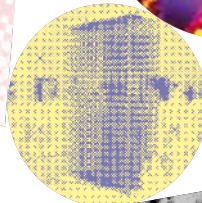


Programme of the re-opening



During the whole evening:

- Tricolour illumination on the Embassy building
- Light installation "The Monolith" on the Embassy piazza
- Light installation "The Resonator" in the underground garage
- Screening about the Embassy building in the underground cinema
- "Fotonaut" photo booth in the vestibule of the underground garage
- Drinks by the world-famous bartender Pavel Tvaroh
- Czech Centre Window Gallery: Viktorie Langer (30 Kensington Palace Gardens)



6:00 – 6:30pm
6:30pm

Arrival of guests
The event will be launched in the presence of:
The Ambassador H.E. Libor Sečka
The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Martin Smolek
Greetings from the representative of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office



6:45 pm
7:15 – 8:30 pm
9 pm
11pm

Reception opens
Lenny's concert
Improvised theatrical performance in the underground garage
Event finishes



Úvod

Vážení přátelé,

asi málokterý český objekt v zahraničí vzbudil takovou polemiku, takovou diskusi odborníků i veřejnosti a současně vyvolal tolik vášní jako budova československého a později české velvyslanectví v Londýně. Už od roku 1970, kdy byl celý projekt dokončen, se o něm vedou debaty a spory, stává se předmětem oslavných článků i kritických statí, jako všechno mimořádné začíná být milován i nenáviděn zároveň. Autorům návrhu – architektům Šrámkovi, Bočanovi a Štěpánskému určitě nechyběla odvaha. Přihlásili se k tehdy avantgardnímu brutalistickému stylu. V jeho duchu poté v Londýně bořili konvence, nechali vystupovat krásu z ryzosti a neuhlazenosti materiálů a současně dokonale zvládli proporce a vytvořili pocit rovnováhy a sounáležitosti díla s okolním prostředím. Na celkovém vyznění se určitě projevila také spolupráce s britským architektem Robertem Matthew. Nepřekvapuje proto, že stavba získala v roce 1971 prestižní cenu RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects).

Po rozdělení československé federace v roce 1993 došlo také k rozdělení celého komplexu. Slovenská strana získala samotnou budovu velvyslanectví, česká poté budovu, která měla původně obytnou funkci a sloužila pro obchodní a konzulární oddělení. Potřeba redefinovat prostor, upravit jej pro nové účely, opět probudila debaty. Zůstat, či odejít, prodat či obnovit, tak stály otázky. Pro kritiky další dobrá příležitost vyřídít si se starým soupeřem účty. Hlasy, které se hlásily k tradici české architektonické školy, nakonec zvítězily. Naštěstí. Česká vláda se rozhodla do objektu investovat, modernizovat jej a uzpůsobit potřebám české zahraniční služby 21. století. Výsledkem rekonstrukce, která trvala bez mála dva roky, je svěží omlazená tvář budovy velvyslanectví, která nechává vyniknout detailům. Udivuje čistota linií, pocit lehkosti a jasů, jakoby proudy světla nebyly do prostoru uváděny jen prostřednictvím velkých skleněných ploch, ale prostupovaly přímo betonovými stěnami. Těžká konstrukce je nadnášena unikátní nespoutanou vlnou sochaře Kolíbala.

Z vlastní zkušenosti soudím, že místo, kde se rodí myšlenky, tvoří iniciativy a přistupuje se k jejich naplnění, do velké míry také definuje jejich výraz, zanechává v nich svoji stopu. Vůbec se proto nebojím tvrdit, že máme – li nyní obnovenou, optimistickou, elegantní, na Londýn velmi pozitivně působící budovu velvyslanectví, pak máme velkou naději, že taková bude i česká diplomacie v britském hlavním městě. Budova velvyslanectví totiž není jenom nástrojem pro uplatňování českých zahraničně – politických zájmů, je svým způsobem také poselstvím. Poselstvím o formě a poselstvím o obsahu. Pevně věřím, že přátelství a vzájemná sympatie mezi Londýnem a ikonickou budovou českého velvyslanectví odolá i v budoucnu všem nástrahám neklidných časů, přetrvá a rozkvetne stejně jako přátelství a sympatie mezi našimi národy.

