

**OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION
“LUNE D’HIVER/LUNA ZIMNÍ”**

December 12, 1995

Madam Director, Mayor Destot, elected officials, dear friends,

Thank you very much for coming to this opening, despite the circumstances that are making our everyday lives very difficult.¹ Like the exhibitions “Dvojí domov/Deux terres” (“Two Lands”), taking place right now in Prague, and “Temps de l’Avent”² (“The Time of Advent”), which Deputy Mayor Michel Hannoun recently opened in Voreppe, “Lune d’hiver/Luna zimní”³ (“Winter Moon”) is presented by *Romarin-Les Amis de Suzanne Renaud et Bohuslav Reynek* to mark the publication of *L’œuvre poétique de Suzanne Renaud traduite par Bohuslav Reynek*⁴ (“The Poetic Work of Suzanne Renaud Translated by Bohuslav Reynek”).

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These twin works—Suzanne Renaud’s poetry and its translation into Czech by Bohuslav Reynek—owe their existence to the exceptional circumstances of Renaud’s life: her marriage to Czech artist Bohuslav Reynek and exile far from home due to the events of the time.

Renaud was born in Lyon into a Grenoble family of Italian origin, whose oldest member was Charles Tartari. She lived over 30 years in Grenoble at 9 rue Lesdiguières and almost 30 in Petrkov, Bohemia, the birthplace of her husband, Czech poet, translator and engraver Bohuslav Reynek. In the 1920s, Reynek, who had an excellent command of French, attentively followed young French writers. Renaud’s earliest poems came to his attention. It was by translating *Ta vie est là...* (“Your Life is Here...”) and obtaining the copyright to this work that he met the poet, who became his wife in 1926. From then until 1936, Renaud and Reynek spent winters in Grenoble and summers in Petrkov before permanently settling in Bohemia with their sons Michel and Daniel.

The war and its aftermath kept Renaud from ever returning to Dauphiné. She dropped off the map of French literature. Reynek then set out to make his wife’s work known in his country. He translated, and sometimes published, the many collections of her poems that came out in Czechoslovakia between 1926 and 1947, the period this exhibition covers.

Bohemia is where Renaud is buried and has always been admired, and where her poetry is ceaselessly published by new translators, while the original work remains unpublished in France. Her work had to be brought out of oblivion here. A critical edition of her poems, decided upon when the Association Romarin was founded, had become essential for the poet to take her rightful place among other writers. Let us gratefully recall that this work was started by Pierre Dalloz and Michel Reynek, who from 1982 to 1984 gathered the private collections of manuscripts in Dauphiné and Bohemia, hand-copied or photocopied them and deposited them at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Grenoble.

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“Lune d’hiver” (“Winter Moon”) accompanies the publication of *Œuvres-Dilo. L’œuvre poétique de Suzanne Renaud traduite par Bohuslav Reynek* (“Works-Dilo. The Poetic Work of Suzanne Renaud Translated by Bohuslav Reynek”).⁵

The title, “Lune d’hiver”, evokes the winters spent in Grenoble between 1926 and 1936. During that time, the Galerie Saint-Louis in Grenoble and the Salon de l’Effort hosted Reynek’s first exhibitions—his charcoals, watercolors and pastels, the language he chose to express his poetic feelings. This was also an intense creative period for Renaud.

Renaud, Reynek and their friends in Dauphiné forged many ties during that ten-year period. The latter bought drawings, paintings and, later, engravings, quietly forming a small circle of friends. Those relationships steadfastly continued from one generation to the next, allowing this literary and artistic heritage to be rediscovered and reconstituted today.

The theme of the relatively large pastels and charcoals was the landscapes near Grenoble, to which Reynek usually walked: Corenc, Saint-Nizier d’Uriage, Vaulnaveys, etc. He did not paint the background of high mountains surrounding Grenoble, considering our city sad and grey under “the glacial, inaccessible gaze of Our Lady”, i.e. our beautiful Belledonne Range. However, many years later in a letter to her friend, painter Henriette Gröll, Renaud emotionally recalled “that moment when our bright, pink mountains blossom like orchards.”⁶

Reynek preferred the Romanesque chapels of Corenc and Saint-Firmin de Mésage and the vineyards then growing on the gentle slopes of Alpine folds. When visiting Giono, he enjoyed the colorful landscapes of Haute-Provence and Tricastin. He loved the scent of rosemary and lingered to paint motifs, such as blossoming almond trees, that must have looked quite exotic to someone from Central Europe.

In the early 1930s, Reynek turned away from large formats, drawings and pastels to inscribe his poet’s journal in his first etchings. He engraved small plates, first with a precise drawing, then “à la prima”, in other words engraving directly on the plate. He also continued translating: first Renaud’s poems, then traditional works like La Fontaine’s *Fables*, which took him five years to complete, and books by Péguy, Paul Valéry, Giono, Bernanos, Claudel, Francis Jammes and Tristan Corbière. Some of the original collections of these translations are on display at this exhibition.

Here we are presenting the works from this intimate, happy period preceding the great engraved work (which was exhibited in this room in March 1994 and can be partly seen again now at the Villa des Arts de Voreppe).

Lastly, the exhibition has a revelation for the Grenoble public that has been following the rediscovery of Reynek’s works on paper for the past ten years or so: his linocuts. Courteously loaned by the Prague National Gallery, all of them were made in 1920, when, under Josef Čapek’s influence, the technique, as well as woodcuts, was very popular in Germany and Bohemia. These early works are very different from the delicate etchings that later became Reynek’s trademark, for his poetic vein was

then dominated by German and Austrian Expressionism, an influence he helped pass on to his country's great poets through translations of Trakl.

The linocuts reflect how close art and poetry were to each other in Reynek's world: *Le serpent sur la neige* ("The Snake on the Snow", 1924) was recently republished in the Czech Republic. Romarin will soon publish the French translation.

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The story of Suzanne Renaud and Bohuslav Reynek embodies what writer Václav Jamek, in his foreword to Renaud's book, calls "francophonie", which he conceptualizes as "a community, a distant expedition in search of the other". The heritage the two poets left us remains common to their two countries, two cultures, two homelands and two *domov*—an untranslatable word that means home, house, household and, here, Grenoble and Petrkov.

The rediscovery of early works made me feel deep down that Reynek's art could not age, and that beyond these images that captivate an increasingly wide public, his legacy is above all a philosophy, a sweet vision of life that offers us its peace and light.

Annick Auzimour

¹ The winter 1995 strikes that paralyzed France for several weeks.

² *Dvojí domov / Deux terres*, Prague, Institut français de Prague, 16.11.1995-29.12.1995. *Temps de l'Avent. Scènes bibliques de Bohuslav Reynek*. Voreppe (Isère), Villa des Arts, 30.11.1995-28.12.1995.

³ *Lune d'hiver / Luna zimní*, Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale d'Étude et d'Information, 13.12.1995-20.01.1996.

⁴ *Œuvres-Dilo. L'œuvre poétique de Suzanne Renaud traduite par Bohuslav Reynek*. (Romarin, 1995).

⁵ The critical edition of Renaud's complete poetic work will be completed with the publication of a second, non-bilingual volume, *Les gonds du silence* ("The Hinges of Silence", Romarin, 1999).

⁶ In A. Auzimour : *Henriette Gröll. Grand peintre. Et femme*. (Romarin, 1997).