

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

A GIFT OF TWENTY-TWO EDVARD KOZAK PAINTINGS

by Lubow Wolynetz, Curator



Recently our Museum was once again fortunate to receive from Lidia Bobovnyk a magnanimous gift of 22 original paintings by Edvard Kozak. Mrs. Bobovnyk and her husband Evhen from Toronto, Canada were art collectors and



personal friends of the artist. For a number of years they spent their vacation at the Ukrainian summer Resort Ksenia in Hunter, NY. It was there that Edvard Kozak and his two sons presented exhibits of their works for over twenty years, in the summer months of the 1960s – 1980s. Mr. & Mrs. Bobovnyk annually purchased a painting

or two from the artist. After a time their collection grew to be formidable in size, quality, and uniqueness. After the death of her husband, Lidia Bobovnyk began to consider the future of her collection. After some inquiries and with the support and advice of the artist's son Yarema and his wife Chrystyna, she decided to donate the collection to our Museum. By making this decision Mrs.

Bobovnyk not only safeguarded the preservation of the collection, but more importantly made it available to the general public, and especially to the Ukrainian community for viewing, study, and appreciation. To carry out her objective, our Museum organized an exhibit of the Kozak paintings which opened October 26, 2013 and will continue to March 2014. This exhibit includes the 22 paintings donated by Mrs. Bobovnyk, along with 15 additional paintings from the Museum's collection which had been donated by various individuals throughout the years. On exhibit there are also several publications which the artist illustrated, some relevant issues of the humorous magazine *Lys Mykyta*, and an assortment of his holiday greeting cards.

Edvard Kozak (EKO), 1902-1992, was a noted painter, illustrator, caricaturist, writer-humorist, satirist, editor, and civic leader. He was born in the village of Hime, Stryi district. After completing his high school studies in Stryi, he went on to study art in Vienna, Lublin, and Lviv at the Oleksa Novakivskyi Art School. His illustrations appeared in satirical periodicals (some of which he edited), children's books, almanacs and individual literary works.

He immigrated to the United States in 1949 and settled in Detroit where he worked as an artist's animator in television films. For his work in edu-

cational films he received the first prize award from the National Educational Association. He is best known for the satiric periodical *Lys Mykyta* (Reynard the Fox) published in Detroit from 1951-1990, which he edited, illustrated, and contributed satirical essays.

Edward Kozak participated in many group and one-man art exhibits in Ukraine, Germany, and the United States. He is best known and remembered for his annual art exhibits from the 1960s - 1980s along with his sons Yurii and Yarema in the motel *Ksenia*, in Hunter, NY.

As an artist he worked in different mediums: oils, tempera, gouache, acrylics, and mosaics. In the United States he was the author of over 700 paintings. Thematically, his paintings were devoted to the following: the bygone life and traditions in a Ukrainian village; the lore and life of the Hutsuls; heroic exploits of Ukrainian men and women in the struggle for Ukrainian independence; illustrations for Ukrainian folk songs; folk sayings and superstitions; satirical caricatures of political and civic activities in the Ukrainian community; good-natured, humorous caricatures of Ukrainian social activists, writers, artists; etc.

As an artist and caricaturist he is unique in Ukrainian cultural achievements and as one art critic stated "There was no one before him of this caliber and there has not been anyone since". His work is of an exceptionally high standard. The caricature portraits of various individuals, though satirical, are not malicious or spiteful, but are presented affectionately with warmhearted humor.

The folkloric aspect of his paintings is an important ethnographic document of life and times gone by, illustrated to the minutest detail in a light-hearted fashion. His beloved Hutsuls he presents in all of their colorful glory; from their costumes, to their dances, and their *trem-*

bita players with majestic Carpathian mountains in the background. These paintings can be studied as fascinating documents describing and teaching us about our Ukrainian roots and heritage. His artistic interpretations of the different genres of Ukrainian folk songs—Christmas carols, Cossack, historical, military, jocular—are colorful and rich in detail, conveying the mood and essence of the song, thus stirring in the listener emotions, memories, and feelings of nostalgia. The heroic episodes of Ukrainian history as rendered in his paintings inform, teach, inspire, and evoke feelings of national pride.

The 22 paintings on exhibit from Mrs. Bobovnyk depict most of the themes as



mentioned above. At the opening of the exhibit Mrs. Bobovnyk spoke about how she and her husband became collectors of the Kozak paintings. She delighted all present with fascinating stories about each painting, how and why it was purchased, the artist's thoughts about it, etc.

We are immeasurably grateful to Mrs. Bobovnyk for choosing our Museum to be the recipient of such magnificent collection of paintings, the works of Edvard Kozak—truly a talented, original, and unique phenomenon in Ukrainian cultural achievement!



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