Libor Sečka
Velvyslanec České republiky ve Velké Británii
Londýn, 14. října 2017

Foreword

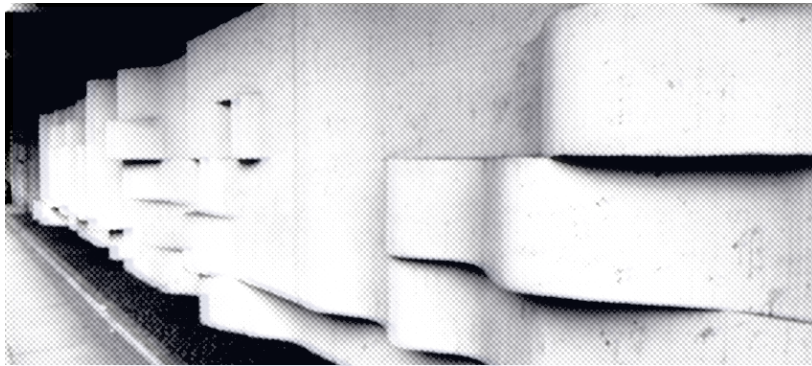
Dear friends,

Few Czech structures outside the country have aroused such controversy, such discussion among experts and the public alike, and at the same time inspired so much passion, as the building of the Czechoslovak and later the Czech Embassy in London. Just as all extraordinary things are both loved and hated, as soon as the structure was completed in 1970, debates and controversies swirled around it, and the building became the topic of notable articles and critical essays. Those behind the design, the architects Jan Šrámek, Jan Bočan and Karel Štěpánský, certainly did not lack courage. They were proponents of the avant-garde brutalist style of the time, and it that spirit they shattered contemporary conventions in London. They allowed the beauty of purity and unrefined materials to take precedence, and at the same time perfectly mastered proportions and created a sense of balance and harmony with the surrounding environment. Co-operation with British architect Robert Matthew certainly contributed to the overall effect. It's no surprise that the building was awarded a prestigious RIBA award from the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1971.

After the split of the Czechoslovak Federation in 1993, the whole complex also was divided. Slovakia got the embassy building itself, and the Czech Republic gained the building that had originally had residential quarters and housed the trade and consular sections. The need to redefine the space and adjust it for new purposes has reawakened debates. Questions arose about whether to stay or leave, to sell or renovate. For critics, it presented a fresh opportunity to settle accounts with old adversaries. Fortunately, the voices supporting the tradition of the Czech architectural school eventually won. The Czech government decided to invest in the building, to modernize it and adapt it to the needs of the 21st-century Czech foreign service. The result of the reconstruction, which lasted almost two years, is a rejuvenated embassy building in which the details can shine. It has an astonishing purity of line, feeling of lightness and brightness – as if streams of light were entering the space not only through the large glass windows but penetrating right through the concrete walls. The heavy construction is lightened by the unique unbridled wave created by the sculptor Stanislav Kolibal.

In my experience, I think that a place where ideas are born, where initiatives originate and are brought to fruition, leaves its imprint on them to a considerable extent. I will not hesitate to claim, therefore, that since we now have an embassy building that is renewed, optimistic, elegant, and leaving a very positive mark on London, we can have great hope that Czech diplomacy in the British capital will make a similar impact. The embassy building is not only an instrument for asserting Czech foreign-policy interests, it is also a statement. A statement about form and a statement about substance. I firmly believe that the goodwill and harmony between London and the iconic building of the Czech Embassy will continue in the future to resist the pitfalls of restless times and will keep blossoming, just like the goodwill and harmony between our nations.

Libor Sečka
Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the Court of St. James's
London, 14 October 2017



Embassy of the Czech Republic in London / brief history

The former Embassy of Czechoslovakia (built between 1965 and 1970) was planned as a statement of the country's new communist society, in the new style adopted by Czech architects: Brutalism.

For Czechoslovakia, the 1960's and 1970's were the golden age of architecture. Czech architects built other embassies and exhibition pavilions around the world in the same architectural style. They had moved away from the regionalist architecture dictated by Socialist Realism and looked to international modernism for inspiration, borrowing from America and Japan, to create a style which would promote Czechoslovak national belief in the power of new industry and the possibilities of prefabrication.

