

Joža Uprka

1900 c.

Original signed photography

4-1/2 x 3 inches

National Treasure:
The Art of Joža Uprka
from the
George T. Drost Collection





*The villa in Hroznova Lhota in the early 20th century
after the restoration by architect, Dusan Jurkovic.*



*A photograph of the artist,
taken in the early 20th century relaxing in his garden in Hroznova Lhota*

Dedication

To the

“Memory of John Anton Drost and Doris Matela Drost

and

Robert Woodward Beart and Helen Elizabeth Beart

that always supported my efforts

albeit sometimes quirky,

but never abandoned their trust in what I did

to bring attention to good and positive things

...they were my helpful enablers”.



National Treasure: The Art of Joža Uprka from the George T. Drost Collection

Table of Contents

1	An Introduction to the Collection and Exhibition
2	A Personal Journey into Art Collecting: A Note by George Drost
3	A Brief History of Joža Uprka and His Rise to Fame <i>Dr. Petr Vašát</i>
5	Stručná Historie Joži Uprky a Jeho Vzestupu ke Slávě <i>Dr. Petr Vašát</i>
7	Joža Uprka's Modern Traditionalism <i>Dr. Nicholas Sawicki</i>
10	Slovácko, the Region of the Painter's Palette <i>Dr. Jiří Jilík</i>
12	Slovácko, kraj malířovy palety <i>Dr. Jiří Jilík</i>
118	Chronology
134	Acknowledgement and Accolades
137	Credits

Table of Contents: Images

	13
I. Early works: Sketches and Drawings	
	25
II. Working People and Daily life	
	39
III. Portraits and Folk Costumes	
	79
IV. Festivals and Celebrations	
	101
V. Sculpture and Relief Work	
	107
VI. Posters	
	125
VII. Ephemera	

National Treasure:
The Art of Joža Uprka
from the
George T. Drost Collection



Art Advisory, Ltd. Publishing

artadvisoryltd.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-7328113-0-0

Copyright 2018 Uprka USA LLC

An Introduction:
National Treasure: The Art of Joža Uprka from the George T. Drost Collection

*“I worked my whole my life
not for fame and recognition
not for money and other advantages
not to out-do others
but only for the simple purpose
of demonstrating that I am a full member
of the community of people I sought
to capture as truly as possible through my art.”*
—Joža Uprka¹

This monograph contains a large body of work by the Czech and Moravian-Slovak artist Joža Uprka as gathered over nearly 30 years by George T. Drost. The collection contains prime examples of Uprka’s art, chiefly oil paintings, watercolors, gouaches, drawings in charcoal and pencil, etchings, lithographs, and other representations of his works.

The exhibit, which runs from October 12, 2018 until March 24, 2019 at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, will allow patrons to examine the artist’s work in a setting that will provide a better understanding of and appreciation for Uprka’s place in the historical context of late 19th and early 20th century art, while demonstrating the burgeoning interest collectors have shown in his works. This is the first solo exhibition of Uprka’s work in the United States.

¹ Uprka’s granddaughter, Eva Nováková, compared her grandfather to the Czech Millet in an article published in the Summer Edition of the NCSML magazine *Slovo*. She concluded her article with the poem above. Eva Nováková, “Modernist Interpreter of Traditional Themes: The Painter Joža Uprka.” *Slovo* (Summer 2002): 21.

A Personal Journey into Art Collecting: A Note by George Drost

My first real exposure to fine art was at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL, when I elected to take a pottery course by noted sculpture Egon Weiner, who also taught at the Art Institute of Chicago. He was supportive and forgiving, never taking a condescending or highbrow approach to appreciating art. “Make it interpretive, make it you,” he would say. Hence, I began collecting art while I was in college and I amassed a trove of lovely pieces.

I was born in Moravia, yet it wasn't until my return to the Czech lands in 1990 that I decided to focus my collection on the diverse works of the Czech and Moravian-Slovak artist Joža Uprka. His work felt very familiar, as I recognized the traditional subject matter from the calendars and other materials my parents had when I was growing up. Uprka was active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and he portrayed the everyday people and places of his birthplace, which was in Southern Moravia. The scenes are bucolic and traditional, displaying a nostalgia for simpler times in the face of the disruptive forces of urbanization and industrialization happening around him. His artistic style progressed from the tight and polished brushwork and earth toned palette favored by the Prague Munich School to a more flamboyant and robust style, rich with bright color, and with looser brush strokes. Clearly, he was influenced by the French Impressionist movement which he was exposed to during his time in France early in his career, and an important milestone during this period was his success at the Grand Salon in Paris in 1894, which gave him the critical recognition necessary to set him apart from other struggling artists.

After purchasing my first Uprka during my return to what was then Czechoslovakia in 1990, I had it professionally restored and reframed, and thus, began

my addiction. I rationalized this by saying: “If you have one work, two would be better and so on, right?” Then, I decided, that one needs a range of works to explain the development of the artist, his styles and media, prints, etchings, drawings, watercolors, colleagues, collaborators, competitors for his space, and the like. A good addict also needs enablers, so I searched for those who could help. Henry Skacel introduced me to the artist's granddaughter, Dr. Eva Nováková, in 1997. From there, I networked with dealers (some reliable, some not), auction houses, private parties, and other collectors. Most notably, I befriended Evžen Škňouřil of Prague and Henry Skacel of Brno, whom I mentioned earlier. These gentlemen helped introduce me to sources of art, collectors, artists and to family members of notable artists. One such person is Dr. Petr Vašát, who organized the largest collection of Uprka's for the 2011 exhibition in Prague. He claims that the gallery in Uherske Hradiste, where this exhibit was held is the largest gallery dedicated to one artist in the world. I can personally attest that it is an amazing place, having visited it in December of 2015 with my son, Charlie. One final acknowledgment can go to Nancy Wilkinson, a great grandniece of Joža Uprka, whom I met in 2002, and with whom I share a passion for collecting Uprka's art.

I hope these comments help to explain how Joža Uprka and his work made its way into the American Midwest to be shared and enjoyed by all lovers of art. Fortuitously, this exhibit and monograph is presented during the 100th anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the task of researching the work of Joža Uprka is ongoing, and my journey continues. On that note, it is with great pleasure that I introduce you to the work of Joža Uprka!

A Brief History of Joža Uprka and His Rise to Fame

Dr. Petr Vašát

*Nadace Moravské Slovácko (Moravian Slovakia Foundation) and
Founder of the Joža Uprka Gallery, Uherské Hradiště, Czech Republic*

The work of Joža Uprka—a European artist from rural Moravian Slovakia (1861-1940)—may be better understood by the contemporaries of this masterful visual artist, as they would have been more familiar in the cultural environment of Moravian Slovakia, which became a permanent source of inspiration for Uprka's artworks. Nevertheless, the vibrant hues, exciting brushstrokes, and gregarious figures depicted in his work immediately attract all viewers, regardless of their familiarity with the region. His work has been extensively analyzed and evaluated on various occasions by leading art historians across several generations. Therefore, in this article I will eschew an academic lens and instead focus on the story of how I came to meet George Drost, and on our shared lifelong passion for collecting and promoting Uprka's work.

When I left my native Moravian Slovakia and moved to Prague 30 years ago, I felt that the move was merely a change of address, as I knew that Moravian Slovakia would remain in my heart. Moravian Slovakia is a beautiful, picturesque corner of the Czech Republic with a number of unique customs, traditions, and full of genuinely good people. Apart from the culture, there is another strong bond between myself and the region—it is Joža Uprka—the artist to whom I had already dedicated a significant part of my life. I remember very well, seeing my first exhibits of Uprka's work in Zlín and Uherské Hradiště. I was just a schoolboy, accompanied by my father. The experience of seeing his oil paintings piqued my passion for collecting his work, which continues to this day, and I am proud to say, that in the past 30 years I have attended every single important event dealing with Uprka.

In 1995, when I could not find a partner who would open a Joža Uprka gallery in Moravia with me,

I decided instead, with the solid moral support of Dr. Eva Nováková—the painter's granddaughter—to open a gallery dedicated to Uprka on Plzeňská Street in Prague. I was surprised at how much interest in Uprka there was in Prague, as they did not always identify with his work, especially during his early years. Over time, the Uprka gallery also became a meeting place for Moravians living in Prague. To me, it is symbolic that one of the first important foreign guests in the newly founded gallery in Prague was George Drost, an American who was born in Brno. As it turned out later, this gregarious man was a collector and also a tireless supporter of Joža Uprka's work, especially within the United States. This is evidenced by this exhibition in Cedar Rapids, which is clearly a highlight of his long-term determination to introduce Uprka's work to a larger, international audience.

Over the years George has visited several exhibitions of Joža Uprka's work in the Czech Republic, such as the 2011 comprehensive exhibition of Joža Uprka's paintings on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birthday at the Valdštejn Riding Hall in Prague, accompanied by his wife Beth and a large number of their fellow Americans; or along with his son Charlie, to the permanent exhibition of Joža Uprka's work in Uherské Hradiště in 2015. These visits document his tireless devotion to the artist and demonstrating George's relationship to South Moravia and the country of his birth, while also showing that Uprka has gained popularity beyond the Czech borders. I am glad George and I have remained in frequent contact for over 20 years and that our business relationship grew into a friendship.

The fact that art knows no boundaries is evidenced by the successful exhibition of Joža Uprka's work in Abu Dhabi, UAE in 2002, which I organized

at the initiative of the Czech Embassy in the UAE under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. It is still a great mystery to me that Uprka's work was so well received in a country with a completely different culture, different traditions, and a different way of life. Such great interest was directed at his paintings that even with the competition of the Andy Warhol exhibit in the neighboring hall, Uprka's exhibit drew large crowds.

It is worth mentioning that after Auguste Rodin, the ingenious French sculptor, visited Moravian Slovakia and Uprka in 1902, a number of Uprka's major pieces were successfully sold at the initiative of Zdenka Braunerová in Paris where they still are today. France, the cradle of impressionism, which was adopted by Uprka as one of the first Czech painters, is likely to become another site for an exhibition of his paintings. At the time of writing this article in 2018, we are seriously considering a solid offer to exhibit Uprka's best works in Paris.

It would be interesting to know the number of Uprka's paintings abroad because the whereabouts of many of his high-quality works are unknown. According to an unofficial list compiled during his life, it is obvious that he was very hard-working. He is the author of nearly 900 oil paintings, more than 600 watercolor paintings, and hundreds of pastel, charcoal and ink paintings. His graphic work, especially those using the drypoint and etching techniques, are at a comparable level with other European masters of the time. However, the most interesting thing about his work is the fact that he was original and authentic. His astute and original eye for creativity is based on, among other things, the fact that he did not look to follow other artist's patterns but instead, he followed the sound of his heart. Simultaneously, he himself significantly influenced his peers and subsequent generations of painters.

It is little known that between 1930 and 1940 he was one of the most sought-after, best-selling and most valued Czech painters, as evidenced, for example,

by the fact that he bought a chateau with a large park in Klobušice, Slovakia, with the payment he received for his monumental painting *Jízda králů* (The Ride of the Kings). Uprka thought of his work very highly to the extent that at the peak of his career he never negotiated his prices. Therefore, his paintings were owned only by very wealthy art lovers, collectors and benefactors. And that was one of the reasons why he became one of the most imitated Czech painters, and his work was valued at record prices even in the art market of his time.

Today, the life and work of Joža Uprka is best illustrated by his permanent exhibition in Uherské Hradiště which, during his lifetime, was the commercial, cultural and social center of Moravian Slovakia. In September 2018, it will have been six years since the grand opening of Uprka's permanent exhibition. On that occasion, it was stressed that the permanent exhibition, which also became a museum, was introduced to pay tribute to Uprka and thank him for what he gifted to Moravian Slovakia, to the visual arts, and to his homeland during his life. The well-attended Joža Uprka Gallery has become an important cultural and social center for the whole region and beyond.

During a visit in 2017 by a large group of visitors from the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, President and CEO Gail Naughton, announced the intention to organize an exhibition of Uprka's work from the collection of George Drost at the Museum in 2018. This is the first exhibition of this significant and distinctive artist's work in the United States and will become an important contribution to the rich history of his exhibitions. I very much wish that, even in the United States, Uprka finds fans among the lovers of visual arts and history, especially amongst the descendants of his fellow Czech countrymen.

