Czech Fine Art academia" – however, "Brychta, an educated and sophisticated artist,

apparently felt no hesitation about dedicating his long professional career to their creation”.<sup>x</sup> To demonstrate his “fine art” status, Frantz highlights the distinctive similarity between Brychta’s work and ceramic figures made in the 1920s by Symbolist artist Jan Zrzavý yet she also points out the influence of a popular form of German Christmas tree ornament produced by Bimini Werkstätte, Vienna.<sup>xi</sup>

Such varied credentials are typical of the position of Czech glass figurines, and indeed the wider reputation of collectable miniatures.<sup>xii</sup> Particular to Brychta’s work and the production he influenced, is the way in which the figurines became entangled in the rhetoric of Communism. It is this position which has arguably affected their “aesthetic consideration within the Czech Fine Art academia”.<sup>xiii</sup> The appeal of figurines to the post-war Socialist state was based on their connection with a longer national history of cottage production and folk heritage; key components of Czech national identity. Železný Brod, the town in which the figurines were made, was inextricably bound to this story.

Located in northern Bohemia, Železný Brod had been Brychta’s home and place of work from the 1920s. Since the first half of the nineteenth century, it was known for an extensive cottage industry that involved creating glass rods or tubes over kerosene or gas-fired blast lamps (seen in Brychta’s earlier works, Figures 3 and 4). The area was also an important site for the Czech national folklore movement of the 1880s, bound to the Czech National Awakening.<sup>xiv</sup> In the late nineteenth century, glass companies in the region were mostly German-owned and vocational training schools mainly taught in German. However, in 1905, Czech citizens petitioned for a school of glassmaking with Czech language classes in Železný Brod (then Eisenbrod) – a request initially rejected by authorities in Vienna. In 1919, one year after Czechoslovakia gained its

independence from the Habsburg Empire, the Železný Brod Glass School became the first Czech-speaking glass school. This series of historical events brought together local working class glassmaking methods, folk associations and the symbolic rejection of imperial rule.<sup>xv</sup> Glass production in the region was centralised after World War II, and these layers of meaning were co-opted into the socialist narrative.

In the interwar period, glassworks in Železný Brod and the surrounding area employed around 5,000 glassworkers: a quarter of the inhabitants of the region.<sup>xvi</sup> In 1938, the Sudetenland border region, which was inhabited by a majority German-speaking Sudeten population, was annexed by Nazi Germany. In 1939, Nazi occupation extended to the Czech Lands, which became the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. After years of occupation and war, glass factories were in a bad state. Železný Brod, located near the Sudetenland region and part of the Protectorate during the war, was similarly affected. An issue of the periodical *Czechoslovak Glass Review* from 1946 claimed, "For seven years there was no capital investment, no replacement of worn-out machinery, so that there is no wonder that a state of technical devastation and administrative chaos existed."<sup>xvii</sup> When World War II ended, Czech industries, including glassworks, were restructured according to the Beneš Decrees, a series of decrees compiled and issued by President Edvard Beneš. A decree issued in October 1945 structured the national administration of property expropriated from Sudeten Germans, entailing the expulsion of ethnic Germans.<sup>xviii</sup> The Beneš Decrees remain a contested part of Czech and Slovak history well into the twenty-first century,<sup>xix</sup> but for Železný Brod glass in the immediate post-war period the expulsion of Sudeten Germans meant the removal of some of the area's best glassworkers. One post-war consolidation that facilitated improved

administration and production of glassmaking in north Bohemia was the Železný Brod Glass National Enterprise (Železnobrodské sklo), established in 1948, which incorporated twenty-six local nationalised firms.

Železnobrodské sklo enabled the state to absorb local, rural techniques, recontextualising figurines in order to construct socialist understandings of history and national identity. In this light, works like *Inspirace* can be re-read not just as an idealisation of the artist's romantic, visionary capabilities, but also as an endorsement of the role of the maker within the structure of a centralised glass industry under the new, Soviet-backed leadership of the Komunistická strana Československa (Czechoslovak Communist Party, the KSČ). Established in 1921, the KSČ's membership had grown to 1.2 million between 1945 and 1947, making it the largest political party in Czechoslovakia – arguably capitalising on the role of Russian liberating forces in 1945 to gain support for Communism.<sup>xx</sup> Its leader, Klement Gottwald, became president after a coup d'état in February 1948, when the KSČ took full control of the government with Soviet backing. Edward Taborsky, former personal secretary to Gottwald's predecessor Beneš, called the move "unflinching personal fealty to Stalin".<sup>xxi</sup> The coup led to the resignation of non-Communist cabinet members and the KSČ initiated a series of purges to reform those considered disloyal to the Party, resulting in trials, imprisonment and executions.<sup>xxii</sup>

A new aesthetic order was also declared. Socialist Realism was named the official creed at the KSČ General Congress of 1949 by politician and journalist Václav Kopecký, following a "Zhdanov" approach, imported from Stalin's Russia.<sup>xxiii</sup> Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov defined Socialist Realism by its "optimism, which arises from serving the victorious progressive class of workers,"<sup>xxiv</sup> an ideology that created a division in Czechoslovakia between those

loyal to the Party who followed official requirements of Socialist Realism, and supposed bourgeois cosmopolitans, who faced reprobation and were subject to attempts at “rehabilitation”.<sup>xxv</sup> Glass figurines, amongst other branches of Czechoslovak glass, were absorbed into official political and economic propaganda, just as individual endeavours were absorbed into the aim towards a centralised artist-industry relationship.<sup>xxvi</sup> In the same year of the Congress, the directorate of Czechoslovak Glass was founded in Prague to administer the country’s glass companies.<sup>xxvii</sup>

