

# Folk art of miners in the collection of the Slovak Mining Museum

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## *Miners' Folk Art in the Collections of Slovak Mining Museum*

The article presents artifacts of folk mining art in the collections of Slovak Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica, such as sculptures of miners in home altars and nativity scenes, models of mines hidden in bottles, or models of the town's architectural landmarks. We can further find there sacral folk oil paintings with mining motifs, or utility objects decorated with mining motifs like wall clocks, plates, jugs, walking sticks. The article also describes the most famous creators of folk mining art, the most used materials and basic production techniques.

Keywords: folk art, miners, votive statues, mines in a bottle, nativity scenes, Jozef Červený

## Home

Mining encouraged the creation of specific values that have their permanent place not only in Slovak, but also in European folk culture. In mining localities, there were long-lasting contacts between ethnic groups. Individual mining centres changed their face depending on historical development, natural conditions, social composition and religiosity. The mining towns were also strongly influenced by the surrounding farming communities and their culture. Periods of mining stagnation forced the search for alternative livelihoods. The products of such secondary occupations (e.g. woodcarving, lace-making) evolved over time into art.

The ethnologist Ester Plicková was mainly devoted to the research of miners' folk art in Slovakia. According to her, miners lived in a dichotomy of two worlds. The world of tunnels and shafts without sun and greenery, where they spent most of the day, and the beautiful living nature around their dwellings. According to E. <sup>1</sup> The renowned ethnologist also pointed to the knowledge of the basic material of the miners' artistic work - wood, with which they came into contact on a daily basis. They also liked to use another familiar material in their works, namely minerals. One can mention galena, pyrite, chalcopyrite, sphalerite, amethyst or citrine.

The miners were predominantly engaged in carving. The figure of the miner and his work became the central motif. Miners were represented in the form of decorative objects, which appeared in their homes in the form of statuettes in domestic altars, as part of models of mines or cribs. Miners initially took up carving as a hobby, but later it became an important supplementary occupation and a solution to the poor social situation of mining families in times of mining stagnation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PLICKOVÁ, Ester. Mining. In: *Hont*. Banská Bystrica : Osveta, 1988, pp. 119-137.

<sup>2</sup> DENKOVÁ, Zuzana. Supplementary occupations of miners in times of mining stagnation (with an accent on

carving production). In: GÉCZYOVÁ, Iveta (ed.): *Domestic production and supplementary occupations in cultural and social contexts (in relation to museum collections)*. Ethnologist and Museum, Vol. XVIII. Prievidza : Hornonitrian Museum, 2014, pp. 78-91.

From the end of the 18th century the strongest centre of miners' carving became the area of Banská Štiavnica.<sup>3</sup> In an effort to encourage folk carving, a carving school was founded in Štiavnické Bany at the end of the 19th century.<sup>4</sup> This state intervention was intended to help miners to engage in secondary gainful employment. Miners (especially mining apprentices) were taught the basics of carving techniques and produced not only art objects, but also everyday objects and toys. On the other hand, the school suppressed individual artistic expression by emphasising the realistic representation of motifs, which led to the gradual levelling out of miners' carving art.<sup>5</sup>

The paper introduces the collection of folk mining art from various localities of the Central Slovak mining area in the collection of the Slovak Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica (SBM): mines in a bottle, moving models of mines, oil paintings, statues of miners, cribs and painted shepherds, which the museum has acquired as part of its acquisitions since the 1920s. The collection of miners' folk art is one of the most important collections in the Slovak and Central European context in terms of its structure and number, and together with the collections of Hungarian, Polish, German, Austrian, Czech and other European museums, it contributes to a deeper knowledge of European mining art. However, a synthesising view of the phenomenon of mining folk art in an international context is lacking.

## Sculptures of miners made of wood

The basic product of the miners' carving work were votive sculptures, which were still in the first



**Fig. 1:** Ján Šulc: *Adoring Auschwitzers*, wood, polychrome, 1st half of the 20th century, Štefultov. Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection

mid-20th century, they were commonly found in house niches, domestic altars, roadside chapels, churches, vaults, or in niches at the portals of adits. The sculptures depicted the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, miners' patrons and other saints. A specific feature of miners' folk art were statues of miners, the so-called adoring Auschwitzers. The Aušusniki created spatial compositions with a saint, whom they followed, holding wooden candlesticks. The miners depicted them especially as illuminators of liturgical rites, because they were remembered as such. In the past, the Aušusnik tradition was an important cultural and historical specificity of the Montagnard localities of Slovakia. The German word *Ausschuss* (committee) indicates that

these were members of the miners' committee, later the brotherhood. In some mining localities, the Aususnik was called a faciger, from the German *eine Fackel tragend*, or torchbearer.<sup>6</sup>

In the SBM collection we have 58 sculptures (28 pairs). Their production was widespread in the folk environment in the 19th century, most of them date from the second half of the 19th and the first third of the 20th century. The authors of the sculptures, as Rút Lichnerová writes, were unknown authors from Štiavnické

<sup>3</sup> PLICKOVÁ, Ester. Motifs of mining work in the artistic expression of miners (Montánná region of Banská Štiavnica). In: *Slovak Ethnography*, vol. 21, 1973, no. 1, pp. 3-22.

