

Press release

New film on Czech graphic design highlights Sutnar, Mucha, trail signs and beer

American expert maps the best of Czech visual culture – The ‘Identita’ film is coming to Czech cinemas this October and will be shown abroad.



Czech filmmakers have just finished shooting their first feature film, titled **IDENTITA: A film about Czech graphic design**, mapping more than a hundred years of Czech visual culture. Not coincidentally, the country's masterpieces as well as a number of leading figures in the field will be presented by **Nicho Lowry**, an American native with Czech roots, a passionate collector, and expert in graphic design and 'vintage' posters. In 1909, Lowry's ancestors founded one of the companies that played a significant part in the history of Czech graphic identity. Today, Lowry is an auctioneer and leading figure in New York's Swann Auction Galleries. The film will be released in Czech theaters on October 10, 2024 by Bontonfilm.

Directed by **Kateřina Mikulcová**, the film is intended for both domestic and foreign audiences. Through the eyes of an American expert, the film presents Czech graphic design as a window into the country's history, the nation's character, and its story. In it, Lowry, whose nickname is Nicho,

maps important brands such as Baťa and Pilsner Urquell. The film begins in New York, but Nicho gradually visits Prague, Brno, Litomyšl, Zlín, and Plzeň, where he explores the work of figures such as Ladislav Sutnar, Alfons Mucha, and Josef Váchal. He also examines domestic book production, the graphic design of banknotes, typography, and orientation systems. The film also introduces the current generation of artists such as **Petr Babák**, **Martin Pecina**, and **Aleš Najbrt**. Nicho's travels lead him to Southern Moravia in search of the aesthetics of wine labels, and he also goes on a hiking trip along trails marked by the Czech Tourist Club. Along the way, he finds answers to questions about what Czech visual communication says about the local identity, and how to present it to those who do not know the Czech Republic.

"In my naivete, I thought that as the host of this project I would share what I love about Czech visual culture and graphic design with people who don't know as much about it. To my delight, I learned so much during the filming that my own 'personal Czech identity' grew even more," says **Lowry**, who **in the film reminds Czech viewers and introduces foreign viewers to the major milestones of Czech visual identity.**

For Lowry, starring in this film is also a journey to his own roots. In New York, Lowry belongs to the third generation of a family of antiquarians, and is the president of the city's second largest auction house, where he manages the historical posters department, which he has specialized in since his student days. He lived in Prague from 1990 to 1994, where he contributed to the first Central European English-language newspaper, *Prognosis*, and also worked as a presenter on Prague's Radio 1. It was during this period that his passion for collecting Czechoslovak historical posters began, and as a curator he was involved in a number of exhibitions of Czech posters in Europe and the United States. His great-uncle founded the family rubber company, Primeros, which is known as the oldest registered brand of condoms in Europe. While Primeros is synonymous with human ingenuity and industrial growth, it also recalls a dark moment in 20th century history, when Lowry's family had to flee Czechoslovakia to escape Nazism.

The screenwriter is **Petr Hauzírek** and the cinematographer is **Jan Šuster**. The producer is **Michal Gregorini** of the Mowshe graphic studio, the creative producer for Czech Television is **Martina Šantavá**, and other producers are **Martin Palán** for Bontonfilm and **Nicholas Lowry** himself for Swann Auction Galleries. The creative producer of the film is **Pavel Vácha**.

The film is part of the wide-ranging *Identita* project, which pays tribute to Czech graphic design, and in addition to the television series broadcast in

January and February on Czech Television, it also includes a forthcoming exhibition and accompanying monograph. The creators and expert advisors of the project are **Linda Kudrnovská** and **Filip Blažek**.

Partners of the *Identita* project are the Baudiš family, the Bakala Foundation, Lanik, Jiří Polidar, Czech Television, Swann Auction Galleries, Bontonfilm, Typo, the Czech National Bank, the Embassy of the United States in the Czech Republic, the Czech Union of Graphic Design, Czech Centres, the State Printing Works of Securities, Mat Film Resort, Marvil, Economia, Czech Radio Vltava, Art Antiques, DesignMag, Czechdesign, Moderní byt, Font, the Museum of Decorative Arts, the Municipal Library in Prague, the Moravian Gallery in Brno, the Moravian Library in Brno, Museum Kampa, Paseka, the Museum of Literature/PNP, the National Library, the Military Historical Institute of the Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic, the City of Prague, the Academy of Arts Architecture and Design in Prague, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, the Brno University of Technology, and the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. Financial support was also provided by the State Cinematography Fund, the Prague Audiovisual Foundation, the South Moravian Film Fund, the Zlín Region, and the Plzeň Region.

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Identita – the Story of Czech Graphic Design

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