Emil Holárek

Emil Holárek (1867–1919) was known as an academic painter, graphic artist, and illustrator. His extraordinary talent was recognised early on by the headmaster of the school in Louny that he attended, who once confiscated a sketchbook filled with masterfully drawn cityscapes during a maths lesson. Thanks to a scholarship from his hometown, Holárek studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague from 1882, then spent six years refining his skills in Munich (1884–1890), where he was also an active member of the Škréta association. He also studied briefly in Rome. Soon after completing his studies, Holárek – together with Max Švabinský (1873–1962) and Mikoláš Aleš (1852–1913) – was commissioned to decorate the meeting hall of Prague's Živnobanka bank, a project that brought him wider recognition. His work was shaped by the influence of German Symbolists. Particularly acclaimed is his 1906 drawing series *War*, which reflects on Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. In 1916, at nearly fifty years old, Holárek was drafted into military service in Chomutov. During his time in the Austro-Hungarian army, he received several decorations, but the recognition cost him nearly all his friends. He returned from service in fragile health and died shortly after the founding of Czechoslovakia.