<sup>4</sup> TREPKOVÁ, Zuzana. Carving workshop in Piarg. In. 19, 1970, no. 4, pp. 186-189; Same. Apprentice woodworking workshop in Banská Štiavnica. In. 20, 1971, no. 4, pp. 28-31.

<sup>5</sup> PLICKOVÁ, ref. 3, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> DENKOVÁ, Zuzana - CHOVANOVÁ, Iveta. Past and present of the Auslan tradition. In. 20, 2013, no. 1-2, pp. 120-137; DENKOVÁ, Zuzana. Aušusníci on the threshold of the 21st century (transformations of an important phenomenon of mining culture). HARVAN, Daniel (ed.): *Proceedings of the 13th Erbe Symposium*. Banská Štiavnica : Slovak Mining Museum, 2015, pp. 146-156; RAMMINGER, Johann. Neulateinische Wortliste. Ein Wörterbuch des Lateinischen von Petrarca bis 1700. Neulatein. [Online] 2007. [Date: 5 March 2013.] [www.neulatein.de/ words/2/009750.htm](http://www.neulatein.de/words/2/009750.htm).

Baní, Hodruše-Hámrov, Štefultov, Banská Štiavnica and Nová Bana.<sup>7</sup> Thanks to a note in the documentation we know the surname of one manufacturer - the miner Neuschl from Štiavnické Baní. According to the nature of the carving, he can be credited with the authorship of two pairs of Auschwitz carvings. For the other three pairs it is assumed that they were made in the carving workshop of Ján Šulc from Štefultov. The other four pairs show the same carving method and may therefore have come from the hands of a single author. According to the analysis of the collection, we can assume that around 20 folk carvers worked in Banská Štiavnica and its surroundings alone. In the collection of sculptures there is also one massive slab pair of aušusníky, which was probably unloaded in front of the entrance of the tunnel in Hodruša-Hámry during festivities (e.g. the miners' ofera). The installation also included the Eye of God, which was placed in the centre above the portal.

Carving and painting techniques were mastered by folk producers at different levels. We discover disproportionate sculptures without details as well as precise works. It was not uncommon for a sculpture to be made by a carver but painted by the owner, or there were miners who carved and moved the pieces to others who just painted.

The sculptures are dressed in a white jacket belted with a sash, wearing red trousers and boots. The standing Auschwitzers wear a green cap (a boat cap or a taller oval cap) on their heads; the kneeling ones do not wear it on their heads, but folded on the knee or the ground. The hands of the statuettes are white, the authors thus representing their wrapping in gloves, observed in real life. The basic prop of the statuettes is a candlestick. Usually in the form of a simple wooden handle with a playpen - in real life catching the dripping wax, in the centre of which a metal tip for a candle emerges. Only rarely do the statuettes also hold something else, such as a miner's fokos, a firebox, an axe, or a wooden ore pan. For stability, all the figures are placed on a wooden base.<sup>8</sup>

## Mine models



**Fig. 2:** Jozef Červeň: *Moving model of a mine, 1910 - 1920*, Banská Štiavnica Photo: L. Lužina, SBM collection

The models of mines are among the jewels of folk art. They represented what was familiar to the miners, their work and living space. Mine models began to be produced between 1900 and 1940<sup>9</sup> and were made in the form of bottle inserts or models on a mat, some of which were also movable.

The models of the mines on the mat were made of cardboard, decorated with mineral fragments and the gaps between the architectural elements were filled with moss. Both large and small works have survived, the foundation of each being the shafts, shafts and miners. As he writes E. Plicková, in large models we can discover mining technology and mining work in its newer and older forms, from the Middle Ages to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>10</sup> In large models, mining work is depicted in horizons (horizons). On the top floor usually opencast mining buildings (smelters, ghats, knockers), trees and crosses. On the lower floors we recognize underground

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<sup>7</sup> LICHNEROVÁ, Rút. Mining folk art in the collections of the Slovak Mining Museum. In. 16, 1993, s. 203-208.

<sup>8</sup> DENKOVÁ, Zuzana - CHOVANOVÁ, Iveta. Unforgotten Auschwitzers. Banská Štiavnica : s. n., 2013, 80 p.

<sup>9</sup> PLICKOVÁ, ref. 3, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp. 3-22.

work, such as lowering the miner with the help of a trommel (while the miner sits on a leather seat - the so-called knecht), extracting ore, working with a hammer and a handcuff, or with a wedge and a hammer, picking and hammering out ore. There is also transport of ore in hunts. We can observe water pumps, carpentry work on the workings, tunnels, shafts, cages and ladders that connect the different floors. The miners often have sledgehammers in their hands.

