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Before Warhol

Anthony Kubek and the Problem of Carpatho-Rusyn American Art[1]

Резуме

Закля был Варголь. Антоний Кубек і квестия карпаторусиньской американьской штукы

Хоц Енді Варголь є найбарже знаным американьскым творцьом русиньского роду, то неє він першый. В сесій статі є доведене, што першым выдатным американьскым карпаторусиньскым творцьом был Антоний Кубек (1885–1971), найстаршый сын писателя Еміля Кубека. Школеный мастерами мюнхеньского і мадярского імпресіонізму, а тіж в пленеровій методі артистычной колоніі Надьбань, Кубек уґрунтувал свою естетыку в головных осередках модернізму і стал ся славный завдякы олійным образам, што представляют натуральны і містовы пейзажы, а тіж світскы і сакральны натурморты. Пак, кєд еміґрувал до Америкы, стал ся знаный зо свого стінного малярства, часто выконуваного анонімово, што прикрашат десяткы грекокатолицкых церкви в Ню Йорку, Ню Джерзі і Пенсильваніі. Вельох карпаторусиньскых Американців має копію його ґрафікы *Отче нашъ*

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(1911), што представлят Молитву Господню. Своє наслідя в новым світі уґрунтувал тіж през ілюструваня верши, оповідань свойого няня і його першой, написаной по русиньскы повісти *Марко Шолтыс* (1923). Коли уж перешол на пенсию, дале розвивал свої артистычны заінтересуваня, помагаючы шырити «руску віру» на берегу Пацифіку і розвиваючы свої іконоґрафічны і портретовы таланты. По смерти Кубека, його артистычный доробок остал в більшости забытый, єднак в звязку з фактом, што одкрыто близко 100 образів в штырьох приватных колекциях, днес можна написати так інтерпретацийну історию його творчости, як і артистычну біоґрафію того першого американьского карпаторусиньского артисты.

Ключовы слова: Енді Варголь, реґіональный модернізм, мюнхеньска школа, артистычна колонія Надьбань, народна штука, грекокатолицка Церков

Abstrakt

Przed Warholem. Antoni Kubek i zagadnienie amerykańskiej sztuki karpackorusińskiej

Chociaż Andy Warhol jest najbardziej znanym amerykańskim artystą o karpackorusińskim pochodzeniu, to nie był on pierwszy. Niniejszy artykuł dowodzi, że pierwszym wybitnym amerykańskim karpackorusińskim artystą był nieznany dotąd malarz – ksiądz Antoni Kubek (1885–1971), najstarszy syn pisarza Emila Kubeka. Szkolony przez mistrzów szkoły monachijskiej i węgierskiego impresjonizmu, a także w technice plenerowej kolonii artystycznej Nagybánya, Kubek ugruntował swoją estetykę w głównych ośrodkach środkowoeuropejskiego modernizmu i zyskał sławę dzięki obrazom olejnym przedstawiającym miejskie i naturalne pejzaże oraz świeckie i sakralne martwe natury. Po wyemigrowaniu do Ameryki stał się znany dzięki swojemu malarstwu ściennemu o tematyce religijnej, często wykonywanemu anonimowo, które zdobi dziesiątki cerkwi greckokatolickich w Nowym Jorku, New Jersey i Pensylwanii. Wielu karpackorusińskich Amerykanów posiada kopię jego grafiki *Ojcze nasz* (1911), która przedstawia Modlitwę Pańską. Swoje dziedzictwo w nowym świecie ugruntował także poprzez zilustrowanie wierszy, opowiadań swojego ojca oraz pierwszej powieści napisanej w języku rusińskim *Marko Šoltys* (1923). Po przejściu na emeryturę w Kalifornii, Kubek kontynuował rozwijanie swoich artystycznych zainteresowań, pomagając szerzyć „ruską wiarę" na wybrzeżu Pacyfiku oraz rozwijając swoje talenty w zakresie ikonografii i portretu. Po śmierci Kubeka jego dorobek artystyczny w dużej mierze został zapomniany, jednak w świetle odkrycia blisko 100 obrazów w czterech prywatnych kolekcjach obecnie możliwe jest napisanie zarówno interpretacyjnej historii

jego twórczości, jak i biografii artystycznej pierwszego amerykańskiego karpackorusińskiego artysty.

Słowa kluczowe: Andy Warhol, modernizm regionalny, szkoła monachijska, kolonia artystyczna Nagybánya, sztuka ludowa, Kościół greckokatolicki

Keywords: Andy Warhol, regional modernism, Munich School, Nagybánya artists' colony, vernacular art, Greek Catholic Church

I. Who is a Carpatho-Rusyn Artist? Identity, Practice, Tradition

In the sparse historiography of Carpatho-Rusyn American art, the conversation often begins and ends with Andy Warhol (1928–1987), the leading figure in the Pop Art movement whose representations of consumer and celebrity culture defined the visual language of the American 1960s and 1970s. The question of whether Warhol ought to be considered a "Carpatho-Rusyn artist" or an "American artist of Carpatho-Rusyn heritage," however, remains an open one. Since Warhol never publicly identified as Carpatho-Rusyn, the historian Paul Robert Magocsi has described him as a "descendant of Carpatho-Rusyns" who made a successful career in the American art world (Magocsi 1980, 3; Magocsi 1984, 77; Magocsi 2023, 86–87). In the *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (2005b), Magocsi categorically states that "Warhol himself never contributed anything to Rusyn culture," even if zealous activists have tried to attribute his creative genius to his Carpatho-Rusyn ancestry (Magocsi 2005a, 539). At the same time, Warhol's murky sense of his own ethnic identity has allowed some scholars, such as the political scientist Alexander J. Motyl, to claim that Warhol is also part of the Ukrainian "cultural legacy". However, since "neither nation can claim him as a self-conscious member," Motyl admits, "the United States probably has the greatest claim on Warhol and his art" (Motyl 2014, 553). Thus, the consensus has been that if an *artist* does not identify as Carpatho-Rusyn, the answer to whether they are included in the canon of Carpatho-Rusyn art is a definitive no.