Stručná Historie Joži Uprky a Jeho Vzestupu ke Slávě

Dr. Petr Vašát

*Nadace Moravské Slovácko a zakladatel Galerie Joži Uprky, Uherské Hradiště, Česká republika
Edited for length by Petra Ledererova Maier, University of Northern Iowa*

Pochopit dílo Joži Uprky (1861-1940)—evropského umělce slováckého venkova—může lépe ten, kdo se dokáže vžít do doby, ve které mistr výtvarného řemesla tvořil své kompozice, ten, který poznal specifiku prostředí Slovácka a okolnosti, které se pro Uprku staly trvalým zdrojem malířských inspirací. Nicméně živé barvy, dynamické tahy štětcem a postavy překypující životem zobrazené v jeho dílech přitahují pozornost všech diváků, bez ohledu na jejich znalost Uprkova kraje. Jelikož jeho tvorba byla při nejrůznějších příležitostech podrobně analyzována a zhodnocena předními kunsthistoriky několika generací, ve svém příspěvku proto pomínu hodnocení Uprkovy umělecké tvorby a zaměřím se především na to, jak jsem se seznámil s Georgem Drostem a na naši společnou celoživotní vášň pro sběratelství a propagaci Uprkovy tvorby.

Když jsem před více jak 30 lety opustil mé rodné Moravské Slovácko a přestěhoval jsem se do Prahy, věděl jsem, že je to jen změna adresy a cítil jsem, že Slovácko mi zůstává v srdci. Moravské Slovácko je překrásný, malebný kout České republiky s celou řadou specifík, zvyků, tradic a upřímných lidí s dobrým srdcem. Kromě kultury mě k tomuto kraji poutá i další silné pouto—Joža Uprka, se kterým jsem spojil významnou část svého života. Velmi dobře si pamatuji, když jsem ještě jako školák v doprovodu svého otce navštívil první výstavu Úprkových děl ve Zlíně a Uherském Hradišti. Stejně dobře si pamatuji, jak jsem poprvé uviděl Uprkovy olejomalby, které byly na počátku mé sběratelské vášně, jež trvá dodnes. Dnes jsem tedy hrdý na to, že jsem mohl být u všech důležitých událostí spojených s Uprkou za posledních 30 let.

Když jsem v roce 1995 nenašel partnera, který by se mnou založil galerii Joži Uprky na Moravě,

rozhodl jsem se za velkého zájmu a morální podpory MUDr. Evy Novákové, vnučky malíře, založit galerii věnované Uprkovi v Praze na Plzeňské ulici. Samotného mě překvapilo, s jakým zájmem se Uprka setkal v Praze, která mu ne vždy, zejména v době jeho malířských začátků, rozuměla. Uprkova galerie se časem stala i místem setkávání Moraváků žijících v Praze. Je pro mě tedy symbolické, že jeden z prvních významných zahraničních hostů nově založené galerie v Praze byl Američan George Drost, který se narodil v Brně. Jak se později ukázalo, tento sympatický muž byl sběratelem a neúnavným příznivcem tvorby Joži Uprky, zejména v USA. O tomto svědčí i tato výstava v Cedar Rapids, která v tomto směru završuje jeho dlouhodobé cílevědomé úsilí přiblížit Uprkovu tvorbu širšímu mezinárodnímu publiku.

George Drost doposud navštívil celou řadu výstav děl Joži Uprky v České republice, například soubornou výstavu Uprkových obrazů uspořádanou k příležitosti 150 výročí od Uprkova narození ve Valdštejnské jízdárně v Praze, kterou George navštívil se svojí ženou Beth a početnou skupinou krajanů v roce 2011. Dále v roce 2015 navštívil stálou expozici Joži Uprky v Uherském Hradišti, tentokrát v doprovodu svého syna Charlieho. Tyto návštěvy dokládají nejen jeho neúnavný obdiv k Uprkovy jako umělci, ale i jeho vztah k jižní Moravě a zemi, kde se narodil, ale také to, že Uprka má své příznivce daleko za hranicemi České republiky. Jsem proto rád, že moje čilé kontakty s Georgem vydržely více jak 20 let a že naše obchodní vztahy přerostly v přátelství.

O tom, že umění nezná hranice, svědčí i úspěšná výstava Joži Uprky v Abú Dhabí, Spojených arabských emirátech (SAE) v roce 2002, kterou jsem organizoval z iniciativy České ambasády v SAE a pod záštitou Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České

republiky. Dodnes je pro mě velkou záhadou jakto, že v zemi se zcela odlišnou kulturou, jinými tradicemi a jiným způsobem života byla Uprkova tvorba tak pozitivně přijata. Jeho obrazy přilákaly řadu zájemců a obstály i v konkurenci s díly Andy Warhola, jehož výstava probíhala ve stejném termínu ve vedlejší sále.

Za zmínku stojí i to, že po návštěvě Slovácka a Uprky geniálním francouzským sochařem Auguste Rodinem v roce 1902 se řada jeho významných děl velmi dobře prodala z iniciativy Zdenky Braunerové v Paříži, kde jsou dodnes. Francie jako kolébka impresionismu, který si jako jeden z prvních českých malířů osvojil právě Uprka, se velmi pravděpodobně stane dalším místem výstavy jeho obrazů. V době psaní tohoto příspěvku v roce 2018 velmi vážně zvažujeme solidní nabídku uspořádat z jeho nejlepších děl výstavu právě v Paříži.

Bylo by zajímavé znát počet Uprkových obrazů v zahraničí, protože řada jeho kvalitních děl je neznámá. Podle neoficiálního soupisu zpracovaného už za jeho života je zřejmé, že Uprka byl velmi pracovitý. Namaloval téměř 900 olejů, více jak 600 akvarelů, stovky kreseb pastelem, uhlem a tuží. Evropskou úroveň rovnou ostatním umělcům své doby mají zejména jeho grafické práce, především ty, u kterých použil techniku suché jehly a leptu. Nejzajímavější na jeho tvorbě je ale skutečnost, že byl původní a autentický. Jeho fenomén a cit pro originalitu spočívá mimo jiné i v tom, že nehledal jako jiní autoři cizí vzory, ale šel doslova za hlasem svého srdce. Naopak on sám ovlivnil výraznou měrou své vrstevníky i další generace malířů.

Je málo známé, že mezi lety 1930 a 1940 byl jeden z nejvyhledávanějších, nejprodávanějších a nejvíce ceněných českých malířů, o čemž svědčí například skutečnost, že za honorář za prodaný monumentální obraz Jízda králů zakoupil zámek s velkým parkem v Klobošicích na Slovensku. Uprka si své práce patřičně vážil, a proto ve vrcholném období své umělecké tvorby nikdy nepřipustil smlouvání o ceně za svá díla. Jeho obrazy tudíž vlastnili jen velmi movití

milovníci výtvarného umění, sběratelé a mecenáši. I to byl jeden z důvodů, proč se stal jedním z nejvíce napodobovaných českých malířů a proč na tehdejšímu trhu s výtvarným uměním jeho díla dosahovala i na svou dobu rekordních částek.

Život a dílo Joži Uprky dnes nejlépe dokumentuje jeho stálá expozice v Uherském Hradišti, které již za jeho života bylo přirozeným obchodním, kulturním a společenským centrem Moravského Slovácka. V září roku 2018 tomu bude šest let od slavnostního otevření Uprkovy stálé expozice. Při této příležitosti bylo zdůrazněno, že stálou expozicí, která se stala současně muzeem, chceme Uprkovi vzdát hold a poděkovat mu za to, co on během svého života věnoval Slovácku, výtvarnému umění a své vlasti. Galerie Joži Uprky se stala důležitým kulturně-společenským a vzdělávacím centrem nejen celého regionu.

Uprkovu galerii navštívila v roce 2017 početná skupina z National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library ze Cedar Rapids, Iowa vedená výkonnou ředitelkou muzea, paní Gail Naughton, která při této příležitosti oznámila svůj záměr uspořádat v muzeu v Cedar Rapids v roce 2018 Uprkovu výstavu z osobní sbírky George Drosta. Jedná se o vůbec první výstavu ojedinelé Uprkovy tvorby podobného rozsahu v USA, která se stane významným příspěvkem do bohaté historie jeho výstav. Velmi si proto přeji, aby i v USA našel Uprka mezi milovníky výtvarného umění a historie, zejména mezi potomky českých krajanů, své příznivce.

Joža Uprka's Modern Traditionalism

Dr. Nicholas Sawicki

Associate Professor of Art and Architectural Design, Lehigh University, PA

For much of its history, modern art held in balance two seemingly contrary tendencies. Perched between the old and the new, it oriented itself to artistic innovation and new creative ideas, while at the same time maintaining a deep interest in the precedent of tradition and history. This duality defined the modern movement in the major art centers of Europe, where modernism first emerged, as well as in the many other cities and regions across the globe where it took hold. The artist Joža Uprka embodied it. A worldly inhabitant of the late Austro-Hungarian empire who moved comfortably through cosmopolitan artistic circles in Prague, Munich, and Paris, Uprka structured his life and art around the rural, picturesque part of southeast Moravia known as Slovácko, where he was raised, and where he returned to work for most of his professional career. Active from the 1880s through his death in 1940, he was the region's principal artistic chronicler and one of its leading public figures. Throughout the years, his art has helped shape Moravia's understanding of its own identity and history and defined its place in the broader cultural imagination.

Like his Moravian contemporary and artist friend Alphonse Mucha, to whom he has sometimes been compared, Uprka took lifelong inspiration for his work from the ethnographic details and folk traditions of the Moravian countryside, which was his main artistic subject. He combined this with a similarly formidable interest in artistic and painterly experimentation. For Uprka, this took the form of a looser, impressionistic manner of painting that closely aligned him with impressionism—the new art form that originated in Paris in the early 1870s, and which became synonymous with modernism throughout Europe for much of the late 19th century. Uprka became familiar with impressionism in Paris, where he

lived for a brief period in 1892-1893, after initial studies in Prague and Munich. This new style left a decisive imprint on his artistic trajectory, and it connected well with his own, even earlier preference for a free and expansive approach to painting and drawing. This habit had in previous years put Uprka at odds with his training at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts, where he was a student in the early 1880s, and where a stricter, more academic mode of painting prevailed. Uprka was part of the first generation of Czech artists who oriented themselves in this direction, along with Mucha, and painters such as Luděk Marold and Antonín Slavíček, whom he came to know at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, where he continued his studies. Together in Munich, they formed an expatriate association for Czech artists known as Škréta, which coalesced in 1885 and encouraged modern artistic thinking.

Impressionism propelled Uprka to become an accomplished colorist and to move beyond the more neutral, brown-tinted palette that still predominated in much of Czech and German art in the late 19th century. He dappled the surface of his paintings with bright flecks of color and bold, elongated strokes of the brush, and he developed a distinctively vibrant color palette that became increasingly characteristic of his work: a colorful array of warm reds and yellows, set against cooler blues and greens. The colors were frequently similar in intensity and richness, as if each competing for attention. Modeled in part on the example of French artists like Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, and in later years, the Nabis painters Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard, these intrinsically modern artistic techniques offered Uprka a new way of seeing and portraying the otherwise familiar, strongly rural subjects of his own youth. In 1897, Uprka returned definitively to Slovácko. He settled in the

village of Hroznová Lhota, a few kilometers from the town where he was born, Kněždub.

The everyday scenes, vernacular traditions, and natural landscape of this part of Moravia had always fascinated Uprka, and he spent the next four decades documenting them in his extraordinarily prolific output of oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and etchings. Over time and with each new picture, he constructed a broad-ranging visual catalog of the region and the people who lived there. He pictured their agricultural way of life, their folk traditions, religious customs, and in particular their distinctive “kroje”—the colorful and richly embroidered ceremonial and folk costume that was once a regular feature of cultural and social life across much of rural Moravia and Bohemia, and which had all but vanished from routine use by the late 19th century in nearly all parts of the two provinces, with the exception of Slovácko. There, many local residents continued in the traditional practice of attiring themselves in folk dress for Sunday worship, feast days, and seasonal festivals. This lent Slovácko the reputation of a place where time stood still, even as it progressed towards modernity through the early 20th century, like the rest of the Czech lands.

Uprka’s fascination with traditional forms of culture, labor, and dress constituted a form of cultural archaism, and was itself an embodiment of the modern era’s pronounced unease with the modernization of life at the turn of the century, which gradually pushed aside earlier and more traditional, particularly rural customs. It coincided with a growing interest in vernacular culture and traditions across much of Europe at the time. Particularly among educated, urbanized Czechs in major cities like Prague and Brno at the turn of the century—many of whom traced their family lineage to the countryside—it became an increasingly common practice to search out and admire examples of rural life and customs, in an attempt to identify

with and preserve their own ethnic and social heritage. This accounted for the great appeal that Uprka’s art had for Czech audiences, who flocked to see his work when it was exhibited. Two successful early exhibitions in Prague, at the Topič Salon in 1897, and in the exhibition pavilion of the Mánes Association of Artists in 1903, helped build up Uprka’s reputation as the era’s preeminent painter of the countryside.