Jozef Červeň's compositions in which miners move while turning the crank are the highlight of the creation of large models.<sup>11</sup> On the top floor of one such model we see mining buildings, such as a mining knocker with a miner, the Crucifixion, a horse chapel, a miner with a hunt at the tippel from which ore flows into a stupa powered by a water drive. Below the upper horizon, we see underground work: a miner being lowered onto a knecht, the extraction and transport of ore, carpentry work, water pumping, tunnels, shafts with cages and ladders connecting the horizons. The open areas are filled with minerals, mineral drains and moss. The miners are dressed in Auschwitz clothing. In the model we also discover colourfully dressed mining goblins - permonikers. On the stupa, the gap and the portal of the adit there is a distinctive miners' sign.

Jozef Červeň (1861 - 1932) was probably the most prolific author of mining folk carving of the first half of the 20th century. His works date from the beginning of the 20th century until the early 1930s, although, according to his memoirs published by E. Klementis, he is said to have started carving at the age of ten. He worked in a mine, but after nine years and many accidents, he had to leave the work. In order to support his large family, he sought alternative employment, which turned out to be folk carving.<sup>12</sup> Many of the unsigned works in museum collections today are attributed to J. Červeňovi. Jozef's brother Štefan also created works, and later, in the 1970s-80s, his daughter Terézia Šimonová and son Vojtech.



**Fig. 3:** Jozef Červeň: *The Shed* (commemorative subject), 1910 - 1930, Banská Štiavnica. Photo: K. K. Patschová, SBM collection



**Fig. 4:** Štefan Pivarčí: *Ashtray (souvenir)*, mid-20th century, Štefultov. Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection

The miners also produced smaller models consisting of one shaft and two or three miners. They were made as souvenirs mainly by J. Červeň. The tradition was continued in the second half of the 20th century by the carver and mining surveyor Štefan Pivarčí (1915-1989) from Štefultov, who initially devoted himself, as E. Lovásová writes, mainly to sacral work and later to relief paintings with motifs of mining work. However, he also produced a number of commemorative objects commissioned by state institutions on the occasion of celebrations or exhibitions.<sup>13</sup> In these, he enriched wood, as

<sup>11</sup> PLICKOVÁ, ref. 3, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> KLEMENTIS, Eugen. Štiavnický carver Jozef Červeň. In. 55, 1961, s. 93-98.

<sup>13</sup> LOVÁSOVÁ, Eva. The carver Štefan Pivarčí from Banská Štiavnica. In. 18, 1997, s. 197-209.



his basic material, the Stiaavnica minerals, which he used, for example, to decorate the composition around an ashtray with a miner pushing a hunt, which is part of the SBM collection.

## Mine in a bottle



**Fig. 5:** *Johannes Zinkraut: Mine in a bottle (detail), 1762, Banská Stiaavnica. Photo: L. Lužina, collection SBM*

Mine in a bottle belongs to a broader group of bottle inserts, which we generally divide into profane and sacred. The general name for this kind of art, especially in foreign literature, is Bottles of Patience (Gedudlflasche, Türelemüveg). There are 21 mining bottles preserved in the SBM collection. In addition to these, we also keep several sacred inserts with the motif of the Crucifixion, Calvary or the Nativity. Profane non-mining bottles, such as ships, animals in bottles, etc., are not in our collection. The bottles of the various makers differ from each other mainly in the design of the supporting columns (each maker had his own method) and also in the number of tiers (usually, however, they are two- and three-tier bottles).

What unites all the works is the miners' clothing, which is predominantly weavers' clothing.

The oldest mine in a bottle in the museum's collection is a work by Johannes Zinkraut from 1762. It is a unique collection object, which is not found in other museums in Slovakia and in Europe, according to E. Lovásová's study, there are only two others, one in a private collection in Hamburg and one in the museum in Sopron.<sup>14</sup> J. Zinkraut came from Banská Stiaavnica and together with G. Blah and J. Schmidt were among the well-known folk artists of the 18th century. Zinkraut's bottle is three-tiered, made of lime wood, minerals, wire and glue is used as a binder.<sup>15</sup> According to the grading of P. Huber and O. Fitz<sup>16</sup> it is a type A2

bottle formed by wooden supporting pillars of circular cross-section, coated with polychrome red colour and sprinkled with mineral grit. The sculptures are smaller than in bottles of younger date, measuring 5 cm in diameter.<sup>17</sup> The first floor of the Zinkraut bottle shows the workings of the quarrying ('quarrying')

with a hammer and a handcuff, or transporting rubble in mining carts - hunts. On the middle floor we can see miners working at the blast furnace and metallurgists in green hats at the smelting furnace. The work is supervised by mining supervisors. On the top floor sit the chamberlain counts in white wigs and gold embroidered coats.

Most of the other mines in the bottle came from the hands of the aforementioned J. Červeň and members of his family (T. Šimonová, V. Červeň). His bottles are mainly three-storeyed with a skeleton formed by wooden supporting pillars of circular cross-section, finished with polychrome and sprinkled with mineral gravel. The floors are connected by ladders. On the first floor there is usually a staged quarrying operation, miners in bushmen's clothing with hammers and handcuffs, hunts full of rubble and miners hogging the knecht. On the second floor there is a colliery, the construction of a workings or a mine supervisor with mining regulations. Also in the Worm Bottles, the top floor features surface buildings and foliage.