The cultural historian Elaine Rusinko has taken a different approach to the relationship between Warhol's art and ethnicity. Since Warhol was famous for inhabiting multiple – often conflicting and imagined – identities, Rusinko argues that alongside a "gay," "Pop," or "postmodern" Warhol there also is a legible

"Carpatho-Rusyn Andy" (Rusinko 2012, 8). In her *'We are All Warhol's Children': Andy and the Rusyns* (2012), Rusinko shows how Carpatho-Rusyns have argued that Warhol's working-class upbringing in Pittsburgh's Rusyn Valley (*Ruska dolina*) may have made him attentive to the aesthetic qualities of everyday consumer objects – Campbell's soup cans, Brillo pads, or Coke bottles – and how his Byzantine Catholic faith may explain his interest in not only sacred but secular icons: Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, or Elvis Presley (Rusinko 2012, 45). In other words, Rusinko suggests that even if Warhol as an artist did not consciously identify as Carpatho-Rusyn, a Carpatho-Rusyn interpretive tradition has discovered traces of a common *visual language* and *practices*.

For this reason, Rusinko has explored the work of Andy's mother Julia Zavacka Warhola (1891–1972), his frequent collaborator but also, she argues, an artist "in her own right" who is "no less intriguing than her artist son" (Rusinko 2016, 27; Rusinko 2022a, 32). Rusinko places Warhola in the traditions of folk, primitive, and, most importantly, outsider art, which refers to "work created by self-taught artists who overcame personal odds to make their artwork or who did not follow a traditional path of art making" (Rusinko 2022b, 11). In doing so, she demonstrates how Warhola's artistic production is firmly grounded in the material culture of the Carpatho-Rusyn world: her expressive handwriting was learned in the Hungarian Kingdom, her fascination with the aesthetic qualities of domestic life was first cultivated in the Zavacky home in Carpathian Rus', her appreciation and production of devotional or religious objects first emerged in the Miková's Greek Catholic Church (Rusinko 2016, 28; Rusinko 2022a, 5; Rusinko 2022b, 1–2). In other words, even if Warhola's identity as an artist may require some qualification, the *visual language* and *practices* that she developed in the United States directly emerge from the Carpatho-Rusyn vernacular art in the homeland. In this respect, Warhol's collaborations with his mother are evidence that he was in contact with a certain *tradition* of Carpatho-Rusyn visual culture, even if this tradition was not conceptualized as such at the time. Indeed, only recently has the immigration historian Rich Custer explored the sacred art of the first-generation Carpatho-Rusyn American artists Stephen Hegedus (1853–1921), Michael Kupetz (1891–1964), John Zacharias (1860–1915), John Baycura (1886–1965), and Emil Gulyassy (1888–1956), whose work defined the aesthetic of the diaspora in the first half of the twentieth century (Custer 2022).

Like Julia Warhola, most early Carpatho-Rusyn American artists were self-taught, if highly skilled, amateurs who were not influenced by and did not respond to the dominant trends in European and American modernism. However, this article argues that the missing link between the nineteenth-century European tradition and the twentieth-century American one is the painter Anthony Kubek (1885–1975), the oldest son of the writer Emil Kubek. Born in the Prešov Region to a nationally conscious Carpatho-Rusyn family, Kubek followed his father's initiative and was ordained priest in the Greek Catholic Church, which seems to have supported his talent in painting and sent him to study in the major centers of European modernism. Trained by the masters of the Munich School and Hungarian impressionism and in the *plein-air* method of the Nagybánya artists' colony, Kubek gained recognition for his oil paintings of urban and natural landscapes and secular and sacred still lifes. After World War I interrupted his artistic career, Kubek emigrated to America, where he was known for his religious murals, often anonymously executed, that adorn dozens of Greek Catholic churches in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Kubek's identity as a Carpatho-Rusyn American artist was first established by his print *Our Father* (1911), a dramatization of the Lord's Prayer that was widely distributed in the diaspora. He also developed his American artistic identity by illustrating his father's poems, short stories, and the first novel written in Rusyn *Marko Šoltys* (1923). After retiring from the priesthood, Kubek moved to California, where he had more time to dedicate to his painting. For the rest of his life, he turned his attention to iconography and portraiture while spreading the *rus'ka vira* to the Pacific coast.

After his death, Kubek's artistic accomplishments were largely forgotten. He is not mentioned in Paul Robert Magocsi's *Our People: Carpatho-Rusyns and Their Descendants in North America* (1984) nor in Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop's *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture* (2005c). In 2008, Eugene Petrick, Kubek's grandson, organized an exhibit of Kubek's paintings in Antioch, California, but this event went unnoticed by scholars in Carpatho-Rusyn Studies ("For Petrick" 2007). However, in 2022, after Petrick's collection was complimented by the collections of Gerara Marchesi, Bruce Wagner, and Frank Wagner – also Kubek's grandchildren – it is now possible to write both an interpretive history of his work and the artistic biography of, perhaps, the first Carpatho-Rusyn American artist.

Like many first-generation Carpatho-Rusyn Americans, Kubek had many identities, which tended to manifest themselves in distinct genres. As

a *European artist*, he is part of the long legacy of Munich academic realism and the Nagybánya *plein-air* tradition, which can be seen in his oil paintings of urban and natural landscapes and still lifes. While many of his canvases were completed in Europe, Kubek also represented his American environments in the style using techniques he developed in the old world, which brought a modern aesthetic to the working-class communities where Carpatho-Rusyns lived. As a *Greek Catholic priest*, he received multiple commissions to execute murals and icons in Carpatho-Rusyn, Hungarian, and Slovak American churches, which illustrate his mastery of the visual language of sacred art. As a *Carpatho-Rusyn artist*, he established his legacy with illustrations of religious themes and of Emil Kubek's nationally conscious poems, short stories, and novel *Marko Šoltys* as well as with portraits of family members and friends. In other words, Kubek consciously worked as a *Carpatho-Rusyn artist*, was fluent in the *visual language* and *practices* of traditional Carpatho-Rusyn culture and the strong presence of the church, but was also trained by and part of the most influential artistic *traditions* in Central European modernism.