Among Czech artists, writers, and musicians, the practice of singling out rural subject matter had precedent in the work of earlier mid-19th century cultural figures including the painter Josef Mánes, the author Božena Němcová, and the composer Bedřich Smetana. Uprka was the modern era’s successor to this earlier precedent, and he embraced the role entirely, both in the Czech community and in his relationships abroad. When Uprka’s friend Mucha accompanied the Parisian French sculptor Auguste Rodin for a groundbreaking exhibition of Rodin’s work in Prague in 1902, they also traveled to Hroznová Lhota to visit Uprka at his home and studio. Uprka and Mucha arranged for Rodin to be accompanied part of the way by young men dressed in folk attire, riding on horseback in an emulation of the traditional ceremonial procession called the “Ride of the Kings,” common in Slovácko and usually held on the Pentecost. Uprka knew the tradition well, and painted at least two large, monumental oil paintings documenting the ceremony, in 1894 and 1897 respectively.

Although by the early 20th century, Czech art on the whole was trending in both form and subject towards a much more vanguard direction, Uprka persisted in his style of work, producing a steady stream of pictures depicting Slovácko’s inhabitants in their observance of religious holidays and seasonal festivals, and at work in the various forms of agricultural labor that sustained the region economically. In his imagery of rural labor, the conspicuous pageantry of Uprka’s larger, more colorful paintings was balanced by a careful attention to the process and toil of the physical work his subjects were undertaking. Breaking stone,

plowing and sowing the fields, scything, and taking in the harvest of grains, vegetables, fruit, and grapes in a region known for its agriculture and winemaking, Uprka pictured the lives of his working subjects with considerable sincerity and empathy. In his depiction of these themes in particular, he recognized that the rural life of the countryside, which remained a continued source of fascination for many Czechs, contained within it a less celebrated, frequently unrecognized breadth of repetitive, physically difficult daily work—precisely those conditions that modernization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries aspired to remediate, in its continued push for the mechanization and industrialization of modern life.

Slovácko, the Region of the Painter's Palette

*Dr. Jiří Jilík
Czech Author and Folklorist*

In the Czech Republic, in south-eastern Moravia at the border with the Slovak Republic, there lies a place called Slovácko, also known as Moravian Slovakia. Three fairies of fate stood at its birth far back in the past.

“Let it be a region where people like to sing!”
the first one said.

“And let it be a region where people like to dance!”
the second one spoke.

“And let it be a region that makes people
joyful and merry!” the third one added.

And so it happened. The most beautiful singing rang in one's ears when the girls were walking to the river with a melody on their lips. Everyone stopped what they were doing and listened. Why would they not, the girls were singing about love after all. Even today, all men from Slovácko, despite seeing each other for the first time, put their arm around each other's shoulders without a hint of shyness and a song spreads across the countryside—one is a cheerful song, in which the singers allow their joy and power to come out, another one is dark and threatening, as a message to the arrogance of the powerful, and the third song will have a catchy melody that makes work go by faster.

And along with the song, their feet start dancing, children are hopping around in a circle holding hands, right next to a young couple doing a wiggle dance where the boy is circling around his dancing partner. And finally, the king of all dances, so-called *verbuňk*, the dance of recruits, when the dancers jump up high as if they were to touch the sky.

Where so many colours in Slovácko came from, no one will ever know. Different traditional costumes, different embroidery and different head scarves distinguish every village. The palette of colours

at the pilgrimage to St. Anthony's chapel above Blatnice used to be unbelievably varied and it is no surprise that was where the biggest painter of Slovácko, Joža Uprka, set up his canvas to use his brush to capture all the beautiful impressions. His paintings exhibited in a gallery bearing his name in the largest city of the Slovácko Region, Uherské Hradiště, offer a peek inside the spirit of this region where people managed to beautify and decorate their harsh lives with ritual poetry.

Folk customs came to life and affected both regular and festive days. In the early spring, it is a carnival (*fašank*) with processions of ceremonial dancers intended to secure a rich harvest. Easter is a holiday of boys with their braided whips made of pussy willow twigs that make girls' bodies younger, and the girls thank them with beautiful Easter eggs decorated with miniature patterns onto which the painters (*maléřečky*) have reflected their artistically exhibited message of love. At the turn of spring and summer, during Pentecost, the Ride of Kings sets off on its journey. It is an old initiation ceremony turned over the ages into a colourful procession of costumed horsemen and a king, a young virgin boy with his face covered with ribbons and a rose in his mouth to symbolise silence. When nature yields its crops, there is a period of the harvest festival (*dožínky*) with wreaths made of cereals and field blossoms, followed by a feast (*posvícení*) which is a plentiful thanksgiving for a good harvest and fertility complemented by tables full of food and drinks. At Christmas, when Slovácko quiets down, Christmas trees light up at the towns' squares accompanied by the prayers and carols of little carolers.

Vineyards, where grapes ripen in the autumn, are an oasis for the bodies and souls of the locals. The maturation then continues in plump barrels in wine

cellars and sheds, which no local calls otherwise than budy. And when the juices of the grapes mature and turn into golden ambrosia, people meet in the rooms above the cellars for tastings to enjoy the taste, colour and smell.

And the wine cellars of Hroznová Lhota, Kněždub, Vlčnov and Mařatice are where painter Joža Uprka, who captured the beauty of Slovácko in his paintings, raised a glass to his lips many times. His paintings are not just a memory of what has been but they are also an inspiration for today's generations. A message about the fact that there is artistic talent in everyone's heart. Let's not be afraid to open them up.

Sursum corda! (Lift up your hearts!)

Slovácko, kraj malířovy palety

Dr. Jiří Jilík

V České republice, na jihovýchodní Moravě, při hranici se Slovenskou republikou, se nachází kraj zvaný Slovácko. Při jeho zrodu stály v dávné minulosti tři sudičky.

„Ať je to kraj, kde lidé budou rádi zpívat!“
řekla první.

„A ať je to kraj, kde lidé budou rádi tancovat!“
pravila druhá.

„A ať je to i kraj, který lidé rozzáří mnoha barvami!“
dodala třetí.

Tak se také stalo. Ten nejkrásnější zpěv se ozýval, když šly dívky s písní na rtech k řece. V takovou chvíli každý ustal v práci a naslouchal. Jak by ne, vždyť dívky zpívaly o lásce. I dnes se slováctí mládenci a muži, byť se vidí poprvé v životě, obejmou bez ostychu kolem ramen a píseň se rozlehne po kraji – jednou veselá, již zpěváci dávají průchod své radosti a síle, jindy temná a výhružná, jako vzkaz aroganci mocných, potřetí taková, která se notuje při práci, aby šla lépe od ruky.

A s písní se nohy samy dávají do tance, tu děti držíce se za ruce poskakují v kole, o kousek dál dvojice mladých se otáčí při vrtěném tanci, při němž chlapec obkružuje svoji partnerku. A konečně drahokam mezi tanci, verbuňk, při kterém tanečníci ve výskoku vyletují vzhůru, jako by se chtěli dotknout nebe.

Kde se vzalo na Slovácku tolik barev už nikdo nedohledá. Co vesnice, to jiný kroj, jiná výšivka, jiný šátek. Nekonečně pestrá bývala paleta barev na pouti u svatého Antoníčka nad Blatnicí, a tak není divu, že právě zde napjal největší malíř Slovácka Joža Uprka své malířské plátno, aby štětcem zachytil všechnu tu nádhernou impresi. Jeho obrazy vystavené v galerii nesoucí jeho jméno v hlavním městě slováckého regionu Uherském Hradišti jsou oknem do duše tohoto kraje, v němž si lidé nejjednodušší život dokázali zkrášlit a ozdobit rituální poezií.

Zrodily se lidové obyčeje, které poznamenaly všední i sváteční dny. V předjaří je to fašank (masopust) s průvody tanečníků obřadního tance, který má zajistit bohatou úrodu. Velikonoce jsou svátky chlapců s pomlázkami spletenými z vrbových proutků, které omlazují dívčí tělo, a dívky se odvěčují kraslicemi, vajíčky zdobenými miniaturními vzory, do nichž maléřečky (malířky) vložily výtvarně cítěný vzkaz lásky. Na přelomu jara a léta, o letnicích, vydá se na svou pouť Jízda králů, pradávny iniciální obřad, přetavený v průběhu věků do barvitěho průvodu krojovaných jezdců na koních s králem, mladičkým panicem s tváří zakrytou pentlemi a růží v ústech na důkaz mlčenlivosti. Když příroda vydá úrodu, přichází období dožínek s věnci uvitými z obilí a z polního kvítí a nato hody (posvícení), pohostinné díkůvzdání za dobrou úrodu a plodnost, doprovázené stoly plnými jídla a pití. O Vánocích, kdy se Slovácko ztiší, na návších a náměstích se rozzáří vánoční stromy a zazní modlitby a koledy malých koledníků.

Oázou, z níž se občerstvuje tělo i duše obyvatel Slovácka, jsou vinohrady, na nichž na podzim dozrávají hrozny vína. To další zrání už pokračuje ve vinných sklepích a búdách, v boubelatých bečkách. A když mošt vylisovaný z hroznů dozraje a změní se ve zlatavý mok, pak se scházejí lidé v jizbách nad sklepy, aby je koštovali, tedy vychutnali jeho chuť, barvu a vůni.

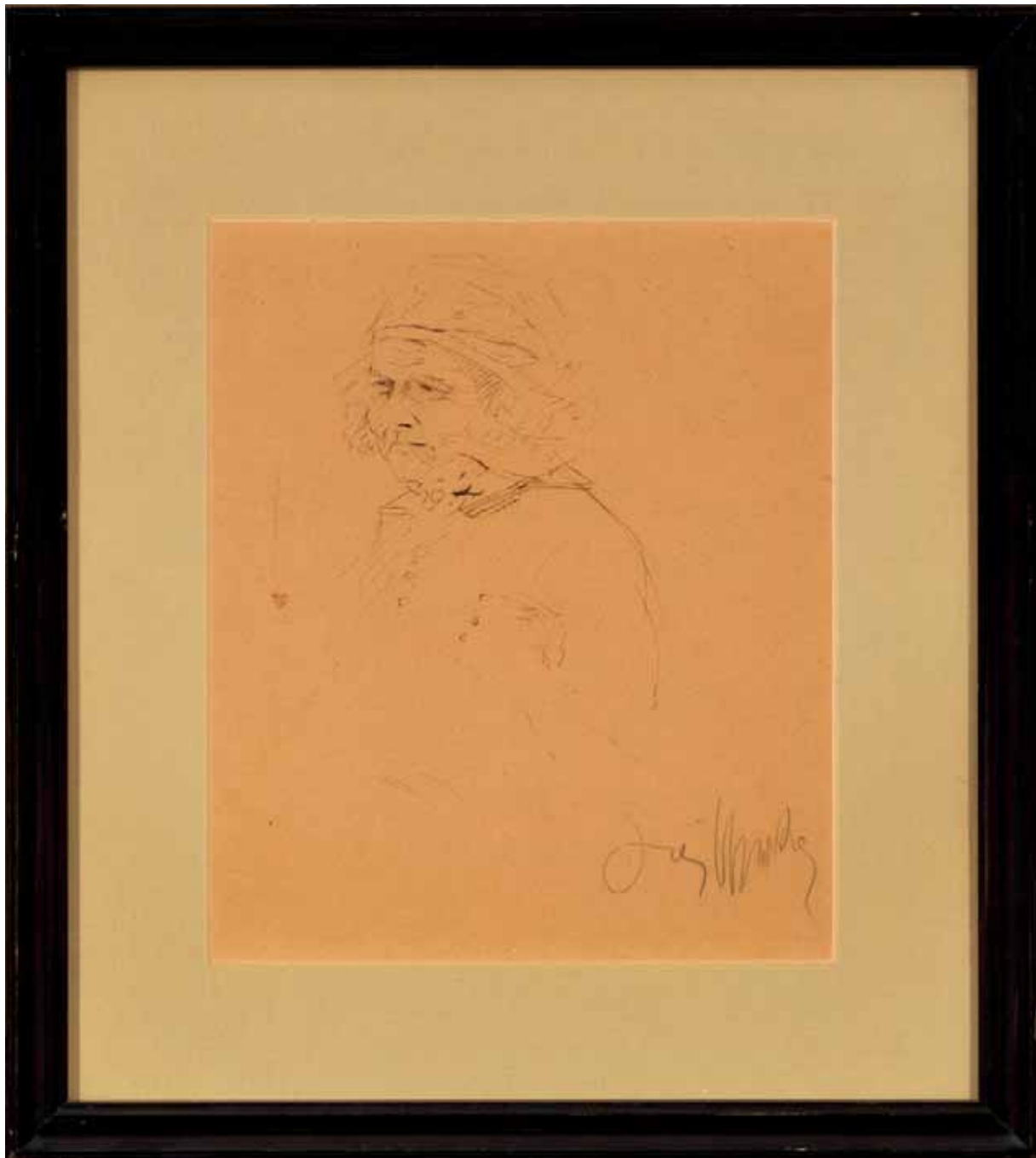
A právě ve vinných sklepích v Hroznové Lhotě, Kněždubě, ve Vlčnově a v Mařaticích mnohokrát pozvedal pohárek k ústům malíř Joža Uprka, který krásu Slovácka zachytil ve svých obrazech. Ty jsou nejsou jen vzpomínkou na to, co bylo, jsou i inspirací pro současné generace. Poselstvím o tom, že umělecké cítění má v srdci každý z nás. Nebojme se je otevřít. Sursum corda! (Vzhůru srdce!)



