

= Happy Brothers =

Happy Brothers , Their Poor Mother ! (often referred to simply as Happy Brothers) is an 1887 oil painting by the Serbian artist Uroš Predić . It shows four intoxicated youths walking through their village whilst the mother of one shouts her disapproval from the distance . The painting is said to have been inspired by a frequent sight in Predić 's home village of Orlovat ? that of drunken youths returning from the pub at dawn . Predić painted the composition hoping it would persuade the villagers to change their ways . He was disappointed that it not only failed to decrease the incidence of drunkenness in Orlovat , but was well received by the villagers themselves , who were happy merely to have been depicted .

One art historian suggests the painting was influenced by the works of Rosa Bonheur and Gustave Courbet , while another believes it was informed by those of the satirists William Hogarth and Honoré Daumier . The painting 's humorous content contributed to its popularity among critics , collectors and the public at large , which led to Predić painting two replicas in 1918 and 1922 . By 1890 , the original was owned by the National Museum of Serbia , in whose possession it remains .

= = Background = =

Uroš Predić (1857 ? 1953) was one of the most successful 19th- and 20th @-@ century Serbian realists . A native of Orlovat , a village in the Banat region of Austria @-@ Hungary , Predić drew scenes of life in the village throughout his career . One of the more frequent sights during his stays there was of intoxicated young men returning from the pub at dawn and waking up the whole village . In painting the composition , Predić was not only attempting to realistically depict contemporary village life but also to convey a message . " I observed this every day " , he explained . " I said to myself there must be some way of telling these people to what an unhappy level they have descended and have a moral impact on them , capturing all the bad habits of my compatriots . " Predić had expressed disapproval of the villagers ' behavior in an earlier work , Clients in Front of a Lawyer 's Door (1886) .

= = Painting = =

= = = Description = = =

Happy Brothers , Their Poor Mother ! , often referred to simply as Happy Brothers , is an oil painting that measures 82 by 122 centimetres (32 by 48 in) . " It is a glimpse into village life in early fall " , Predić explained . " The harvest has been gathered and the pigs slaughtered . The fires have been lit , the spits turned , the drinks dispensed and the celebrations fully under way . The air is filled with the aroma of ... cooking meat ... and the sounds of music and drunken song that disturb the village 's peace . "

According to Predić , the painting shows four intoxicated youths who have been drinking all night walking rowdily through their village around dawn and waking all their neighbours . They trudge down the middle of the dirt road and distance themselves from the surrounding houses so as to avoid crashing against a wall and hurting themselves . The gajda (bagpipe) player ? the most sober of the four ? walks ahead of his friends . The one to the left , the youngest of the group , walks barefoot through the mud and props one of his friends up against his shoulder . The man he is propping up , who is the most intoxicated , paid for the previous night 's drinks and bounces between shoulders for support . The man to his right has just realized that he is walking by his own dilapidated home . His mother , alerted by the young men 's laughter and song , emerges from the house and recognizes her son . She begins shouting at him and says she will spank him once he returns , but the young man simply laughs and sends her an acknowledging wave with his hat . A young girl peaks out the bottom pane of the left window of the house to the far right , wondering if her boyfriend is part of the group . A sign above her reads Szeszf?zde (" distillery " in Hungarian) .

Predi? 's initials in Cyrillic ? ??. ? can be found in the bottom @-@ right corner .

In his notes , Predi? identified the individuals depicted in the painting as " Maks " (the gajda player) , Nikola Boji? (the man waving his hat) and Nikola Mad?arov (the man bobbing between friends) . Predi? described the person to Mad?arov 's right as simply " a young man from Orlovat " .

= = = Analysis = = =

The art historian Lilien Filipovitch @-@ Robinson posits that the painting is informed by the progressive style of French realists such as Rosa Bonheur and Gustave Courbet . She concedes that there is no documentary evidence to suggest Predi? was influenced by Courbet 's depictions of peasant life , but notes that the latter 's work was in the public domain at the time Happy Brothers was created and was quite popular throughout Europe . Filipovitch @-@ Robinson believes that Predi? rejected the precision and linearism of both Academic and Biedermeier art , and , as Courbet would have done , used heavily textured brushstrokes to define the roughness of the muddy road . She also draws parallels between the painting and Courbet 's Peasants of Flagey , which was shown at the Paris Salon of 1850 ? 51 alongside The Stone Breakers and A Burial At Ornans .

The art historian Dejan Medakovi? once suggested that Predi? was imitating the style of satirists William Hogarth and Honoré Daumier . Filipovitch @-@ Robinson writes that if this were so , Predi? 's attempt at emulation was almost certainly unsuccessful . " Perhaps this was due to the inherent limitations of his subject " , she writes , " the fact that the figures are not caricatured and that the painting is devoid of biting or mocking humor " . According to Filipovitch @-@ Robinson , Predi? 's treatment of Balkan rural life differs in a number of ways from that of his contemporary Paja Jovanovi? , who was known for painting similar subjects . Jovanovi? 's paintings were based on careful ethnographic studies of rural costumes and everyday objects , whereas Predi? 's works lack Jovanovi? 's precision , owing to the artist 's tendency not to produce detailed studies of his subjects beforehand . " The images " , Filipovitch @-@ Robinson writes , " are more gestural because of the combination of generous brush strokes and minimal linear definition . This painting also brings Predi? much closer to the more daring experimentations of the Munich School not only because of the textural play of the mud @-@ laden soil against rough peasant garb but in his convincing presentation of the atmosphere of the quiet predawn hours . "

= = Reception and legacy = =

Upon seeing reproductions of the painting , the villagers did not interpret it as a call to change their ways . Instead , they were flattered by Predi? 's decision to depict them . " To local audiences in particular " , Filipovitch @-@ Robinson writes , " such lighthearted didacticism entwined with a familiar and beloved world was immensely satisfying " . It is said that on one of his visits home , Predi? went to the local pub and encountered the patrons examining a calendar with a reproduction of his painting inside it . A number of patrons ? some of whom were included in the composition ? tapped him on the shoulder in drunken stupor and commended him on how accurately he had captured them . What Filipovitch @-@ Robinson calls Predi? 's " well @-@ meaning and subtle moralizing " had thus been rendered ineffectual .

Writing for the Novi Sad @-@ based publication Javor in 1890 , the critic Milan Re?etar ranked the painting among Predi? 's finest works up to that point . The Croatian magazine Vienac offered a positive review of the work , saying it offered a sad look at conditions in the Banat . The magazine praised Predi? as " a true artist ... one who isn 't afraid to use his talent to educate people and nurture the nobler aspects of human nature " . Critics were satisfied with Happy Brothers because it not only offered an instructive narrative but also demonstrated the artist 's technical abilities . Such vignettes of village life contributed greatly to Predi? 's popularity among collectors from the emerging Serbian middle class . Reproductions of the painting met with commercial success , further contributing to its popularity . This led Predi? to paint two replicas , one in 1918 and the other in 1922 . By 1890 , the original was owned by the National Museum of Serbia , in whose possession it remains .

= = = Endnotes = = =