II. Anthony Kubek in Europe

Anton Kubek was born on November 8, 1885, in Piller-Peklen, Hungarian Kingdom (now Ruské Pekľany, Slovakia) as the second of four children – and only son – of Emil and Maria Kubek ("Russkij…" 1925, 159). When Anthony was born, the family had just recently settled in the neighboring village of Ľubovec as part of Emil's early Catholic ministry, but after a week in the village, the Kubeks immediately moved to the village of Snakov, where for the next 20 years Emil established himself as a Carpatho-Rusyn Renaissance man. In addition to his priestly responsibilities, Emil developed the village infrastructure by leading the renovation of the old chapel. He opened a school, built a new road into town, and raised a new parish building. He also became a talented agronomist, for he taught the villagers about new farming methods and introduced fruit trees and beekeeping (Dancák 1999, 7–12). Finally, he developed his talents as a scholar and published an extensive comparative *Church Slavonic-Hungarian-Russian-German Dictionary for Holy Writing* (*Старославянскій-оугорскій-русскій-нѣмецкій словарь къ священному писанию*, 1906). Young Anthony clearly absorbed many of his father's qualities: a steadfast faith in the *rus'ka vira*, a love for the Carpatho-Rusyn people,

an appreciation of the natural world, a respect for the dignity of work, and a lifelong commitment to education and erudition. After completing his primary education in Bardejov, Anthony decided to follow in his father's footsteps and became a seminarian in the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Prešov.

In 1904, Emil learned that he was being reassigned to the United States, but Anthony decided to stay behind in Europe to finish his education. Alone in Prešov with his family across the ocean, Anthony began to cultivate an interest in the arts, but we know only a few details about this period of his life. While still a student, he was tutored by an artist named Henrik Štenhura. At the Prešov gymnasium, he studied with the professor of drawing Josiph Tragor and was recognized, first, as the best artist of his class, and later, as the best in the entire gymnasium. It appears that he even managed to sell a number of his early works on religious themes, and the money that he earned – which was supplemented by additional financial support from his uncle Father Alexei A. Kubek – allowed him to continue his studies ("Russkij…" 1925, 159–160). As his ordination approached, Anthony received permission from Sándor Gerbery, the superintendent of the Prešov Greek Catholic Teachers' College, to propose to his daughter, Maria Gerbery. In 1908, Anthony and Maria married, and the couple went on to have six children: John, Teresa, Sophia, Klari, Emil, and Marianne. After he was ordained, he joined the faculty of the Teachers' College, where he taught geography, economics, and drawing for the next 12 years ("Russkij…" 1925, 160; Dancák 1999, 64; Magocsi 2005c, 397).

Anthony's position in the seminary, however, did not interfere in his pursuit of the arts. In 1911, he traveled to Bavaria, where he sought out the leaders of the Munich School, a group of painters associated with the Royal Academy of Fine Arts that made the city "next to Paris, the major European center for academic training" (Jelavich 1982, 17). Since its founding in the mid-nineteenth century, the Munich School was associated with the turn away from classicism and romanticism to realism, often with a focus on urban and rural life in genre scenes, portraiture, and landscapes (Jelavich 1982, 18). By the end of the nineteenth century, the city first became an international center for Art Nouveau, or Jugendstil, in the arts and crafts and then popular, or *Volk*, culture, primarily in the cabaret theater. For this reason, turn-of-the-century Munich attracted artists from around the world, from the American impressionists William Merritt Chase (1849–1916) and J. Frank Currier (1843–1909) in the 1870s to the Russian and German modernists Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and Franz Marc (1880–1916), whose *The Blue Rider* (*Der Blaue Reiter*) group

formed in the city in the 1900s and 1910s. Munich also was an especially popular destination for artists from the Hungarian Kingdom. In fact, the Russian artist of Carpatho-Rusyn origins Ihor Hrabar (1871–1960) studied in the Munich atelier of the Slovenian painter Anton Ažbe (1862–1905) from 1896 to 1901 (Грабарь 1937, 119–136).

In Munich, we know that Kubek studied under the Hungarian artist Dezső Pécsi-Pilch (1888–1949), a painter of urban landscapes and still lifes. After Pécsi-Pilch left to teach at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts, Kubek resumed his duties in the Teachers' College in Prešov in 1912. The Greek Catholic Church seems to have been pleased with his progress, for the following year, in 1913, Kubek returned to Munich on a stipend from the Eparchy, this time to study with the landscape painter Carl Weinhold (1867–1925). His dedication to his craft appeared to be yielding results, for he reportedly held a successful exhibition of his work in the city ("Russkij…" 1925, 160).

In 1915, Kubek received another stipend from the church, which now sent him to study at the influential Nagybánya School, one of the many European artist colonies, such as the French Barbizon School, that were located in the countryside and focused on natural landscapes and rural life (Jacobs 1985, 12–13). In the midst of Hungary's millennial festivities in 1896, three Hungarian artists living in Munich – Simon Hollósy (1857–1918) and his two former students István Réti (1872–1945) and János Thorma (1870–1937) – acted on their frustrations with the "formality and perceived restrictiveness of the German academic tradition" (Mansbach 1999, 269) and led a group of painters to Réti and Thorma's hometown Nagybánya (now Baia Mare, Romania) located in the rolling hills of the Carpathians (Jacobs 1985, 133). The Nagybánya artists specifically sought out a Hungarian countryside that was, in their view, unpolluted by the trappings of the modern world. There they developed *plein air* techniques, focused on rural genre scenes, and used local peasants, who often wore their traditional national clothing, as models. In 1902, the artists opened the Nagybánya Free School, which featured permanent studios where aspiring artists could receive instruction from its core members. In the years that followed, a generation of even more progressive artists came to Nagybánya, where they developed techniques in cubism and constructivism. The colony also came to be associated with Hungarian patriotism, especially through the work of Réti. For this reason, the Hungarian art historian Lajos Németh has argued that "the modern period of the visual arts in Hungary" begins with "the formation of the Nagybánya School" (Németh 1969, 7).

Kubek arrived in Nagybánya to study with Réti in 1915 and found himself in an environment that encouraged artists to cultivate a relationship with the common people, pursue their craft in communion with the natural world, experiment with color, form, and theme, and proudly embrace their contributions to greater Hungary. While Carpatho-Rusyn historiography has downplayed the impact of the Nagybánya School on Carpatho-Rusyn art – the historian Ivan Pop has noted that Hungarian painters Simon Hollósy and Imre Révész lived and worked in Carpathian Rus', but "their works had no influence at all on the region's cultural life" (Pop 2005, 18) – Kubek's participation in the school suggests that Hollósy and his followers' turn to vernacular life and support of local culture had tangible impacts on the course of Carpatho-Rusyn art.

