

TELEGRAPH

PRESS RELEASE
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The exhibition *Za Pultem (Behind the Counter)* explores diverse interpretations of femininity, tracing both the real and symbolic presence of women in the public sphere.

Presenting a fresh perspective, the exhibition highlights how contemporary women artists across generations—Paulina Olowska, Caroline Walker, and Adéla Janská—use painting to decode and reconstruct the cultural memory of Modernism. Through this lens, the artists reflect on “recycled” iconographies of the 1950s–1990s and reconsider themes of women’s labor, intimacy, and visibility within public and private spheres.

It adopts a historical lens, reflecting on archetypal female figures of Socialist Modernism and the period of “Normalization” in Czechoslovakia—such as allegories of labor—and asks whether this visual canon allowed room for female desire. Scholars of the era often described the female worker as *the Other*. How, then, might we understand this socialist imaginary today?

Drawing inspiration from the iconic 1970s Czechoslovak TV series *Žena za pultem (Woman Behind the Counter)*, the exhibition juxtaposes figurative works with a scenographic display and a film installation that evoke the atmospheres of shop interiors and domestic workspaces. The gallery’s scenography incorporates industrial machines, sculptural and stainless-steel elements, and spatial mise-en-scène, extending the reflection on modern labor and gendered memory. A newly produced video work complements the installation, introducing the project through the voices and faces of the three participating artists. Presented amidst piles of scrap metal and staged compositions, the video explores scale, memory, and post-socialist transformation through a feminist lens.

The exhibition design draws not only on the logic of the store counter but also on the aesthetics of everyday rituals, habits, and gestures. The scenography transforms the gallery into a multilayered environment, inspired by retro-futuristic shop displays, folding screens, kitchen counters, and backroom storage. These elements function as both stage and frame for the paintings, inviting the viewer to become a passerby, a customer, a worker, or a voyeur.

Through this dialogue between past and present, *Za Pultem (Behind the Counter)* reconsiders the cultural legacy of Socialism and its echoes in contemporary visual culture, while asking urgent questions about gender, labor, and visibility in today’s world.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication with contributions from Yelena Yemchuk and Joanna Zielinska, edited by Krzysztof Gutfrański.

Paulina Ołowska (1976) is an artist whose work is deeply engaged with the political and social histories of Eastern Europe, American consumerism and pop culture, and feminism. Her paintings often feature women in a wide range of environments, from offices and shops to rural farms and wild landscapes. Through her singular use of colour and perspective, she creates surreal, dreamlike scenes. Her paintings, drawings, and collages borrow imagery from both Eastern European and American popular culture and challenge traditional notions of femininity across international cultural contexts. Ołowska studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the United States and later at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, Poland. Alongside numerous exhibitions in her home country, she has been widely exhibited across Europe and has held solo exhibitions at major institutions including MoMA in New York and Tate Modern in London. In 2014, she received the prestigious Aachen Art Prize, and her works are included in several major public collections worldwide. Ołowska lives and works in Rabka-Zdrój, Poland.

Caroline Walker (1982) has long been concerned with questions of gender identity and the role of women in contemporary society. Through her paintings, she challenges stereotypical representations of the female body across a range of socio-economic contexts. Walker is best known for her depictions of women engaged in everyday activities, often in settings that blur the boundaries between public and private. She tells women's stories through the spaces they inhabit—from the undisguised luxury of beauty parlours to the humanistic portraits of refugees and asylum seekers to scenes of anonymous women at work framed by the architecture of London. In her recent artworks, Walker turns her focus to her immediate surroundings, becoming an external observer of familiar spaces. Her subjects include a neighbour working in her garden, a local dry cleaner or a pharmacy sales assistant – figures whose daily routines are connected within a discrete area of the sprawling London metropolis. Her work explores ideas of community and how the anonymous people we encounter become characters in our own stories. In recent years, Walker has held solo and group exhibitions not only throughout the UK, but also in the United States, China, Germany and the Netherlands. Czech audiences were introduced to her work in 2023 through the exhibition *New Positions in British Painting* at Telegraph Gallery, which featured a new generation of British figurative painters. Her works are held in numerous major public collections, including those in the UK, Australia, China, the United States, and Lebanon. Walker studied painting at the Glasgow School of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. She currently lives and works in her hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland.

Adéla Janská (1981) focuses in her work primarily on the theme of female identity. Her nudes and portraits are inspired by porcelain dolls, whose features symbolise unattainable ideals of feminine beauty. Janská places her solitary female figures, with their glossy porcelain skin, into closed, fragmented spaces that resemble dollhouses, creating an atmosphere of isolation, suspended time, and tension between intimacy and alienation. Her distinct female protagonists sometimes engage the viewer with direct eye contact, combining sensual provocation with delicate vulnerability. Devoid of physical substance yet perfectly beautiful, her unsettling female figures resemble modern nymphs who challenge stereotypical erotic imagery. Janská graduated from the Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, though her artistic development has been shaped above all by her Czech surroundings, as well as by European and world painting. In addition to frequent exhibitions in the Czech Republic, she regularly shows her work internationally, with recent solo exhibitions in Paris, New York, Rome, Warsaw, Vienna, and Bucharest. Her paintings have also featured in group shows in Poland, Austria, China, the United States, and the United Kingdom. She lives and works in her native city of Olomouc.

Useful information

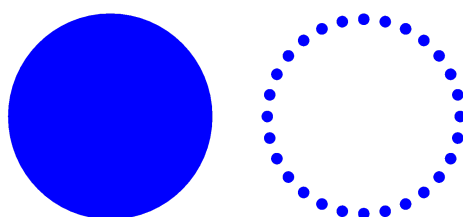
The Telegraph Gallery is open Tuesday to Thursday from 9 am to 7 pm, Friday from 9 am to 9 pm, and Saturday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm. Entrance to the exhibition is 50 CZK. Members of the TLG CLUB loyalty programme can visit the exhibition for free and enjoy other benefits.

Contact

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Za Pultem (Behind the Counter)

20. 11. 2025–19. 2. 2026 (opening 20. 11. 2025 at 6 p.m.)



TELEGRAPH GALLERY
Jungmannova 4, Olomouc
www.telegraph.cz/en

Opening hours Tuesday–Thursday 9 am – 7 pm, Friday 9 am – 9 pm, Saturday–Sunday 10 am – 6 pm

Entrance 50 CZK, free for TLG CLUB members.

Telegraph Gallery regularly presents exhibitions of contemporary art from the Czech Republic and abroad. On 350 m² displays the work of well-known and also overlooked artists of all ages. It also hosts workshops; art courses and offers residencies to Czech and international artists. For more information, visit <https://telegraph.cz/en/gallery>.

TLG CLUB

The Telegraph Gallery offers membership in the TLG CLUB loyalty programme. Members receive free entry to exhibitions, discounts on publications, and a range of other benefits. Memberships can be purchased at the Telegraph's reception desk or online. For details on the loyalty program, visit <https://telegraph.cz/en/tlgrphclub>.

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