

FRANTIŠEK BÍLEK: ENTRANCE TO THE TEMPLE VESTIBULE

2 July 2024 – 1 June 2026

Prague City Gallery
Villa Bílek
Mickiewiczova 233/1
160 00 Prague 6
Tue–Sun: 10 a.m.– 6 p.m.

Curator: Hana Larvová

The work of his early period is among the best that František Bílek (1872-1941) produced during his lifetime. His sculptures, drawings, prints, artist's books, and texts from that time convey Bílek's unique interpretation of Christianity, rooted in a mystical world of symbols and allegories. It is these that are the focus of the exhibition *Entrance to the Temple Vestibule* which is open to the public from 2 July 2024 in Villa Bílek of Prague City Gallery in the Hradčany quarter.

František Bílek was a unique artistic figure of his generation, whose work stood apart from his contemporaries. He developed his spiritual worldview already during his studies in Paris (1891-1892). He was influenced by the artistic and intellectual circles he encountered through the Czech painter Zdenka Braunerová. During this time, Bílek was exposed to various theories and movements, including secret doctrines, hermeticism, occultism, and esoteric symbolism, which deeply attracted him.

"The GHMP, as the administrator of František Bílek's estate, consistently devotes attention to his work. Every two years, we curate an exhibition on the third floor of the villa, focusing on a specific thematic or stylistic aspect of his work. For over a decade, curator Hana Larvová, one of the few experts on his work, has been dedicated to these exhibitions," says Magdalena Juříková, director of the GHMP.

G TISKOVÁ ZPRÁVA HMP

Early works of this "Art Nouveau Symbolist", created by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, open up a complex space of reflection on the meaning of human existence and its place in the eternal cycle of the universe. Two of his seminal artist's books from this period, *Building the Future Temple in Us* (1908) and *The Journey* (1909), are central to understanding Bílek. These works reflect Bílek's experiences in Paris in the early 1890s, and, in particular, show the influence on him of the esoteric and then-popular book *Les Grands Initiés / The Great Initiates: A Study of the Secret History of Religions* (1889) by French philosopher and essayist Édouard Schuré. The resulting intricate mosaic of religious syncretism, which became the backbone of Bílek's entire work, was most authentically expressed during this time.

"Villa Bílek represents a comprehensive stylistic whole conceived by a great creative mind. The upcoming exhibition will showcase the synthesis of pagan mythology, Christian philosophy, and natural motifs in the work of František Bílek, a sculptor, graphic artist and architect and a key figure in Czech Art Nouveau and Symbolism. I believe this exhibition will offer a new perspective on the artistic and intellectual legacy of this exceptional artist and provide another reason to visit this remarkable place," says Prague's Deputy Mayor for Culture, Tourism, Heritage, National Minorities, Exhibitions Sector, and Animal Welfare, JUDr. Jiří Pospíšil

The long-term exhibition, *Entrance to the Temple Vestibule*, open at Villa Bílek in the Hradčany quarter until 1 June 2026, will present Bílek's early work through a series of key drawings, prints, and rarely preserved publications.



Prague City Gallery is one of the most important galleries in the Czech Republic, which in its exhibition activity focuses in particular on modern and contemporary art. It collects, preserves and professionally processes the art collections of the City of Prague. Currently, the GHMP exhibits in seven buildings: the Stone Bell House, the Municipal Library - 2nd floor, the Colloredo-Mansfeld Palace, the House of Photography, Villa Bílek, the Troja Château and František Bílek's House in Chýnov.

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Text: Hana Larvová

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Designer of the Exhibition: Tomáš Svoboda

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Media partners: Art Antiques, ArtMap, Artalk, Flash Art, A2, Artiki

Entrance fee: CZK 150 full (adults) / CZK 60 discounted (students and seniors)

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