While World War I would interrupt his artistic education, Kubek returned to painting in 1918, when, on the advice of his mentors, he moved to Budapest to study at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts. There, he would reunite with Réti and study under Pál Szinyei Merse (1845–1920), a supporter of the Nagybánya school who himself developed *plein-air* painting as early as the 1870s (Németh 1969, 11–12). In the years to come, Kubek returned to Carpathian Rus', where he painted religious subjects for the Greek Catholic Church in Prešov, Miskolc, Sabinov, Čemerné, and Budimír and secular ones for the National Casino movement, which were clubs for the Hungarian aristocracy. He also displayed his work in Prešov and reportedly sold a number of works to local dignitaries ("Russkij…" 1925, 160).

For many years, the only extant artwork from his European period was *Our Father (Otche nash*, c. 1911), a pastel illustrating the Lord's Prayer (Image 1). This work dates to his first period of artistic activity in Munich and survived because he sent it to his father Emil in Mahanoy City, who then wrote an extended theological treatise on the meaning of the Lord's Prayer and illustrated it with Anthony's drawing. Both Anthony's image and Emil's text remained unpublished for many years. In 1916, Emil offered to let the Greek Catholic Union sell both the painting and the text to raise money for orphans in exchange for a modest honorarium, but the organization refused to compensate the Kubeks, who withdrew their offer. The following year, the *American Rusyn Messenger* agreed to publish *Our Father: An Interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in Images and Words* (*Отче нашъ: толкованіе господской молитвы въ образах и словами*, 1917) as a detachable section that ran from 16 August to 20 September 1917 and forced readers to cut the pages out of the newspaper

and sew the book together themselves (Image 2). Furthermore, it began to advertise prints of Anthony's illustration, which could be purchased for $1.50 in Rusyn, Polish, Slovak, and Lithuanian (Image 3). While it is unknown how many copies were sold, dozens of copies can be found in private collections or hang in Greek Catholic Churches through the American East Coast.

Our Father consists of 12 images, each of which illustrates a different clause in the Lord's Prayer. While some scenes are generalized representations of the text – "Our Father, who art in heaven" is paired with an image of an omnipotent God the Father surrounded by a chorus of angels – others directly draw from Biblical references: Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane represents "thy will be done," Christ feeding the five thousand depicts "give us this day our daily bread," and the devil leading Christ to the mountain top is paired with "lead us not into temptation." What makes Kubek's drawing significant is that it uses pastels – a medium traditionally reserved for color studies, portraits, or scenes of modern life – to represent elevated religious subjects. While it is difficult to determine if *Our Father* is influenced by the techniques of the Munich School or Nagybánya artists' colony, perhaps we can see how Kubek uses a bright, expressive color palette, loose figuration, and modulated color to achieve impressionist, rather than realistic, effects. If so, then we can conclude that Kubek learned modern techniques with the leading figures in the German and Hungarian art world but used them to spread the gospel to his Carpatho-Rusyn parishioners in an aesthetic calibrated towards viewing publics who were beginning to get accustomed to modernism.

III. The Anthony Kubek Collection

While Kubek's *Our Father* made its way into many Carpatho-Rusyn American households and churches, few had seen any of Kubek's work from his European period. The few articles written about him indicate that most of his secular paintings were lost during the war ("Greek Priest" 1930, 1). None of his work remains in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, or San Luis Obispo, California, the two cities where he lived the longest. In 2021, Johna Cook and I wrote a brief biography of Kubek that was published on the *Emil Kubek Project* website (Kupensky, Cook 2021). Soon after, his grandchildren discovered the article and contacted the authors to report that Kubek, in fact, did preserve a good portion of his collection, which was lovingly cared for, first, by his daughter Sophia

Wagner, and then by his grandchildren Bruce and Frank Wagner, Gene Petrick, and Gerara Marchesi. The 81 artworks that they preserved clearly reveal that Kubek's aesthetic was meaningfully shaped by his European contemporaries.

We can see the contours of Kubek's artistic personality in a number of predominant themes, media, techniques, and concerns. First of all, Kubek was drawn to (1) *urban landscapes* and *places of culture*, such as the majestic architecture of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Prešov juxtaposed with the simple thatched roof of a peasant's hut (Image 4), a sketch of the Marian Plague column at Evanjelické kolégium in Prešov (Image 5), or the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich (Image 6). Another street scene of Munich's Max-Joseph-Platz is exemplary for its inclusion of a car and the play of light and shadows on the square and in the alley (Image 7). In other words, Kubek occasionally represents the urban spaces inhabited by Carpatho-Rusyns, whether in Carpathian Rus' itself or elsewhere in Central Europe.

The second and third major themes in Kubek's work are (2) *rural scenes* and (3) *scenes from the natural world*. While we do not know if Kubek worked with peasant models, that he is drawn to rural genre scenes shows how he may have harmonized his training in the Nagybánya School with his Carpatho-Rusyn identity, such as in representations of peasant women dancing (Image 8) or of a peasant mother bringing her children into the fields to work (Image 9). In a style reminiscent of his Hungarian teachers, Kubek's natural landscapes often capture the fleeting moments of the seasons, whether the blossoming trees of spring (Image 10, Image 11), summer wildflowers (Image 12), the changing colors of autumn (Image 13, Image 14), or a forest at twilight (Image 15). Again, the time that Kubek spent in Carpatho-Rusyn villages in his youth may have made him especially attentive to nature's movements, even if it was his time in Nagybánya that gave him the techniques to represent them.