As Czech art historian and curator Antonín Langhamer has written in detail, Brychta was one of the local artists who began to collaborate with larger glass manufacturers.<sup>xxviii</sup> Another artist was Miloslav Klinger (1922-1999), a specialist in glass figurines and later, hot-worked glass and sculpture. A key source that provides insight into how these objects were packaged for international audiences is *Czechoslovak Glass Review*, which was published in over six languages by the Czechoslovak Glass Works National Corporation in Prague from 1946. Skloexport [Glassexport], opened in 1949 to rekindle foreign sales, and their adverts in *Czechoslovak Glass Review* boasted that they provided work that was “handmade by the glassmakers of Železný Brod, *real artists*”.<sup>xxix</sup> Železný Brod became increasingly associated with both figurines by named authors, such as Brychta, and mass-produced items. These were imbued with social realist and folk subject matter, and promoted through references to romantic notions of the glassmaker as creator. Brychta, Klinger and their colleagues’ small glass figurines were also examples of humorous *lidovost* (or popular “folkliness”) acceptable to Socialist Realist aims in the 1940s and early-to-mid 1950s.



In 1956, Dr Zdeněk Vodička allotted Železný Brod's success to the prolific nature of their ever-expanding categories of figurine, such as animals, sailors and chimney sweeps, sportsmen, folk musicians, characters from suitably patriotic plays or opera, and dancers (Figure 5). This effort, he wrote, was intended "...to draw attention to their high quality, to captivate the interest of prospective customers and to provoke demand for the products."<sup>xxx</sup> Central to this mission was the ability of Železný Brod glassmakers to create souvenir works relevant to other nations, such as guardians of the Crown Jewels and the coronation coach for English customers.<sup>xxxi</sup> However amongst this language of merchandise, Vodička also reminded the reader of the glassmaker's role in building a new socialist reality: "It is no more a mere service to customers, and you can see here quite clearly in what way a sensitive the glassmaker approaches reality, how he balances it in his mind, how he re-melts it and shapes it to become a new, glass reality."<sup>xxxii</sup>

Here, Vodička's wording resonates with that of the dedication of *Inspirace* seven years earlier. However, rather than "transforming hard material glass into magical poetic images",<sup>xxxiii</sup> Vodička uses the Marxist Leninist wording of reality formation, an optimistic heralding of a new Socialist future promised to all citizens,<sup>xxxiv</sup> a reality "in its revolutionary development".<sup>xxxv</sup> Selected traditions and histories could be incorporated into Socialist Realism as a "new type of artistic consciousness"<sup>xxxvi</sup> and Železný Brod's association with folk history, glass production, as well as national uprisings against both Habsburg and Nazi rule, provided ideal ingredients for this. Anthropologist Deema Kaneff describes, in relation to Bulgaria, how the centralised government applied local practices "in order to construct coherent regional-national identity...which could be controlled by the state apparatus."<sup>xxxvii</sup> Historian Katherine Verdery also proposes these are

“value-laden exhortations, as well as attempts to saturate consciousness with certain symbols and ideological premises to which subsequent exhortations may be addressed”.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Verdery has applied this state methodology to language as a vehicle for achieving ideological consensus amongst the Czechoslovak public, intending to make Marxism-Leninism “the inevitable and glorious outcome of a discernible historical process”.<sup>xxxix</sup> We can read the figurines of Železný Brod and their “glass reality” as part of this wider ideological process, as symbols centralised through the state by organisations like Skloexport.

### **International Export, Miloslav Klinger and the Czechoslovak Spartakiáda**

The consolidation of foreign marketing and sales through Skloexport was considered by many to prohibit individual endeavours. According to Jan Mergl, many still felt that when it came to the foreign market Skloexport did not understand the latest developments in Czechoslovak glass industry and so the only real way to show the world their work was via international trade fairs.<sup>xl</sup> Vodička highlighted this distinction, noting of a 1955 Skloexport exhibition in Prague that, “Železný Brod glassworks, indeed, did not bring any pioneer novelties, but their exhibits were testimony of a well and scrupulously conceived service to foreign customers.”<sup>xli</sup> It is this reputational impact, and the pressures of creating work for export, that arguably impacted the aforementioned “aesthetic consideration within the Czech Fine Art academia”.<sup>xlii</sup> Železný Brod's development was impacted by the founding of a design center in 1950, the Železný Brod Glass National Enterprise. The center employed local glassmakers and it included an experimental department for the application of glass in architecture.<sup>xliii</sup> An independent prototype designing plant was also founded in 1956 under the name of Art Glass, a subsidiary of the Železný Brod Glass

Enterprise, and a glassworks was opened in the local Glass School. The first Železný Brod hot-worked, functional glassware was produced there from designs by Miloslav Klinger.<sup>xliv</sup>

Though he is somewhat lost to the main international narrative of Czechoslovak glass history, Klinger's impact on glass in the early period of Socialist Czechoslovakia was significant. In 1955, a new development in production was established as a result of Klinger's campaigning: a regenerative pot furnace was built for the use of both the glassmaking school in Železný Brod and the national glassmaking firm established there, Železnobrodské sklo. This enabled increased income from flame-worked figures and larger furnace-worked pieces. As head of furnace-worked figurines in Železný Brod from 1956-67, Klinger would create larger-scale work for the 1958 Brussels Expo: his crystal figures entitled *The Dance* not only won a silver medal but were also sold by the Skloexport representative before the event had even begun. Klinger later succeeded the renowned glass artist Stanislav Libenský as director of the Železný Brod glass school in 1963.

