**PRESS RELEASE**

**Exhibition: A Path Destined by Fate – Květa and Jitka Válová**

**Exhibition curator: Richard Drury**

**Exhibition dates: 6. 11. 2022 – 19. 3. 2023**

**Exhibition opening: 5. 11. 2022 at 4.30 pm**

*‘I don’t have a single friend or acquaintance who doesn’t begin to smile when you say their name, “the Válová girls”. Their roughness and temperament, the truthfulness of their artistic testimony, their absolute inability to be afraid and not to speak their mind made them a true legend…’*

Ester Krumbachová, *První knížka Ester* [The First Book of Esther], 1994

*On 6 November, the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region opens an exhibition of art by the twin sisters Květa and Jitka Válová with the title* A Path Destined by Fate*, which presents the life’s work of these two distinctive artists on the centenary of their birth. An important part of the exhibition consists of works from both sisters’ estates that were donated to the GASK collection in 2021. The exhibition, which runs from 6 November to 19 March, is curated by GASK’s head curator, Richard Drury.*

The Válová sisters are two of the most outstanding figures of Czech art of the late 1950s, when they were part of the distinctive young generation of artists then emerging onto the scene during the era’s social and cultural ‘thaw’. From the very beginning, both sisters’ art sprang from a profound sense of empathy for the fate of man, expressed first through scenes from the industrial environment of their hometown of Kladno and later as a universal symbolism of generalised figures. Says Drury: ‘Although their artistic testimony is clearly rooted in the generational and historical context, the unusually strong humanist charge of their art far transcends these limits.’

When speaking of the Válová sisters, one can identify an extraordinary unity; they were ‘one soul in two bodies’. Each would certainly have excelled on her own as a consummate artistic personality, but to divide them on the basis of one or another measure would be to deny the life-long symbiosis that stimulated and determined their individual yet mutually interrelated work. ‘In order to understand the content of one sister’s work, one must also understand the content of the other’s work’, adds curator Richard Drury.

The exhibition has been conceived as a symbolic ‘pilgrimage’, divided into twelve thematic sections (reality, parallel lives, slaughter, struggle, burden, confinement, journey, conversation, touch, reconciliation, harmony, transformation) that introduce visitors to the Válová sisters’ profound artistic statements on the drama and intimacy of human existence through monumental canvases as well as small-scale drawings, sketches and prints. This ‘pilgrimage’ leads from their early work made during the Second World War, when they were employed as forced labourers at Kladno’s Poldi steelworks, through the crisis years following the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, all the way to Jitka Válová’s late drawings representing her intimate reflections on the interconnectedness of ephemeral human life with the never-ending cycles of nature and the universe. An important part of the exhibition consists of works from both sisters’ estates that were donated to the GASK collection in 2021 – some 1,730 drawings, sketches and prints. ‘In conjunction with the exhibition’s opening, GASK will make four hundred of the Válová sisters’ works from their estates available online at sbirky.gask.cz’, says Kateřina Rusková from the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region’s Collection Administration. Much of the works’ digitisation was done in collaboration with photographer Oto Palán and the digitisation office of the Central Bohemian Research Library in Kladno. Also included in the exhibition are Jitka and Květa Válová’s digitised sketchbooks, which visitors can browse on tablet computers, as well as a documentary film about the sisters by Ester Krumbachová. In the ‘Harmony’ section, visitors can hear the music – not just classical but also experimental – that Jitka Válová listened to for inspiration while creating her drawn and cast ‘musical recordings’.

The exhibition at GASK also relates to Dagmar Šubrtová’s longtime educational activities at the Válová sisters’ house in Kladno and her systematic efforts to remember the sisters’ importance in their hometown. It is envisioned as the culmination of the “Year of the Válová Sisters”, a year-long programme in Kladno consisting of three exhibitions and other accompanying events. Two other exhibitions are being held as part of this Year of the Válová Sisters. The first, *The Válová Sisters’ House*, opens on 10 December at the Uhelný mlýn gallery. The second is a double exhibition: one half, titled *An Homage to the Válová Sisters,* consists of paintings, drawings and objects by the sisters and by other artists; the other half, *Jitka and Květa Válová,* presents photographs of the sisters taking by Jiří and Jiřina Hanke. This dual exhibition will open at the Kladno Chateau on 15 December.

*A Path Destined by Fate* is held at the Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region from 6 November to 19 March and is curated by Richard Drury. In conjunction with the exhibition, the gallery offers a series of guided tours and lectures where you can learn more about the art and life of the Válová sisters and their principles of defiance, otherness and self-reflection. The GASK Learning Centre has put together educational programmes for schools, art workshops for families with children and a dance workshop with Jiří Lössl and Monika Švec Sybolová. ‘As part of the GASK without Barriers programme, we are organising an experience-based programme for visitors with vision impairments titled “An Eye into the Past”, where participants can use the Válová sisters’ work to reveal hidden secrets’, says Karolína Šteffková of the GASK Learning Centre. In January, the gallery will publish a book that, besides covering the exhibition *A Path Destined by Fate*, will also present the broader contexts of this comprehensive project.

*The exhibition is held under the patronage of the Czech Ministry of Culture and Mgr. Petra Pecková, Governor of the Central Bohemia Region.*

*The project is supported by the Central Bohemian Region, the Czech Ministry of Culture, the Town of Kutná Hora and Galerie Kodl.*

GASK – Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region is located in the former Jesuit College in Kutná Hora. As an institution, it focuses on its collection of modern and contemporary art and on exhibiting fine art of the twentieth and twenty-first century.