Like his mentors in Munich, Kubek was also a master of (4) *still life*, and the care with which he represents commonplace objects and the prevalence of still lifes in his extant corpus indicates that this genre was especially important to his oeuvre. His favorite subjects tend to be flowers – mallow (Image 16), roses (Image 17, Image 18, Image 19), and gladiolus (Image 20) – and fruit, such as melons (Image 21, Image 22) and grapes (Image 23). He also incorporates icons into his compositions (Image 24), which create a telling juxtaposition between the sacred and the secular and illuminate how he links his religious mission and worldly training. In this sense, we might say that Kubek is showing the divine can be found in the most ordinary of objects, that the banal or

quotidian can also become an icon, a gateway to God (Image 25). If this reading holds, then we also might be able to detect in Kubek's visual practice the very insight often attributed to Warhol, who also played with the intersection between the iconic and the everyday.

Naturally, (5) *religious themes*, by far, predominate in Kubek's work, and this includes a large corpus of icons and classical representations of Biblical figures: *The Virgin Hodegetria* (Image 26), *The Virgin of Tenderness* (Image 27), and *Triptych* (28), the latter of which he also carved from wood. It also includes many depictions of Biblical scenes, such as the *Flight into Egypt* (Image 29), *The Last Supper* (Image 30), *The Crucifixion* (Image 31), or *The Assumption* (Image 32). While we do not yet know how many of these works Kubek painted in Europe – in fact, it could be very few of them – we can clearly see that his aesthetic was formed by the major movements of early European modernism in theme and style.

IV. Anthony Kubek in America

After World War I, Kubek left Carpathian Rus' forever and emigrated to the United States in 1920. When he arrived, he served as a priest at a number of parishes in the mid-Atlantic: first at the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and then at St. Joseph's in New Brunswick, New Jersey ("Greek Priest" 1930, 1). While we do not know the specific reasons why he was reassigned to the new world, one of his responsibilities could have been to adorn America's Eastern Rite churches. In his first few years in the United States, he contributed murals to Greek Catholic churches in at least Jersey City, NJ, Rahway, NJ, Trenton, NJ, Binghamton, NY, Allentown, PA, Johnstown, PA, Mahanoy City, PA, Perryopolis, PA, and Scranton, PA ("Greek Catholic…" 1924, 23; "Russkij…" 1925, 160).

At the same time, Kubek also found the time to artistically collaborate with his father Emil, who was preparing his four-volume collected works *People's Tales and Verses* (*Narodny povísti i stichi*, 1922–1923) for publication. The best-known corpus of Emil Kubek's writing, the first volume features a selection of his lyric poetry and short prose set in America, and Anthony provided the illustrations. Among the most expressive are the illustrations to the short story *Palko Rostoka* about a Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant who takes on a new American identity as Paul Smith (Image 33), to the short story *A Meeting* about

a Carpatho-Rusyn American soldier who returns from the Great War to meet his son for the first time (Image 34), and to the short story *An Easter Gift* about a Carpatho-Rusyn American immigrant Fedor Bistrica who reunites with his long-lost niece in a mining town (Image 35).

Kubek also illustrated the final three volumes of the collection, which contain Emil Kubek's most significant literary accomplishment, the first novel written in the Rusyn language, *Marko Šoltys* (1923). Set in Subcarpathian Rus', the novel is a coming-of-age story of the Carpatho-Rusyn peasant Marko Furman set against the backdrop of Central European history from the 1860s until World War I. Marko is tragically orphaned at a young age (Image 36), is forced to serve in the Austro-Hungarian army, and makes his own way in life as a farmer. Through hard work and perseverance, he becomes a successful landowner and, by the end of the novel, comes to "believe firmly that this poor nation of mine will come to life, will be raised by their national spirit towards a happy future" (Kubek 1923, 179). As the novel reaches national apotheosis, Kubek illustrates the moment (Image 37).

The Carpatho-Rusyn diaspora began to notice that Kubek was a talented priest and accomplished painter. In 1925, the New York-based newspaper "The Day (Deñ)" published an extended feature about his career in its yearly almanac. Calling him an "exceptional artist," the article describes Kubek as "quiet," "modest," and a "Rusyn by blood and lineage," someone whose name is still unknown but whose work is becoming ubiquitous in immigrant communities throughout the East Coast ("Russkij…" 1925, 160).

After a decade on the East Coast, Kubek moved again and, in 1930, came to Mahanoy City to assist his now elderly father in tending to St. Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church. The local Mahanoy City "Record American" reported on Anthony's arrival and expressed great delight at the prospect of having a second artistically inclined Kubek in town. In addition to being "an able preacher" "known throughout the entire east as one of the outstanding leaders in the Greek Catholic Church," Kubek is described as a "gifted painter" who possesses a "priceless collection of his paintings and pastel drawings that proclaim him to be an exceptional artist." Regrettably, the paper reports, his most valuable work was "destroyed during the late World War," but he had managed to preserve some of his work from the old world. For these reasons, "both the religious and cultural life of the community," they write, have "received a valuable addition through the coming of Father Kubek" ("Greek Priest" 1930, 1).

What is especially valuable about this article from the "Record American" is its rich descriptions of Kubek's paintings. According to the author, Kubek's prominent genres include oil paintings of religious subjects; pastels of Munich's architecture; American and European landscapes; still lifes of floral arrangements; realist scenes of harvests in New Jersey; imitations of the great masters, including Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair* (Image 38); and portraits of family members – including his niece and his wife (Image 39) – which the "Record American" compares with George Romney's portraits of Emma Hamilton ("Greek Priest" 1930, 1). The author especially praises an oil painting called *The Mother of Consolation* for its "harmonious" setting that inspires spiritual "quietness". "Seated on a throne of gold with a wide marble base, and set in a large tree shaded area, the Virgin Mary comforts a sorrow stricken figure, whose head she soothes with a gesture that radiates gentleness," they write: "Grouped around the throne, on which is emblazoned in flaming letters, old Slavic initials meaning, 'Mother of God,' are family groups all of whom are seeking surcease from woes" ("Greek Priest" 1930, 1). This description may correspond to Kubek's depiction of the faithful venerating an iron of the Panachranta (Image 40).

Within his first year in Mahanoy City, Kubek organized an exhibit of his art in town at the Book Mart on 130 East Centre Street, and the "Record American" was impressed with his landscapes of the Coal Region countryside and European cities. *Autumn Foliage* featured the Lakeside Dam, which the paper called "one of the most charming of the exhibit." *Autumn Oak* was "an October-clad sturdy giant of the type Joyce Kilmer must have had in mind when he wrote his lovely poem, with a view of Pottsville in the distance." And three pastels painted in Munich include *The King's Palace*, *Market Square*, and *Nagybánya Church* also "form an interesting group for study" ("Rev. A. E. Kubek…" 1930, 2).

