CZECH CENTRE LONDON

Love You from Prague: First solo exhibition by internationally acclaimed fashion and portrait photographer Robert Vano opens in London

Press release

An extensive exhibition presenting the world-renowned photography of Robert Vano – master of platinum printing and pioneer of male nudes – opens in Notting Hill this June.

The retrospective is a carefully curated cross-section of Vano's work spanning from the 1980s to the present day with special focus on the free and optimistic era of the 1990s. It showcases more than 50 photographs sectioned into three different standalone exhibits featuring Vano's work for leading fashion magazines from New York to Paris and Milan; his dramatic stills of Prague; and his most famous work of black and white male nude portraits, often developed through Vano's signature platinum printing - a rare and highly demanding technique used only by a handful of photographers.



Robert Vano, Boys from Bohemia, 1992

'Robert Vano is a globetrotter, throughout his life he sought freedom for his work and life, took pioneering paths and created masterpieces. He also spent some time in London at the very beginning of his artistic career and we are thrilled to bring him back through our exhibition. Whether it is dramatic Prague scenery, fashion, or taboo breaking male intimacy back from the 1990s, the photographs bear Vano's unique signature and their depth makes us think about the

captured moments and their context,' says Tereza Šídlová, Director of the Czech Centre.

Born in Slovakia in 1948, Robert Vano emigrated to the United States in the late 1960s to pursue his ambition of becoming a photographer. He initially worked as a hairdresser and make-up artist, a job that brought him into contact with fashion photographers and soon he began assisting them. Among these mentors was Horst P. Horst, the pioneering photographer of Hollywood's golden era, who encouraged Vano to focus on male subjects. Following Horst's advice — "You like boys, so photograph boys" — Vano developed a lifelong dedication to photographing men, becoming one of the first photographers to specialise in this field.

Inspired by Horst P. Horst, Vano visited modelling agencies in search of models for his signature black-and-white male portraits and nudes. One notable exception was his most extensive photographic series, *Boys from Bohemia*, created in 1992. Following Vano's return from emigration, the series of over 200 images captures a trio of friends who knew each other from the gym. Through the series, Vano immortalised their vitality, beauty and spontaneous playfulness against the beautiful backdrop of the Adršpach Rocks. The intimate atmosphere of the secluded nature provides refuge to the closeness of the men in the early 1990s when the LGBTQ+ rights were a far cry from today's standard in democratic countries. Selected photographs from the series ***Boys from Bohemia*** create the first standalone section of this retrospective exhibition, housed in the Vitrínka Gallery.

To work on his fashion portfolio, Vano travelled to Milan where he boosted his name as a fashion photographer through help from the famous Italian photographer and architect Marco Glaviano who put Vano in touch with the best fashion magazines and famous international models. Vano then applied his extensive experience in fashion photography in the Czechoslovak edition of the ELLE Magazine, where he served as Creative Director from 1994 to 2003. Amongst his favourite techniques one can find polaroid photography and *Emulsion Lift*, which he has adopted in his printing processes since the 70s. The composition and dreamlike atmosphere of his colourful, intentionally soft-focus images, are reminiscent of the work of famous painters such as Botticelli or Modigliani, as well as the photography of Miroslav Tichý and Sarah Moon.
The series of fashion polaroids titled ***Polaroid Sessions***, which Vano shot for Cento Cose, Vogue, ELLE, Dolce Vita, Harper's Bazaar, and Marie Claire, forms the next section of Vano's London retrospective and can be found in the public space outside the Czech Embassy building, just a short walk from the galleries.

After spending nearly 30 years based in the USA, Vano returned to Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s, and has called Prague his home ever since. The third section of the ***Love You from Prague*** exhibition, titled ***Prague Impressions***, is dedicated to that very city. Monumental images of well-known Prague locations capture the city as the author remembers it upon his return from emigration – as a sort of ‚enchanted Disneyland'. The spellbound atmosphere of the photographs is emphasised by their black-and-white style and the dramatic clouds, for which Vano waited two years to capture.

‚Everone seems to have a plan; but I have no more plans. I've done everything I wanted to and I've done it to the best of my ability.' – Robert Vano

Love You from Prague opens on 25 June 2026.

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Preceded by Artist Talk with photographer Robert Vano on 24 June from 7pm.

Exhibition dates: 26 June – 4 September 2026.
Address: Vitrínka and Bouda Galleries + nearby public outdoor space.
30 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QY

Love You from Prague **is organised by the Czech Centre.** Kindly supported by FotoŠkoda and Astronauts.cz

More information: https://bit.ly/RobertVano_LoveYouFromPrague

IMAGES available for download:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11mrGDMolrJcYToIP0ayXmrEOzEeNJ1zq?usp=drive_link

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