

Jozef Hanula

Reminiscencie



The exhibition project offers the first comprehensive overview of works from the collections of various Slovak galleries and private archives. The project presents works from the artist's most productive creative period within the context of the development of Slovak fine art. These remarkable artworks, featuring authentic elements of Slovak folklore of the period, opened up new directions in Slovak art in which depictions of common people and everyday life came to the fore. The project is based on academic research which builds upon the re-evaluation of the works which feature in the permanent exhibition of Hanula's art at the Gallery of Spiš Artists which are drawn from the Gallery's own collection. The exhibition is presented as part of the *Profiles / Spiš Artists* dramaturgical cycle of exhibitions.

The exhibition approaches the oeuvre of Jozef Hanula through a selection of important works from the collections of several galleries across Slovakia (the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, the Peter Michal Bohúň Gallery in Liptovský Mikuláš, the East Slovak Gallery in Košice, the Central Slovak Gallery in Banská Bystrica, the Ernest Zmeták Art Gallery in Nové Zámky and the Gallery of Spiš Artists in Spišská Nová Ves), from private collections and from the artist's own estate. The collections of these galleries have furnished 72 paintings, drawings, sketches and studies which illustrate the development of Hanula's art over the entirety of his artistic career. The artist's archival estate consists of a further 265 items which predominantly consist of preparatory designs and sketches for murals.

The arrangement of the exhibition interprets the artist's early period in the form of drawings, sketches and his early realist paintings which emphasise the individualisation of the subject. The contrasting radical change in subject matter and the orientation towards the traditions of the Slovak nation are apparent in the large-format oil paintings of rural scenes. The chronological development of the presented works concludes with preparatory drawings for sacral artworks with recurring rustic motifs.

The exhibition titled *Reminiscences* is a homage to the remarkable artistic and educational activities of this Slovak artist. Among the greatest contributions which Jozef Hanula made to the Slovak cultural milieu is his focus on themes from folk genres. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Hanula created a series of works in which formal sophistication was combined with efforts to psychologise portrait depictions and capture period details. Hanula admired folk customs, the songs and dances, the sophistication and variations of kroj, the traditional Slovak folk costume, and these rustic details not only appear in his genre works but were also integrated into his later sacral works.

Mgr. Kamila Paceková – GUS,
exhibition curator



O výstave



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About the artist

Jozef Hanula was born on April 6th 1863 in Tri Sliache (now Liptovské Sliache) region to a family of farmers and folk woodcarvers. He completed his earliest professional studies at the Budapest School of Landscape Painting and Preparatory School for Teachers of Drawing in 1881 and 1882 under Professors Imre Greguss, Bertalan Székely and Karol Lotz, but his studies were interrupted by his military service on Prešov, Košice and Hercegovina from 1882 to 1885. From 1886 to 1889 he continued his studies in Budapest at the Hungarian Royal Institute for Drawing and Teachers of Drawing. He continued his artistic education in Munich, first at the private school of Simon Hollósy (1891) but he also attended the studio of Jaroslav Věšín, and finally from 1892 to 1896 he studied at the Royal Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts under Professors Gabriel von Hackl, Karol Marr and Franz von Defregger. In 1898 he purchased the old manor house of Keresztfalvy in Chrást nad Hornádom where he settled to start a family. As the Bolshevik forces of the Hungarian Republic began to advance into Slovakia in April 1919, he moved permanently to Spišská Nová Ves. He was appointed briefly as a Slovak language teacher at the Real Gymnasium in Žilina, but from April 1919 to August 1932 he taught Slovak language and drawing at the State Burger School in Spišská Nová Ves. In addition to this work, he also collaborated in the publication of the first Slovak newspaper in the Spiš region, "Tatry", of which he was also an editor. From 1920 he was a representative of the Štefánik Circle, the first Slovak association on the territory of Spišská Nová Ves, and he was also a founding member of the Association of Fine Artists in Martin and the long-serving chairman of the Matica Slovenská, a fine arts association. On the occasion of his 75th birthday in 1938, he was awarded the "Štefánik Artistic Prize for the Fine Arts" for lifelong achievement, and in 1941 he was the third artist after Martin Benka and Ludovít Fulla to be awarded the laureate state prize "for lifelong achievement in the field of fine art painting". In 1940, the Matica Slovenská published his autobiography titled "Memoirs of a Slovak Painter". He died on August 22nd 1944 in Spišská Nová Ves where he was also buried.

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"In conclusion, then, we can consider Jozef Hanula's artistic oeuvre as a link in a chain that fluently and historically connects the romantic world or the pietistic world of the painters of 1848 – 1849, Peter Bohúň and Jozef Božetech Klemens, with the world of the new age of Slovak art. Hanula is thus as much their historical successor as the generation of his peers, in the persons and works of Hurban-Vajanský, Hviezdoslav, Kukučín, Škultéty and others, were the successors to the literary and nation-building traditions of the Štur family."