The architects of the embassy were Karel Šrámek, Karel Štěpánský and Jan Bočan, from the Studio Beta Prague, working in cooperation with the British architect Robert Matthew, the chief architect of the Royal Festival Hall. The interior design includes works by artists such as Stanislav Kolíbal and Adriana Šimotová. Jan Bočan, a junior architect who was originally only asked to develop initial sketches for the new embassy, eventually became the main designer and coordinator on site. Later in his career he was also involved in the design of the Czech embassies in Stockholm and Brasilia.

The building comprises of two contrasting structures: a rectangular block following the street alignment on Nothing Hill Gate and a smaller lower square plan block sheltered from the heavy traffic under the trees of Kensington Palace Gardens. The rectangular block consists of four floors of mostly duplex apartments for employees and their families, and a fifth floor, which used to serve as a common dining area. The ground floor and mezzanine, now the embassy offices, served as a consulate and small meeting rooms. The lower block had offices for the Ambassador, administration and a large room for the main official functions. Both buildings are connected at basement level, where there are changing rooms, a garage and a movie theatre.

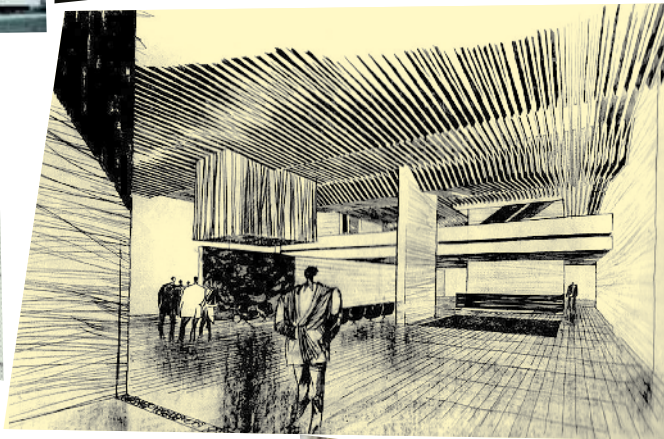
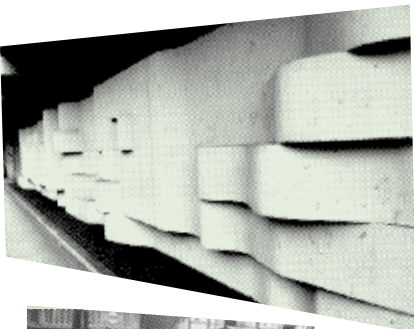
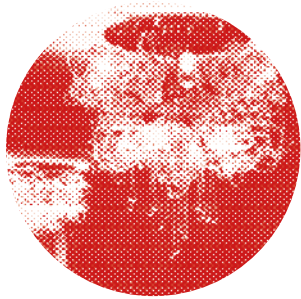
In 1971, the Czechoslovak embassy won the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Award for the best building in the United Kingdom created by foreign architects. The jury declared that "unlike so many examples of precast concrete buildings which are weathering badly, this one is a refined example of its kind, skilfully detailed technically and aesthetically."

The cubist geometry of the embassy indicates the influence of Le Corbusier, probably through František Samner, a Czech architect who worked for Le Corbusier during the 1930's. This cubist geometry is particularly remarkable in the lower block, which has balanced proportions and appears as a floating pavilion above the ground. The shading created by the slanting alignment of the glass on the first and second levels is particularly interesting.

After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the building was divided to accommodate the embassies of both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

After almost fifty years since its construction, some modernisation and reconstruction work was essential to secure the smooth operation of the building for the upcoming years. The reconstruction started in November 2015 and finished in October 2017. Now, the building hosts not only the Czech Embassy, but also the other Czech governmental agencies and offices of CzechTourism, CzechInvest, CzechTrade and the Czech Centre. Truly a centre of all things Czech.