Klinger made a series of successful figurines in the early to mid-1950s. *Girl* (1950), a rural worker with a traditional headscarf, was dressed in patriotic red and held a sickle (Figure 6). The figure was captured in a breeze, the leaves in the tree above her blowing in the wind. She also held her skirt down with the sickle – a suggestive and objectifying pose: here was a socialist woman who was both a serious worker and available for consumption. In this context, the figurine can be considered as a site of idealisation, both as a gendered body and as a working member of the new socialist reality. Another typified role in socialist society was the athletic gymnast, and in 1955 Klinger was selected for an

important commission to create commemorative souvenir figures for the mass-exercise Spartakiad (known as Spartakiáda<sup>xlv</sup>) gymnastic event in Prague.

In 1955, Klinger's gymnast figurines were amongst the designs selected to be sold at the first "All-State" Spartakiad in Czechoslovakia (Figure 7). The Spartakiad event took place between May 1st (International Workers' Day) and May 9th (the anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi occupation). Named after Spartacus, the Roman gladiator and leader of the slave uprising, the first official Spartakiad was held in Moscow in 1928 as a means of competing with the Olympics, demonstrating through synchronised exercise how individuals could work together to form a greater collective. Spartakiad events in Czechoslovakia overlapped with an older form of patriotic gymnastics event, organised by the Sokol movement and founded in 1862, but this foundation was completely and intentionally, eclipsed by the state Spartakiad events in the 1950s.<sup>xlvi</sup> The meaning and function of these events were ideologically important and somewhat precarious in relation to the socialist citizen's relationship to the state in the immediate post-war period. The state organisers of Spartakiad wanted to erase associations with pre-socialist forms of public gymnastic performance (*s/ets*) that had links to the Czech National Awakening in the late nineteenth century.<sup>xlvii</sup> This led to displays of public unrest. An English writer, Edith Pargeter, was amongst those in Prague attending the 1948 *s/et* describing the mounting tension as the parades became a demonstration. Sokol members called out for former Czech leaders: "We are the children of Masaryk... All the world knows that we want Beneš back", as the new socialist president Klement Gottwald looked on.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Against this political backdrop, Klinger's glass figurines can be viewed as vehicles for realigning the public's understanding of mass gymnastics to befit the

ideology of Socialist Czechoslovakia. The production of paraphernalia, “tasteful and valuable reminders” of the Spartakiad event for visitors to buy, was essential to this process.<sup>xlix</sup> A committee was formed to select these objects, made up of representatives of sport, manufacturing, distribution, the Ministry of Culture and the Central Union of Czechoslovak Visual Artists. Alongside “utility” objects, such as gym shoes and sports bags, “novelty” objects like cigarette cases, wrapping paper and cups (all displaying the Spartakiad logo), were “artistic” souvenirs, including Klinger’s figurines. These were considered by the selection committee to have a more “direct” relationship to Spartakiad as they were thought to effectively interpret the ideological content of the celebrations.<sup>i</sup> Described as “upomínkové předměty”, variously translatable as souvenirs, reminders, keepsakes, and commemorative objects, Klinger’s glass athletes were designed to purvey and retain an approved ideological memory.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Glass Figurines and the Body**

Through Klinger’s earlier work *Girl*, the concept of labour was subtly eroticised. Pavla Frýdlová has discussed the role of women in Socialist Czechoslovakia stating how there was a “celebration of hard work [that] helped facilitate the socialist regime’s hiding and legitimating the overload of, and discrimination against, women”, who maintained both domestic and paid labour positions.<sup>iii</sup> The depiction of the ideal socialist women, noted as a positive attribute of glass figurines according to the 1955 article cited earlier by Dr Zdeněk Vodička, becomes an example of ideological reality formation. We can see this designation in other media, such as a 1953 advertisement for Pražské kosmetické závody [The Prague Cosmetics Company] in the magazine *Tvar* [Form], produced by ÚLUV [Ústředí lidové a umělecké výroby, the Center for Folk and Art Production]. Entitled “Women in Socialism”, the advertisement

informed the reader that “under capitalism, only some women have the means to take care of their appearance”: under socialism, however, all women can have good cosmetics at affordable prices.<sup>lviii</sup> Behind a central figure in a white coat holding pots of cold cream, women from all areas of socialist society lined up: factory and agricultural workers, a secretary, a mother and a rural woman in traditional headscarf (Figure 8). It is this kind of “one-dimensional role” that has led to western misperceptions of women under Socialism as either, as Frýdlová states, “not emancipated enough”, or an exaggerated idea of a “socialist woman”, viewed as a “heroic tractor driver”.<sup>liv</sup>

The idealisation of certain roles and their relationships to the body can also be applied to Klinger’s Spartakiad figurines. Particular to this was a Socialist Realist optimism that eradicated any possibility of being an imperfect citizen. The perfect movements of the gymnasts, according to writer Marie Majerová in 1955, “cleansed” them of “unsightly involuntary movements”.<sup>lv</sup> In this context, Klinger’s gymnasts can be seen as memorandums of control. Their range of poses made manifest what Petr Roubal, writing on the politics of gymnastics in Central and Eastern Europe, calls a “grammar”, part of a “body language of obedience” to the Socialist mass.<sup>lvi</sup> In so doing, mass gymnastics “did what all its fascist predecessors did with the same problem: it aestheticized politics”.<sup>lvii</sup>

Klinger’s Spartakiad figurines also relate to the body in terms of the way they were produced and, in particular, the crucial role of the hand. They drew upon the Czech glass craft tradition and the history of flame-worked glass, contrasting with similar figures made in Germany or the USSR that tended to be porcelain. Klinger’s Spartakiad works were elevated by this connection to Northern Bohemian craft and production heritage, and Železnobrodské Sklo’s role in the post-war drive for industry reconstruction.<sup>lviii</sup> They were positioned as

a form of anti-kitsch, modern, a manifestation of socialist reality that perhaps wouldn't be expected of commemoration-ware. Writing in 1955, Jindřich Švec differentiated between the acceptable nature of Klinger's souvenir gymnasts and the contrasting rejected items that were submitted to the selection committee. He described the latter as "dubious kitschy" things demonstrating "tasteless production" by merely attaching the Spartakiad logo to badly made objects, taking advantage of consumer demand.<sup>lix</sup> Such a hierarchy was frequently outlined in issues of *Tvar* at the time, distinguishing between objects that superficially drew upon folk methods and motifs,<sup>lx</sup> and those that fully integrated the two in order to locate what a "happy medium between the folk and the modern".<sup>lxi</sup>

