



Embassy of the Czech Republic
Washington, DC

400 ASA
PHOTOGRAPHY



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
COLLEGE of ARTS & SCIENCES

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Photo above by Karel Cudlín, Kvasy (Zakarpattia Oblast), 1994

LOST EUROPE: ON THE EDGE OF MEMORIES

June 17 – December 10, 2023

American University Museum, Katzen Arts Center

The exhibition *Lost Europe: On the Edge of Memories*, by Czech documentary photographers Karel Cudlín, Jan Dobrovský, and Martin Wágner, premieres in the United States on June 17, 2023, at 6 pm, at the American University (AU) Museum at the Katzen Arts Center and runs through December 10, 2023.

Throughout the AU Museum's second floor, the 75 black and white pictures offer a glimpse of mainly rural Ukrainian life between 1991, the year of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and 2018. The images reveal a place full of the poetics and drama of a fast disappearing world.

"All three artists are genuinely interested in Ukraine, and their documentary work has a deep human quality," said curator Milena Kalinovska. "Their motivation was to capture something authentic, particular. These lyrical photographs, although straightforward and accurate, have ageless intensity and acknowledge deep historical context with lingering traces left."

Ukraine bears a complicated storied past. The word "okrayina" means "edge" – the edge of one world and the brink of another. The country sits directly between the European Union and Russia. Continuously traumatized, especially between 1932 and 1945: Holodomor, war, anti-Jewish

persecution, the Nazis, the Red Army, the cycle of partisan warfare and punitive carnage, left an indelible mark on the country. Over 14 million civilians died in that timeframe alone.

In the exhibition, the photographs present clues of this tumultuous past: a stark snowy field with Soviet dilapidated buildings, industrial factories spewing smoke next to a river, an old Jewish cemetery with headstones askew on the side of a road, ducks waddling past decapitated statues, and desolate rural landscapes. The exhibition asks, “Why does so much pain and drama happen here?”

Within this darkness, though, there is also a will to survive, persevere, and overcome. An old woman sits on a farm as the sunlight peaks out from behind the clouds. Horses run freely over a bridge. A baby lies swaddled on a bed. Children laugh as they throw snow at one another.

“This exhibition evokes a strong sense of wonder and pain but also hope. With the current onslaught on Ukraine, it is imperative to help Ukraine as much as we can to emerge to find much-deserved peace, stability, and prosperity,” said Lukáš Příbyl, Head of the Public Diplomacy Department at the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

The exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Embassy of the Czech Republic and 400 ASA (<https://www.400asa.org>), a collective of documentary photographers.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Karel Cudlín, born in 1960, trained in photography at the Film and Television School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He worked as a photojournalist and served as one of Czech President Vaclav Havel’s official photographers. An award-winning artist, Cudlín is known for black and white documentary photographs.

Jan Dobrovský, born in 1960, saw his family persecuted by the Czechoslovak Communist regime. He became a dissident for human rights and was involved in publishing art and literature in *samizdat* (forbidden manual reproduction and distribution of censored and underground publications.) Formerly a journalist for the underground of *Lidové noviny* newspaper, he returned to black and white documentary photography full-time in 2000. He is a co-founder of the group 400 ASA, a collective of Czech documentarian photographers active worldwide.

Born in Prague in 1980, **Martin Wágner** attended the Prague School of Photography and graduated from the Institute of Creative Photography in 2013. Russia and Ukraine have been the focus of his intensive travels and work. Wágner has won a number of prizes and has exhibited at home and abroad.

Lost Europe: On the Edge of Memories will be on display until Dec. 10. More details about public events associated with the exhibit, including a symposium, artist’s talk and poetry reading, will be available by summer at american.edu/museum.

Photographers are available via Zoom w/translator or in-person during their visit to the U.S., dates TBD. Curator Milena Kalinovska also available to meet for interview about the exhibition.