

A Few Highlights from Rennes 2's tribute to Milan Kundera



Visit of the exhibition of graphic works by Kundera (25 drawings) at the Chambre Claire, introduced by Baptiste Brun, Vice-President for Culture and Documentation. Photo credit: Clara R., University of Rennes 2

Several of Kundera's books were visible on the tables of the B8 amphi, on November 21, 2024. Coming to attend [the seminar dedicated to the writer](#), Ninon, a student in M1 General and Comparative Literature, proudly brandishes her well-worn copy edition of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: "I loved this one! And *The Art of the Novel* helped me a lot with my essays." Jasmine, a graduate of the Master's in Literature program, is curious to learn more about "the fact that he's a foreign author writing in French."

"We feel close to him"

Kundera's Czech origin explains the presence of several teacher-researchers from [Masaryk University](#), a partner of Rennes 2. "Our hope is that the cooperation between our institutions will continue to grow, as each country tends to believe it has its own Kundera, and we strive toward a convergence of perspectives," explained Marcela Poučová, recalling the censorship of the Czechoslovak Communist Party of which the author was a victim in the 1970s.



Vojtěch (center) and his classmates, who are pursuing a double degree program at the University of Rennes (IPAG) and at Masaryk University. Photo credit: Anaïs Giroux, Rennes 2 University

Perfect representatives of Franco-Czech university cooperation, Vojtěch and his classmates, in Rennes as part of a dual degree program in Public Administration, are already well acquainted with Milan Kundera—and for good reason: "We are from Brno, his hometown, so we feel a close connection to him. And we are curious to hear the perspectives of people in France about him."

Showcasing his many talents

In addition to literary research on his work, other artistic aspects of Milan Kundera's creativity were also highlighted. On display until December 13 at *La Chambre Claire*, [an exhibition entitled "We all need someone to look at us"](#) presents 25 of his drawings. The opportunity to discover his graphic style, naive and ironic, specific to his modernist approach.

The student association [Ciné Tambour](#) also screened *La Plaisanterie*, an adaptation of one of its novellas about a Communist student ostracized by his peers, which was filmed in Czechoslovakia in the middle of the Prague Spring. Milan Kundera co-wrote the screenplay with his fellow countryman, director Jaromil Jireš.



Meeting with Ariane Chemin, journalist at Le *Monde* and author of the book *À la recherche de Milan Kundera*. The discussion was moderated by two teacher-researchers of CELLAM, Charline Pluvinet and Barbara Servant. Photo credit: Sébastien Boyer, Rennes 2 University

Amphitheatre B3 renamed after Kundera

The two-day tribute concluded with a celebration of the strong bond between Rennes 2 University and Milan Kundera. “He was very happy in Rennes—it served as a kind of refuge for him,” said journalist Georges Guitton during the roundtable *“Kundera, Professor of Comparative Literature at Rennes 2.”* Guitton also evoked the iconic Horizons Tower where the writer and his wife Vera lived.

“We witnessed his reflections as a novelist in real time. I was impressed because even my own professors would attend his lectures,” recalled Dominique Sineux, a doctoral candidate and former student of Kundera. Kundera’s seminar on the history of European literature, taught at Rennes 2 in 1979–1980, inspired his essay *The Art of the Novel*.

“It’s an excellent memory,” added Jacques Dugast, a former professor of Comparative Literature at Rennes 2.



Naming of the Kundera amphitheater (formerly B3), in the presence of (from left to right): David Aliis, President of the University of Rennes, Vincent Gouëset, President of Rennes 2 University, Professor Edwige Fusaro, Vice-President International Affairs, Anabel Marie, City Councillor of Rennes delegated to Europe and (from behind) Christelle Molina, Director of the INA. Photo credit: Sébastien Boyer, Rennes 2 University

The day ended with the official name of the Kundera amphitheater (formerly B3), in testimony to the passage between these walls of the writer whose words continue to accompany the university community.

A commemorative plaque now adorns the amphitheater, honoring Milan Kundera’s legacy and his enduring connection to Université Rennes 2.

03 December 2024