

Raven Row presents the first posthumous retrospective of the work of Czech artist Běla Kolářová (1923–2010). The show is both the first solo exhibition of the artist in the UK and the first major survey of her work outside the Czech Republic.

From her trademark ‘artificial negatives’, ‘light drawings’ and ‘derealised portraits’ to her assemblages and collages, Běla Kolářová pioneered an art based on intimate objects often associated with domesticity and the feminine. The works on display will span Kolářová’s career to include documentary photographs from the late fifties, camera-less experiments, ‘arranged photographs’ of objects and hair and assemblages from the sixties, as well as make-up drawings and assemblages from the seventies and eighties.

While rooted in the context of the Cold War and exile, Běla Kolářová’s practice is also closely linked to the life of her husband, the influential artist and poet Jiří Kolář, whose work overshadowed her own until its recent rediscovery. Despite the difficulties of exhibiting in her own country, she was able to develop a unique body of work, both formally and conceptually. As this exhibition will demonstrate, its legacy to the history of art – on both sides of the Iron Curtain – is anything but modest, unlike its materials and its author’s personality.

An accompanying catalogue published by Raven Row will include new essays by Prague-based writer and curator Karel Císař and Matthew S. Witkovsky, Chair and Curator of the Department of Photography at the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as an edited conversation between Alice Motard and Czech art historian Marie Klimešová, who organised the most complete exhibition of the artist’s work to date at Olomouc Museum of Art in the Czech Republic in 2006.

The exhibition is curated by Marie Klimešová and Alice Motard.

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