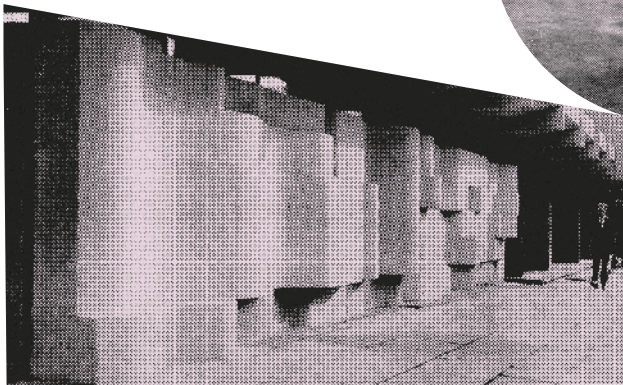
Eva Palacios



Stanislav Kolibal

Since the 1950s, Stanislav Kolibal (1925) has been one of the most notable personalities on the Czech art scene. He was a leading figure in the group "UB 12", which played an important role in the 1960s. His language is geometry, his predominant theme the relation of illusion and reality. Eventually his emphasis turned to the need for finding rules and order. It is a meditation on the problems engendered by and linked to man's presence on Earth.

From drawings used as ground plans, Stavby (Buildings), i.e. wooden and metal objects, that became Kolibal's preoccupation since the second half of the 1980s, came into being. Stanislav Kolibal has been drawing and sculpting simultaneously with his work in architecture and other creative pursuits for more than 60 years. His cycles of drawings are a key to the understanding of his highly sophisticated art.



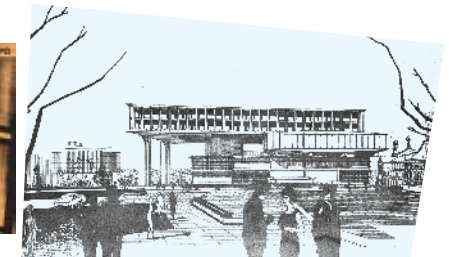
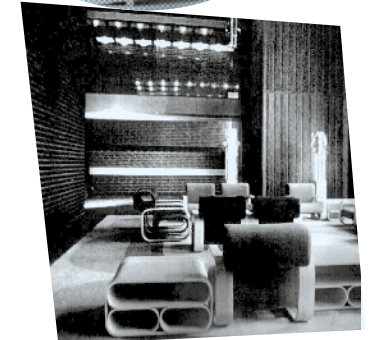
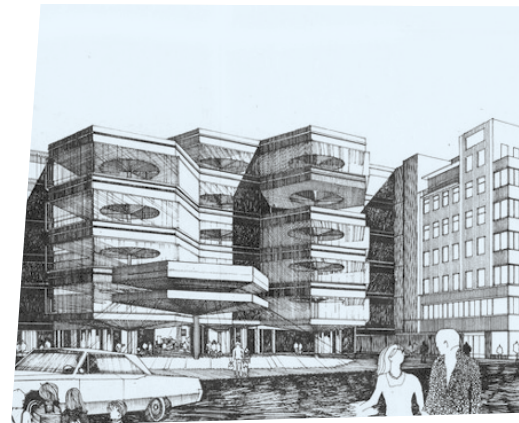
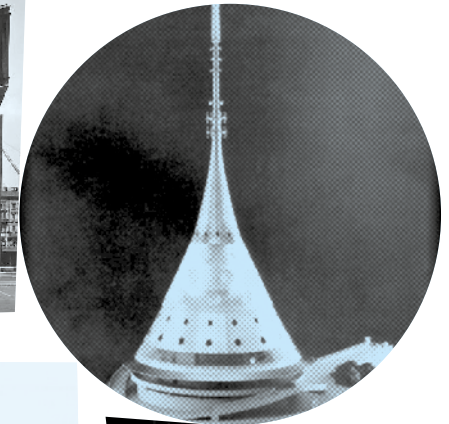
Stanislav Kolibal

1966, *Separated Matter*, bronze, 80 x 80 cm

1968-1969, *Plastic Wall*, concrete cast in a wood form 2,30 x 18 m

Czech brutalist architecture

The best works of the late 1960s Czechoslovak architecture could hold their ground with top level western architecture, as demonstrated by the prestigious foreign awards they earned: the 1969 UIA Auguste Perret Prize for Hubáček and Patrmann's Ještěd, an award from the Japanese Institute of Architects for the best architecture at EXPO 70 for Palla, Rudiš and Jencek's Czechoslovak pavilion in Osaka, and the RIBA Award (awarded by the Royal Institute of British Architects) for Czechoslovak embassy building in London in 1971



The building of the Czech Embassy has changed to a Light Gallery of contemporary Czech artists

The unifying element is the light; the building has become a unique exhibit on its own. One whole side of the building is shining in the tricolour. The lights in the windows rejuvenate the building with the light pulsing and play the role of a mediator between the outer and the inner world of the Embassy on the night.

