

jitka hanzlová  
*architectures of life*

**PRESS RELEASE**

**via a. stradella 1-4**  
**february 4 – may 8, 2021**

Galleria Raffaella Cortese is delighted to present the fourth solo show by Czech photographer Jitka Hanzlová, following her first major presentation in her native country at the National Gallery Prague in 2019, *SILENCES*, curated by Adam Budak.

In the past 30 years Hanzlová has depicted, series after series, image after image, portraits of a world in which subjects exist in a non-hierarchical composition: people, nature, animals, architecture exist in a unity of sense, and yet, in all their specificity and contradicting moments. "A single pear tree does not make a forest – or does it?", asks Urs Stahel: can a single portrait, a single landscape, be telling signs of wholeness?

In each of her series, Hanzlová composes her vision in sequences, rising a self-evident constellation of relations that draw the structures of existence: the exhibition *Architectures of Life* allows them to be, once again, evident in a new composition that collects images from a variety of series spanning through the years.

Her portraits since the early '90s touch upon silent images of places, things, homes, their inhabitants, as in *Rokytnik* (1990 – 1994), *Bewohner* (1990 – 1994), *Tonga* (1993), *Here* (1998, 2005 – 2010), *Brixton* (2002), *Cotton Rose* (2004 – 2006), where human, nature, urban, animals merge into landscapes with unique characters, colors, lives, connections and contradictions, one is invited to imagine. In series as *Forest* (2000 – 2005), *Vanitas* (2008 – 2012), *Horse* (2007 – 2014), also present in the show, Hanzlová's approach to the "deep unconscious of Nature", as Urs Stahel defines it in her latest publication *Silences* (2019), expresses nothing less than the same curiosity that she reserves to the human-made: in her existential searching, beyond trends, for "the quintessence of life, for things that endure".

The latest series *WATER* (2013 – 2019) expands the transversal approach of the latest thirty years and is dedicated to a pervasive element onto which our existence is based: water, in its various states and faces without own shape.

Hanzlová's photographs materialize as appearances, phenomena: a line of research that has developed over the decades coincidentally and consistently in the unconscious, and yet single images are now connected in new relations to one another.

Architectures that imprint our lives belong to the realm of nature, which cannot be understood as the exact opposite of what is human: it is simply a condition to our being, a part of us, an irreplaceable one. Hanzlová invites us to look quietly and repeatedly. Her images, then, not only transcend a hierarchy of subjects, but also suggest an original and essential order of existence.

For this solo show, she newly breaks away from the borders of her series, which are treasured as bodies of work in her well-known publications.

She sees beyond them. The architectures underlining life are organic and inorganic, contradictory and complementary, and yet self-evident, to those who observe.

Hanzlová has dedicated her decades-long practice to the act of seeing, in all its possible meanings – she sees, she is seen, she invites us to see, she seeks manifestations that are fragments of our living and which, through her own eyes, might tell us about the wholeness we belong to.

## jitka hanzlová

### BIOGRAPHY

Jitka Hanzlová was born in 1958 in Náchod, Czech Republic. She lives and works in Essen, Germany.

In over 30 years Hanzlová has portrayed the human, the urban, and nature in her photographic series: these are excerpts, moments of entirety, existing in relations that connect us to ourselves, to one another, us to nature and to every surrounding.

Deeply marked by her experience of exile at the beginning of the '80s and later return to her native country after the Velvet Revolution of '89, Hanzlová has developed, step by step, her own visual language; with instinctive gaze focused on questioning identity and belonging, she looks through her subjects, seeking an inner matrix of existence. With time, experience and practice become the true concept behind her photography.

Starting with *Rokytník* (1990 – 1994) and until her latest *WATER* (2013 – 2019), Hanzlová's photographs are silent appearances, in which one may gather signs of cultures and contexts she has chosen to capture: these images live within the bodies of her series and in her well-known publications, but also transcend them, drafting together a transforming texture of the world.

In 1993 Hanzlová was awarded the Dr. Otto-Steinert-Preis by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Photographie, in 1995 she received the DG BANK Frankfurt scholarship, in 2003 the Grand Prix Arles, and in 2007 the Paris Photo Prize for Contemporary Photography. She was twice nominee for The Citibank Photography Prize in London. Her noteworthy solo exhibitions include *Jitka Hanzlová. Silences*, Národní Galerie, Prague (2019); National Gallery, Edinburgh (2012); Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid (2012); Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany (2005); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2001); Fotomuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland (2001); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (2000); Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany (1996). Selected group shows include *Essere Umane*, Musei San Domenico, Forlì, Italy (2021); *SUBJECT and OBJECT. PHOTO RHINE RUHR*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf (2020); *NEUE WELTEN. Die Entdeckung der Sammlung*, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany (2019); *The Moment is Eternity – Works from the Olbricht Collection*, ME Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany (2018); *BEHOLD THE MAN*, Kunstmuseum Magdeburg, Magdeburg, Germany (2017); *The Photographic I – Other Pictures*, S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium (2017); *Portraits. Photographs from the MAPFRE Collection*, Museo de la Ciudad de México, Mexico City (2017); *Landscapes and People. From the Photographic Collection of the Albertina*, Albertina Museum, Vienna (2016); *Mit anderen Augen. Das Porträt in der zeitgenössischen Fotografie*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany (2016), travelled to Kunsthalle Nürnberg and Kunsthaus, Nürnberg, Germany (2016); *Human Nature. Art Collection Deutsche Börse*, Deutsche Börse AG, The Cube, Eschborn, Germany (2016), travelled to NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany (2016).

The exhibition is supported by the Centro Ceco di Milano.

