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| Devětsil was the name of a group of Czech avant-garde artists founded in Prague in 1920. The group was established to create an organised platform for artists, thus paving the way for an artistic revolution. In the beginning the group took inspiration from Magic realism and studied proletarian literature, naming the proletariat as their ally against what they to be an elitist, wealthy, and bourgeois literary culture. The group aimed to communicate art and literary culture to a wider audience, and so structured their events to be popular, accessible, and diverse. The events (including lectures, recitals, performances) were solely financed by the group’s members. Beginning in 1923 they formulated a new concept — poetism. Poetism was a literary movement never adopted abroad, and so remains a unique Czech avant-garde literary movement. The ambition of poetism was to make poetry a way of life, so that life resembled a poem and, in doing so, breaking free from politics and filling existence with a sense of optimism. As a style, poetism encouraged playfulness, a lyrical approach and, in terms of form, it ignored punctuation. Popular themes included moments of happiness, the present, and joy.  Devětsil identified alienation as the key problem within contemporary society, and poetism attempted to rectify and overcome the alienation of individuals. The first formulation of the poetism movement was published in 1924. Five years later, this same publication appeared as the Poetist Manifesto in the journal ReD. It was composed of three sections: Ink drop (V.Nezval), Ultraviolet Images or Artificialism (K.Teige), and the Poetist Manifesto (K.Teige). Devětsil was initially composed of the following members: Artuš Černík, Josef Frič, Josef Havlíček, Adolf Hoffmeister, Karel Prox, Jaroslav Seifert, Ivan Suk, Ladislav Süss, Vladimír Štulc, Karel Teige, Vladislav Vančura, Karel Vaněk, Karel Veselík, BedřichFeuerstein a Alois Wachsman. In 1925 the group changed its name to the Association for Modern Culture Devětsil, and absorbed the progressive theatre Osvobozené divadlo (Liberated Theatre) as the group’s theatrical platform.  In 1924 Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige left the group to focus on activities in other cultural groups. The last branch of Devětsil — the Prague branch — ended its activity in 1930. However, the impact of poetism remained present in Czechoslovak literature until World War II, and its influences can be found as late as the postwar period, for example, in the songwriting of Jiří Suchý and Jiří Šlitr. |
| Further reading:  Šmejkal, F., Švácha, R., Rous, J. *Devětsil : čes. výtvarná avantgarda dvacátých let, Praha: Galerie hlavního města Prahy*. Brno : Dům umění, 1986. Print.  *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* (2010) Praha : Akropolis ve spolupráci s Centrem výzkumu české umělecké avantgardy.  Vloemansm J.A. (1994) *Czech Avant-garde Books 1922-1938 = Knihy avantgarda - XX. století : Devětsil - Poetism - Constructivism – Surrealism*, Hague : Vloemans Antiquarian Books.  Toman, J. (2009) *Foto/montáž tiskem = Photo/montage in print*, Prague: KANT.  Birgus, Vl., Mlčoch, J. (2010) Czech photography of the 20th century, Prague: KANT. |