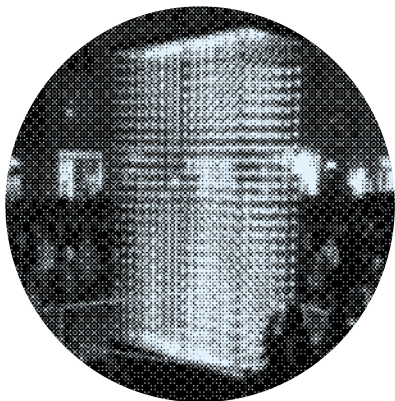
The Monolith by Hyperbinary

On the piazza in front of the Embassy stands almost a five-meter high light installation "Monolith". This installation ranks among the newest light installation trends and is composed of 3,328 LED balls. Each of them is an independent point of composition, capable of displaying the entire colour spectrum.

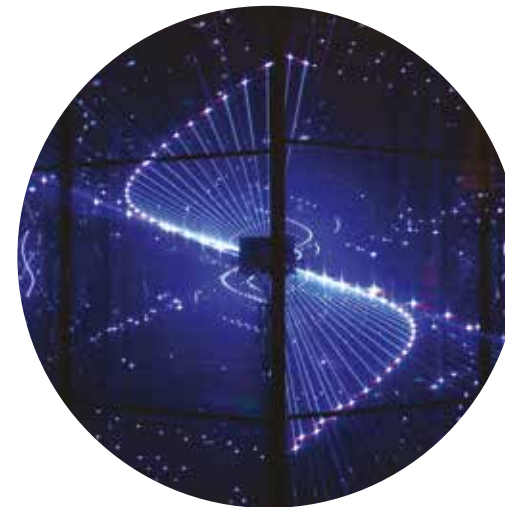
This installation gives homage to the quiet and at the same time the noise of the city at night. This light object absorbs all the surrounding light sources and transforms them into an engaging digital show. Through alternating landscapes and environments, the installation evokes the impression of a dynamic ride in a sports car, providing its viewers with an original experience of night in the city full of light, energy, and elegance. An integral part of the installation is a hypnotic sound that was created specifically for the Monolith by the world famous composer from Bosnia, Billain.

The Resonator by Jan Hladil

The Resonator, an installation in the Embassy's underground garage of the Embassy, combines elements of technology with a philosophical subtext, all derived from scientific understanding. As expressed by its title, it consists of a model of a resonator—a fundamental component of the mechanism of a laser module. The artist does not stop at the technical aspects of this device, but also presents the resonator as a metaphor for human existence. In his view, each human being figuratively functions as a sort of sociocultural resonator.



Hyperbinary, the author of the whole concept, is an independent Prague based studio founded by The Macula / Signal festival founders (Martin Pošta, Jan Šíma and Amar Mulabegović) with the need to envision, design and implement new artistic perspectives towards human identity and innovative technology. While open for independent and commissioned projects, Hyperbinary collaborates with agencies, cultural institutes, media artists, technologists and choreographers to explore the human in the digital age.



Pavel Tvaroh Bartender

Pavel Tvaroh / bartender

Pavel is the founder and Head Bartender at Lounge Bohemia, one of London's top bars. Lounge Bohemia opened in 2007 and quickly built its reputation thanks to Pavel's unconventional approach to Molecular Mixology. Recently he has opened a Lounge Bohemia in Prague.

BETON - A "CONCRETE" DRINK OF THE NIGHT

A traditional Czech liqueur, Becherovka, with notes of sweet spices, pungent herbs, and stomach-soothing bitters blossoms into a light and fizzy refresher when mixed with tonic water and a generous squeeze of lemon. The drink's name is a mashup of the two ingredients, but also a word that translates to "concrete" in Czech.



