



MUNICIPAL GALLERY „HASIČSKÝ DŮM“



Jan Křen / What is the world made of?

The exhibition of paintings on the 100th anniversary of the artist's birth

Jan Křen (10 September 1923 - 10 April 1998) was born as the eldest son of a medium-sized farmer in Mysliboř (a village located four kilometres north of Telč).

At first, he attended a five-grade municipal school in Mysliboř, then a grammar school in Telč. He studied quite readily, however he refused to distinguish I from Y (Czech grammatical principle affects the orthography). Therefore, he left the grammar school at the age of 14 and started working at his father's farm. Jan Křen drew and painted since his childhood, initially influenced by Mikoláš Aleš (famous Czech artist).

He was interested in philosophy and natural sciences – especially physics. He was also an inventor and improver and worked on experiments with plant crossbreeding, feeding cattle with water plants, he also collected minerals. During the second world war he spent a few months in Austria doing compulsory work. He got married to Božena Lukšů in 1951 and they had four sons. In 1956 he was forced to join the JZD (Agricultural Cooperative in the era of socialism). At first, he worked as a zootechnician and later he became an ordinary agricultural worker. He organised exhibitions of paintings, discussions and lectures on art, philosophy, theoretical physics, biology, ecology and mineralogy in the community centre in Mysliboř.

He obtained scientific information mainly from the popular-scientific journals Vesmír and ŽIVA, and after his acquaintance with Prof. Šmarda, also from the journal Universitas (published by the University of J. E. Purkyně in Brno). Together with art teachers Václav Ondráček, Jan Urbanec and Josef Závodský he formed an art group called “MT” (Mysliboř - Telč). In the 1990s, after the “velvet revolution”, he was helping his youngest son to run a private farm. He wrote memoirs, philosophical reflections and kept an extensive correspondence.

Jan Křen created approximately one thousand oil paintings on hardboard during his life. He made his paintings for philosophical reasons, not for aesthetical ones. As a result, a unique painting and philosophical piece of work, combining folk art with reflections on the origin and functioning of the universe and humanity's position in it, was created. There is also poetry and peculiar humour glossing the life of rural society in the era of real socialism. His paintings were on display in the Tower of the former church of Holy Spirit in Telč between 1998 and 2017.

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