I.

Early Works: Sketches and Drawings





Untitled (Study of an old woman's head)

1890

Ink on paper

9 x 8 inches



*Untitled (Study for Funeral in Javornik,
possibly located in Moravske Lieskove)*

1880

Charcoal on paper

9 x 8 inches



Untitled (Slovakia Madonna)

1890

Oil on canvas

19 x 14 inches



Untitled (Field worker with hoe)

1900

Ink on paper

3-1/2 x 5-3/4 inches

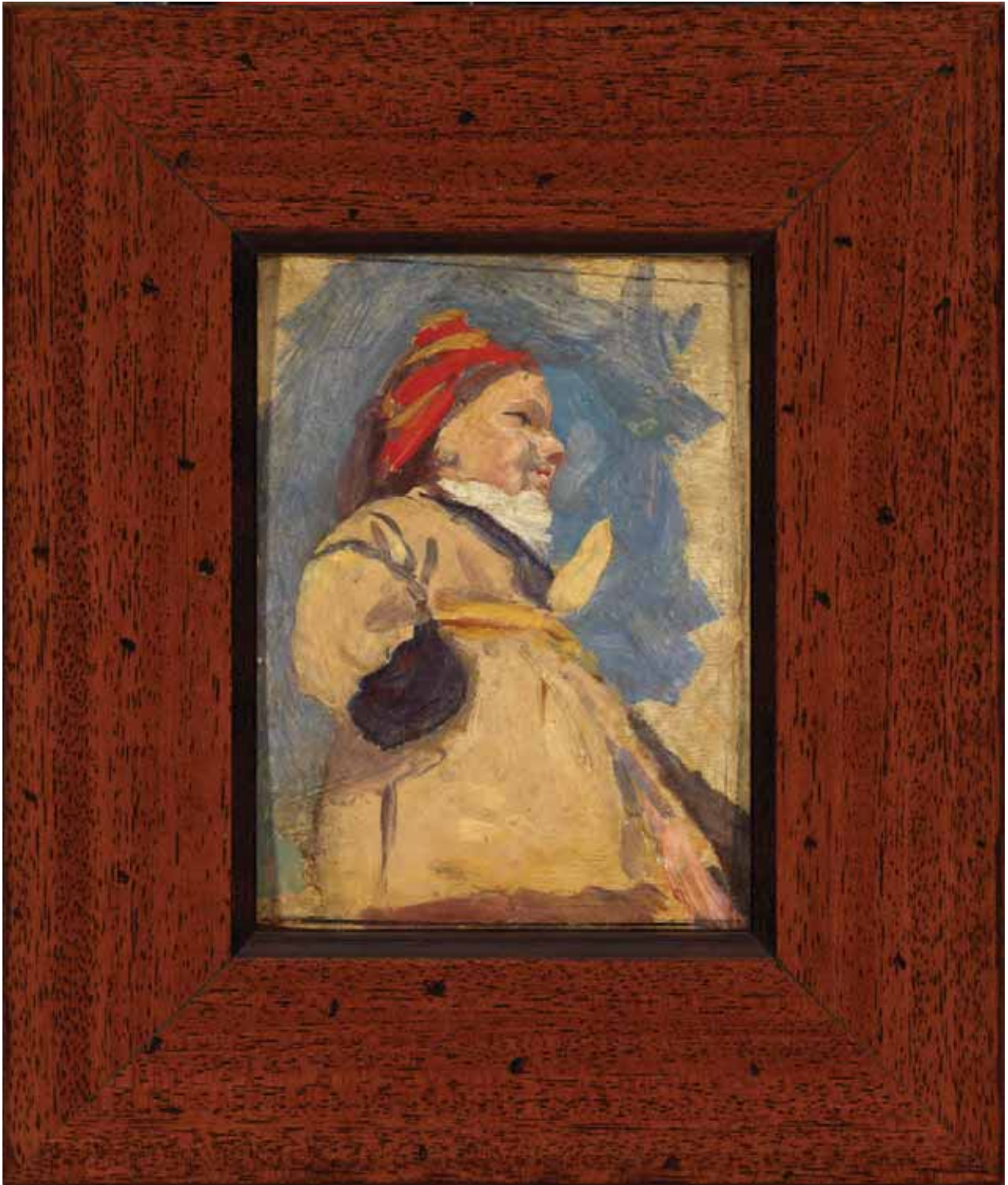


Untitled (Dancing girl from Piešťany. From a 1926 poster: Piešťany Slovakia)

1930

Charcoal on paper

20 x 27 inches



Untitled (Study of a little girl in a fur coat)

1895

Oil on wood

4 x 6-1/2 inches



Untitled (Field worker)

1917

Etching

14-1/4 x 10-3/4 inches



Slovaci (Portfolio)

1918

Etchings

14 x 18 inches (Page size)

From top left: 12 x 9-3/4; 12-1/2 x 9; 10-1/4 x 12-1/4;

Bottom from left: 12-1/2 x 7-1/2; 12 x 9-3/4; 11-1/2 x 12-1/4



Scythe Sharpener

Early 20th century

Drawing on paper

22 x 15-1/2 inches



Man from Hluk in a Fur Coat

Early 20th century

Mixed media on paper

22 x 14-1/2 inches



The Stitcher

Early 20th century

Drawing on paper

12 x 7-3/4 inches



II. Working People and Daily Life





Untitled (The pottery market at Hroznova Lhota)

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

12 x 17 inches



Untitled (Children at play)

1901

Oil on board

12-1/2 x 18-3/4 inches



Untitled (The potato picker)

1920

Watercolor on paper

18 x 22-1/4 inches



Untitled (Wedding Joy)

1895

Ink on paper

14 x 9-1/2 inches

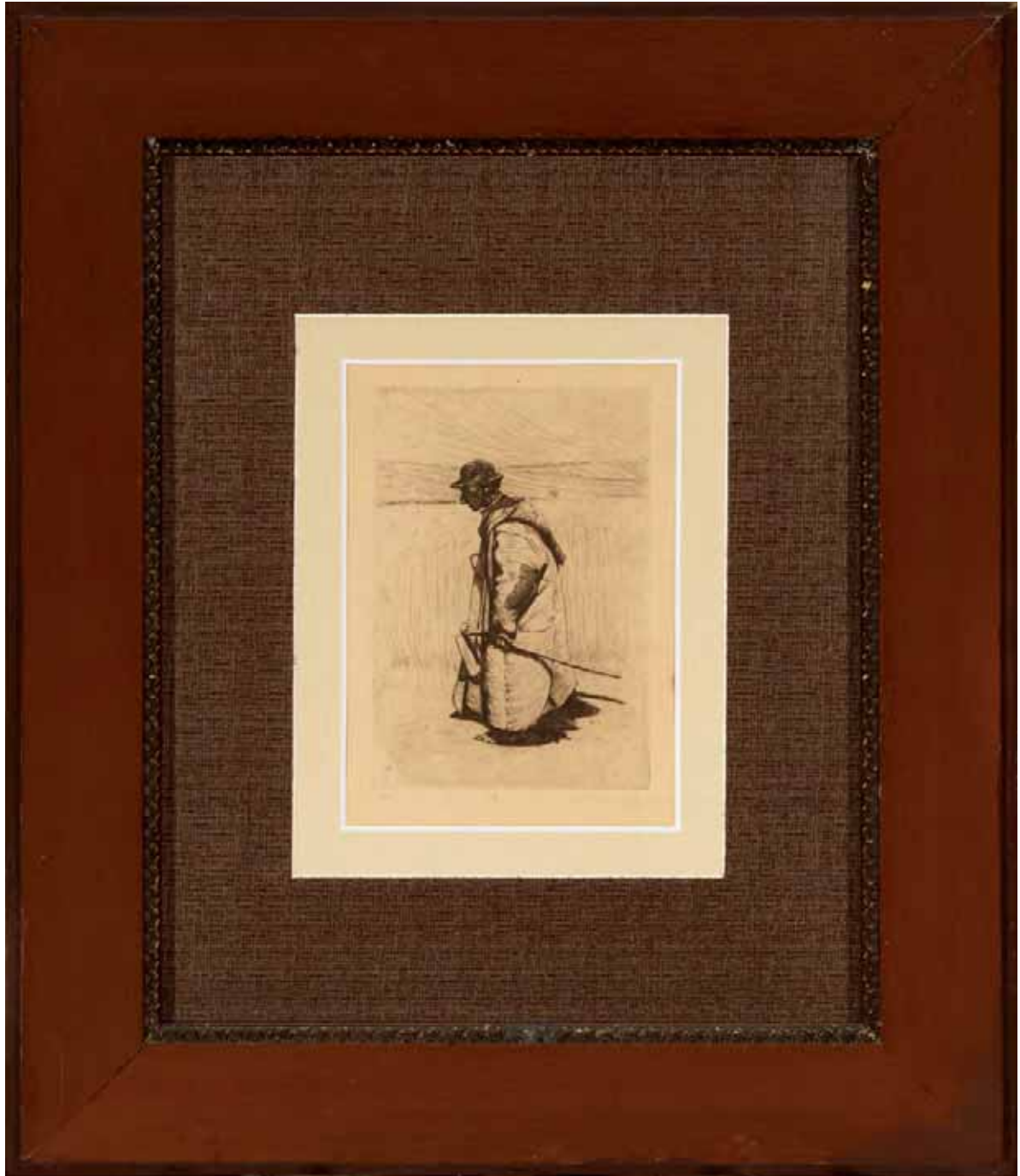


Untitled (Woman embroidering)

1925

Charcoal on paper

12-1/2 x 16 inches



Untitled (Field worker with hoe from the White Carpathians region)

