Jaroslav Věšín

Jaroslav Věšín (1860 Vraný – 1915 Sofia, Bulgaria) was a Czech-Bulgarian painter, professor, and founder of a painting school in Sofia, which played a key role in the development of Bulgarian art. From 1876 to 1881, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague under Antonín Lhota and visiting Flemish professor Jan Swerts. He then left for Munich, where he was first a private student of Polish painter Józef Brandt, and later of professors Karl von Piloty and Otto Seitz at the local art academy. In 1884, Věšín moved to Slovakia and held a private exhibition of his work in Turčiansky Svätý Martin in 1887. He returned to Munich in 1889 and, in 1891, exhibited at the General Land Centennial Exhibition in Prague. In 1897, he settled in Bulgaria, having accepted a professorship at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia, which he co-founded. In 1904, he became a state employee of the Bulgarian Ministry of War, commissioned to artistically document military campaigns. Alongside military scenes, he also painted moments from everyday life, hunting scenes, and his beloved horses. During the First Balkan War (1912–1913), he served as a military painter with the rank of colonel. Stylistically, Věšín's work belongs to the realist tradition of the 1880s generation, which saw a renewed interest in rural life and ethnographic themes. In Bulgaria, he both captured the distinct ethnographic character of village life and served as a kind of visual chronicler of the Bulgarian army's campaigns in the turbulent early years of the 20th century.