

## HIGHWAY MINDWAY

**Exhibition of students from the Royal College of Art, London, and UMPRUM, Prague**

February, 24th - June, 30th 2023

London's Czech Centre Vitrínka Gallery including outdoor spaces, Kensington Palace Gardens, London

*Press Release, Czech Centres, UMPRUM, 15. 2. 2023*

**The Czech Centre London, in cooperation with the Royal College of Art and the Studio of Photography II of the Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague (UMPRUM) under the direction of Alena Kotzmannová and Tomáš Souček, have prepared an exhibition of student works for British visitors, highlighting the necessity of perceiving public space and improving city life. More than twenty students participated in the project called "Highway Mindway." The Embassy of the Czech Republic in London is also involved in the implementation of the exhibition.**

The new exhibition, which will be on display from February 24th at the Vitrínka Gallery (exhibition space of the Czech Centre London), offers visitors a new perspective on architecture, with a particular emphasis on the need to change the overall perception of public space. Four teachers from the British Royal College of Art (Wiebke Leister, Gary Clough) and the Studio of Photography II at the Prague UMPRUM (Alena Kotzmannová, Tomáš Souček), together with Ukrainian architect and photographer Alex Bykov, have prepared a multimedia exhibition project in collaboration with curator Michal Nanoru. During the semester-long online meetings, discussions on the topic were conducted, resulting in photo series, videos, photographic zines, and especially site-specific installations that were created in dialogue directly for the gallery space. The young artists were inspired by Josef Pleskot's lecture held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October last year, during which he presented his vision of the future of Prague's highway.

*"The exhibition project Highway Mindway by students of two prestigious art schools of the Royal College of Art in London and UMPRUM in Prague is not only exceptional in its artistic treatment of the exhibition installation but especially the opportunity for mutual creative cooperation, artistic inspiration and personal acquaintance of students," stated **Přemysl Pela, Director of the Czech Centre London.***

For several years now, the issue of the Prague highway has been one of the topics discussed not only in professional circles. The highways generally "connect" or "cross" linearly, sometimes creating an unbreakable barrier. Part of the title of the exhibition Mindway, (flow of ideas) is based on sharing the students' knowledge and purposefully accentuating the importance of being aware of the environment and how it can (not) be influenced individually. Students from diverse backgrounds came out of the lived reality of "their cities"

on different continents. The exhibition explores life (not only) around motorways but also permeates the environment of large urban agglomerations alongside London, Prague, and the Chinese port of Yantai.

*"Based on the vision presented by architect Josef Pleskot, we are aware that the highway can be perceived in different ways. The thoroughfare, which divides the city center into two areas and has been a barrier for pedestrians so far, does not have to be only negative in the future. It points to the potential for new uses and the ability to view the issue of the "highway" through the reverse view of the 'mindway' e.g. as a future urban boulevard, a cultural leisure zone. Highway Mindway is a challenge to think differently about public space and its shaping through interventions that can build on and reformat the existing structure,"* said **Alena Kotzmannová, Head of the Studio of Photography II, UMPRUM.**

The three-month collaboration has led the students to a variety of metaphorical approaches. The exhibition combines photography with objects, spatial installations with projection, and smell with sound. The main message is unanimous: to improve life in the city, it is essential to begin to perceive the environment in which we live.

### [More about the exhibition](#)

#### **About the Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague (UMPRUM)**

The Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague was founded in 1885. Throughout its existence it has ranked among the best educational institutions in the country. It boasts a number of successful graduates who have gone on to become respected professionals, garnering acclaim beyond the Czech Republic. The school is divided into the departments of architecture, design, fine arts, applied arts, graphic and theory and history of art. Each department is divided into studios according to their specialist area. The studios are all led by leading figures of the Czech art scene. Twice a year the school opens to the public for a presentation of student work, entitled "Artsemestr". Each year the school organises over 15 exhibitions, half of which are shown abroad. Prague UMPRUM, as one of the only schools of former post-communist countries, is featured in the index of prestigious European and world art schools.

#### **About Czech Centres (CC)**

Czech Centres, a state-funded organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, are the core instrument of public diplomacy of the Czech Republic's foreign policy, and strive to support the reputation of the Czech Republic in the world. As a cultural institute, Czech Centres are members of the network of European cultural institutes – EUNIC. They present our country in a wide range of cultural and social areas: from art through the creative industries to the achievements of Czech science and innovations. They also provide Czech language courses in foreign countries. They participate in international projects and serve as a platform for the development of international cultural dialogue. At present, there are 25 branches across three continents – in addition to Czech Centres these also include the Czech Houses in Moscow, Jerusalem and Bratislava.

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