Thanks to the biographical portrait of J. Červeň by E. Klementis we know the method of bottle production.

J. Červeň first sculpted the bodies of the sculptures without hands, later he finished the

hands, which he glued to the torso

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<sup>14</sup> LOVÁSOVÁ, Eva. Mine in a bottle from 1762 in the collections of the Slovak Mining Museum in Banská Štiavnica. In:

*Proceedings of the Slovak Mining Museum*, vol. 19, 2003, s. 129-133.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> FITZ, Otto. - HUBER, Peter. *Bergmännische Geduldflaschen*. Wien : s. n., 1995.

<sup>17</sup> LOVÁSOVÁ, ref. 14, p. 131.



**Fig. 6:** Jozef Červeň: *Mine in a Bottle*, 1920 - 1929, Banská Štiavnica. Photo: L. Lužina, SBM collection



**Fig. 7:** Terézia Šimonová: *Mine in a Bottle*, 1973, Banská Štiavnica. Photo K. Patschová, SBM collection

by means of the glee. He then made the other elements of the composition, including the closing stopper with a stopper cross. He painted the sculptures only at the end. Using tweezers, wires and thin forceps, he inserted the prepared parts into the bottles. First the skeleton with the supporting pillars, which he oiled and dusted with galena dust mixed with pyrite and chalcopyrite. Then he arranged the sculptures and other parts of the composition. He closed the bottle with a stopper by first inserting a stopper cross suspended from a string, pulling the string through the drilled stopper, and tightening the cross so that the stopper could not be pulled out. He then tucked a wooden peg into the hole to prevent the cork from coming loose. He glued the su with galena dust.<sup>18</sup>

### Models of architectural landmarks

In addition to the models of mines, the SBM collection is also decorated with models of the architectural landmarks of Banská Štiavnica from the first half of the 20th century. Several models of Calvary, two models of the New Castle, a model of the Piariská Gate, the Mining Knocker and an altar from an unknown church have been preserved.

The most depicted dominant feature in the works of local folk artists was Calvary. Between 1910 and 1920, J. Červeň created smaller models of it from cardboard, paper, moss and minerals, which he overlaid a glass box resembling a tunnel with a brick portal. In addition to chapels, churches and rugged terrain, we



**Fig. 8:** Štefan Černák: *Model of Calvary*, 1940s-1950s, Banská

Štiavnica. Photo: L. Lužina, SBM  
collection

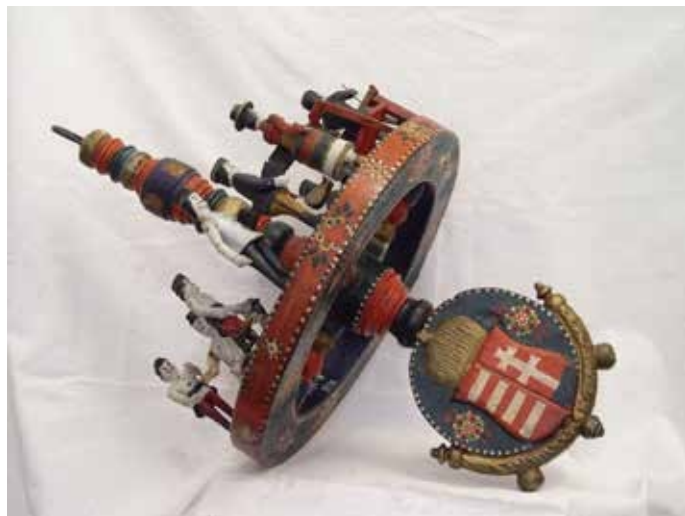
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<sup>18</sup> KLEMENTIS, ref. 12, p. 96.

SBM is proud of the massive model of Calvary with a length of 162 cm and a height of 111 cm. The model is made of wood, paper and minerals and the authorship is attributed to Štefan Černák from Banská Štiavnica. According to the data in the first-level documentation, he also created two other artistically and craftsmanship successful works. The first is a 102 cm long and 63 cm high model of the Piarská Gate, which, according to the preserved paper label, was part of the exhibition of Slovak folk art in the town. The model of the Piarská Gate was probably made in the 1950s. He also made a slightly smaller but still quite massive model of the New Castle. Štefan Černák's artistic status is evidenced by the acquisition of the Museum in Svätý Antony, which owns his Slovak double cross made of minerals. The memento was a birthday present to Ferdinand Coburg on the occasion of his 83rd birthday. It was given to him in 1944 by the theatre circle of Andrej Trúchle Sitniansky in Sv. Antony. The making of the gift for F. Coburg was an honour for the author and this fact indicates that he must have been a renowned carver.<sup>19</sup>

The model of the New Chateau was also made around 1970 by Terézia Šimonová. The artisanally simple work depicts not only a historical building, but also a group of aussies sitting at a table playing cards. A rare acquisition in the museum's collection is a massive model of the church's main altar, depicting a feast day Mass being celebrated by the ushers. The model by an unknown author from Hodruše-Hámrov was created in the first third of the 20th century.

