

Maximilian Vanka

Date of Birth: 1889

Place of Birth: Zagreb, Croatia

Date of Death: 1963 (Age 74)

Place of Death: Mexico

Discipline: Painter, Muralist

Biography: Painter Maximilian Vanka was celebrated as the finest Yugoslavian portraitist in the 1920's and 1930's. He exhibited throughout Europe, receiving such honors as the 'Palme Academique' of the French Legion of Honor, before moving to the United States in 1934.

Although his first New York shows were not well received, Vanka gained American recognition in 1937, when he was commissioned to paint two sets of eleven murals for the St. Nicholas Church of Millvale, Pennsylvania. Noted as some of the finest examples of church murals in the United States, the strongly anti-war images depict not only traditional Catholic scenes and symbols, but also scenes showing the lives and spirituality of the Croatian immigrant community in the small mining town.

After completing the second set of murals in 1941, Vanka moved to Rushland, Bucks County, with his family. There he continued to work, exhibiting only rarely, and teaching Art Appreciation at the National Agricultural College outside of Doylestown. He established the art department at Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture in New Britain, Pennsylvania. After his death in 1963, a bird sanctuary was established in his honor at the Washington Crossing Nature Education Center.

Artwork:

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