This notion of a happy medium between folk and modern was critical to the thinking of Josef Vydra (1884-1959), an editor and writer for *Tvar*, and to ÚLUV, the organisation which produced the periodical. Vydra was an influential industrial designer, ethnographer, pedagogue, theorist and historian of folk art<sup>lxii</sup> and founder of the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava (1928-1939). His research into folk art as a prototype for modern design began in the mid-1920s and continued into the post-war period. *Tvar's* endorsement of Klinger's practice demonstrates how practitioners who explored folk references as they did in the interwar period garnered the approval of the post-1948 socialist state. The folk-modern dynamic also repeatedly brought discussions back to the role of the hand and its connections to the maker and their authorship, particularly in relation to larger-scale manufacture and the ways in which practitioners could avoid the "pitfalls" of kitsch.<sup>lxiii</sup> **There is a continuity here that challenges the monolithic division between historical epochs in this context;** the span of an artist's life – and its overlaps with younger artists – allowed earlier ideas to

become entangled in socialist era realisations. Brychta's figurines were created in both interwar modernist and socialist era craft circles. As a member of a younger generation, Klinger was taught by Brychta at the Specialized Glass School in Železný Brod.

Making for the state during this period, however, was not straightforward. From being the first Czech glassmaker to win a State award in 1960 and after creating larger-scale interior commissions for key projects such as the Hotel International in Brno in 1962, Klinger was forbidden from exhibiting and making his own creations from 1970 onwards. This was due to his active participation in the 14th Special Meeting of the KSČ at Vysočany, which condemned the Soviet invasion of 1968. In a context in which materials, especially glass, were not available outside of official institutions, this would have been a grave punishment.

### **Humor, Poesy and the Grotesque**

Three years after the Spartakiad, the 1958 Brussels Expo again heralded the success of glass figurines. The role of glassmaker was idealised too, just as it had been in the romantic hero of *Inspirace* nearly ten years earlier. Železný Brod figurines again received special attention and there were live demonstrations by its glassmakers.<sup>lxiv</sup> Klinger, Brychta and their colleague Ladislav Ouhrabka were depicted in the white coats of Socialist authority, working on their specialist craft (Figures 9, 10 and 11). Klinger (Figure 9) was working on a relief in preparation for a work entitled *The Dance*, using an oven-moulded technique for figures that reached the height of 45 centimeters. Ouhrabka (Figure 9), a teacher at Železný Brod Glass School, was executing a design by Brychta and the painter Jan Černý. Brychta was shown (Figure 9) working on figurines for a work called *Universe*, the caption reading, "J. Brychta, professor of the Železný Brod glass-



makers school, is the author of the world-famous blown and drawn glass figurines. His work was exhibited at the last World Exhibition in Paris and will be included in the Czechoslovak display in Brussels 1958 as well."<sup>lxv</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, it was in this year that writer Ivo Digrin and glass curator from the Prague Museum of Decorative Arts (UPM) Karel Hetteš, writing for the *Czechoslovak Glass Review*, described Brychta's 1958 figures as "humor and poesy" combined with the "grotesque".<sup>lxvi</sup> *Universe* was composed of a series of glass tableaux representing the signs of the zodiac, made in collaboration with Jan Černý and Ladislav Ouhrabka (Figures 12-15). Their exaggerated features and curling limbs were as captivating and whimsical as the characters Zeman designed and Brychta, with his students, made for *Inspirace*. Digrin and Hetteš's use of the term "grotesque" is particularly interesting. Characters in *Universe*, and those that recurred throughout Brychta's long career, play upon the humor of the absurd, a well-established canon in the Czech context ever since Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Good Soldier Švejk* was published in 1923. The novel concerned the hapless adventures of a fictional Czech soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, whose misadventures satirised the Habsburg authorities. As Neo-Marxist philosopher Karel Kosík later noted, Švejk was a figure "in a system motored by make-believe and jerry-building: those who take things seriously and literally, as he does, reveal the absurdity of the system while their own activity appears absurd and grotesque."<sup>lxvii</sup> The grotesque in the Czech context points to the fallibility of human constructs and the unfixing of hierarchies. We see this irreverence and comic distortion in the work of Brychta's contemporaries, such as the ceramics of Pravoslav Rada, the surrealist films of Jan Švankmajer, and the novels of Bohumil Hrabal. Brychta's earlier sketches also reveal similar features to those

of Josef Lada who illustrated *Švejk* (Figures 16 and 17), but more importantly Brychta's "grotesque" demonstrated how humor and absurdity in socialist craft was a method of empowerment and cohesion in the face of difficulty and restriction.