While the "Record American" praised his secular work, Kubek remained a painter dedicated to religious themes. In 1926, he donated two oil paintings – *Christ at the Gates* and *Christ in Gethsemane* – to the Holy Emmanuel Slovak Lutheran Church in Mahanoy City (Sanjek 1938, 181; Sanjek 1970, 45). In 1930, he painted a "mammoth mural" in the archway of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church in Scranton to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the canonization of Hungary's saints, a work that the "Record American" called "a masterpiece of the painter's art." "The coming of Father Anthony Kubek," they continue, "is a decided asset to the cultural life of the town, and the community should feel justly proud of its accession" ("Local…" 1930, 2).

In 1931, both Kubeks launched a monumental renovation and expansion of St. Mary's, and the parish held a day of festivities on Thanksgiving to give thanks for the completion of the new church and its two talented priests. The day began with a street parade led by two local marching bands, and the procession led into the church for the first liturgy. The crowd ended up being so large that amplifiers had to be installed to broadcast the service to those left standing in the street ("Dual…" 1931, 1, 7).

Once inside, the parishioners discovered that Kubek had painted no less than 18 murals throughout the church depicting scenes from the Old Testament, such as the *Banishment from Paradise* (Image 41), and New Testament, such as *The Nativity* (Image 42). Most interestingly, his murals of *Sts. Cyril and Methodius* (Image 43) and *Sts. Volodymyr and Olha* (Image 44) flank the entrance to the church, which balances the two competing origins stories about how the Carpatho-Rusyns received Christianity. The western theory proposes that the Carpatho-Rusyns were baptized directly by Cyril and Methodius, thus making them the first Slavs to accept Christianity; however, the eastern theory argues that Christianity only came to Carpathian Rus' after the baptism of Kyivan Rus' in 988 by Grand Prince Volodymyr, whose mother Olha converted to Christianity before him (Magocsi 2015, 36–41). Here, Kubek literally incorporates both traditions into the pillars of the church.

As the years went by, Kubek began to take on more and more of the pastoral duties from his father. He continued to grow the parish through events such as the celebration of Carpatho-Rusyn heritage "Russkij Den", which regularly drew thousands of guests ("Thousands…" 1935, 5). When his father passed away in 1940, Kubek succeeded him at St. Mary's ("Rev. E. A. Kubek" 1940, 1). It seems that the daily demands of a priest and a father of six children forced him to scale back his artistic career. By the time he celebrated his 40th jubilee as a priest, the "Pottsville Republican" did not even mention that he was a painter ("Mahanoy…" 1948, 14).

Kubek would, however, return to cultural pursuits towards the end of his career. In 1956, he participated in a number of programs about American religious life that were organized by Radio Free Europe and broadcast into Communist Czechoslovakia ("Area…" 1956, 2). In 1958, he returned to mural painting for a commission at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Tarentum, Pennsylvania ("Dedicate…" 1958, 6). That August he also celebrated his 50th jubilee and was feted by a crowd of 500 guests, including Bishop Nicholas Elko. "People must be attracted by something spiritual and Father Kubek has been holding his people in this way for 50 years," Bishop Elko said: "God loves things done in Bethlehem

style and without fanfare." The "Record American" describes how "Rev. Kubek humbly said it was hard to express all his feelings at a time such as this" and "expressed his heartfelt thanks to all who have honored him and his wife on the occasion and for the many blessings enjoyed in his life" ("Over…" 1958, 1). At the age of 73, Kubek not only retired from the priesthood but made plans to leave the centers of the Carpatho-Rusyn American diaspora altogether.

V. Anthony Kubek in California

By the 1960s, four of Kubek's daughters had moved to the Pacific Coast with their spouses: Terez (1917–1993) who moved to San Luis Obispo with her husband Dr. Eugene Petrick in 1954, Sophia (1920–2019) who moved to the Bay Area with her husband Torrance Wagner in 1965, Klari (1921–2005) who moved to San Francisco with her husband Anthony Lynch in 1965, and Maria Anne (1924–2007) who moved to San Jose with her husband Alfred Moyer in 1964. Thus, after resigning his duties from St. Mary's, Kubek and his wife also set off for the Pacific to be closer to their children and grandchildren. Kubek settled in a ranch house on 1925 Corralitos Avenue in San Luis Obispo, next door to his daughter Terez and her husband Eugene, a successful doctor, who lived at 1893 Corralitos Avenue.

When Kubek came to California, he found himself in a vibrant, historic Catholic community, for the Mission San Luis Obispo, founded in 1772, was one of the 21 Spanish missions along the Pacific Coast. Known as the Canyon of the Bears, San Luis Obispo with its picturesque mountains and lush vineyards in many ways echoed the verdant valleys of the Carpathian foothills and Hungarian plains where Kubek spent his childhood. Even in retirement, he continued his ministry by building in his residence a private chapel, which became a place of pilgrimage of sorts for the Central Coast's Greek Catholics. After many Catholic churches instituted reforms after the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the "mystery" of the *rus'ka vira* practiced by Kubek and his followers began to attract many Roman Catholics into his makeshift house church (Nesbit 2021). In his home studio, Kubek continued to paint until his final days. His grandchildren remember him laying the goldleaf on depictions of the saints (Image 45) and painting portraits of his family members.

On March 7, 1971, Anthony Kubek died at the age of 85 and was "honored with the funeral rites of a priest" in the Old Mission (Steward 1992, 1). He was buried beside his wife Maria in the Old Mission Cemetery beneath black acacias,

California sycamores, and queen palms. While his death was not met with national recognition at home or in the diaspora, Kubek's impact continues to live on not in Carpathian Rus' or the Coal Region but in California. In San Luis Obispo, the Greek Catholic Community that he began continued to grow, and by 1991, the community opened its first church, St. Anne Byzantine Catholic Church. Today, St. Anne's holds Kubek's chalice and paten (Image 46) that he first received in Prešov in the nineteenth century, brought with him to Mahanoy City in the twentieth century, and now in the twenty-first century brings a distinctive Carpatho-Rusyn character to a new community on the shores of the Pacific.