An equally interesting solitaire in the collection is a wooden painted miner's carousel from Kremnické mines, which was acquired by the museum in 1936. It is the work of an unknown author from the first half of the 19th century. On the wooden wheel there are 11 sculptures depicting mining work, from underground mining, through the finishing to the handing over of metal to the mining official. The miners' sculptures are dressed in Hungarian wearing the Hungarian miners' clothing, as in the previous works. At the bottom, the carousel is decorated with the miner's and Hungarian emblem. As there is a hook at the top for



hanging, we think that it could have served as a candlestick.

**Fig. 9:** *Unknown author: model of an altar, 1st third of the 20th century, Hodruša-Hámre. Photo: L. Lužina, SBM collection*

**Fig. 10:** *Unknown author: mining carousel, 1820, Kremnické Bane. Photo: K. K. Patschová, SBM collection*

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<sup>19</sup> In the annual report of the State Industrial School in Banská Štiavnica (Vocational School for Woodworking) for the school year 1946/1947 there is a record of the student of the 1st year of the woodcarving department Štefan Černák.



## Bethlehem



**Fig. 11:** Ján Šulc: *Miners' crib*, 1960, Štefultov. Photo: L. Lužina, SBM collection

The production of nativity sculptures began to develop in Europe in the second half of the 18th century as a result of Joseph II's reform, which restricted the display of Christmas nativity scenes in churches. This restriction sparked an interest among the population to install a nativity scene at home. The nativity scene was usually set up in the corner of the room on a board, the size of which varied according to the preferences and financial means of the owner. Nativity figures were bought in succession and also inherited, so that a single family nativity scene could have several authors and the oldest figures could be as large as a hundred.

years old. To cover the front edge of the board, the production of painted salaš developed in Banská Štiavnica and its surroundings as another specific feature of the mining folk culture.

It was thanks to the miners that Banská Štiavnica, together with the surrounding mining villages, became the centre of Slovak crib making. The sculptures were carved from lime wood and finished with polychrome. The biblical story of Christ's birth was depicted thematically in the cribs. In the mining environment, folk producers supplemented the classical Christmas scene with figures of miners, miners, miners, permoniks, the Holy Family was placed in a tunnel, etc.

We have approximately 40 nativity sets in the SBM collection. A quarter of them were made in Banská Štiavnica, several pieces are represented by the villages of Horná Roveň, Banský Studenec, Hodruša-Hámre, Banská Bela, Vyhne, Svätý Anton, Štefultov, Špania Dolina and Štiavnické Bane. The oldest crib dates back to the middle of the 19th century, but its author is unknown. At the end of the 19th century, crib figures were made by Štefan Horák from Štefultov, who combined wood with textiles. A wooden crib by Ignác Gráč from the mining village of Banka dates from the same period.<sup>20</sup> From the first half of the 20th century we have the crib of Ondrej Zorvan from Banský Studenec, Jozef and Štefan Červeňovec from Banská Štiavnica and Ján Macek from Svätý Antony, whose crib with a shed instead of a stable is also electrified. The personality of this period was the professional carver Ján Šulc and his Štefult workshop, which significantly influenced carving in the locality. During the socialist period, crib making stagnated, after 1989 a few folk artists started to create cribs. Milan Gazdik from Banská Bela, Rastislav Henčel from Horná Rovňa, Vladimír Drexler from Štiavnické Baní or Tibor Chovanec from Banská Štiavnica can be mentioned.



Ján Šulc (1894 - 1974) grew up, according to E. Lovásová's study, in the carving workshop in Štiavnické Bany under the direction of Jozef Krause (who led the workshop between 1919 and 1934). Ján Šulc also worked in the workshop after his apprenticeship. In 1923 he became



independent and established his own trade oriented towards the sculpture industry and the construction of altars. His workshop

**Fig. 12:** *Tibor Chovanec: Bethlehem, 2000*, Banská Štiavnica.  
Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection

<sup>20</sup> LOVÁSOVÁ, Eva. *Wooden carved cribs from Banská Štiavnica*. Szeged : s. n., 2003, 50 p.

in Štefultov also produced wooden painted cribs. In 1943 he founded the company Folklór and became more involved in toy production. During the period of nationalisation his workshop was closed down and he worked in an industrial enterprise in Banská Štiavnica until his retirement. In his spare time, however, he continued to make cribs.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to this, the museum made a remarkable acquisition in 1960, when it acquired his monumental crib with majestic sculptures and oriental architecture, almost three metres long, complete with scenes from mining life and the life of a Slovak village.

The miners made paper painted nativity scenes for poorer families. The individual figures were glued onto a wooden board or cardboard and displayed by sticking them into the moss. Among the 19th century creators we should mention the miner Truban from Vyhní, Jan Schindler from Banská Štiavnica and Jan Koch from Banská Hodruše, and from the first half of the 20th century the miner Pleva from Banská Bela and Štefan Knopp from Španja Dolina. Home-made paper cribs were replaced in the second half of the 20th century by cheaper printed factory-made cribs.