1900/1918

Etching

13 x 9 inches

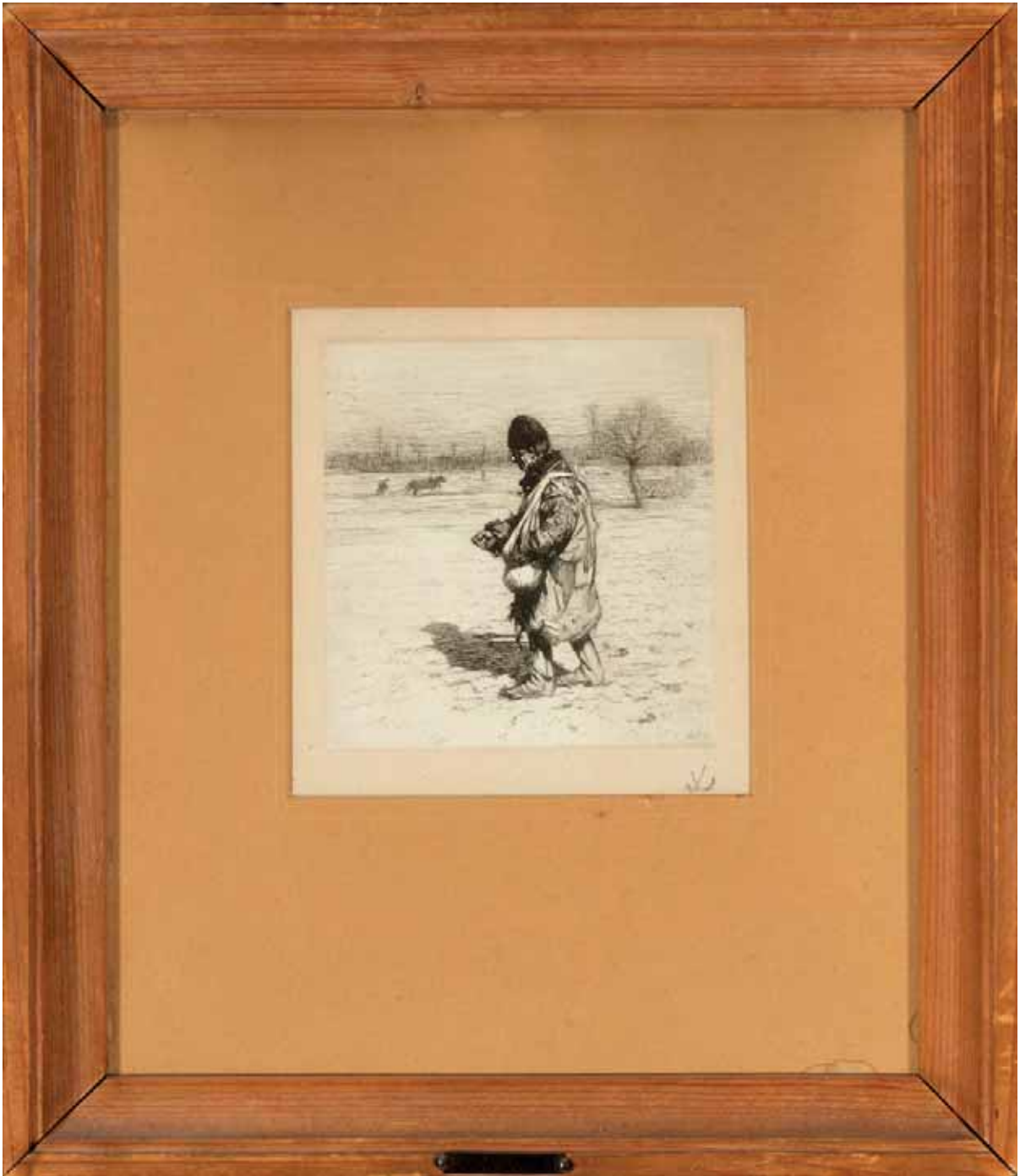


Untitled (Field worker from Vlcnov drinking from jug)

1900/1918

Etching

9-1/2 x 4-1/2 inches



Untitled (The sower, from the Uherske Ostroh Region)

1900/1918

Etching

5 x 5 inches



Untitled (Turkey women, husking corn)

1926

Oil on panel

15 x 21 inches



Untitled (Turkey women husking corn)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

17 x 28-1/2 inches



Jaro Slunci (Spring sun, children at play in Veseli Region)

1911

Oil on panel

8 x 16 inches



Study of Horse Market at Hrozna Lhota (Vesili Region)

1890 c.

Oil on canvas

5 x 9 inches



Untitled (Woman in Nemkyne dress from Ostroh with baby in field)

Early 20th century

Oil on panel

8 x 14 inches



III. Portraits and Folk Costumes





Untitled (Study for woman in native Kroje dress from Breclav)

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

16 x 11 inches



*Untitled (Woman in prayer.
Study for Slav mother of God Triptych/Slovanska Bohorodica)*

1925

Watercolor on paper
25-1/2 x 17-1/2 inches



*Untitled (Woman kneeling in prayer.
Study for Slav mother of God Triptych/Slovanska Bohorodica)*
1936
Watercolor on paper
23-1/2 x 15-1/2 inches



Untitled (Two girls in scarves from Kyjov, Ratiskovice)

1915

Oil on panel

10-1/2 x 23 inches



*Untitled (Man kneeling in prayer.
Study for Slav Mother of God Triptych/Slovanka Bohorodica)*
1932
Charcoal on paper
23 x 15 inches



Untitled (Man in a fur coat from the Myjava District, Vrbovce)

1918

Oil on canvas

48 x 20-1/2 inches



*Untitled (Man standing with coat on shoulder.
Study for Slav Mother of God/Slovanska Bohovdica)*

Early 20th century

Mixed media on paper

20 x 16 inches



*Untitled (An older man with a religious book.
Study for Slav Mother of God/Slovanska Bohorodica)*

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

20 x 16 inches



*Untitled (Man standing with a religious book.
Study for Slav Mother of God/Slovanska Bohorodica)*

1929

Mixed media and charcoal on paper

21-2/3 x 15-1/3 inches



Untitled (Bag piper/Gajdos)

1900/1918

Etching, edition of 136

9-1/2 x 4-1/2 inches



*Untitled (Study of a woman tying a scarf
from the Uherske Hradiste Region, Maratice)*

Early 20th century

Charcoal on paper

9 x 7-1/2 inches



Untitled (Brother Zvolsky, a patron of the artist, Order of the Holy Cross, Prague)

1887

Oil on canvas

22 x 18-1/2 inches



*Untitled (Woman posing with hands behind her head,
from Kyjov Region, Milotice)*

1911

Oil on canvas

23 x 12 inches

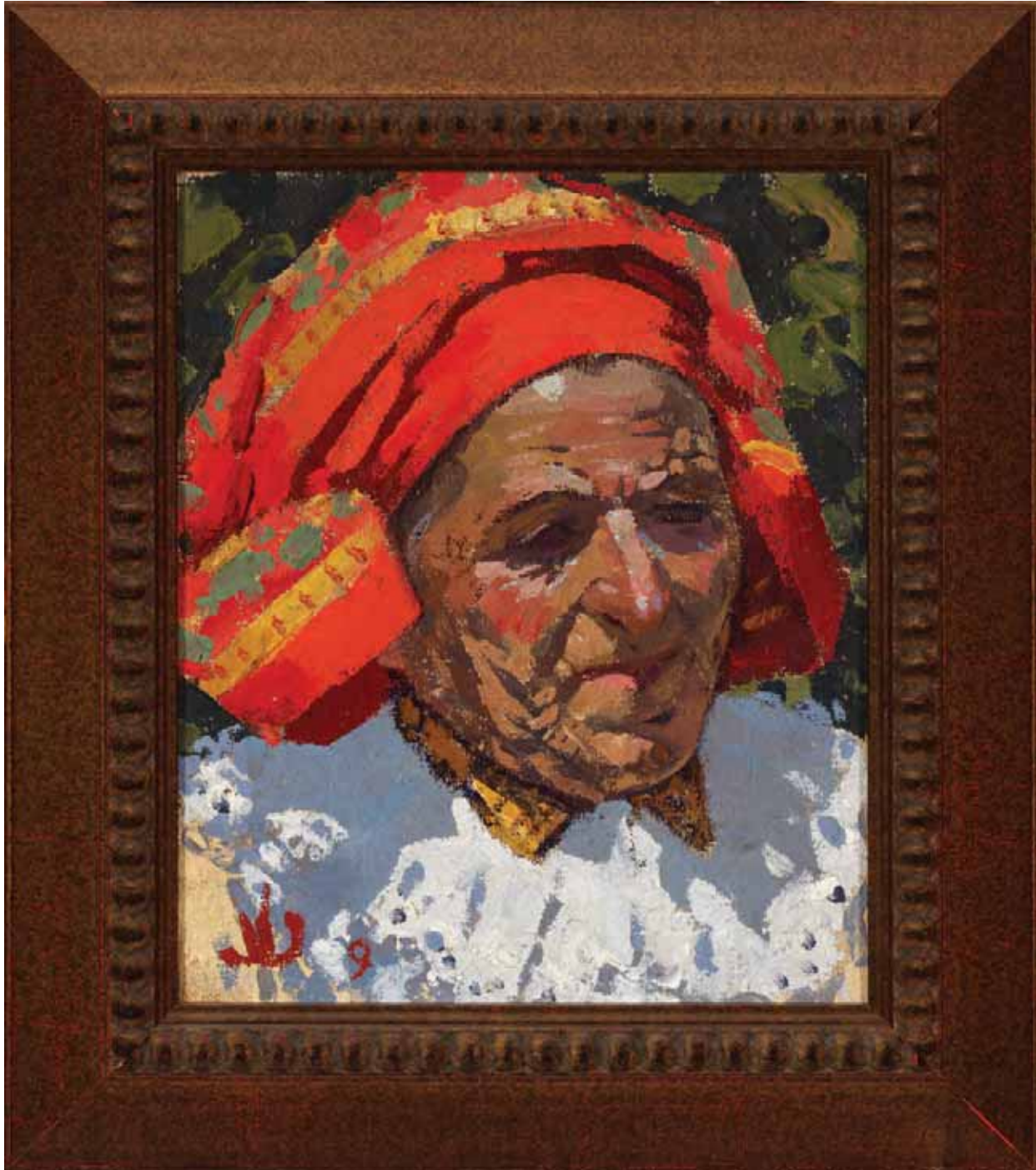


Untitled (Study of church girl with Baxus Wreath, Veseli Region, Z Kostela)

1894

Oil on canvas

13 x 12 inches



Untitled (Head of an old woman, Veseli Region, Hroznova Lhota, Knezdub, Tasov)

1909

Oil on canvas

11 x 9 inches



Untitled (Portrait of a woman in a scarf, Veseli Region, Knezdub, Tasov)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

11-1/2 x 15 inches



Untitled (Woman in a scarf)

1920

Oil on canvas

20 x 15 inches



Untitled (Girl in scarf from Vesili and Moravou)

1925 c.

Oil on canvas

19 x 32 inches



Untitled (Bare bottom baby)

1934

Oil on panel

7 x 9 inches



Untitled (Shepherd [Orvac] with dog)

1929

Watercolor on paper

19 x 28-1/2 inches



Babi Leto/Indian Summer (From Zliecha, Trencin District)

1927

Oil on canvas

27 x 17 inches



Untitled (Old Egyptian in Cairo)

Early 20th century

Restrike-Etching on paper

5 x 5 inches



Woman with Headscarf (From Vacenovice or Ratiskovice)

1897 c.

Oil on canvas

22 x 18 inches



Untitled (Man in fur coat with red and green hat from Boršice a Hluku)

1917

Mixed media on paper

38 x 20 inches



Untitled (Man in fur coat and cap)

1917

Mixed media on paper

38 x 20 inches



Untitled (Girl green grocer, Kyjov Region)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

15 x 19-1/2 inches



Untitled (Girl with cherry tree twig, from the Hornacko Region, Velka and Velickou)

1917

Oil on canvas board

18 x 9 inches



Untitled (Girl spring planting, from the Kyjov Region, Milotice)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

24 x 28 inches



Untitled (Girl in folk costume and scarf, from the Ostrou Region)

1916

Oil on panel

6 x 10 inches



Untitled (A young boy with his Easter rattle, possibly from the Hornacko Region)

1891

Oil on panel

10 x 5-1/2 inches



Untitled (Girl with red scarf and floral vines, from the Veseli Region, Hroznova Lhota)

1916-20 c.

Oil on panel

15 x 11 inches



Untitled (Girl in a red scarf, from the Vesili Region, Knezdub, Hroznova Lhota)

1918

Watercolor on paper

6-1/2 x 9-1/2 inches



Untitled (Study of a young woman in Rubac, with white linen undergarment)

1923

Pastel and aquarelle on paper

23-3/4 x 15-1/4 inches



Untitled (Bare bottom baby)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

7-3/4 x 6 inches



Untitled (Young girl seated near the forest)

Early 20th century

Oil on board

6 x 9 inches



Untitled (Girl in a red scarf from Kunovice)

1917

Watercolor on paper

4-7/8 x 6-7/8 inches



Untitled (Old woman)

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

48 x 33-1/2 inches



Untitled (Old man)

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

26-1/2 x 31 inches



Untitled (Vlcnovjan, The man from Vlcnov)

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

23 x 17 inches



IV. Festivals and Celebrations





Untitled (Barefoot girl at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

1924

Oil on panel

18 x 10-1/2 inches



Untitled (Two girls with a child at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

Early 20th century

Oil on panel

12 x 19-1/2 inches



Untitled (Woman sitting in Field with a religious book at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

Early 20th century

Oil on board

8-1/3 x 8-1/3 inches



*Untitled (Woman kneeling in field with a jug
at St Anthony's pilgrimage in the Ostroh Region, Uhersko Ostrozsko)*

Early 20th century

Oil on panel

9 x 14-1/2 inches



Untitled (Girl in field with jug at the St Anthony's pilgrimage, pair of paintings)

Early 20th century

Oil on panel

5-1/2 x 9 inches



Untitled (Girl in field with jug at the St Anthony's pilgrimage, pair of paintings)

Early 20th century

Oil on panel

5-1/2 x 9 inches



Untitled (The gathering at St. Anthony's pilgrimage in the Vlcnov Region)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

27 x 50 inches



Untitled (Man in a field with flowers at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

1929

Oil on canvas

23 x 12 inches



Untitled (Portrait of a girl at St. Anthony's pilgrimage in Vlcnov)

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

12-1/4 x 9-1/4 inches



Untitled (Young man at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

Early 20th century

Oil on panel

18 x 10 inches



Untitled (Study for St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

Early 20th century

Watercolor on paper

25 x 18 inches



Untitled (In the field at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

1917 c.