VI. Conclusion

The discovery of the work of Anthony Kubek forces scholars in Carpatho-Rusyn Studies to revise many previously held assumptions about the evolution of Carpatho-Rusyn art in Europe and America. Firstly, Kubek's presence in the Munich and Nagybánya Schools places him at the heart of early twentieth-century Central European modernism. He is a student of two of the most important pioneers of the Hungarian *plein-air* tradition – István Réti and Pál Szinyei Merse – and, as a result, ought to be mentioned alongside the more celebrated members of the Transcarpathian School of Painting, including Iosyf Bokshai (1891–1975), Adal'bert Erdeli (1891–1955), and Fedor Manailo (1910–1978). His influence on the development of Carpatho-Rusyn art in the homeland, however, appears to be minimal since he emigrated before the establishment of the Public School for Painting in Uzhhorod in 1927 (Pop 2005, 18). Secondly, as a student of these European traditions, Kubek brought with him to America an aesthetic sophistication that is often missing from accounts of the Carpatho-Rusyn immigrant story. Thus, the working-class narrative that predominates in histories of the Carpatho-Rusyn American diaspora is in many ways woefully incomplete. At the same time, that Kubek's artistic legacy is only just being rediscovered is, perhaps, a sign that his work made little impact on the diaspora on the whole, even if the parishioners who attend the churches where his murals are on display have unconsciously engaged with his religious art.

Finally, the diversity of Kubek's oeuvre suggests that early Carpatho-Rusyn American art was not as impoverished as previously assumed. In other words, we may be able to speak of a legible *tradition* of first-generation Carpatho-Rusyn American *artists* who employed a shared *visual language* and *practices*, which

were influenced by sacred art but often operated independently of the church. Many of these artists, such as Kubek and Gulyassy, received formal training and thus can be seen as a bridge between European modernist and American immigrant art; however, those who were self-taught, such as Julia Warhola, were embedded in the same networks and responding to the same historical and political events. In fact, there is a good chance that both Ondrej and Julia Warhola encountered the work of Anthony Kubek, whether through his print *Our Father*, murals in the Greek Catholic Churches, or his illustrations of Emil Kubek's stories. While further research by art historians is needed to better define its contours, the history of Carpatho-Rusyn American art must now begin with the work of Anthony Kubek.

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Image 1. Anthony Kubek, *Our Father* (c. 1911), St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania

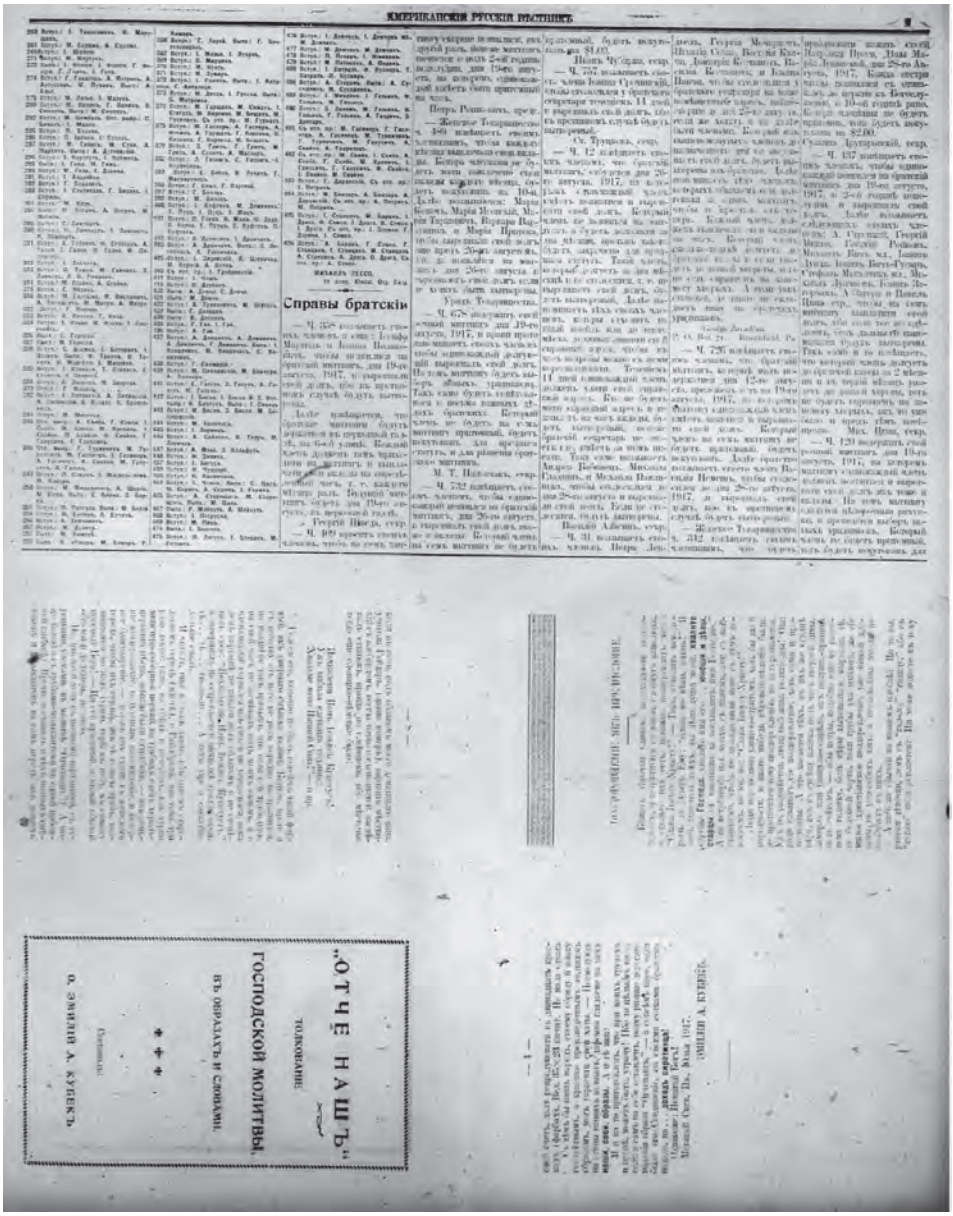

Image 2. Emil Kubek, *Our Father: An Interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in Images and Words* (1917)