A few years later, in the early 1960s when the "Thaw"<sup>lxxviii</sup> began to be felt in Czechoslovakia, Hašek's stories of *Švejk* were described by Kosík as "a way of reacting to this world of absurd omnipotence of the machine and of reified relations".<sup>lxxix</sup> "Švejkism" was offered as a critique of Soviet Marxism. Whether as a means of ridiculing political structures, locating a "sense of hope for renewal", or effecting real change, the tactic of humor was an important strand of socialist modernity.<sup>lxxx</sup> In their small scale, the glass figurines of Brychta, Klinger and those designed for mass production, seem to chime with Kosík's declarations concerning *Švejk*. Their humor offered contrast and pleasure. Whether a "Sancho Panza without his Don Quixote"; a truth-speaking fool or "modern *Eulenspiegel*", Kosík described *Švejk* as ultimately, "the personification of little Czech people, humble as grass...reduced to his biological needs, who survives world catastrophes because he cares only for mundane matters", but with "nobility and generosity".<sup>lxxxi</sup>

Czech glass figurines might be humble, but they allow us to unpack the complex layers of socialist modernity in a way that removes the "obscure schemata of ideological postulates", which cloud writing from the time.<sup>lxxii</sup> Kosík also wrote of a process of "masking and unmasking", in which the absurd and grotesque aspects of authority were revealed.<sup>lxxiii</sup> A 1980 samizdat by Josef Krouter, *Manifest české grotesky* (Manifesto of the Czech Grotesque) described the principle of the grotesque as the following: "One says something different, does something different and thinks something completely different about all of

it”.<sup>lxxiv</sup> The strange world of Brychta’s *Universe* seems to fit this description in its whimsy and fantasy. It also moves beyond the Socialist Realist tropes of Klinger’s early to mid-1950s figurines, showing a wider movement towards a freeing up of style that was significant to the years leading up to and following the 1958 Brussels Expo.<sup>lxxv</sup>

Despite the official creed of Socialist Realism in late 1940s and 1950s Czechoslovakia and the prohibition of modernist associations, the functional nature of craft and its associations with folk culture enabled a continuation of theoretical and practice-based exploration that was rooted in the inter-war period. Chiming with the official rhetoric, art critic Vladimír Šolta stated in 1950 that Modernist movements sought to “construct an art outside reality, to deprive it of its effect as an instrument for enhancing knowledge and transforming reality” and “covering up class conflicts”.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Craft and design practices, like those of Klinger and Brychta, were less easy to categorize as purely modernist and were embraced by the Socialist state. However, this did not mean they were “politically mute” as David Crowley has discussed in relation to studio craft in Socialist Poland.<sup>lxxvii</sup> In the pursuit of understanding the role of craft in the politically controlled environment of state projects in Socialist Czechoslovakia, it is more helpful to re-examine what we mean by the maker’s agency in relation to the manifold variations of specific projects. Nicolette Makovicky has written on this issue in the context of state craft and processes of modernity in Slovakia, focusing on lacemaking. She described the relationships between working for the state and for tourists as an ongoing negotiation between individual practitioners and modernity, a process of “ideological entanglement”.<sup>lxxviii</sup> The push and pull of working for the state, seen in Klinger and Brychta, show how the glass figurine was caught up in this entangled process. Just as craft is a slippery and

expansive field, a 'variable and problematic dynamic that is loose in the cultural landscape', so too are the objects we see being made in the early Socialist period in Czechoslovakia.<sup>lxxix</sup>

These entangled relations with the state were centre stage in Brychta's daughter Jaroslava's glass relief, *The River of Life*, made with her husband and collaborator Stanislav Libenský and the Železný Brod Glass National Enterprise for the 1970 Expo in Osaka.<sup>lxxx</sup> The work consisted of a wall made of four meter-long sections of glass across which marched the footprints of Soviet military boots. This work marked the transition of Czechoslovakia into the period known as Normalisation, describing the era in the 1970s when public criticism of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party was once again prohibited, press and cultural activities were again censored and centralised as they had been before de-Stalinisation and the events leading up to the Prague Spring of 1968.<sup>lxxxi</sup>

The wall recalls one scene of *Inspirace* produced twenty years before the Osaka work, where Pierrot beats against an opaque glass wall, positioned between him and the departing Columbine. The repeated breaking down and reappearance of barriers were political realities that confronted Czech glassmakers and creative practitioners throughout their careers; in this way Zeman's wall seems to symbolically anticipate the barriers being positioned around Czechoslovakia as the KSČ took hold.

Re-examining the layers of meaning surrounding craft in this period allows us insight beyond the rhetoric of state publication. The figurines and the craft that produced them were embroiled in a tangle of political layering, more complex than their initial appearance as souvenir or tourist paraphernalia. As

discussed, the humorous *lidovost* (or popular “folkiness”) that characterized Brychta, Klinger and their colleagues’ small glass figurines were examples of also allowed them to be acceptable to Socialist Realist aims in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>lxxxii</sup> And the status of Czechoslovak glass figurines as exported objects and accessible, collectable items undoubtedly impacted on their position in academic hierarchies: their post-war reputation was shaped by state approval of the connotations they held. But the figurines offer insight into broader national, geographical, economic and ideological narratives around craft in Socialist Czechoslovakia. These expand from local histories of traditional making processes to stories of international success. They also bridged the gap between the inter-war period and post-1948, showing how continued interests were maintained both by state and individual, in a constantly shifting and pluralist series of ideological re-alignments that characterised the relationships between craft and socialist modernity.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Dedication at the beginning of *Inspirace*. Directed by Karel Zeman. Filmstudio Gottwaldov, 1949. The film is a special feature on the DVD for the Karel Zeman film, *Invention for Destruction* currently distributed in the UK by Second Run (2018)..

<sup>ii</sup> Karel Zeman, before and after 1949, experimented with many different materials and filmmaking techniques. According to his daughter and granddaughter, Linda and Ludmila Zeman, in producing *Inspirace* Zeman wanted to create a film that was “poetic and technically challenging” (Correspondence with author, August 2020). Due to Zeman’s respect for the glassmakers of Železný Brod, he approached Brychta who responded with enthusiasm. Zeman was well-known and his films were screened internationally. *Inspirace* received several awards including, Best Puppet Film at the Grand Prix at the Festival Mondial du Film et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1949; 2nd prize at the International Film Festival of Documentary and Experimental films in Montevideo, 1954; and the Golden Sheaf award for the Best Film at the International Film Festival of Documentary Films in Yorktown, Canada, 1958.