Oil on canvas

24-1/4 x 39 inches



Untitled (Seated girl in folk costume [Kroji] at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

Early 20th century

Oil on wood

19 x 31 inches



Untitled (St. Anthony's pilgrimage in the field)

1917

Oil on canvas

33-1/2 x 48 inches



Untitled (Girl with a jug in the field at St. Anthony's pilgrimage)

Early 20th century

Oil on wood

7-1/2 x 9 inches



Untitled (Study from the Ride of the Kings on Whitsunday in Vlcnov)

1903

Etching

5-1/2 x 8 inches



Untitled (The champion on his horse in Ride of the Kings Parade, Vitez)

1906

Oil on canvas

19 x 29 inches



Untitled (The young king, from the Ride of the Kings)

1897

Oil on panel

13 x 9 inches



*Untitled (Young girl in the Corpus Christi
Procession/First Communion at Hroznova Lhota)*

Early 20th century

Oil on canvas

18 x 9 inches



Untitled (Child in the Corpus Christi procession)

1900/1918

Etching on paper

17 x 13-1/4 inches



O Hodech/Zenich (Study of the groom, Ostroh Region, Ostrozka Lhota, Hluk)

1906

Oil on canvas

19 X 24-1/2 inches



V.

Sculpture and Relief Work





Dead Soldier/Nescasna Vojna (Mourning a Fallen Soldier)

1902

Metal relief

23 x 6 inches



Untitled (Dancing Woman with Braids)

Franta Uprka (1868 – 1929)

1920

Plaster

21 x 11 x 21 inches



Untitled (Mother and Child with Baby from the Hana Region)

Franta Uprka (1868 – 1929)

Early 20th century

Porcelain

21 x 12 inches



Untitled (Bust of a Country Woman from Cicmany, Zliechov, Slovakia)

Franta Uprka (1868 – 1929)

1920

Plaster

10 x 8 x 10 inches



Ride of the Kings
Franta Uprka (1868 – 1929)

Bronze

Early 20th century

10 x 6 x 3-1/4 inches



VI. Posters



Joža Uprka Exhibit (Dancing man in red trousers with sabre from Podluzi)

1921

Lithograph

36 x 22 inches



*X Vystava (Promotion for the 10th exhibition of the Association of Moravian Artists,
Corpus Christi procession in the Hornacko Region, Velka and Velickou)*

1913

Lithograph poster

45 x 23 inches



Festival Poster

Lithograph

1926

42 x 27-1/2 inches



The 50th Anniversary of Sokol, July 5, 1922

1922

Poster print

30 x 42-1/2 inches



Exhibition Poster

1915

30 x 53-1/2 inches



Festival Poster

1915

Lithograph, stamped lower right

17-1/2 x 8-1/2 inches



Untitled (Woman holding platter of fruit, from Maratice Uherske Hradiste)

1937

Lithograph

25 x 15 inches



Vystava Slovako

1937 (reprint based on 1915 original)

Lithograph

41 x 24 inches



Exhibition Poster

1996

lithograph

32 x 17 inches



Exhibition Poster

1997

38-1/2 x 26-1/2 inches

Chronology

The following is a version of Helena Musilová's "Biography" in Joža Uprka Evropan slováckého venkova 1861-1940. Národní Galerie v Praze: Prague. 2011.

Published courtesy of the author.

- 1861 Born October 26 in Kněždub, Moravia.
- 1878-1881 Enrolled in elementary schools in Kněždub and Strážnice, followed by secondary education in Olomouc. After meeting Jindřich Bubeníček, a Prague Academy student, he devoted himself to the systematic study of drawing and painting.
- 1881-1884 Studied at the Prague Academy: three semesters under František Čermák, followed by three semesters in courses headed by Antonín Lhota. After disagreements with Professor Lhota (Uprka was dissatisfied with the conservative approach to the art education there) that even cost him his scholarship, Uprka left the Prague Academy.
- 1884-1887 Enrolled in the Munich Art Academy, in the studios of Nikolaus Gysis and Otto Seitz.
- 1885 Co-founded the Czech Škréta academic society.
- During his summer holidays, he met law student František Dostál (who afterwards adopted the pseudonym Otakar Bystřina), who introduced him to members of the Súčov Republic; he made acquaintances with Czech authors and brothers Vilém and Alois Mrštík.
- 1887-1888 Re-entered the Prague Academy (studio of Maximilián Pirner). After completing two semesters, he abandoned his art studies, returning definitively to Moravia.
- 1888 Painted images imbued with a spirit of European Naturalism, with optimistic National Revival undertones For a Feather ("Pro péřečko"), Interrupted Rendez-Vous ("Přerušené dostaveníčko"), etc.
- Created an altarpiece featuring Saint Andrew for the church in Blatnice and the Lenten picture Christ on the Mount of Olives ("Kristus na hoře Olivetské") for St. Martin's Church in Strážnice.
- 1890 Focused on painting large-size genre compositions, such as Examining a Horse at Market ("Zkouška koně na tarmaku").
- 1891 Exhibited several of his works at the Jubilee Industrial Exhibition in Prague Choir Singers ("Literáci na kruchtě"), Fiddler ("Vrzgáč"), Hornácko Musicians ("Hornácké muziky"), Wedding Merry Making ("Svatební veselí"), to name a few.
- 1892 February: Received a grant from the Moravian Land Committee of the Franz Joseph Czech Academy for Science, Literature and the Arts to paint Ride of the Kings; further grants followed in 1894, 1895, and 1896.
- Decorated the meeting room of the Town Hall in Uherské Hradiště with subjects from the city's history.

- Received a government grant to visit Paris.
- Returned from Paris to Moravia.
- Painted his first versions of Pilgrimage to St. Anthony (“Pouť ke sv. Antoníčku”), the final large version dates from 1925. He met the artist Zdenka Braunerová, with whom he struck up a life-long friendship and who gave him substantial support (she organized exhibitions of his works, arranged sales of his paintings, etc.).
- 1894 Granted an Honorable Mention award at the Salon de la Société d’artistes français in Paris for his Pilgrimage to St. Anthony (Les pèlerins slovaques (de Moravie) devant l’église).
- Travelled to Naples, Rome and Venice.
- Focused on paintings social themes Graveler (“Štěrkář”), Sower (“Rozséváč”), Grass Cutter (“Sekáč”), Midday Rest (“Polední odpočinek”).
- 1895 Czecho-Slavonic Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague. Provided with his own “corner” at the art exhibition, in a room with installed interiors from Velká nad Veličkou and Mistrův. William Ritter, a Swiss painter, music and art critic, historian, and a proponent of Czech-French relations, was introduced to Uprka’s work. Ritter wrote a number of articles about the artist in foreign magazines.
- Painted the environs of Kyjov – his later paintings After Church (“Z kostela”), Girls from Svatobořice (“Dívky ze Svatobořic”), etc.
- Met his future wife Anežka Králíková of Svatobořice.
- Awarded the second Annual Gold Medal for his painting Pilgrimage to St. Anthony by the Fourth Division of the Czech Academy.
- December: Josef Klvaňa, an ethnographer, natural scientist, educator, photographer, and traveler, active in southern Moravia, wrote an essay titled Josef Uprka. Several Chapters on the Characteristics of His Art.
- 1896 Painted Women of Velká (“Úvodnice z Velké”) in a style close to Art Nouveau.
- Undertook a study journey through Italy and the Balkans.
- Completed his largest painting Ride of Kings.
- 1897 Exhibition held in the Topičův salon gallery in Prague. The show was accompanied by the entire March issue of Volné směry devoted to Uprka.
- Zdenka Braunerová wrote an article about Uprka for Rozhledy (“Views”) published by Josef Pelcl.
- Exhibition of the artist’s works in the Pavilion in Lužánky, Brno.
- Decorated the interiors of the Vesna building in Brno.

Painted *Beggars and Rolling* (“*Vácování*”) and began work on the paintings *To Austria* (“*Do Rakús*”), *Žarošice Fair* (“*Žarošická pout*”).

Purchased a small piece of land in Hroznová Lhota; as his financial situation steadily improved, he gradually bought up the surrounding land.

February 19: son Jožka was born (died 1913).

Influenced by Viktor Stretti and Eduard Karl, he took up graphic arts. On May 15, he married Anežka.

Exhibited his painting *Ride of Kings* (“*Jízda králů*”) in a group exhibition of Czech and Moravian artists in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, staged as part of a large Austro-Hungarian exhibition.

1900 Completed a watercolor version of *The Slovácko Madonna/Marian Song* (“*Slovácká Madona / Mariánská píseň*”), followed by the first oil-painted version in 1901 (Vienna) and the second one in 1902.

Became a founding member of the Club of Friends of the Arts in Brno.

Article by František Kretz appeared in *Katolická moderna's* magazine *Nový život* (New Life) that analyzed two of Uprka's paintings – *Grass Cutters* (“*Trávnice*”) and *Bagpiper* (“*Gajdoš*”).

May 17: son Jan was born.

Painted three pictures for the newly-built church in Kněždub St. John the Baptist (“*Sv. Jan Křtitel*”), *The Madonna and Child with St. Dominic* (“*P. Marie s Ježíškem a sv. Dominikem*”) and *St. Joseph with the Christ Child* (“*S. Josef s Ježíškem*”), which he donated to the church.

November: Exhibition mounted in the Miethke Salon in Vienna, 52 paintings were accompanied by etchings, the show was repeated at Fritz Gurlitt's Gallery in Berlin.

1901 Led an active social life in Hroznová Lhota – Uprka was visited by music composers Leoš Janáček, Vítězslav Novák and Jaroslav Křička, architect Dušan Jurkovič, and other prominent art figures.

A number of his reproductions appeared in the *Bonnets of Moravian Slovakia* (“*Slovácké čepce*”) album, which was printed by the Unie publishing company, with an introduction by František Kretz.

1902 May 4: The Exhibition of Slovak and Moravian Fine Artists opened in Hodonín; Auguste Rodin traveled with Alfonse Mucha to Moravia for the occasion, visiting Uprka in Hroznová Lhota in the company of Zdenka Braunerová and other prominent artists.

June 18: daughter Božena was born.

1903 Built a small printing studio equipped with printing machines from Vienna.

October 19: son Petr was born (died the next day). Anežka began to show signs of mental disorder.

- 1904 January and February: SVU Mánes staged a comprehensive exhibition of Uprka's works that received high critical acclaim.
Prague's Modern Gallery purchased the artist's replica of Marian Song (the original version was in Vienna).
- 1905 Painted Transporting Eiderdowns ("Vození peřin"), Returning from the Field ("Návrat z pola") and In the Vineyard ("Ve vinohradě), and numerous studies for A Moravian Slovak Wedding ("Ze slovácké svatby").
Designed images in the form of stained-glass windows for the Stations of the Cross (architect Dušan Jurkovič) at the Sv. Hostýn pilgrimage centre. Due to their limited lifespan, one by one the windows were replaced with mosaics based on designs by Jano Köhler.
- 1907 May 5: An exhibition opened in Besední dům in Hodonín, presenting more than thirty Moravian artists; the day before the opening, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne, visited the exhibition and purchased a large format watercolor of After Church. Following discords in the Club of the Friends of the Arts, most artists left the Club, headed by Uprka and Alois Kalvoda, and established the Association of the Moravian Fine Artists (SVUM) in Hodonín; Uprka was elected its first chairman.
Sent his painting Bridegroom ("Ženich", 1906) to the Venice International Exhibition.
- 1908 Engaged in intensive work for SVUM – to a large extent, he determined the direction of the Association's main activities; a decision was made to build the House of Art in Hodonín.
Received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph on the occasion of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the reign of Emperor Francis Joseph I.
- 1909 Discussed preparations for the Pan-Slavic Art Exhibition with the painter Włodzimierz Tetmajer.
- 1910 Painted Winner ("Vítěz"), Ride of Kings in Hroznová Lhota ("Jízda králů v Hroznové Lhotě"), Horse Market in Hodonín ("Tarmark v Hodoníně"), etc.
- 1911 Exhibition in the London Doré Gallery presented Moravia's folk art and works of Moravian artists.
- 1912 June 17: Through a decree he was granted government subsidy of 12,000 Crowns (divided over three years) to depict in paintings the traditional folklore of Moravian Slovakia and its people.
- 1913 May 4: the House of Art was opened (now the Art Gallery) in Hodonín.
Group exhibition of SVUM and Hagenbund from Vienna opened in Hodonín;
Regional Governor Count Otto Serény visited the exhibition.
- 1915-1917 During the war, Uprka mostly stayed home, he was not at the front; throughout the war, he financially supported the Red Cross.