Jozef Cincík, extract from the afterword to *Memoirs of a Slovak Painter*

The exhibition titled REMINISCENCES presents and interprets an overview of the main themes and the chronological development of Hanula's art in a series of seven thematic sections. A comparison of the folk themes and the urban motifs found in Hanula's work draws attention to the artist's abiding interest in the human element which appears in many of his works in different contexts.

The introductory section of the exhibition, titled **Rudimentary Origins**, presents the earliest works in Hanula's oeuvre, a depiction of Bishop Juraj Částka (Ak 95) and a portrait study of a Dominican monk and the Renaissance painter Fra Angelico (Ak 96). These works were a kind of test which the bishop set the young artist in order to assess his drawing skills and decide whether or not to finance Hanula's artistic education. The exhibition space also features a portrait of Jozef Hanula painted by Giorgio Szoldatics during the artist's time in Kaloč and a series of preparatory sketches of nudes from the period of the artist's studies in Budapest (1881 – 1889).

The second room offers the thematic selection titled **Hanula's Studies** which shifts the focus to some of the rich array of sketches and studies from the Gallery's collection which are displayed in a series of cabinets. The central work, a nude study of a seated boy, is an example of the large-format charcoal drawings which form part of the Gallery's permanent exhibition of Hanula's work. The piece dates from the period of the artist's studies in Munich (1892 – 1896). The compositional arrangement of nudes is accompanied by a studio study of a seated male nude in charcoal (K 914, from the collection of the East Slovak Gallery) and an oil painting of a female nude (O 770, from the collection of the Slovak National Gallery) which bears clear traces of impressionism. Hanula's sense for anatomy and its meticulous depiction in painting and drawing is apparent in his plaster model of a male nude. The collection also includes impressive landscape works featuring locations to which Hanula felt a connection, and the thematic section titled **Journeys – Places**, displays interpretations of panoramic landscape paintings on small-scale canvases.

The thematic collection titled **Urban vs. Rural Motifs** offers an overview of the aesthetic shift which was associated with a change in locality – the artist's relocation to the territory of present-day Slovakia (1896). Hanula applied an Art Nouveau symbolism in his portraits from his Munich period which depicted his close friends and figures from the local art scene. The portrait of Fraňo Janček is placed in a dialogue with a plaster cast of the Holy Trinity by Alexander Belopotocký made by Janček himself, a great admirer of Belopotocký's work. While Hanula's Munich period is marked by portraits of an urban character with Art Nouveau influences, his creativity took a different path in the atmospherically rustic environment of Slovakia, with works which draw our attention to the archetypal Slovak villager with his typical attributes of the kroj folk costume, the rural customs and the regional variations which he began to perceive. A selection of works with rural themes are drawn from the collections of the Slovak National Gallery, the P. M. Bohúň Gallery, the East Slovak Gallery and private collections, and they offer a summary of the development and persistence of rustic motifs from 1902 up to 1938 (*Za frajerom*, O 100, replica from around 1910 from the collection of the Slovak National Gallery). The exhibition concept is broadened by numerous commissioned portraits on which he continued to work after his return to his homeland. Selections from the collections of the Gallery of Spiš Artists, the Slovak National Gallery, the East Slovak Gallery and the Central Slovak Gallery in Banská Bystrica offer a heterogeneous overview of the portraiture of Jozef Hanula. The exhibition space is further enriched by an authentic artist's case with surviving art supplies which brings us in touch with the artist's work and resonates with history. The room also features a video presentation that provides visitors with a comprehensive account of the artist's journey.

The final room brings the exhibition to a close with a display of works connected to the 1896 painting *The Death of Tomori at the Battle of Mohács* (**The Story of Tomori**), portraits of children (**Children's Motifs**) and works representing the artist's sacral murals (**Sacral Elements**) which formed a major part of the artist's later work. In numerous studies, preparatory sketches and plaster models, Hanula worked on the theme of large-format paintings whose existence remains unknown even today. A series of works from the collection of the Slovak National Gallery allows us to perceive the passion with which the artist approached the chosen theme. Detailed research into the historical facts and biography of Pál Tomori, studies of weaponry from the period or simulated fights and poses using models: they all testify to the unstinting preparation which we can see reflected in the surviving paintings. The portraits of children follow on from the depictions of urban women with deliberate expressions in which the hint of Art Nouveau motifs can be discerned. Hanula also depicts his subjects as they carried out specific activities, and this motif can also be seen in his rural portraits. Ever since his return to Slovakia, Hanula had been working constantly with sacral themes, and the archival estate at the Gallery of Spiš Artists includes numerous proposals for mural works intended for church interiors on a variety of different themes, to which he added a special character by depicting ordinary people in clothing of the period. Hanula also explored religious themes in large oil paintings which are represented in the exhibition by examples from the collection of the Slovak National Gallery.

The exhibition provides a comprehensive retrospective of the entire career of Jozef Hanula and is a unique showcase of his valuable works which allows us to rank the artist among the precursors of Slovak Modernism.

Mgr. Kamila Paceková – GUS,
exhibition curator



O výstave



About exhibition