<sup>iii</sup> Susanne K. Frantz, “Twentieth-Century Bohemian Art in Glass: The Artistic and Historical Background,” in *Czech Glass 1945-1980: Design in an Age of Adversity*, ed. Helmut Rieke (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 25.

<sup>iv</sup> Verena Wasmuth, “Czech Glass in the Limelight: The Great Exhibitions Abroad” in Rieke, *Czech Glass*, 86.

<sup>v</sup> The administrative authorities and territorial borders of these areas have changed over the centuries, but as a brief outline the Czech lands are made up of three regions: Bohemia, which is the largest historical region of the Czech lands, occupying the western part; Czech Silesia, which borders Moravia, Poland and Slovakia; and Moravia, the eastern part of the territory. They all joined with Slovakia in 1918 after gaining independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, forming Czechoslovakia. In 1992 Slovakia declared itself a sovereign state and the federation was dissolved in January 1993 to become the Czech Republic and Slovakia. I use “Czech” to focus in on specifically Czech glass makers, but “Czechoslovak” to acknowledge the wider official political territory and country in which these makers operated from 1948 to 1989.

<sup>vi</sup> A key example is Rieke, *Czech Glass 1945-1980*, as well as Antonín Langhamer, *The Legend of Bohemian Glass* (Zlín: Tigris, 2003). My PhD on this topic attempted to also address this imbalance by comparing concepts across media including textiles, ceramics, film and interiors, Rebecca Bell, “Questions of Craft: Making for the State in Socialist Czechoslovakia” (PhD diss., Royal College of Art, 2019).

<sup>vii</sup> See Oldřich Palata, *The Glass World of Jaroslav Brychta*, (Liberec: North Bohemian Museum in Liberec & family of Jaroslav Brychta; 1995). Other publications include a small catalogue issued by the Museum of Glass and Jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou in 1998 - Milan Hlaveš, *Skleněné figurky [Glass Figurines]* (Liberec, Praha, Brno: Hoblík a Hlaveš, v.o.s., 1998) and wider discussions in: Rieke, *Czech Glass*; Antonín Langhamer, *The Legend of Bohemian Glass* (Zlín: Tigris, 2003); and Sylva Petrová, *Czech Glass* (Praha: Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, 2001, 2018).

<sup>viii</sup> Terms such as “kitsch” and “trash” were used frequently at this point, and throughout the Socialist period in Czechoslovakia, stemming from earlier twentieth-century debates. There is a trajectory of discussion particular to the Czech context, discussed in the 1930s by writers like Bohuslav Brouk and Karel Teige, debated in relation to fascism during Nazi occupation in World War II, and to socialism in exhibitions and magazine articles throughout the Socialist period. This can be seen in regular features during the 1940s and 1950s in art, craft and design magazine *Tvar [Form]*. Its wider history is discussed by Milan Pech in “Umění a kýč” [Art and Kitsch], in *Konec avantgardy? od mnichovské dohody ke komunistickému převratu [The End of the Avant-Garde? From the Munich Agreement to the Communist Coup]*, ed. by Hana Rousová, Lenka Bydžovská, Vojtěch Lahoda et al (Řevnice: Arbor vitae, 2011), 317-330. This adds new scholarship to relations between craft and kitsch as oft-contested grounds, a debate associated with Western European schools like the Bauhaus, and Modernist writers like Clement Greenberg. See also T’ai Smith, *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>ix</sup> Ivo Digrin, “A Universal Assortment,” *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 2 (1958): 16; and Karel Hetteš, “Reflections on the Aesthetics of Glass,” *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 8 (1958): 11.

<sup>x</sup> Frantz, “Twentieth-Century Bohemian Art in Glass,” 21.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>xii</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (London: Duke University Press, 1993).

<sup>xiii</sup> Frantz, “Twentieth-Century Bohemian Art in Glass,” 21.

<sup>xiv</sup> The Czech National Awakening, also referred to as a National Revival, originated in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, and concerned the revival of Czech language and culture in the Czech Lands. The Czech nation was seen to grow from an inherent and collective sense of history. The Czech lands joined with Slovakia

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in 1918 to form the state of Czechoslovakia, after gaining independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire (ruled by the Habsburg Monarchy). The Awakening also resulted in the production of material culture stemming from an ethnographic interest in traditional folk art, textiles, clothes, ceramics and architecture. For discussion of the latter, see Hubatová-Vacková, "Use and Abuse of Folklore and Folk Art" in *Budování státu. Reprezentace Československa v umění, architektuře a designu* [Building a State: The Representation of Czechoslovakia in Art, Architecture and Design] ed. by Milena Bartlová, Jindřich Vybíral et al. (Prague: UMPRUM, 2015) 67-73.

<sup>xv</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>xvi</sup> Zuzana Peřtová and Arsen Pohribný, "Železný Brod – its Glass and School: On the Occasion of the Glass Exhibition at Železný Brod," *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 1 (1966): 76.

<sup>xvii</sup> "Reorganisation of the Czechoslovak Glass Industry," *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 1 (1946): 11

<sup>xviii</sup> During the First Republic (1918-1938), the role of Czech language had impacted social hierarchies, assigning minority status to 3.5 million German-speaking citizens and 1.5 million Hungarians, Ruthenians, Jews and Poles. See Milea Bartlová, "How a State is Made" (English section), in Bartlová, *Budování státu*, 4.

<sup>xix</sup> The Czech reluctance to annul the Decrees (potentially resulting in claims for the restitution of property) caused doubts as to whether the Czech Republic should be allowed into the EU. See "A Spectre over Central Europe," *The Economist* (August 15, 2002), <http://www.economist.com/node/1284252> (accessed December 21, 2015).

