

IVAN MEŠTROVIĆ (1883–1962) SCULPTOR AND CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

24. 11. 2022 – 26. 2. 2023

Prague City Gallery

Municipal Library, 2nd floor

Mariánské náměstí 1, Prague 1

Tue–Wed, Fri–Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Thu 10 am – 8 pm

Authors and Exhibition Curators: Barbara Vujanović, Sandra Baborovská

The Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović (1883 Croatia –1962 Indiana, USA), by virtue of his complex oeuvre and career, left an indelible mark on the international art scene. Firmly rooted in the Classical and Mediterranean traditions, he also embraced the dominant features of the Vienna Secession, Symbolism, Impressionism, Art Deco, Neoclassicism, late Realism, and the Archaic, always imbuing them with a recognizable stamp of his own.

During all six decades of his career, his thematic interests – which included a range of religious motifs, figure studies, portraits, and monumental sculptures – found significant affirmation in exhibitions held at home and abroad. Meštrović would often deploy his international renown and popularity to introduce the general public to his artistic as well as his political ideals, which – in line with his lived experience – were subject to change. For example, Meštrović's association with the Masaryk family provided an opportunity to voice his disagreement with the regime of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the founding of which he himself played a part in.

Meštrović developed an exceptionally rich web of connections with his contemporaries, wherein his acquaintance with many Czechoslovak artists and politicians was particularly salient. He was related to Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in opinion and participation in the anti-Austrian foreign resistance during the First World War. His close friendship with Bohumil Kafka (1878–1942) gained him an even greater familiarity with Czech culture, with which he had always felt a particular affinity. The two sculptors left behind them a legacy in the form of written correspondence and Meštrović's portrait of Kafka (1908). Their relationship was mutually beneficial, which led to Meštrović becoming a Fellow of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts, and to Kafka being commissioned to design the Jan Žižka Monument (1933).

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Meštrović's fascination with the Futurist painter Růžena Zátková (1885–1923), his soulmate throughout the turbulence of the First World War, found reflection in his private life as well as in his work; in particular, the paradigmatic Vestal Virgin (1917) and the Mausoleum of the Račić Family (1920–1922).

The exhibition, among other things, highlights Meštrović's encounters with outstanding figures such as Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), and the way these influenced one another. Furthermore, the relationships were widespread, spanning numerous European and American cities. It is also crucial to remember the exhibitions that defined and then redefined Meštrović's artistic and social position. From 1903, when he first introduced himself to the public in Prague at the collective exhibition of Croatian artists organized by the Mánes Association, to 1933, when an extensive presentation of Meštrović's works was held under the auspices of the Czechoslovak President, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. There, Ivan Meštrović shone as one of the most distinguished European sculptors of his generation.

Through his connection with the Czech lands and other European countries, as well as with North and South America, Meštrović proved himself to be a true citizen of the world. And yet, despite all the versatility and breadth of these crosscurrents, it is still necessary to discern the Slavic, Central European cultural and political identity that was genuinely reflected in the continual dialogs he engaged in with Czech politicians and artists, whom he deeply respected – and love.

The exhibition offers a new critical assessment of Ivan Meštrović's work in a Central European context. His last major comprehensive exhibition in the Czech lands took place in 1970, eight years after the sculptor's death, at what was then the Regional Gallery Olomouc and at the Waldstein Riding School in Prague. It was a travelling exhibition that began its journey at the Musée Rodin in Paris in 1969. The current Prague retrospective exhibition will put on display Meštrović's work from the Austro-Hungarian Empire era to the end of World War II. It is conceived as a map of Europe, within which Meštrović used to exhibit and create his works (Prague, Vienna, Paris, London, Rome, Zagreb, Belgrade, Split, Cavtat...). In addition to Europe, Meštrović worked also in the United States.

The architecture of exhibitions, which mostly serves as a support, now transcends into inclusive structures based on the specific exhibition space located on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Library. Dominik Lang becomes a kind of "guide" through the environment and also through the layers of the past (Meštrović as a sculptor in motion) and the present (Anna Fiedler's artistic interventions, the living images of the Education Department). The audio component is the responsibility of the Kinetikon association which dramatised and

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had professional actors read the letters Meštrović (Kryštof Krhovják) exchanged with Růžena Zátková (Marie Švestková), Bohumil Kafka and Auguste Rodin (Přemysl Rut).

Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962) exhibition project. Sculptor and Citizen of the World presents the artist's work from the collections of the Ivan Meštrović museums in Zagreb and Split, the Serbian National Museum in Belgrade and the National Gallery in Prague in the context of the work of the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (Musée Rodin in Paris). Meštrović's work has been complemented by works made by Czech sculptors from the collections of the National Gallery Prague and the Prague City Gallery (František Bílek, Jaroslav Horejc, Jan Štursa, Ladislav Kofránek, Josef Mařatka and Bohumil Kafka) and the Austrian sculptor of Czech origin Anton Hanak (Moravian Gallery in Brno).

The exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive publication of the same name (Sandra Baborovská, Ondřej Vojtěchovský, Barbara Vujanović (eds.)), which summarises Meštrović's work. The monograph, contributed by ten Czech and foreign authors, experts in the fields of art history and history, deals with various aspects of the artistic and political life of Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962). It focuses on the context of the development of sculpture during Meštrović's artistic maturation, especially during his studies in Vienna and the time he spent in Paris under the influence of Auguste Rodin. It also focuses on the political framework of Meštrović's work which shaped the visual form of the national and state ideology of the former Yugoslavia. Chapters on Meštrović's links to the Czech environment and on Czech reflection on Meštrović's work provide revealing insights. The authors unanimously point to Meštrović's efforts to express, through particular national and religious motives, his views on general human topics and universal humanistic values. At the same time, they present Meštrović as a highly successful international artist breaking down the barriers between the supposed centres and peripheries of world art. The book is the most extensive scholarly publication devoted to this important sculptor in the Czech language to date. It brings together a number of previously unpublished images, especially photographs of Meštrović's sculptures by the Czech photographer Josef Sudek. All texts are both in Czech and English. The book also includes a biographical chronology, reprints of texts on Meštrović by leading Czech art critics of the first half of the 20th century and a selected bibliography focusing on Czech books and essays on Meštrović. The book is published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name organized at the Prague City Gallery in cooperation with the Museums of Ivan Meštrović in Split and Zagreb.

