Press Release Ostrava, Czech Republic, 06/06/2023

**OSTRAVA’S GALLERY OF FINE ARTS IS EXHIBITING PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE WORLD’S MOST FAMOUS MOTOR SPORTS EVENT**

**The Gallery of Fine Arts in Ostrava (funded by the Moravian-Silesian Region) is presenting photographs taken at the world-renowned 24 Hours of Le Mans by the Czech sports commentator and photographer Martin Straka. The exhibition opens on Tuesday 6 June 2023 at 5 p.m., and guests at the opening will include Martin Straka himself and the exhibition curator Jiří Jůza. The exhibition, held at Ostrava’s House of Art, will run until 20 August.**

The exhibition is being held under the auspices of Lukáš Curylo, the Deputy Governor of the Moravian-Silesian Region with responsibility for culture and heritage management. He summed up what visitors can look forward to: *It may sound unusual, but for this exhibition we’re inviting lovers of fast cars to visit the gallery in Ostrava, where they can enjoy a fascinating exhibition with almost a hundred photos taken at various motor racing events. The exhibition is a response to this year’s 100th anniversary of the first ever Le Mans 24-hour race. Visitors can see photographs by Martin Straka as well as enjoying a film, all of which will combine to capture some of the most exciting moments and stories from the history of the race. You can look forward to the famous Dunlop bridge and a children’s track in the shape of the iconic Le Mans circuit.*

**ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

The exhibition [MARTIN STRAKA / Monsieur Le Mans](https://www.gvuo.cz/martin-straka_ed307) presents 25 large-scale and 60 small-scale black and white photographs by Martin Straka dating from 1986 to 2022. The photographs were taken during motor races at the Circuit de la Sarthe near the French city of Le Mans, the Masaryk Circuit in Brno, the Slovakiaring at Dunajská Streda, and at the Autodrome in the Czech city of Most.

Martin Straka explained why Le Mans is so special: *International motor sport magazines hold regular surveys among professionals and fans to vote for the most iconic circuit event. The top places are always taken by the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the Indy 500, and the F1 Monaco Grand Prix – and Le Mans usually tops the list. I’m delighted that the unique event that is Le Mans – which is now in its 100th year – will be showcased to the public here in Ostrava.*

**VICTORY AND DEATH**  
The 24 Hours of Le Mans is one of the world’s most renowned motor races. It is full of emotion, expectation, hope, and disappointment. Martin Straka’s photographs bear witness to all those emotions – the tension in the face of the race engineer Leena Gade, joy in the eyes of Fernando Alonso, the tunnel-vision concentration of Juan Pablo Montoya, the passionate discussion of six-times winner Jacky Ickx, smoking cars, or the controlled intensity of a tyre change. But these races are not always just festivals of joy and adrenaline. Accidents – such as the one in 1955 that killed more than 80 spectators along with the driver – are also a part of Le Mans’ century-long history.

**DAY AND NIGHT IN THE GALLERY**

This year’s Le Mans will be screened live for the entire 24-hour period in the exhibition hall of Ostrava’s House of Art. The gallery’s director Jiří Jůza gave more details: *For the first time ever, the House of Art will be open non-stop for an entire day and night, from 10 to 11 June, so we can offer visitors the very best of this year’s race – including live commentary by Martin from Eurosport’s Prague studio. There will be comfortable reclining chairs, a DJ set in the evening, and refreshments. You can already buy tickets for this novel event (including a VIP package with a signed photo of Martin Straka) at the gallery’s e-shop*.

**PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

Throughout the exhibition, there will be constant screenings of the 1971 film *Le Mans*, featuring Steve McQueen, which conveys the intense and powerful atmosphere of the race. Martin Straka will give a guided tour of the exhibition on Thursday 15 June starting at 5 p.m. The House of Art will also be hosting the latest in the series of [exhibitions of one work from the gallery’s collections](https://www.gvuo.cz/stromy-vystava-jednoho-dila-ze-sbirek-gvuo_ed318) – this time Jan Zrzavý’s painting *Trees*, which has been selected by the actress Zuzana Stivínová Jr. The gallery is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tickets to the exhibition cost 40 CZK (full price) or 20 CZK (reduced). Entrance is free on Sundays and for seniors.

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[**MARTIN STRAKA / Monsieur Le Mans**](https://www.gvuo.cz/martin-straka_ed307)

7. 6. – 20. 8. 2023 (opening 6. 6. at 17:00)

Curator: Jiří Jůza

Graphic design: Katarína Jamrišková

**MARTIN STRAKA (1967)**, photographer, TV and racetrack commentator, writer, dubbing artist, and journalist. From 2007 to 2009 he was a member of the Charouz Racing System teams for the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the Le Mans Series and the A1 Grand Prix. He is part of Eurosport’s commentary team for Le Mans, as well as commentating on other motor racing events for Eurosport, Nova Sport, Czech Television, Digi Sport and Galaxie Sport. Since 2013 he has been the voice of the Masaryk Circuit in Brno, and he also commentates on European and national autocross events in Přerov. He is a regular participant in the Dakar Rally as a reporter with Tomáš Vrátný’s Ostrava-based FESH FESH team. He dubbed the voice of the circuit announcer for the Czech-language version of the film Le Mans ’66. He is the author of four books. He has received a number of photography awards, including a Golden Eye for the best motor racing photo of the year (2008) and several City of Katowice Awards as part of the Silesian Photo Journalism competition.

**24 HOURS OF LE MANS** **(1923–2023)** is a legendary motor race held at the Circuit de la Sarthe in France. Over a 24-hour period, the teams engage in an uncompromising battle for victory. The drivers face extreme challenges including night driving and exhaustion, testing their skills and endurance (as well as the durability of their vehicles) to the limit. The event is a unique opportunity for the car industry to showcase its latest technical innovations. The 24 Hours of Le Mans is an unforgettable experience for all spectators, offering tension, bravery, passion, and a wealth of history – all packaged up into one spectacular show.

The exhibition is held under the auspices of Lukáš Curylo, the Deputy Governor of the Moravian-Silesian Region.

The project is funded by the Czech Ministry of Culture.

**Partners**: Moravian-Silesian Region; Czech Republic Ministry of Culture; Council of Galleries in the Czech Republic; GAP; NEWTON media, a.s.; RENGL, s.r.o.; Epona, Ostrava s.r.o.; Tiskárna Helbich, a.s. printworks.

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**The Gallery of Fine Arts in Ostrava** is constituted and funded by the Moravian-Silesian Region, and its collections comprise over 23 000 works of art. The gallery’s main premises are at the House of Art (Dům umění) in Ostrava, which hosts exhibitions of historic and contemporary art, design and architecture as well as organizing educational programmes and various accompanying events. The gallery also has an administrative centre (Poděbradova 12), where there is a public library and research room with a focus on fine arts, including documentation from the gallery’s exhibitions. For more information see the gallery’s website [www.gvuo.cz](http://www.gvuo.cz)