<sup>xx</sup> Rick Fawn, Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State* (Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010), 85.

<sup>xxi</sup> Edward Taborsky, "Political Developments in Czechoslovakia Since 1953," *The Journal of Politics* 20, no. 1 (1958): 102, 90.

<sup>xxii</sup> Rick Fawn, *Historical Dictionary*, 106.

<sup>xxiii</sup> A. A. Ždanov, *O umění* [About Art] (Prague: Orbis, 1950).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Cited in Tomáš Vlček, ed., *Modern and Contemporary Czech Art 1890-2010 / Part Two* (Prague: National Gallery, 2010), 42.

<sup>xxv</sup> Shawn Clybor, "Socialist (Sur)Realism: Karel Teige, Ladislav Štoll and the Politics of Communist Culture in Czechoslovakia," in *History of Communism in Europe: Vol. 2, Avatars of Intellectuals Under Communism*, ed. Corina Palasan & Cristian Vasile (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2011), 144.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Jan Mergl, "The Artist and Industry 1945-1965: Conditions, Potentials and Results of the Artist-Industry Relationship," in Ricke, *Czech Glass*, 74.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Antonín Langhamer, "The Organisation of Production and the Development of Design in Czechoslovak Glassmaking (1940s-1980s)," in Ricke, *Czech Glass*, 410.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Antonín Langhamer, Glossary in Ricke, *Czech Glass*, 424.

<sup>xxix</sup> Advertisements for the firms of Josef Barta and Rudolf Lubas, *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 4, no.1 (1949): 1.

<sup>xxx</sup> Dr Zdeněk Vodička, "In Praise of Bohemian Glass: Notes on the Exhibition of Czechoslovak Glass and Jewellery held in Prague in September and October 1955," *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 1 (1956): 8.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Dedication at the beginning of *Inspirace*, by Zeman..

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Middleclass Values and Soviet Life in the 1930s," in *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Vera S. Dunham*, ed. by Terry L. Thompson and Richard Sheldon (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 36.

<sup>xxxv</sup> *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (1975 text published in 1979 edition),

<http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/socialist+realism> (accessed December 27, 2015); also "The Great Soviet Encyclopedia in English," *The Russian Review* 35, no. 1 (January 1976): 77-93.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Deema Kaneff, *Who Owns the Past? The Politics of Time in a "Model" Bulgarian Village* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), in Nicolette Makovsky, "Traditional – with Contemporary Form: Craft and Discourses of Modernity in Slovakia Today," *Journal of Modern Craft* 2, no. 1 (2009): 52.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Katherine Verdery cited in Haldis Haukanes, "The Power of Genre: Local History-Writing in Communist Czechoslovakia," in *Memory, Politics and Religion: The Past Meets the Present in Europe*, ed. by Frances Pine, Deema Kaneff and Haldis Haukanes (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2004), 94.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xl</sup> Jan Mergl, "The Artist and Industry 1945-1965: Conditions, Potentials and Results of the Artist-Industry Relationship," in Ricke, *Czech Glass*, 77.

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- xli Vodička, "In Praise of Bohemian Glass," 8.
- xlii Frantz, "Twentieth-Century Bohemian Art in Glass," 21.
- xliii Langhamer, "The Organisation of Production," 424.
- xliv Ibid.
- xlv The word "spartakiáda" was coined in 1921 by the Czech founder of the Workers' Federation of Sports Associations, Jiří Chaloupecký.
- xlvi Vladimír Macura, "Spartakiad," in *The Mystifications of a Nation: "the Potato Bug" and Other Essays on Czech Culture*, ed. by Hana Píchová and Craig Cravens (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 93.
- xlvii At the 1954 Third National Meeting of Propaganda Instructors, the organisation of the 1955 Spartakiad was accompanied by demands that all evidence of Sokol, which had officially been dissolved in 1952, was removed. Both Spartakiad and Sokol *slety* promoted tradition and folk motifs to invoke a revolutionary spirit and reward athletic endeavour: the two iterations can mainly be differentiated in quantitative terms the size of event, number of exercises, number of regions involved and the existence of regional Spartakiads. State organisers were keen to remove Sokol's bourgeois, capitalist associations. See Macura, "Spartakiad," 93-100.
- xlvi Edith Pargeter, *The Coast of Bohemia* (Pleasantville, NY: The Akadine Press, [1950] 2001), 187.
- xlix Jindřich Švec, "Upomínkové předměty pro I. celostátní spartakiadu" ["Souvenirs for the First National Spartakiad"] *Tvar* 7, no. 5, (1955): 134.
- <sup>1</sup> English Summary in *ibid.*
- li Ibid., 134.
- lii Pavla Frýdlová, "Women's Memory: Searching for Identity Under Socialism," in *Czech Feminisms: Perspectives on Gender in East Central Europe*, ed. by Iveta Jusová and Jiřina Šiklová (Indiana University Press, 2016), 101.
- liii Advertisement for Pražské kosmetické závody [Prague Cosmetics Company] *Tvar* 1 (1953).
- liv Frýdlová, "Women's Memory," 101.
- lv Marie Majerová, "Chvála spartakiády" ["Praise of the Spartakiad"], in Mucha, *První celostátní spartakiáda 1955 [First National Spartakiad 1955]* cited in Macura, "Spartakiad," 100.
- lvi Petr Roubal, "Politics of Gymnastics: Mass Gymnastic Displays under Communism in Central and Eastern Europe," *Body & Society* 9, no. 2 (2003): 8.
- lvii Ibid., 20.
- lviii Švec, "Upomínkové předměty," 134.
- lix Ibid., 134.
- lx For example, columns like "Odmítáme!" ["We Reject!"] *Tvar*, 1, no. 2-3 (1948): 64.
- lxi Josef Vydra, "Osloh v lidové tvorbě," ["On Style in Folk Art"], *Tvar* 2 (1949): 206-214. Cited in Lada Hubatová-Vacková, ed., *Modfolk. Modernita v lidovém: Ateliér designu oběvu a obuvi Liběny Rochové na UMPRUM [Modfolk. Modernity in Folkness: Studio of Fashion and Footwear Design of Liběna Rochová at UMPRUM]*, (Prague: UMPRUM, 2015), 31.
- lxii Lada Hubatová-Vacková, Martina Pachmanová & Pavla Pečinková, eds., *Věci a slova: umělecký průmysl, užité umění a design v české teorii a kritice 1870-1970 [Things and Words: Art Industry, Applied Arts and Design in Czech Theory and Criticism 1870-1970]*, (Prague: UMPRUM, 2014), 555-556.
- lxiii Related notions of kitsch, taste and their relationship to design and the applied arts were frequently discussed in publications from this time. For example, "Odmítáme!" ["We Reject!"] *Tvar* 1, no. 2-3 (1948): 64; Raban, J. "Moderní nebo módní" ["Modern or Fashionable?"] *Domov* 1 (1961): 34.
- lxiv "Brussels Reporting," *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 2 (1958): 1, 6.
- lxv *Czechoslovak Glass Review* 6 (1958): 38.
- lxvi Digrin, "A Universal Assortment," 16; Hetteš, "Reflecitions," 11.
- lxvii Karel Kosík, "Hašek and Kafka," *Telos* 23 (Spring 1975): 86-87. (This essay was originally prepared for the Liblice Conference on Kafka in Prague, 1963.)
- lxviii Soviet First Secretary Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev's criticism of Stalinism in his 1956 "secret speech" at a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, began a process of de-Stalinisation. Khrushchev's denouncement of Stalin's abuse of power in a speech entitled "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" initiated the period known as the "Thaw". The coining of the term is allotted to Ilya Ehrenburg's 1954 Russian novel *The Thaw*. Thaw culture was characterised by the slow freeing up of censorship and discussions of democratic thinking. Historian Vladimir Kusin has noted that whereas revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956 demonstrated widespread discontent with the existing regime, "in Czechoslovakia the outcome lay more modestly in the awakening of the intellectuals," enabling reform from outside of Party structures. See Vladimir V. Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins of the Prague Spring: the*



