

## Colourful World: Alphonse Mucha, František Kupka, Josef Šíma

**Three Czech painters, almost contemporaries, influenced by sweet France. Three similar fates, three different artistic styles and now highly appreciated works that break records in auction houses. Who are these three men who, despite coming from small Bohemian and Moravian country towns, successfully amazed the whole world?**

### Alphonse Mucha

Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) was one of the most remarkable personalities of Czech and world art at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Thanks to his versatile talent he was able to work in a wide range of artistic disciplines but the whole world knows him as the co-creator of the Art Nouveau style and a designer of famous graphic prints and posters. On 24 July 2003, the 143rd anniversary of the artist's birth, a [permanent exhibition](#) was opened in the former town hall in the South Moravian town of [Ivančice](#), mapping his birth and works.

Although Mucha lived for a long time in Paris and the USA, Ivančice always remained in his heart. He made a poster for a local landscape exhibition, illustrated the title page of the town's chronicle, and his hometown, with a typical silhouette of the local church tower, is even depicted in one of the [Slav Epic](#) canvases. Some of Mucha's paintings are exhibited in the [National Gallery](#) in Prague and others in the Moravský Krumlov chateau, only a short distance from Ivančice. Mucha started working on his monumental series in 1910 at the [Zbiroh chateau](#) and finished it 18 years later, in 1928.

The artist also made the first Czechoslovak stamp, took part in the decorating work in [St. Vitus Cathedral](#) at Prague Castle, Mayor Hall of the [Municipal House](#) in Prague as well as the Paris underground, for example.

The works by the famous painter are very well documented in the [Mucha Museum](#), located in the baroque Kaunic Palace in Prague's New Town. Apart from hundreds of oil paintings, drawings, pastels, sculptures, photos and personal belongings from the family collection, the exhibition also includes famous posters created for Sarah Bernhardt, the legendary Parisian actress from the end of the 19th century. A demonstrative installation of Mucha's studio, with his original furniture, is also worth your attention.

From 5 May you can visit the [Art Gallery in Ostrava](#), located in the "Dům umění" (Art House), that displays a series of exhibitions of Mucha's works from his beginnings up to his late works on the occasion of last year's 150th anniversary of Mucha's birth.

### František Kupka

František Kupka (1871-1957), a Czech painter and graphic artist of world-wide renown, became co-founder of the modern abstract art movement, the so called pure abstraction. He was born in Opočná in East Bohemia and spent his youth in nearby Dobruška. After graduating from the Prague Art Academy he stayed shortly in Vienna, later moving to Paris. In France, where he spent most of his life, he worked as a draughtsman, caricaturist and an illustrator.

His paintings are in great demand in Czech as well as world auction galleries and have lately broken auction records. One of the examples can be Kupka's oil painting called "Élévation IV" which was auctioned off in October 2007 in the Prague Žofín Palace for 22.1 million crowns (EUR 884,000). Two years later, the painting called "[En Dégradés \(Verticales\)](#)" was auctioned off for 22 mil. crowns (EUR 880,000).

Kupka's works are exhibited in leading world galleries, such as the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Musée d'Orsay in Paris and the [National Gallery](#) in Prague. The largest collection of his works is the crown jewel of the European art permanent exhibition in the [Museum Kampa](#), located in Sovovy mlýny at Kampa in Prague.

Kupka's first works are displayed in the [Museum of National History in Dobruška](#).

### Josef Šíma

Josef Šíma (1891-1971), born in the East Bohemian town of Jaroměř, also spent a large part of his life in France and is sometimes even considered as a French painter. He studied at the University of Applied Arts in Prague in Jan Preisler's studio, linking his paintings, full of classical mythology, mystery and symbolism to the works by his teacher.

Together with Toyen and Jindřich Štyrský, he ranked among leading Czech surrealists. His work reflects Poetism, Symbolism and other art movements of that time. Šíma's painting called "Theseus' Return", created in 1933 and shrouded in mystery, is part of the collections of the [City of Prague Gallery](#) and was included in the exposition at the [Golden Ring House](#) in the period 2006/2007.

An exhibition of a set of Šíma's graphic prints called "Paris" will take place from the end of September until the end of December this year in the Modern Art Gallery in the town of Hradec Králové. Visitors will be able to see some of his top works inspired by poetic texts of poets and writers of his time.

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