**Fig. 13:** Štefan Knopp: *Miners' crib*, 1921, Špania Dolina. Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection



**Fig. 14:** ?. Štrba: *Paper crib*, 1900 - 1910, Ilija. Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection

## Painted shepherds



**Fig. 15:** Vojtech Krahulec: *Painted shepherd's hut (detail)*, 1876, Štiavnické Bane. Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection

Painted shepherds' huts are known throughout Europe under the name of nativity scenes, backdrops or landscapes. In Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic and Italy, they were installed behind the unfolded nativity scene and formed its backdrop. The nativity scene was then unfolded to respect the painted scene. The city was unfolded on one side and the village motifs on the other. According to the memories of the miners, the shepherd's hut in their homes formed the foreground of the nativity scene and overlapped the edge of the board on which the nativity scene was laid out. Around 150 shepherds' huts are preserved in the SBM collection. Their production is unparalleled in Slovakia. The research of this tradition was mainly carried out by E. Plicková.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> LOVÁSOVÁ, Eva. The carver Ján Šulc from Banská Štiavnica. In. 17, 1995, s. 147-161.

<sup>22</sup> PLICKOVÁ, Ester. Painted shepherds' huts - a specific manifestation of folk painting in northern Hont. In. *Ethnography*, 26, 1978, no. 3, pp. 452-469.

Painted shepherds' huts were set up in the Christmas season not only in homes, but also in the environment of mining operations, e.g. near mining machines or in the niches of tunnels. They are two to three metre long strips of paper (20-30 centimetres wide), painted with scenes from pastoral life, some enriched with mining elements. There are motifs of landscapes, architecture, people and animals. There are 20-30 human figures and 50-100 animal figures per prospectus. There are also hills, huts, huts and typical activities of the shepherds' life, such as herding, milking and the production of dairy products. Musicians are also part of the composition and usually the shepherd's hut is opened on one side and closed on the other by a giant bagpiper or fiddler leaning against a tree. Between 1890 and 1950, around 60 authors worked in the town and the surrounding area. According to Plicková, all but four of them were miners by profession.<sup>23</sup> The most famous was Jozef Daubner from Štiavnické mines, who spoke of his passion in this way: *'There were more of us, such babros. Only one litre of spirits was enough for the moonshine, so we started to work on all the worlds, so that by Christmas it would be ready. Oh, not in summer, even if the most beautiful woman was sitting next to me, I wouldn't make salaš.'*<sup>24</sup> Štefan Kirschner describes salaš in this way: *'A salaš, it's such a village. Those hills are there, the shepherd milks those sheep, the shepherdess, the sheep, the wolf goes - he catches the sheep, the shepherd with the sheep flies after him, even the dog. Even the goat was not moving there. And a bull. The one on the head, the one on the back of the oucu and the fšelijak. And they always put such comfortable geldings on the edge, you know. They'd sit on the stump of a tree, or they'd fiddle a bagpipe or a bagpipe, and they'd tag along. That was a beautiful place. It was a passion to look at.'*<sup>25</sup>

In terms of technical design, more attention has been paid to proportionality since the 1930s. J. Daubner says: *'One day my neighbour will come to me and I will make him a new shepherd's hut, the same as he has already made me a new one. But that didn't work, because there the rooster was more like a chicken and the sheep more like a bull. I did it properly then. Everything was there as the size required. Yet I put more grass in there, and they can mow it down.'*



**Fig. 16:** ?. Osvald: Painted shepherd's hut (detail), 1st third of the 20th century, Štiavnické Bane.

Photo: K. K. Patschová, SBM collection

Unique are the shepherd's huts, where we also discover mining elements. Usually these are mining buildings, portals of tunnels or adoring weavers. A rare painted shepherd's hut is the shepherd's hut from Banská Hodruše, where, in addition to the classic green hilly landscape with grazing sheep, two adoring Auschwitzers appear. One of them kneels by the stable with the born baby Jesus and brings him a gift - a lump of ore. Near the stable we see the brick portal of the adit. Opposite stands a second usher holding a burning candle. Mining buildings also appear on the shepherd's hut of Viliam Ladziansky, a miner and promotional worker of the Rudné bane Banská Štiavnica plant from

Štefultova from 1935. He painted the building of the shaft on the shepherd's hut in addition to

scenes from the life of shepherds,  
and the gold-digging permonites.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 468.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 454.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 455.

## Sacred Folk Oil Paintings



**Fig. 17:** *Unknown author: the Coronation of the Virgin Mary* Only two paintings are signed. The author of one is Ignatz

*Mary, turn of the 19th and 20th century, Hodruša- Hámre.*

Photo: K. K. Patschová, SBM collection

Churches and chapels were decorated with folk oil paintings in mining localities. In addition to the central sacral motif, mining elements can also be found in them. The most frequent motif is the adoring Auschwitzers, who do not dominate the paintings, but only complement the main religious motif. In addition to the Auschwitz miners, mining buildings and equipment (shaft buildings, ghats, tunnel portals) and the typical Montana rugged landscape appear in the paintings. Paintings were created by folk artists for mining workplaces, mining churches and chapels. Each shaft had its patron saint and his image placed in the workplace was a manifestation of lay piety. The Virgin Mary is most often depicted in paintings at the coronation or as the Immaculata and Pieta. The choice of saints depended on the shafts; a painting with St. George, St. Catherine and St. Elizabeth has been preserved.