Becherovka is a unique herbal liqueur made in the spa town of Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic since 1807, based on a secret recipe known by only two people - a balanced mix of approximately 20 herbs and spices, sugar, alcohol and pure water from Karlovy Vary. Its alcohol content is 38% ABV. It is most commonly drunk neat, chilled or on the rocks. You can drink Becherovka in many fashions and on many different occasions: as an aperitif, digestive or versatile ingredient for mixing cocktails.



If you find Pavel's stand, he will composite a genuine "concrete" Czech drink for you ;)

František Skála & Petr Nikl Performance

9.00 PM



As a surprise to the guests, two Czech artists, Mr. Petr Nikl and Mr. František Skála, will perform in an improvised theatrical play using the underground garage of the Embassy as their stage.

Petr Nikl

Artist, puppeteer, occasional musician, and performer. A recipient of the prestigious Chaluppecký Prize for young artists in 1995, he has had numerous exhibitions in his home country as well as abroad. His later work has incorporated theatre, live performance, and play. In addition, he developed the concept for The Garden of Fantasy and Music that was part of the Czech pavilion at EXPO 2005 in Aichi, Japan.

František Skála

Sculptor, painter, children's book illustrator, musician, dancer and one of the most influential contemporary Czech artists. He plays and sings in the Small Dance Orchestra Universal Prague and is a member of the Sklep theatre company. In all the spheres of creative activity in which he is involved, his work is distinctive for his exceptional sense of humour and non-speculative, positive approach to creation.

The reception area of the Embassy, leading to the busy Bayswater Road, has been turned into a "Window Gallery I." with some of the finest Czech works of art which will periodically alternate to show off various artists



Jakub Špaňhel
2016, Old Town Square
Acrylic on canvas, 220 x 150 cm

Jakub Špaňhel feels high esteem for the painting tradition: the works of William Turner, Rembrandt or Václav Hollar as well as strictly painterly qualities and traditional genres. Among these, favoured flower and butterfly portraits can be found as well as unoccupied interiors, chandeliers, female nudes, cities at night and landscapes with petrol stations, cemeteries and crematoria. Špaňhel depicts simple things that surround him so that he can partially veil them with some baroque mysticism and dynamic which hallmarks them as something unique and rare. He treats his subject matter with humility similar to Bohuslav Reynek's when he lent soul to his materials and which inspired Špaňhel's rural cycle.

Anthropoid 42 – A Powerful Statement

Petr Stanický made use of the imprint of a "wounded" wall with a view of the crypt of the Orthodox Cathedral of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague, in which the assassins of Reinhard Heydrich, the Reich-Protector, were hiding. Although the technique of frottage was used, the relief does not make an archival or realistically descriptive impression. Despite a greater degree of stylisation when compared to the original, a certain degree of simplification is justifiable, adding an aureole of struggle, power or threat. This truly minimalist approach shows the author's self-confidence and professional self-assurance. The curators appreciate the fact that the author has not created a boring artefact, a "memorial plaque", but a really powerful object, which, even without literary connotations, represents a distinctive statement in itself.



Petr Stanický
2017, Anthropoid 42
Lead and glass, 150 x 215 x 6 cm



Viktorie Langer Exhibition

Viktorie Langer

Young Czech artist Viktorie Langer, nominated for this year's Jindřich Chalupecký Award, is the first in a series of artists and designers showcasing their work in the new Czech Centre Window Gallery. Langer is primarily a painter, while also working in the media of collage, drawing and ceramics. Her striking large-sized paintings are clearly inspired by early 20th century art, rather than current trends. Yet the almost abstract work of Langer uses a very contemporary language and has a well-established signature style.



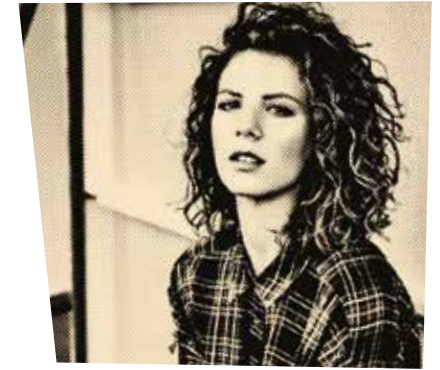
Viktorie Langer
2016, Untitled, oil on canvas



Viktorie Langer
2016, Untitled, oil on canvas

Lenny's Concert

7.15 PM



Lenny

is a one-of-a-kind live performer. She regularly entertains audiences at some of the biggest and most acclaimed venues and festivals in the Czech Republic and Great Britain.

