Karel Vítězslav Mašek

Karel Vítězslav Mašek (1865–1927) was a painter, architect, illustrator, and university professor. His artistic approach was rooted in Symbolism and Art Nouveau. At one time, he enjoyed fame comparable to that of Alphonse Mucha. After preparatory studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, he moved to Munich, where he studied at the local academy from 1884 to 1886 under Johann Caspar Herterich, Sándor (Alexander) von Wagner, and Gabriel von Max, a native of Prague. He was also active in the Škréta association of Czech and other Slavic students in Munich. In the early phase of his career, Mašek was drawn to ethnographic themes, inspired by his travels through the Domažlice region and Slovakia. In 1887, he went to Paris with Alphonse Mucha and František Dvořák to study at the Académie Julian, where he became acquainted with the technique of Pointillism (which also appealed to Jan Vochoč), later applying it in some of his works. He returned to Prague in 1888 and became a member of the *Krasoumná jednota* (Fine Arts Association) in 1890. From 1898, he taught decorative painting at the School of Applied Arts in Prague. Mašek also worked in architecture and urban planning. In 1901, he designed his own villa, including the interior. His later work developed largely in a decorative direction, as seen in his series of theatre curtains in Kolín, Plzeň, Náchod, and Turčiansky Svätý Martin. Among his better-known paintings is the monumental *Massacre of the Saxons at Hrubá Skála* (1895), a collaboration created under the direction of Mikoláš Aleš and now housed in the Museum of the Bohemian Paradise in Turnov. A significant part of Mašek's oeuvre was lost in the rubble of a building destroyed during an air raid on Prague in February 1945.