Most of the authors of the paintings are unknown to us,

Oplušil, for the latter we know only the monogram MB. Most of the preserved paintings come from the first half of

19th century. However, some of them are even a hundred years older,

Exceptionally, such paintings were created in the 1930s and 1940s.

The painting *Regnum Marianum* comes from the Shaft of St. Stephen in Štefultov. St. Stephen handing over the royal insignia to the Virgin Mary is accompanied by a crowd of eight kneeling ushers. In the next painting, the adoring Oussians adore at the feet of the crowned Virgin Mary. The portal of the shaft, the shaft building and the cairn are not missing. The 19th-century painting comes from the property of the Mining Works Council. The Auschwitzers are also kneeling beneath another late 19th-century scene of the Coronation of the Virgin Mary. Each has a piece of ore in his hand, with one Auschwitz worker pointing with his hand to two full miners<sup>26</sup> laid at his feet. Behind the oushushers stand mining officials with sledgehammers. In addition to the crowned Virgin Mary, St. John of Nepomuk and St. Augustine complete the composition. The Immaculata with Jesus is in the centre of the painting by an unknown artist from the 18th century. A Hungarian usher worships her. The painting comes from the property of the parish office in Banská Štiavnica and therefore probably from one of the churches in the town. A similar central motif is also present on an oil painting on sheet metal from Svätý Antony. A miner with a bucket of ore is bowing down to the Virgin Mary and the nearby portal of the adit bears the date 1936. Weavers kneel at the feet of Our Lady of Shasta with the dead Christ in her arms (Pieta).

The kneeling Auschwitz worker in a pair with a miner in a black clerk's uniform appears in a painting with the motif of St. Catherine. We know the author of this painting - Ignatz Oplušil. The painting, painted on tin in 1816, comes from the St. Catherine's Shaft in Štiavnické mines. Near the adorers there is the entrance to the adit, a cairn, the shaft building and the saint holding a piece of ore. Another oil painting from the beginning of the 19th century with the motif of St. George fighting with a dragon comes from the rectory in Banská Bela. The weaver is kneeling in front of the adit, in the composition above him

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<sup>26</sup> Miner - an oblong basket in which ore was carried out of the mine. Local terms are listed at <https://www.virtualna-banska-stiavnica.sk/virtualna-stiavnica/banskostiavnicke-narecie/slovník>.



kneels a woman, behind which looms a castle, perhaps an insightful rendition of Banská Štiavnica's Old Castle. Two Hungarian Auschwitzers kneel in front of two tunnels in a painting on tin with the motif of St. Elizabeth. The painting from the turn of the 19th and 20th century comes from the Elizabeth Shaft in Banská Štiavnica and depicts St. Elizabeth giving alms to a beggar. In the background there are heaps, shaft buildings and mounds. The adoring Auschwitz man under the cross at the entrance to the adit completes the scene in another painting, which is not sacral and depicts a cairn and a knocker at the Mary Shaft. The painting is signed with the monogram MB and dated 1937 on the portal of the adit.

### Utility-decorative objects decorated with mining motifs



**Fig. 18:** Unknown author: *Hrkáč*, turn of the 19th - 20th century, Pukanec. Photo: K. K. Patschová, collection SBM



**Fig. 19:** Anton Neuschl: *Calamari stand*, 2nd half of the 20th century, Kunešov. Photo: L. Lužina, SBM collection

The museum preserves a number of miner's decorated utilitarian and decorative objects: calamari stands, wall clocks, walking sticks, as well as clay jugs, plates and statuettes. One can mention, for example, the calamari stand by the carver Anton Neuschl from Kunešov, which is decorated with three figures on pedestals - a permonik with a lantern and an axe, a mining official with a mining lamp and an oušusnik with a candle. The museum also preserves other mineral-decorated calamari stands, watch holders in the shape of a slipper, jars and spoons, works which we attribute mainly to the J. Červeňovi.



Mining motifs can also be found on wall clocks, the so-called *schwarzwalds*, which miners used to repaint themselves at home. We have four secondary decorated kitchen clocks in the museum's collection. In the archivolt of one of them, the original decoration was replaced by a usher kneeling under a roadside cross near the chapel and the adit. In other clocks, a bushman leans on a miner's focus and clutches a censer in his hand, while another kneels beneath the cross. One clock is so damaged that the decorative motif cannot be identified.



**Fig. 20:** *Wall clock, so-called Schwarzwaldky, 19th century, Banský Studenec. Photo: K. Patschová, SBM collection)*

We find a kneeling Auschwitz on the handle of a walking stick from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. You can recognise the typical Hungarian clothing and the miner's hammer and handcuff in his arms. In the glass painting of the metallurgical supervisor Jan Daniel from Banská Štiavnica from the second half of the 19th century, the adorning adorns a usher under a roadside cross. Nearby is the entrance to the adit. He is kneeling on his right knee and his jacket has an attila-style fastening. In both hands he holds a miner's cap, which bears the miner's emblem.