Image 3. Ad for Anthony Kubek's *Our Father* (1917)

Image 4. Anthony Kubek, [*Church*], Private Collection

Image 5. Anthony Kubek, [*Marian Plague Column, Prešov, Slovakia*], Private Collection

Image 6. Anthony Kubek, [*Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, Germany*], Private Collection

Image 7. Anthony Kubek, [*Max-Joseph Platz, Munich, Germany*], Private Collection

Image 8. Anthony Kubek, [*Rural Scene*], Private Collection

Image 9. Anthony Kubek, [*Rural Scene*], Private Collection

Image 10. Anthony Kubek, [*Spring*], Private Collection

Image 11. Anthony Kubek, [*Spring*], Private Collection

Image 12. Anthony Kubek, [*Wildflowers*], Private Collection

Image 13. Anthony Kubek, [*Autumn*], Private Collection

Image 14. Anthony Kubek, [*Autumn*], Private Collection

Image 15. Anthony Kubek, [*Twilight*], Private Collection

Image 16. Anthony Kubek, [*Mallow*], Private Collection

Image 17. Anthony Kubek, [*Roses*], Private Collection

Image 18. Anthony Kubek, [*Roses*], Private Collection

Image 19. Anthony Kubek, [*Roses*], Private Collection

Image 20. Anthony Kubek, [*Gladiolus*], Private Collection

Image 21. Anthony Kubek, [*Still Life with Fruit*], Private Collection

Image 22. Anthony Kubek, [*Still Life with Fruit*], Private Collection

Image 23. Anthony Kubek, [*Still Life with Fruit*], Private Collection

Image 24. Anthony Kubek, [*Still Life with Icon*], Private Collection

Image 25. Anthony Kubek, [*Still Life with Icon*], Private Collection

Image 26. Anthony Kubek, [*Virgin Hodegeria*], Private Collection

Image 27. Anthony Kubek, [*Virgin of Tenderness*], Private Collection

Image 28. Anthony Kubek, [*Triptych*], Private Collection

Image 29. Anthony Kubek, [*Flight into Egypt*], Private Collection

Image 30. Anthony Kubek, [*Last Supper*], Private Collection

Image 31. Anthony Kubek, [*Crucifixion*], Private Collection

Image 32. Anthony Kubek, [*Assumption*], Private Collection

Image 33. Anthony Kubek, *Palko Rostoka* (1922) in Emilij A. Kubek, *Narodny povísti i stichi*, Vol. 1 (Scranton: Obrana, 1922)

Image 34. Anthony Kubek, *A Meeting* (1922) in Emilij A. Kubek, *Narodny povísti i stichi*, Vol. 1 (Scranton: Obrana, 1922)

Image 35. Anthony Kubek, *An Easter Gift* (1922) in Emilij A. Kubek, *Narodny povísti i stichi*, Vol. 1 (Scranton: Obrana, 1922)

Image 36. Anthony Kubek, *Marko Šoltys* (1923) in Emilij A. Kubek, *Narodny povísti i stichi*, Vol. 2 (Scranton: Obrana, 1923)

Image 37. Anthony Kubek, *Marko Šoltys* (1923) in Emilij A. Kubek, *Narodny povísti i stichi*, Vol. 4 (Scranton: Obrana, 1923)

Image 38. Anthony Kubek, [Copy of Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair*], Private Collection

Image 39. Anthony Kubek, [*Portrait*], Private Collection

Image 40. Anthony Kubek, [*Veneration of an Icon of the Panachranta*], Private Collection

Image 41. Anthony Kubek, *Banishment from Paradise* (1931), St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania

Image 42. Anthony Kubek, *The Nativity* (1931), St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania

Image 43. Anthony Kubek, *Sts. Cyril and Methodius* (1931) and Image 44. Anthony Kubek, *Sts. Volodymyr and Olha* (1931) St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania

Image 45. Anthony Kubek, *St. John the Evangelist*. Private Collection

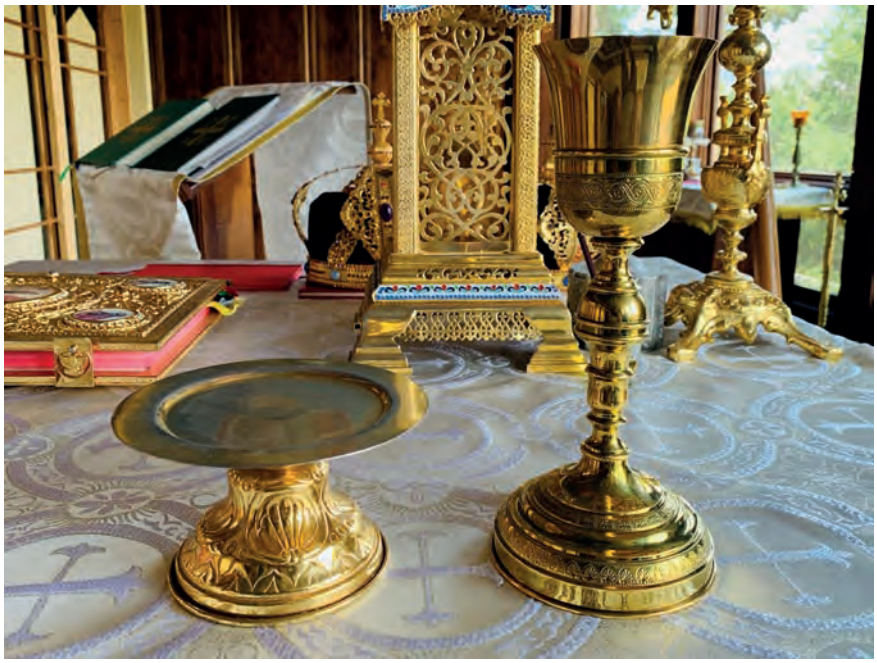

Image 46. Anthony Kubek's Chalice and Paten, St. Anne Byzantine Catholic Church, San Luis Obispo, California