

PRESS RELEASE

# Milan Dobeš. A Celebration of Colour, Light and Movement

Pioneer of kinetic and constructivist art in Czechoslovakia

EXHIBITION: Milan Dobeš. A Celebration of Colour, Light and Movement

DATE: 20 03 – 07 09 2025

OPENING: 20 03 2025 at 7:30 pm

PLACE: Museum of Modern Art, Nave

CURATORS: Gina Renotière, Ivan Jančár

EXHIBITION DESIGN: Ivan Jančár, Michal Soukup

INSTALLATION: Vlastimil Sedláček, Filip Šindelář, Daniel Opletal

RESTAURATION, PRESERVATION: Gabriela Polívková, Jakub Barna, Anna Píšťková

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Petr Šmalec

A retrospective exhibition of Milan Dobeš (\*1929), a pioneer of global kinetic and constructivist art, will be presented by the Olomouc Museum of Art (Czechia) starting March 20, 2025. Visitors will gain a deep insight into the life and work of this artist, who exhibited alongside art icons such as Warhol, Vasarely, Anuszkiewicz, and many others. Through his creations, Dobeš transcended the borders of former Czechoslovakia and became a respected figure within the global avant-garde movement.

The path to becoming an internationally recognized artist was not easy for the native of Přerov (Czechia), who spent most of his ninety-five years life in Slovakia. While studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava, Slovakia (1951–1956), he faced challenges due to his "capitalist background" and was only able to continue his studies with the support of Professor Ján Mudroch. A pivotal moment and turning point in his career came with his three-month stay in France, which he was able to undertake by means of a sham marriage application. During this time, he came into contact with modern art while earning a living by painting street scenes.

## FROM WENCESLAS SQUARE TO INTERNATIONAL FAME

In 1966, he received an invitation to exhibit at the House of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship in Prague, a bastion of socialist realism, which paradoxically became his breakthrough into the world of art. The exhibition of light and kinetic objects in the attractive space at Wenceslas Square, originally planned as a "protest action," attracted 56,000 visitors. It also caught the attention of prominent international theorists, including Frank Popper and Udo Kultermann, who recognized Dobeš as a key figure in kinetic art and op art. Frank Popper subsequently invited Dobeš to the Kunst-Licht-Kunst exhibition in Eindhoven, the first post-war exhibition of its kind in the world.

After that, Dobeš's works travelled to prestigious world exhibitions – Documenta 4 in Kassel (1968), EXPO '70 in Osaka, and the Biennale in Montevideo in 1969, where he received the First Prize for kinetic sculpture. Alongside Victor Vasarely,

Andy Warhol, Edward Kienholz, and Martial Rayss, he was invited to Helsinki for the Ars 69 exhibition, which showcased sixty of the best contemporary artists from around the world. "I don't know how I got there, but I was there," Milan Dobeš recalled nearly half a century later for a documentary film by the Olomouc Museum of Art. "And you know, it didn't strike me at the time at all. I thought I belonged there. In retrospect, I admire myself for I got there," Milan Dobeš laughs as he reflects on those memories. His position among the key figures of global constructivism was affirmed in 2013 by his participation in the prestigious exhibition "Dynamo. A Century of Light and Movement in Art 1913-2013" at the Grand Palais in Paris, which recapped a century of kinetic art. From former Czechoslovakia, only František Kupka and Milan Dobeš were selected for this exhibition.

One of the highlights of Dobeš's career was his collaboration in 1971 with the American Wind Symphony Orchestra in the USA, where he contributed to the creation of a monumental light-kinetic object synchronized with the music of prominent composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki and Toshiro Mayuzumi.

#### LIGHT, MOVEMENT, AND RHYTHM – A UNIQUE AESTHETIC

Milan Dobeš is like an equilibrist working with light and movement, he is the creator of precise op art graphics as well as extensive spatial kinetic objects. He is a refined illusionist and a colourful minimalist, whose rational approach results in works that astonishingly evoke emotional responses. Through his creations, he transforms the reality of space, drawing the viewers in with pulsating works that transport them to other worlds.

Among approximately 180 works, eighteen are by other significant global figures of constructivism and kineticism, allowing viewers to compare Dobeš's work with leading representatives in this field of visual art. "This is a unique opportunity to discover the work of an artist whose creations continue to resonate with both experts and the general public," says curator Gina Renotière. "The exhibition was made possible due to the welcoming approach to loans from not only major state galleries but also private institutions and collectors," explains Gina Renotière, noting that the exhibition will also feature objects and graphics from Dobeš's generous donation to the collection of the Olomouc Museum of Art.

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