LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

Department of Art, Architecture & Design
113 Research Drive, Bldg. C
Bethlehem, PA 18015
Tel: (610) 758-3610 | Fax: (610) 758-6551
Web: http://cas.lehigh.edu/casweb/

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Dear Prof. Jakubec,

Thank you for the invitation to review the habilitation thesis of Dr. Marta Filipová as part of her habilitation proceedings and promotion review at Palacký University.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to read Dr. Filipová's monograph and thesis, *Czechoslovakia at the World's Fairs: Behind the Façade* (Central European University Press, 2024). I was well aware of the book before you sent it to me, although I had not yet read it until now, and my understanding of the broader scope of Dr. Filipová's work as a scholar is strong. I have read many of her past publications, and I often cite her earlier book *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art* (Routledge 2020) in my own publications on modern art in Prague.

Dr. Filipová is in my opinion among the most influential Czech-born art history scholars who regularly publish in the English language, in addition to publishing scholarship in Czech. I do not know of any other Czech scholars in the discipline of art history who have published two books written in the English language and published with major presses outside the Czech Republic—in her case, Routledge and Central European University Press. I point this out not because I believe English-language publishing is of paramount importance, but because part of what a habilitation review is intended to assess is the impact of a scholar's work on their field.

In this case, I can state with confidence that the high degree of scholarly rigor in Dr. Filipová's work and the fresh perspective that she brings to her subject matter—together with the fact that she publishes much of her work in English—has led her to have an especially strong and broad scholarly impact as an art historian, not only in the Czech Republic, where she is already today recognized as a leading mid-career scholar, but worldwide. I would also add that rather uniquely for a scholar of art history, her impact extends beyond the art historical discipline to other scholarly fields where her work is read: to curatorial and exhibition studies; the historical study of Austria-Hungary and its successor states; and Czech, Czechoslovak, and Central and East European studies as it is practiced in universities outside the Czech Republic.

Czechoslovakia at the World's Fairs is an extraordinarily well-researched and carefully argued monograph that in my opinion, strongly merits habilitation and promotion for Dr. Filipová.

The book is a focused study of the Czechoslovakia's participation in the large international exhibitions and world's fairs of the interwar period from the early 1920s through 1939, at a crucial time when the newly formed state of Czechoslovak sought to position itself as "a recognised player" (p. 4) on the global stage and turned to exhibitions for that purpose. Dr. Filipová argues that among all of the successor states to Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia was unique in participating and asserting itself in nearly every major international exhibition of that period, and that the state viewed these exhibitions and fairs as fundamental to establishing broader political and cultural visibility for the country, as well as highlighting and extending the reach of Czechoslovakia's burgeoning interwar industrial economy.

The book can at the same time be read as a broader study of the interwar world's fairs more generally, since in each chapter of the book, Dr. Filipová provides extensive examples of the other countries that participated in these fairs, and the manner and intentions of their participation. Herein lies the other strength of *Czechoslovakia at the World's Fairs*: it tells a story about Czechoslovak art, culture, and politics that will be appealing and interesting to specialists in Czech art, but that is also sufficiently connected and relatable to the interwar culture and politics of other European nations that it will be interesting to readers outside the Czech arena.

Dr. Filipová offers particularly robust analysis of the role and work of the architects and designers of Czechoslovakia's national pavilions, such as Pavel Janák, Josef Gočár, Kamil Roškot, Ladislav Sutnar, and others, as well as the fine artists who were commissioned for projects within these pavilions or who showed their paintings and sculptures there, most of whom were representatives of "classical modernism" (p. 50). It is likewise interesting to read about the many older artists and art critics who were involved in the organization of Czechoslovakia's participation in these exhibitions, such as Stanislav Sucharda and Jan Štursa or V. V. Štech and Vacláv Nebeský. As Dr. Filipová points out, perhaps the most radical of the participating artists was the one who she terms the "odd one out," Zdeněk Pešánek, whose today well-known kinetic light sculpture was part of the 1937 exhibition in Paris but completely misunderstood by audiences of the time (p. 129-132).

As the book demonstrates, world's fairs and large international exhibitions have always been sites where tensions and contradictions unfold between the vernacular and the international; the traditional and the contemporary; the rural and the urban. The prevailing aspiration of most national pavilions and displays—not only for Czechoslovakia, but also for other countries—was to cover over these differences, in order to make the identity of the state and culture more consolidated and easily digestibale for foreign audiences. It is to Dr. Filipová's credit that she does not gloss over these tensions and ruptures, but draws attention to them as a core part of her book. These are some of the most interesting parts of the monograph. Significant attention is also given to the World's Fair in New York and the Golden Gate Exhibition in San Francisco in 1939 and to the plight of the Czechoslovak pavilion and delegation there after the German occupation in March of that year (p. 55-64), and this is the most thorough analysis I have read by any scholar of that particular issue.

I also wish to applaud the way that Dr. Filipová draws on multiple methodologies of both artistic and textual analysis in the book. She researches and analyzes archival sources from government archives; published accounts from newspapers and magazines; architectural plans; photographic documentation; and a wide array of other materials, including diaspora archives and publications of Czechoslovak communities living abroad, particularly in the United States.

This is an absolutely superb book. To repeat what I indicated at the outset of this letter, I believe that *Czechoslovakia at the World's Fairs* testifies to the overall strength of Dr. Filipová as a scholar in her field, and merits her habilitation and promotion at Palacký University.

I am glad to provide additional information as needed, or to respond to any questions you may have about this professional evaluation of her work.

With best wishes,

Nicholas Sawicki, Ph.D.
Full Professor of Art History
Department Chairperson, Department of Art, Architecture and Design