- 1916 The book Šatky a šatků (“Dressed and Scarves”) with eighteen postcard-format color reproductions appeared in print.
- 1920 The books Vázání šatků (“The Tying of Scarves”) with 25 pictures of types of scarves and Kožuchy mužské (“Men’s Fur Coats”) with 30 plates of male figures wearing winter fur coats from various regions of Moravia and Slovakia were published.
- 1921 Exhibition commemorating Uprka’s sixtieth birthday was held at the Hodonín House of Art; the event was accompanied by a special issue of Umělecký list (“Art Journal”).
- 1922 The Ministry of Education and Enlightenment purchased the painting The Corpus Christi Procession in Velká (“Boží tělo ve Velké”, 1912) for 100,000 Crowns.
Purchased a small mansion with a landscaped garden in Klobušice near Ilava in Slovakia, where he lived and worked until the mid-1930s.
Joined the Society of Slovak Fine Artists.
- 1923 Engaged in activities intended to bring together Moravian Slovak and Slovak artists.
- 1924 Visited Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia with František Kretz.
- 1925 Painted his version of Pilgrimage to St. Anthony (titled Festival, the painting was exhibited in various U.S. cities, for example, Pittsburgh, at Carnegie International).
Elected chairman of the Society of Slovak Fine Artists.
- 1926 Began collaboration with the Matice slovenská cultural society and became its member.
- 1927 The book Kožuchy ženské (“Women’s Fur Coats”) with 20 images of female figures wearing winter fur coats appeared in print.
Participated in a collective exhibition of Czechoslovak art in Warsaw.
Received 5,000 Crowns in prize money in a contest for an award granted from the Josef Mánes Fund (administered by the Mánes Fine Artists’ Union).
- 1927-1928 During perhaps the most active period of his life and work in Slovakia, he painted compositions depicting peasants working in the fields, women praying in a church, etc. Indian Summer (“Babí léto”, 1928), Autumn (“Podzim”), 1928, Harrowing (“Vláčení”), 1929.
- 1928 Went on a study trip to Dubrovnik.
An authoritative study by Alois Kolísko was published in Slovenské pohľady (“Slovak Views”).
- 1929 A comprehensive exhibition in Olomouc.
- After 1930 Worked on The Slovak Triptych and The Moravian Triptych, works called by his biographer ‘Uprka’s final prayer and testament’.

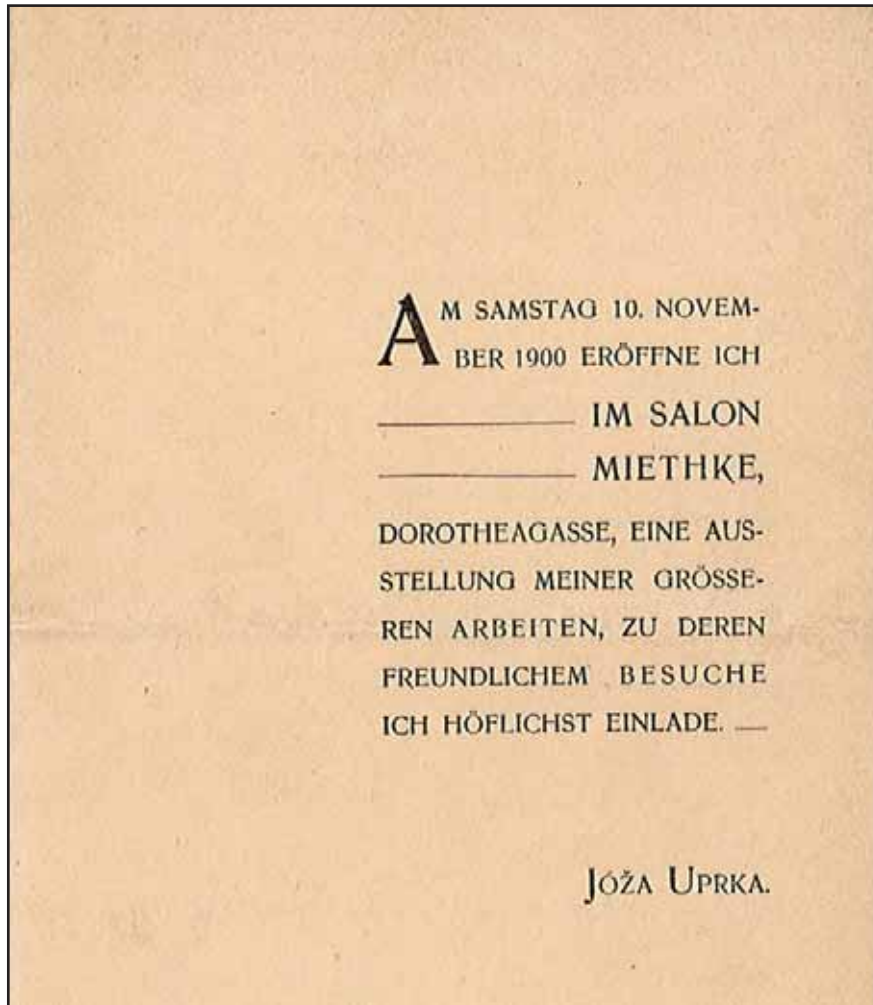
- 1931/1932 Exhibition was mounted at the SVU Myslbek gallery in Prague to commemorate his seventieth birthday.
- 1933 Exhibition in Hroznová Lhota.
- 1935 Entry on Uprka was listed in the Československá vlastivěda (“Czechoslovak National History”) textbook.
- 1936 The Moravian-Slovak Association was established in Hodonín with the goal of safeguarding the ethnographic character of Moravian Slovakia and Wallachia. The Association was later renamed Ethnographic Moravia. Briefly, Joža Uprka headed the organization, a post later held by his son Jan. On March 15, 1939, Jan Uprka and the teacher Josef Vávra issued a declaration in Hroznová Lhota, stating that Moravian Slovaks formed part of the Slovak nation and that the Nazi-supported Slovak State was a sovereign entity. Shortly before his death, Joža Uprka disassociated himself from the activities of Ethnographic Moravia.
- 1937 Returned from Klobušice to Moravia; together with his daughter Božena, he worked intensively on the manuscript of the later-published book Rozhovory s Jožou Uprkou (“Discussions with Joža Uprka”).
- Involved in the preparations of Haleny (“Tunics”) and created several study sketches, but did not have enough time to finalize the book for publication.
- 1940 January 12 5:30 a.m.: died in Hroznová Lhota and was buried in the churchyard in Kněždub. The funeral took place on January 14 and the funeral mass on January 15.





VII. Ephemera

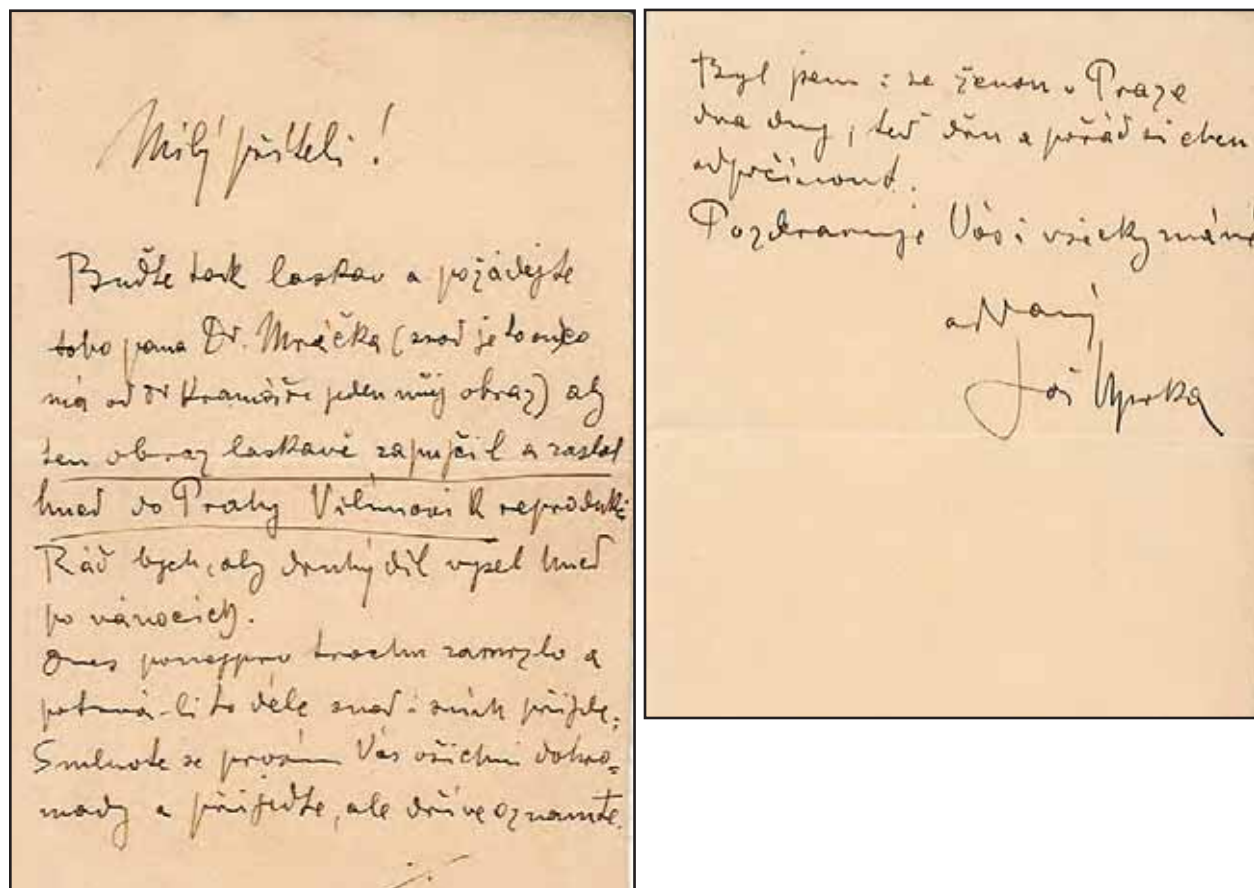
This is an example of Uprka promoting an exhibition of his works in Vienna. Uprka presented his works throughout the Czech Republic and also in the following locations and years: Paris – Salon in 1894; Vienna in 1897, 1900, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1908, 1914; Berlin in 1901; Warsaw in 1927; Krakow in 1902, 1927; Saint Petersburg in 1899; Cologne in 1903; Dusseldorf in 1903; St. Louis in 1904; Augsburg in 1909; Munich in 1905; London in 1906, 1911; Venice in 1907, 1930; Kiev in 1908, 1912; Moscow in 1912 and Amsterdam in 1912.



On Saturday, November 10th, 1900 I am opening in the Miethke Salon, Dorothea Alley, an exhibition of my best work. You are warmly invited to attend.

Joža Uprka

In this letter, Uprka refers to Dr. Kramář, or Karel Kramář, who was the 1st Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. Additionally, the letter refers to Vilém, meaning Vilém Mrstik, who was a writer who was very supportive of Uprka.



Dear Friend!

Please be so kind and ask Dr. Nováček (hopefully it is him who has one of my pictures from Dr. Kramář) to lend the picture to Vilém and send it to Prague as soon as possible for reproduction. I would be glad if the second volume could be published right after Christmas.

