



International Center of Photography

media release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Press Contact:**

ICP Communications Department 212.857.0045/info@icp.org

### **In Memory of Miroslav Tichý (1926-2011)**

April 20, 2011, New York, NY – Miroslav Tichý, a major Czech photographer and one of the most mysterious and reclusive artists of the twentieth century, passed away on April 12, 2011, at age 84. Tichý was a genuine eccentric, known as much for his makeshift cardboard cameras as for his haunting and distorted images of women and landscapes, all taken near his home in Kyjov Moravia, Czech Republic. He began photographing in the 1950s, in part as a political response to the social repressions of Czech communism, but his intensely private work did not gain public attention until 2005, when the artist was nearly eighty. In 2010, the International Center of Photography published a monograph on Tichý and presented a retrospective his work from the 1960s and 70s, the first museum in North America to do so.

“In the context of Soviet dominated Czechoslovakia of the 1960s, Tichý's smudgy snapshotlike pictures of the women of his hometown of Kyjov are a record of not only private artistic obsessions but also of a defiant quest for personal pleasures amid public repression,” said ICP Chief Curator Brian Wallis, who organized the 2010 retrospective. “Though Tichý was quite elderly and had stopped taking photographs decades ago, his work remains fresh and vibrant, and his death yesterday is experienced as a profound loss.”

Tichý began his artistic work as a painter, studying abstraction at the Academy of Arts in Prague, But after the Communist takeover in 1948, and a widespread insistence on the style of Socialist realism, he withdrew to a life in isolation in his hometown of Kyjov. He photographed local women sensitively, on the streets and in public places, in part with cameras he made by hand. He later mounted many of his photographs in handmade cardboard frames, added finishing touches with pencil, moving from photography to drawing. The resulting are works of strikingly unusual formal qualities, which disregard the rules of conventional photography.

In 1981, Tichý's prolific body of work was brought to light by his longtime neighbor, psychiatrist Roman Buxbaum, who began efforts to document the artist and preserve the deteriorating photographs. Tichý's work first went on view in an exhibition by Harald Szeemann at the 2004 Seville Biennale, where Tichý's work won the “New Discovery Award.” After this exhibition, the Tichý Ocean Foundation was founded on the artist's behalf by a group of trustees to preserve and exhibit Tichý's work, which has since been shown at major museums including the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Kunsthaus Zürich.

Through his deliberate and self-inventive use of the old photographic materials, Tichý inspired a new generation to reflect on photography at the very moment when the digital revolution was making the conventional medium archaic. Perhaps for this reason, many contemporary artists – including Richard Prince, Arnulf Rainer, Jonathan Meese, and Lawrence Weiner – were drawn to Tichý's work. Prince, who wrote about Tichý in the ICP book, said, “Sometimes Tichý's photographs remind me of candles and shadows and silhouettes, ghost stories, keyholes, Jim Morrison lyrics, white bicycles, the short story by John Cheever entitled ‘The Swimmer’ (the bathing suits)...The best art for me is when I see something and say to myself, yea, I could spend an afternoon doing that. For me, the afternoon is in Tichý's work.”

(more)

Now, there is even a “Bad Camera” app for the iPhone, which replicates Tichy’s unique style of photography. As Tichy said, “The mistake is a part of it, it is poetry...and for that you need a bad camera.”

In May, the Foundation Tichy Ocean will organize a memorial to the artist. For more information, visit [www.tichyocan.com](http://www.tichyocan.com).

# # #