Studio in the Tower Above Prague

The painting ***St. Nicholas Tower*** (oil on canvas, 190 × 142.5 cm), which became part of Vochoč's legacy to the Karásek Gallery, is closely linked to the painter's life story. The painting was created in 1910, and the dial of the tower clock of the church belfry marks the time of birth of the painter's son Martin. A detail of the Baroque belfry, seen from immediate proximity with its typical verdigris patina, was painted from the gallery of the dome of St. Nicholas Church in Prague's Malá Strana – an exceptional Baroque opus by Christoph Dientzenhofer and his son Kilian Ignaz, though completed only in 1752 by Anselmo Lurago. The focus is on the spire's finial with its motif of rays radiating from a gilded sphere. Before the exhibition, the painting was not in the best condition and therefore underwent professional restoration, primarily the removal of mould, excessive later deposits, and overall cleaning, carried out by restorer MgA. Denisa Cirmaciová, Ph.D., from the Academy of Fine Arts.

The slender four-storey tower, originally planned as a watchtower with more than two hundred steps, has its own entrance on the south façade from Malostranské náměstí and is now open to the public. The tower has a complex design – its individual storeys are based on a superposition of classical orders and progressively smaller, shifting floor plans, featuring concave curvature and intricately structured corners. The structure culminates in a clock and a metal roof crafted with complex tinsmithing, adorned with trefoil windows and ornamental vases. On the floor above the bell named Mikuláš ("Nicholas"), cast in 1576 and now the only one remaining of the original five – having survived not only wartime requisitions but also the major fire that struck the belfry in 1925 – there was, until 1891, an apartment for the town watchman, whose duties included promptly reporting any nearby fires, as well as daily winding, oiling, and cleaning of the mechanical clockwork mechanism, which has since been replaced by an electric one. An interesting detail in the lower right corner of the painting is the depiction of František Křižík's electric tram, which, at the time when Vochoč had a studio in the St. Nicholas Tower, even ran across Charles Bridge.

During his regular returns from Paris after 1905 until his death, Vochoč painted a variety of panoramas of Prague from this studio, focusing especially on the rooftops of Malá Strana, rendered in a pointillist manner. It is also interesting that after 1925, the tower's premises served as a municipal rental flat, which was later used by the communist regime between 1964 and 1990 as an observation post for the State Security.