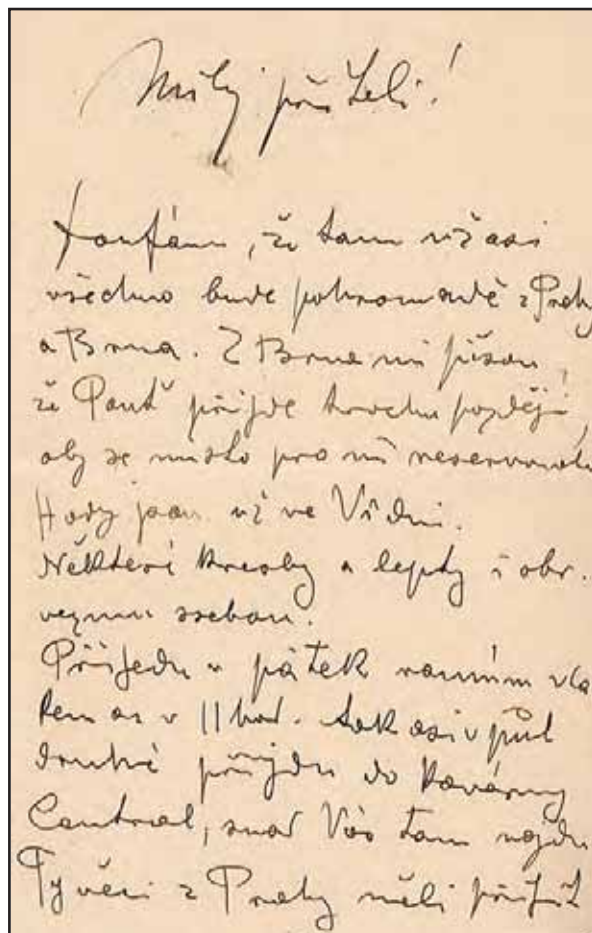
Today was the first day when it was freezing and if it lasts for some time, maybe we will get some snow. Talk with the others about visiting me, but please let me know in advance when you want to come.

I was in Prague with my wife for two days and then for another day, so I want to rest now.

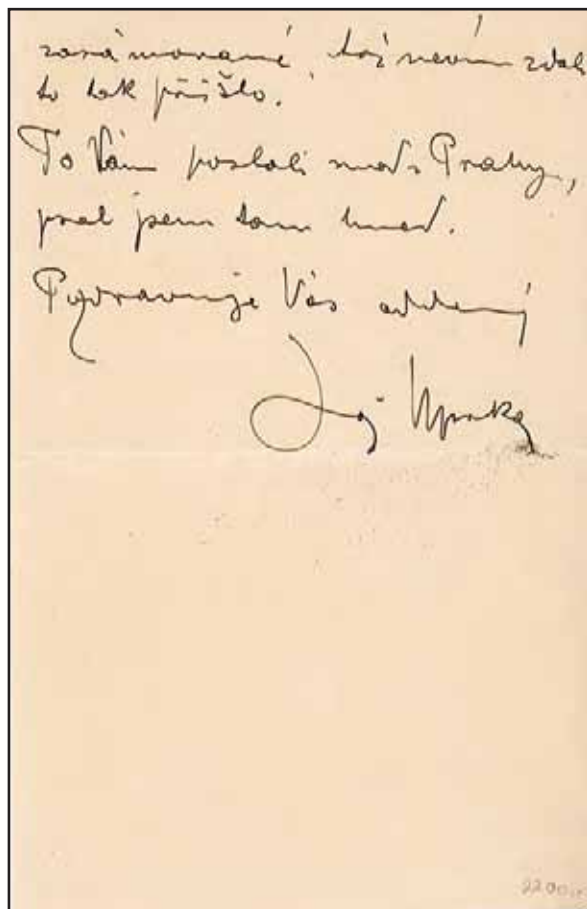
Many greetings to you and all,

Jož Uprka

This is an example of the business side of the artist. He wants make sure he has works available to his publicist/publisher.



Možná pro tebe!
Doufám, že tam všichni
všechno bude pokračovatě z Prahy
a Brna. Z Brna mi píšou,
že Poutí přijde trochu později,
aby se mohl pro mě rezervovat
Hody jsou u nás v úvodu.
Některé kresby a kresby i obr.
vezmu sebou.
Příjedu v pátek ráno v 11
hodin a v 11 hod. budu asi v pří-
stupu přijdu do kavárny
Central, snad Vás tam najdete
Ty věci z Prahy měly být!



zavázání, což měm zále-
to tak přišlo.
To Vám poslal mal. Prahy,
proal jsem tam hned.
Převážně Vás udělám
Jož Uprka

Dear Friend!

I hope that everything will be there together from Prague and Brno. They wrote to me from Brno that 'pout' (a fair/carnival) is going to take place a bit later and that they would reserve a spot for me. 'Hody' (the harvest festival) has already started in Vienna.

I am taking some of the pictures, etches, and pictures with me.

I will arrive on Friday by the first train at 11am, so at about 1:30pm I will come to the Café Central. I hope to see you there.

The things from Prague were supposed to come framed, but I don't know if they arrived framed or not.

I hope they sent them to you from Prague; I wrote them right away.

Yours sincerely,

Joža Uprka

This is an example of correspondence shared with Dr. Eva Novakova, the artist's granddaughter. Drost kept in correspondence and visited her at her flat in Brno, Czech Republic for over a decade, until her death. This letter refers to autographed letter signed by Joza Uprka and to some local personalities of his time. The letter is shown on page 127.

Brno, the 20.november 2008.

Dear Mr.Drost,

thanks to your last letter with one of my grandfather and the invitation to his exposition in the Galerie Miethke in Vienna.

I regret that I cannot give you a positiv answer on your questions, dealing with the names of dr.Mráček and the friend to which the letter was adressed.

Dr.Kramář was the Prime Minister in the early time of our first republic and I haven't the faintest idea what kind of the grandfather's painting he could sell to dr.Mráček, neiser I dont know who this man was, because I haven't any notice of this name in my register.

May be that grandfather's request relates to Vilém Mrštík or prof. Klvaňa, in view to the clause "Smluvte se, prosím Vás všichni dohromady a přijedte" but it makes me wonder, that he used "Vy" by those names.

The loan of the picture was demandet evidently for the second part of the grandfather's monografy, published in 1901 by the editor "Unie" with the introduction of prof.K.B.Madl to the first part and of prof.Klvaňa and Vilém Mrštík to the second part. I dont know which of painting the loan concern,because there are 17 pictures, presented in this edition.

I hope that your cold is better in this time in the contrast to my numerous diseased which trouble me every day.

With best regards

Dr. Mrštíkovi en.

This is an autographed postcard by Joza Uprka's brother, Franta.



This is an autographed postcard by Joza Uprka's brother, Franta.





*Untitled (from St. Anthony's pilgrimage)
Jan Uprka (1900-1975, son of Joza Uprka)*

1969

Watercolor on paper, reproduction

12 x 8-1/2 inches



Untitled (Babi Leto)

Jan Uprka (1900-1975)

1969

Watercolor on paper, reproduction

12 x 8-1/2 inches

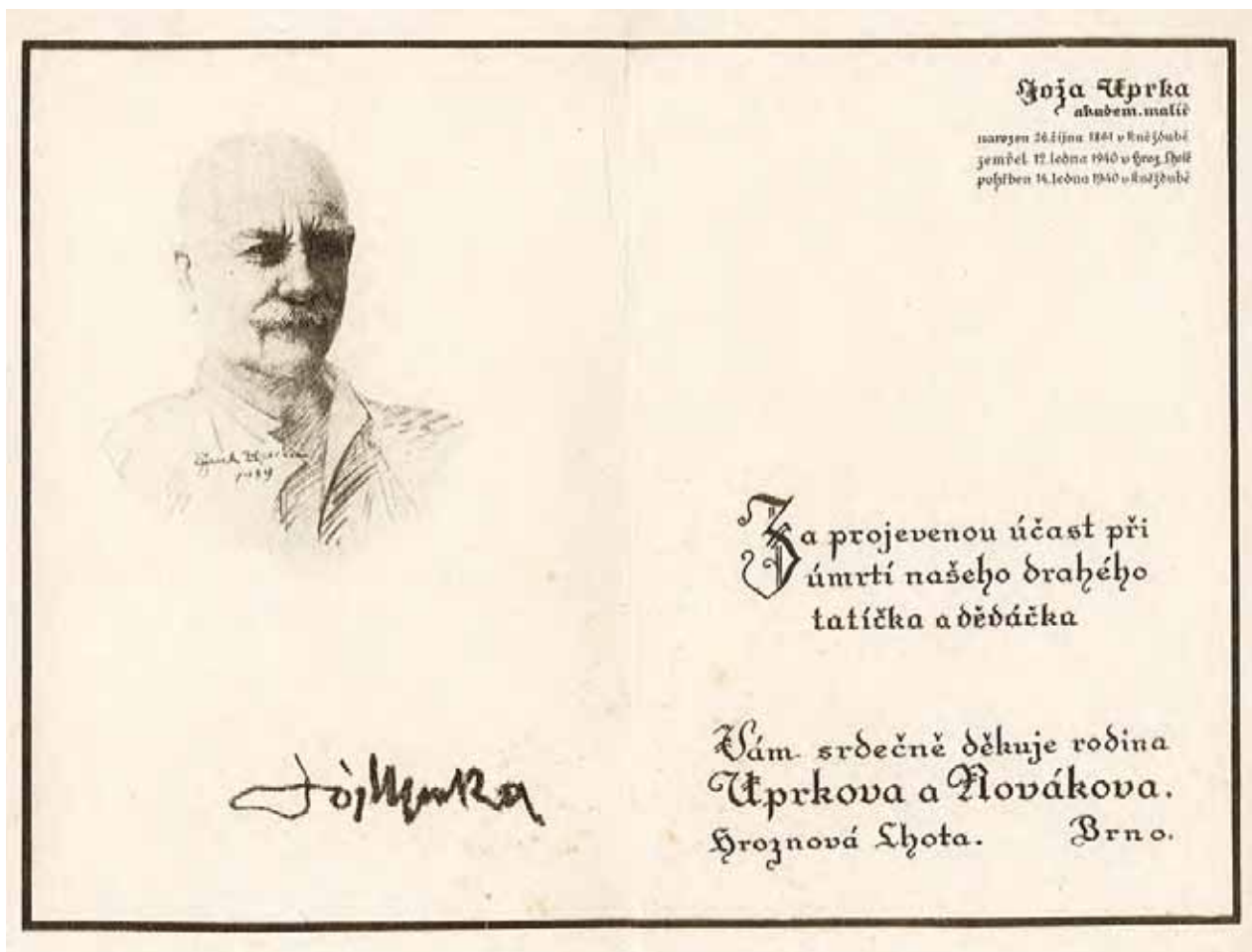
Acknowledgement and Accolades

- Dr. Eva Nováková Died earlier this century, but her connection to her grandfather helped make me a disciple of the works of Joža Uprka. Prior to her death, we corresponded for over a decade and had nice visits from time to time in her flat in Brno. She was a valuable resource and educational tool.
- Dr. Petr Vašát The primary Uprka Art Collector. He was introduced to me by Dr. Eva Nováková as someone that had the most reliable and largest collection of Uprka art work in the world. Petr has been extremely helpful in supplying my collection with many valuable works and has given me confidence and guidance to do more with my passion for Uprka. His crowning achievement was to organize the 150th Birthday Celebration of Uprka in Prague with a 2011 Exhibition at the Waldenstein Riding School gallery and the permanent Uprka Art Exhibition in Uherské Hradiště, which houses one of the world's largest collection of art dedicated to a single artist. A must-see.
- Evžen Škňouřil with whom I have been acquainted for over 25 years. Evžen has been my “man in Prague,” vetting and locating contacts, finding Uprka's art and assisting in the formalities that are associated with purchasing and shipping art.
- Henry Skacel is a Brno attorney who always warmly welcomes me to his home city. He introduced me to Eva Nováková, helped with translations, and helped grow and facilitate my contacts and network in the Czech Republic.
- Gail Naughton The retired CEO of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library who spent numerous nights in our Uprka-filled guestroom! She encouraged me to present my collection in this exhibit.
- Beth Drost And of course, my patient and supportive wife, without whom I would not have been able to collect the works of a true Moravian of International Caliber.
- With love, thank you, Beth!



A sepia photograph of Joza Uprka from 1904.

This death notice of Joza Uprka identifies the Novak and Uprka families and the connection with Brno. His signature on the left-hand side identifies his signing off on the notice of his life.



Joza Uprka
Academic painter
Born on October 26, 1861 in Kněždub
Died on January 12, 1940 in Hroz. Lhota
Buried on January 14, 1940 in Kněždub

*Thank you for your support and showing sympathy at this difficult time
as we remember our dear father and grandpa.*

Uprka's signature

*With sincere appreciation,
families Uprka and Novák*

Credits

Created and edited by Susan Blackman and Jenelle Davis from Art Advisory, Ltd.

Photography: Tom Van Eynde

Translation: Petra Ledererova Maier

Graphic Design: Emily Thornton Calvo

Printed by Lowitz + Sons