On clay jugs and jugs from Pukanec we can find figures of miners at work, miners' greeting and other inscriptions. According to the inset design, we conclude that the miners painted them themselves. On an unglazed jug from Kunešov (from 1825) we find two kneeling Auschwitzers in front of the portal of the adit. In their hands they hold brass censers. The Aušusnians look like bandits or hussars on a clay Pukan jug from 1842. The colour of the clothes corresponds to the Aušusniks' uniform, the cut is in the manner of a hussars' uniform. Aušusníci work on ore mining, they hold a miner's hammer and a handcuff and the painter named them. One is called Franco and the other Michal Vindič, presumably members of the mining party. The scene is complemented by the hunt-men (one written Fero with a hunt and the other Cigela, name illegible). The miners are supervised by a mining supervisor.

From the village of Štiavnické Bane comes the Pukan water storage and transport rattle with a dark green glaze, painted miners' emblem and the greeting *Glúk auf*. It is decorated with a six-line inscription in Slovak: *'I am hanzo zlí, I have money in my pocket. Miners, bitter your cunt, you have fallen off the sople for half a reef. Miners bad news(?) you skapali pomie told on you.'* The collection of miners' folk pottery includes two decorative Pukan plates, each one decorated with a kneeling Auschwitz man on the bottom. Their clothing is not accurately depicted, however; a white jacket and red trousers are complemented by a blue waistcoat. Both, however, are holding a burning candle.

From the middle of the 19th century to the first third of the 20th century, the potters of Pukany also produced sculptures of miners and miners' weavers, which can be considered a regional peculiarity of the north-western Honten region. The sculptures are both insitu modelled and coloured. There are three pairs of statuettes in the SBM collection and one sculpture whose 'twin' is missing. All are kneeling and holding a miner. They are dressed in white jackets, multicolored trousers with lampas, which are belted with a dark slip. The jacket is decorated with multicoloured buttons. They are wearing boots and a boat with a miner's emblem on their heads. The height of the sculptures ranges from 14 to 21 cm. They are probably votive sculptures that could have decorated mining workplaces, as they are made of a more durable material. However, their function and breadth of production is shrouded in mystery. The makers of the statuettes are unknown; they were acquired for the museum's collection from Emil Reif, a well-known antiquarian from Banskó-Stiavnica, in 1930 and 1932. In addition to the miners, the collection also includes equally artistic sculptures of musicians.

## Conclusion

The folk culture of the miners was multi-layered. It reflected their hard work underground, isolated from the outside world, which contrasted with their beautiful home. The mining landscape provided unique natural scenery, but for the miners it was more of a 'background' image that they longed for, loved, but had to say goodbye to daily as they

descended underground.

In the miners' folk art we discover emotions that were mainly influenced by fear for health and life. The miners placed themselves in the hands of God every day before their sacrifice, and we find a strong religious element in their artwork. The miners were helped in their work by their ingenuity, which was also

learned in the mine, where they had to work on their own and only from what they had on hand. The working environment influenced the choice of material, which became the ubiquitous wood and minerals. We also observe in their culture the struggle to make a living, especially in times of illness or after an accident, when there was no faroi, but each mining family lived on one salary. Therefore, artistic creation became a supplementary occupation and sometimes the main source of livelihood.

We consider mining folk carving to be a jewel of folk art. Over the last two centuries, miners have created a number of works whose common element has become the figure of an adoring Auschwitz miner. The Auschwitz tradition has significantly influenced folk art in the locality. The candle-bearing Auschwitzers appeared in the form of votive sculptures in house niches, domestic altars, roadside chapels, churches, cacherns or in niches at the portals of mines, with miners' tools in static and moving models of mines. Their tiny figures are unmissable in compositions in bottles.

The models of architectural landmarks of Banská Štiavnica made of wood, minerals, moss and paper became the decoration of the miners' folk art. We can discover the seals of mining in cribs and painted shepherds' huts. These customary objects were produced by the miners especially in the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, and the statues of the miners were given pride of place in front of the nativity scene with the newborn baby Jesus. Mining elements appear in sacred folk oil paintings and decorative objects. In the first case, there are mining buildings, pieces of ore, miners and Auschwitzers completing the scene with the saint; in the second case, the clay cairns are decorated with the miners' emblem, the old miners' greeting "Glück auf!", Auschwitzers and humorous and informative inscriptions.

As is typical of folk art, most of the authors remain unknown and only a small number of folk artists can be identified. The best known are the authors of the painted salaš, which were usually signed. The authors' markings are not missing on the mines in the bottles. Thanks to this, we know the name and life story of the most prolific author not only of mine models but also of other types of mining folk art - the miner Jozef Červeň. Ján Šulc, an apprentice carver, was an equally important author. There are authors whose names we know, but nothing about their life and work. Yet they have left us remarkable works, such as the carver Štefan Černák. At the end of the 20th century and in the 21st century, the tradition of carving was revived in the locality and, although not in the same magnitude as a hundred years ago, several new and valuable works have been created in the last decade as well.

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