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*Development of Reformist Ideas in Czechoslovakia 1956-1967* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), 19, 27; Ilya Ehrenburg, *Ottepel* [*The Thaw*] (London: Harvill Press, [1954] 1955).

<sup>lxxix</sup> Kosík, "Hašek and Kafka," 88.

<sup>lxx</sup> Drawing upon Chrisoula Lionis's discussion of humor, humorology, and the grotesque – particularly in relation to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Laughter in Occupied Palestine: Comedy and Identity in Art and Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 8-15. The response of humor is also seen across varying media in craft practices under Socialism in Czechoslovakia, as explored in my PhD thesis, "Questions of Craft".

<sup>lxxi</sup> Kosík, "Hašek and Kafka," 86.

<sup>lxxii</sup> From Kusin, discussing *Stát a člověk* [State and Man], by Zdeněk Mlynář, published in 1964. In his book, Mlynář called for a theoretical analysis of political reality, demanding an end to false thinking, to "strip the system of its mythical clothes". Kusin, *The Intellectual Origins*, 40.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Kosík, "Hašek and Kafka," 88-87.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Maruška Svašek claims that a Brno exhibition named *The Founders of Modern Art* in 1957 was the first public opening up of abstraction away from Socialist Realism (See Maruška Svašek, "The Politics of Artistic Identity. The Czech Art World in the 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary European History* 6, no. 3 (1997): 383-403). But from 1955, my research shows there were adverts in *Tvar* for purchasable reproductions by Modern artists considered controversial under both Nazism and Socialism, such as Václav Špála, who had also worked for applied arts organisation Artěl (founded 1908) – thus connecting the trajectory of modern fine art and craft across pre and post-war periods. From this we can see, although craft was not a tool for explicit political subversion, nevertheless its environments enabled a certain creative flexibility, where pre-Socialist intellectual pursuits could be continued and parameters tested. The grip of Socialist Realism was also loosening from the mid-to-late 1950s and in the fields of craft and design, this was heavily impacted by the attention received for Czechoslovak work at the 1958 Brussels Expo.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Vladimír Šolta, *Výtvarné umění* [Fine Art] 1, no. 3 (1950): 110, cited in Svašek, "The Politics of Artistic Identity," 388.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> As David Crowley has noted, studio crafts were considered "politically mute" under Socialism and Susanne K. Frantz writes that craft and industrial design were fields 'assumed to be incapable of subversion'. See David Crowley, "Stalinism and Modernist Craft in Poland," *Journal of Design History* 11, no. 1 (1998): 81; and Frantz, "Twentieth-Century Bohemian Art in Glass," 32.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> Makovicky, "Traditional with Contemporary Form," 43-58.

<sup>lxxix</sup> "Editorial Introduction," *The Journal of Modern Craft* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 5.

<sup>lxxx</sup> Langhamer, "The Organisation of Production," 424.

<sup>lxxxi</sup> Milan Otáhal, *Normalizace 1969–1989: příspěvek ke stavu bádání* [Normalization 1969–1989: Contribution to State Research] (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2002), 6, cited in Libora Oates-Indruchová, "The Limits of Thought?: The Regulatory Framework of Social Sciences and Humanities in Czechoslovakia (1968–1989)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 10 (2008): 1767.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> A characteristic criticised by Deryck E. Viney in "Czech Culture and the New Spirit, 1948-52," *Slavonic and East European Review* 31, no. 77 (1953): 492.