

PREFACE

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It was in 1980, nine years before the Velvet Revolution and the fall of the Czechoslovakian Communist regime, that Rudolf Kicken, at the annual exposition of the International Photography Art Dealers at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, first exhibited an extraordinary group of modernist Czech photographs. Howard Greenberg, having previously developed a level of connoisseurship of this material, was inspired by Kicken's knowledge and vision and, from that moment forward, joined in his adventurous pursuit. Over the ensuing years, both individually and in partnership, they hunted for, acquired, and promoted these artworks.

In addition to other exhibitions and publications, their pursuits were validated by Anne Tucker's groundbreaking 1990 exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, *Czech Modernism 1990–1945*. The show and accompanying book confirmed what they believed—that modernist Czech photography warranted scholarly study and wide exposure. More recently, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., broadened the scholarship with its 2007 exhibition *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945*, curated by Matthew Witkovsky.

What once occupied an esoteric niche in photographic history—modernist photographs by Czech masters such as František Drtikol, Jaromír Funke, Jaroslav Rössler, Josef Sudek, et al.—have at last achieved the level of recognition they both always believed was deserved. With the publication of this book and the exhibitions in each of their galleries, Kicken's in Berlin and Greenberg's in New York, they have aspired to further contribute to the collective knowledge and enthusiasm for the work of these masters. In the process, they discovered many photographs that were previously unknown. But more importantly, this project offered them an opportunity to illustrate the common vocabulary of ideas and processes that existed between these artists, which, when viewed in their totality, reveal what can truly be called an artistic apotheosis.