Her debut album Hearts released in September 2016 became a sensation within hours. Great media reviews and universal acclaim, exceptional sales of both digital downloads and CDs and the top position in the national IFPI sales chart followed.

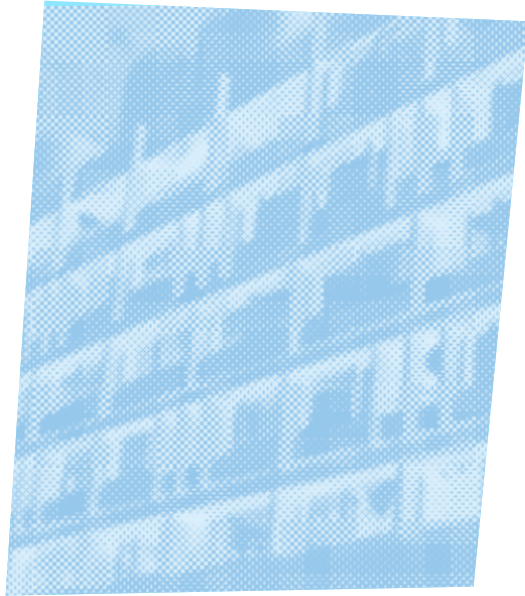
Lenny was born on September 25th, 1993. Her mother is a popular Czech singer who has been known as both top pop and chanson singer and an extraordinary guitar player. Lenny started playing piano at the age of four. She wrote her first song at eleven and five years later she performed with a band. She also accompanied her mother at concerts and gained experience at numerous performances abroad, namely on tour in Australia, Canada, Europe and Asia.

Her song You're My Everything reached the semi-final of the International song writing Competition in the US.



the concert is supported by the Czech Centre London

Screening about the Embassy



Screening about the Embassy building

A famous Czech promoter and critic of architecture, Adam Gebrian, visited the Czech Embassy in London in January 2016 to shoot a short movie about the building's distinctive and architectonic features. For the first time in London, the movie is being screened to the public in the newly reopened underground cinema of the Embassy.

In the future, the cinema will be used not only to show Czech/Slovak films and documentaries but will also serve as a place for seminars, conferences and community meetings.



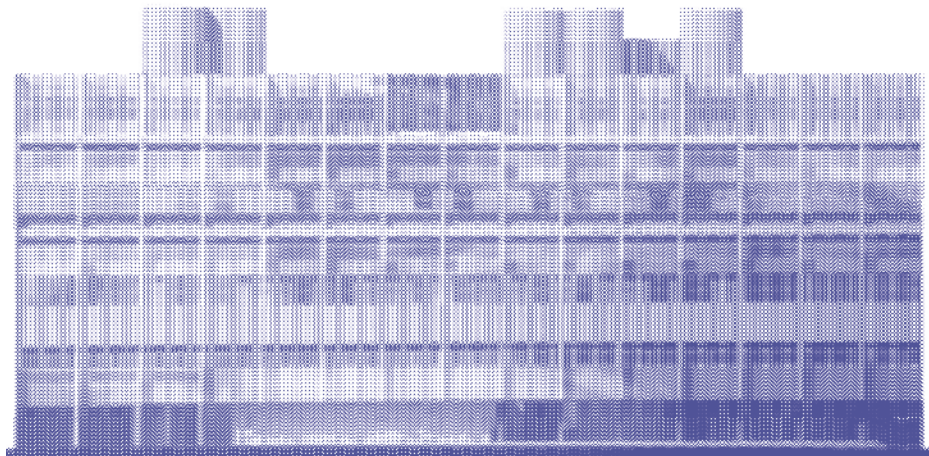
Fotonaut photo booth

Fotonaut

Are you looking for the best photo booth around? You found the Fotonaut!

Fotonaut is a young Czech company that created a unique sleek photo booth that won several international design awards. Fotonaut takes professional quality photos that can be done one person at a time, or in groups. The photo booth prints the highest quality photos on the spot and you can also send them through email and share them across social networks. Fotonaut has been used at more than 2000 events by many top companies around the world, as well as 34 from the prestigious Forbes Top 100 list.





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