Sandra Baborovská



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, protects and professionally processes art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the Prague City Gallery exhibits at seven venues: The Stone Bell House, Municipal Library – 2nd floor, Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, The House of Photography, Villa Bílek, Troja Château and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

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Authors and Exhibition Curators: Barbara Vujanović, Sandra Baborovská

Expert supervisor: Ondřej Vojtěchovský

Architecture Design: Dominik Lang

Graphic Design: Robert V. Novák

The exhibition was created in collaboration with the Ivan Meštrović Museums (Muzeji Ivana Meštrovića).

The exhibition is held under the auspices of the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic, Mgr. Martin Baxa, and the Minister of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia, Dr. Nina Obuljen Koržinek.

The exhibition and the accompanying monograph of the same name, Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962). Sculptor and Citizen of the World was supported by a grant provided by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

Media partners: Art&Antiques, ArtMap, Artalk, Flash Art, A2, Artiki, Revolver Revue, Artyčok.tv, protisedi.cz, Radio 1, Český rozhlas Radio Wave, Fotograf

Entrance fee: CZK 150 full (adults) / CZK 60 discounted (students) / CZK 20 seniors

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ACCOMPANYING PROGRAMME

Wed 30 November 2022, 6 p.m.

Guided tour of the exhibition with Prague City Gallery curator and co-author of the exhibition, Sandra Baborovská, and historian Ondřej Vojtěchovský.

Thu 12 January 2023, 6 p.m.

Lecture given by Ondřej Vojtěchovský: Ivan Meštrović in the context of 20th-century history.

The sculptor Ivan Meštrović was not only an artist but also a politically engaged figure. His art was always closely linked to his worldview and political views. In his youth, he was intensively involved in the movement for South Slavic national unity and, during the First World War, in exile, he advocated the establishment of a unified South Slavic state. In the inter-war period, he provided his work for promoting Yugoslavia abroad and shaped the state ideology through artistic means. Although he maintained a close relationship with the royal court, he was critical of the political situation in the country. After the outbreak of the Second World War, his critical view of Yugoslavia and the possibility of the co-existence of Croats and Serbs in one state deepened. The lecture will discuss his activities and the development of his views, even after he left for the United States, where he spent the final years of his life in emigration.

Thu 2 February 2023, 6 p.m.

Markéta Ježková: Masaryk and Artists

The first Czechoslovak President, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, considered fine arts a significant part of life and state representation. We will introduce the artists who portrayed Masaryk and his personal preferences.

Ivan Meštrović portrayed Masaryk at the Lánya Château in 1923, and photographs from this event appeared in several magazines. Exactly ten years later, a collective exhibition of Meštrović's work was held in the Queen Anne's Summer Palace (Belve-dere) at Prague Hradčany under the auspices of President Masaryk.

Thu 16 February 2023, 6 p.m.

Lecture given by Alena Pomajzlová on Růžena Zátková and her friendship with Ivan Meštrović

What started her friendship with Ivan Meštrović, the events surrounding her portrait, and other turning points in her life and work. Ivan Meštrović created a sculptural portrait of the Czech painter Růžena Zátková in 1912 during his stay in Rome. He considered Zátková his muse at the time and incorporated her stylized form into several other sculptures.

Thu 26 February 2023, 4 p.m.

Guided tour of the exhibition with the Ivan Meštrović Museum curator and the exhibition's co-author, Barbara Vujanovič (in English)

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Saturday art workshops

Sat 21 January 2023, 1–6:00 p.m.

From Sketch to Object and Sculpture

Prague City Gallery Education Center

The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sat 18 February 2023, 1–6:00 p.m.

Experimental Map – In the Sculptor's Footsteps

Prague City Gallery Education Center

The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Art studio for adults and seniors

Sun 22 January 2023, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Study Drawing: Portrait I

Prague City Gallery Education Center

The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 22 January 2023, 3–6:00 p.m.

Study Drawing: Portrait II

Prague City Gallery Education Center

The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 29 January 2023, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Study Drawing: Portrait III

Prague City Gallery Education Center

The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

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Sun 29 January 2023, 3–6:00 p.m.

Study Drawing: Portrait IV

Prague City Gallery Education Center
The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Thu 19 January 2023, 3–6:00 p.m.

Features of the Art Nouveau Style I

Prague City Gallery Education Center
The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Fri 20 January 2023, 3–6:00 p.m.

Features of the Art Nouveau Style II

Prague City Gallery Education Center
The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Thu 26 January 2023, 3–6:00 p.m.

Features of the Art Nouveau Style III

Prague City Gallery Education Center
The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 12 February 2023, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Figure in Sculptural Form I

Prague City Gallery Education Center
The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

Sun 12 February 2023, 3–6:00 p.m.

Figure in Sculptural Form II

Prague City Gallery Education Center
The Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace

We organize **interactive tours of the exhibition, aimed at all types of schools and other age and interest groups**. The participants can subsequently express their experience in creating their authentic artwork. We flexibly adapt the events in terms of time, subject, and difficulty level to the specific requirements of the individual schools and groups.

Booking required. Please contact us on the e-mail address edukace@ghmp.cz.



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