**Hofman, Vlastislav (1884-1964)**

Vlastislav Hofman was an architect, graphic artist, and stage designer who gave shape to Czech cubist architecture and avant-garde stage design. In his early career he was known for his drawings, linocuts, and woodcuts of mostly unrealized architectural projects, inspired by both Parisian Cubism and the historical building traditions of Czech baroque and gothic architecture. He subsequently gained prominence as a designer for the theatre in interwar Czechoslovakia.

Born in the town of Jičín, Hofman studied architecture at the Czech Technical University in Prague, where he became close to the architects Josef Chochol, Josef Gočár, and Pavel Janák, who together formed the nucleus of the Czech Cubist circle. Together with them, Hofman was active in the Group of Fine Artists (*Skupina výtvarných umělců*), and he later joined the Czech group that famously called itself the Obstinates (Tvrdošíjní). Both associations were local strongholds of Cubism, and provided Hofman with a venue for exhibiting and publishing his artwork and writing, which regularly appeared in the magazine of the Group of Fine Artists, the *Art Monthly* (*Umělecký měsíčník*). Hofman also simultaneously published with the German expressionist magazine *Der Sturm* in Berlin, where he was a prominent contributor.

In contrast to his contemporaries Chochol, Gočár, and Janák, Hofman realized relatively few built projects. He instead spent much of his career quietly employed as a municipal architect working for the Prague city government, where he eventually became chief building inspector. His best remembered built project is his design for the entrance wall and gate for Prague’s Ďáblice Cemetery (1912-15). Like Chochol, Gočár, and Janák, Hofman also excelled at the design of furniture. He exhibited some of his designs at the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris, where he was awarded a gold medal.

Hofman became increasingly involved in the theatre after the formation of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. He was the main stage designer in Prague for the Vinohrady Theatre and the Czech National Theatre, and worked closely at both institutions with the director Karel Hugo Hilar. He produced stage and costume designs for productions of works by Henrik Ibsen, William Shakespeare, Richard Wagner and others, and for Czech avant-garde playwrights such as Jan Bartoš, Emil František Burian, Karel Čapek, and Stanislav Lom. Hofman notably worked on stagings of Čapek’s play *R.U.R.* (*Rossum’s Universal Robots*), best remembered today for introducing the word “robot” to international usage. Hofman’s career in the theatre extended into the communist era of the late 1940s. He later worked as an art director and costume designer for political films that included *Anna the Proletarian* (Anna Proletářka) (1952), a historical drama by Karel Steklý based on the novel by Czech author Ivan Olbracht.

**References and Further Reading**

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**Illustration Caption**

Vlastislav Hofman, study for the entrance to Ďáblice Cemetery, Prague. Linocut in *Der Sturm* 5:3 (May 1914). Digital file by the Blue Mountain Project, Princeton University Library.

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