

A Self Portrait

Hurry Slowly.

. . .he (Professor Karel Novak) would show a collection of photos and would say nothing. Isn't that beautiful when one doesn't say anything to the photographs.

One cannot escape being influenced by others, but these influences were only good to the extent that they forced me to go my own way. I met the Czech-American Ruzicka early in my life and through him the photography of (Clarence H.) White. At the time I did not know that all mystery lies in the shadow areas. When Dr. Ruzicka arrived from the U.S.A. he told me often: expose for the shadows, the rest will come by itself – he was rightBut how to master the technique, that I did not know.

As soon as I had earned enough money to pay for my rent and food, I closed the studio and worked for myself. You should never lose contact with that which is close to your heart; at the most you can make an interruption for half a year. If it is longer you lose the thread and never find it again.

I print my photographs exactly the way a graphic artist prints the engraving of the etching on his printing press. I want nothing else but that which the camera with its lens delivers ___– what I myself put in front of it.

When I began to photograph (from) my window during the war I discovered that very often something was going on under the window that became more important to me. An object of some kind, a bunch of flowers, a stone, in short, something that separated this still life and made an independent picture. I believe that photography loves banal objects, and I love the life of objects. I am sure you know the fairy tales of (Hans Christian) Anderson: when the children go to bed, the objects come to life, toys, for example. I like to tell stories about the life of inanimate objects, to relate something mysterious: the seventh side of a dice.

It would have bored me extremely to have restricted myself to one specific direction for my whole life, for example, landscape photography. A photographer should never impose such restrictions upon himself.

I have no particular leaning toward...the all-to-clearly defined; I prefer the living, the vital, and life is very different from geometry; simplified security has no place in life.

Everything around us, dead or alive, in the eyes of a crazy photographer

mysteriously takes on many variations, so that a seemingly dead object comes to life through light or by its surrounding(s). And if the photographer has a bit of sense in his head maybe he is able to capture some of this – and I suppose that's lyricism.

When a person likes his profession and tries hard to overcome the difficulties that are connected with it, then he is glad if at least something of what he tried to do succeeds. I think that is enough for a lifetime. And while you're at it you work up a real sweat and that's a bonus.

I used to be fascinated by painting; now music has taken the place of painting.

What would I be looking for when I didn't find what I wanted to find? At most I travel...but here I am again, talking about music. In music you find everything...

Music has to be inside you.

Music influences my work but how, I could not tell you. Either you feel it or you think you do and it is not so. But in any case it gives you a push. Music always led me to something. If you take photography seriously you must also get interested in another art form. For me it is music. This listening to music shows up in my work like a reflection in a mirror. I relax and the world looks less unpleasant, and I can see that all around there is beauty, such as the music.

Every young person has a talent. But talent alone is not enough. I once knew a painter with talent. He drank and he drank. And it ended up as if he had no talent at all.

When a photographer decides on a theme, he wants to finish, put it all together, and close a chapter. But that's forcing it. It is better rather to do other things too and to live. When something doesn't come together by itself it cannot be forced. The photos then look tired.

I believe a lot in instinct. One should never dull it by wanting to know everything.

One shouldn't ask too many questions but do what one does properly, never rush, and never torment oneself.

Joseph Sudek