František Xaver Harlas

František Xaver Harlas (1865–1947) was a Prague-based art historian, but also painter, prolific publicist, and director of the Museum of Prague, with which he remained deeply connected throughout his life. From 1890 to 1894, he studied history of art at the German Charles-Ferdinand University in Prague, where his professors included Otakar Hostinský. In 1898, he graduated with a doctorate in philosophy. Alongside his studies of the theory of art, he also received training in painting at the School of Applied Arts in Prague under František Ženíšek and Jakub Schikaneder, and he took private lessons with Charlotte Mohr-Piepenhagen. From 1897, he worked as an assistant at the Museum of Prague, and from 1913 to 1930, he served as its director. Harlas was a founding member of the Circle for the Advancement of Art History and served as its vice-chair from 1915 to 1933. From 1911, he was an art correspondent for the *Národní politika* newspaper and also contributed to numerous other periodicals (*Hlas národa*, *Politik*, *Rozhledy*, *Osvěta*, *Světozor*, *Zvon*, *Dílo*, *Český svět*, and others). He also collaborated on entries for *Otto's Encyclopedia*. He was the editor of the reproduction series *Obrazárna Zvonu* (1918–1923), which included the work of painter Jan Vochoč, with whom Harlas shared a close friendship – he followed Vochoč's artistic career closely and maintained a regular personal correspondence with him. As a painter, Harlas focused on landscape painting (a representative exhibition of his work was held in 1943). While the philosophical roots of his worldview lay primarily in Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, he also shared the positivist belief in the continuous and ever more refined understanding of nature through art – an endeavour in which science could play a meaningful role. His articles focused primarily on Prague-related topics (*pragensia*). He authored numerous books and monographs on art.