

Images of Old Age in the Paintings of Ivana Kobilca

In the imagery of 19th-century art and visual production, images of old age and the elderly occupied a special, prominent place in the iconography of the time. Death, old age and the approaching end of life were very common motifs in 19th-century realist art.¹ In this period, a kind of transition finally took place from the almost derisory images of old people in early modern art to the depiction of the elderly as venerable and wise, most often cast in the role of grandparents. This process was mainly the result of the Enlightenment's revaluation of old age and the French Revolution, which even introduced a kind of worship of old age.²

Since the Renaissance, one of the iconographic ways of addressing old age was highlighting the transience of life. The personifications of vanitas, such as those found in the Renaissance, often emphasised to the extreme all the negativity and ugliness of old age as a warning about the transience and brevity of life and beauty, as well as an admonition against disregard for the precariousness and vanity of all that is mundane.³ The characteristic iconography of transience and decay was depicted in countless works

1 Covey, Herbert C.: *Images of older people in western art and society*. New York, Westport, London: Praeger, 1991, 5.

2 Knöll, Stefanie: Generationsabfolge und Wissenstradierung: zur Beziehung von Großeltern und Enkel in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts. In: *Alterskonzepte in Literatur, bildenden Kunst, Film und Medizin* (Herwig, Henriette ed.). Freiburg i.B., Berlin, Wien: Rombach Verlag, 2009, 98.

3 Knöll, Stefanie: Antikenrezeption und Naturbeobachtung. Der alternde Frauenkörper in der schwäbischen Kleinskulptur. In: *Menschenbilder. Beiträge zur Altdeutschen Kunst* (Tacke, Andreas, Heinz, Stefan. Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2011, 84.

of the period, in which youth is often juxtaposed with old age and also include sudden encounters of the individual with death.⁴

In the face of secularisation and the decline of traditional iconography, from the mid-19th century onwards, realist art deals with death and old age with worldly sobriety, an almost objective description of the facts and a realistic depiction of ageing and the end of life. There can often be found precise descriptions of the facts and characteristics of old age and death, as well as an almost factual depiction of the conclusion of human existence and the inexorable end. On the other hand, the academic movement in the art of the second half of the 19th century unreservedly emphasised its canon of beauty, its softened realist style, and its edification. Thus, anecdotal images of helpless and pitiful old people on the fringes of society and at the end of their lives are also common in this period, and a popular motif of the time, especially in the academic current within the art of the second half of the 19th century.

A typical example of a somewhat overly sentimental anecdotal image of old age and its associated ills, such as poverty and begging, is provided by Alojzij Repič's sculpture *The Blind Beggar and the Boy*, created in 1895, which addresses us with its emotive image of a beggar boy and an old man (Fig. 1).⁵

The theme of old age was thus firmly rooted in the art of the second half of the 19th century and contained various individual motifs, one of which was the widespread motif of grandparents, often depicted in an extremely idealised form in both magazine illustrations and painting. However, paintings or illustrations of old people living a God-fearing, home-centred life, lovingly and sacrificially devoting themselves to caring for their grandchildren, as this art often offers, do not in any way mirror the typical or most widespread life of old people, whether peasant or bourgeois, of the mid-19th century. Rather, many such paintings of the Biedermeier era and later in the Realist period show a familial idealisation of old age,

4 Białostocki, Jan: *Stil und Ikonographie. Studien zur Kunstwissenschaft*. Köln: DuMont Verlag, 1981, 176.

5 Vignjević, Tomislav: *Kiparstvo okoli leta 1900. Iz zbirke Narodne galerije*. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 1998, 11.

i.e. an idyllic image of grandparents, which spread rapidly from the 1860s onwards, especially in the German-speaking countries and elsewhere in Central Europe. In the period up to the late 18th century, images of grandparents were rare, appearing mainly in the context of family portraiture or illustrations of the transmission of custom and virtue from one generation to the other.⁶



Fig. 1: Alojzij Repič: The Blind Beggar and the Boy, 1895 (National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana).

6 Knöll, *Generationsabfolge*, 87.

Ivana Kobilca and her vision of older people

Ivana Kobilca's oeuvre of paintings, especially in the first decade of her career in the 1880s, undoubtedly includes numerous works on the theme of old age. This important realist painter was born in Ljubljana in 1861. The periods of her life took place in different capitals of Europe, from Vienna and Munich, where she studied from 1881 to 1891, Paris, where she worked from 1891 to 1893, and then Sarajevo, where she lived and worked from 1897 to 1905. From 1906 to 1914 she lived in Berlin, from where she returned to Ljubljana, where she died in 1926. During her first creative period, between 1881 and 1891, she created numerous works with the motif of old age. The iconographic motif of a grandmother taking exemplary and devoted care of her grandchildren is also present in her painting *Grandmother and Granddaughter*, which was mostly painted in Munich in 1886 and 1887, with only the image of the little girl being painted later, the model being the painter's cousin (Fig. 2).⁷ In any case, this painting is a rather idyllic image of an old woman peeling an apple for her granddaughter and showing her affection in her eyes and expression; in many ways, it is a typical genre work of the second half of the 19th century. The genre anecdote involving the two people in this painting places this work in the group of idealised images that could have served as a kind of model or example for the audience of the time. However, the artist's sharp, objective sense of observing people is also present in this painting, as is her realistic approach to the two figures, staged in the characteristically Leibl-esque idiom of the Munich realist style.⁸ Thus, the narrative anecdote is somehow neutralised by the realistic visual description of the two protagonists. In terms of iconography, this painting is one of the characteristic works of its time, as it stages the new role of grandparents, as promoted at the time by, among other factors, the magazine press with its illustrations.

7 Vrhunc, Polonca: *Ivana Kobilca, 1861–1926*. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 1979, 121; Ciber, Nataša, Jaki, Barbara, Simončič, Alenka eds., *Ivana Kobilca (1861–1926)*. *Slikarija je vendar nekaj lepega ...*. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2018, 395.

8 The "Leibl circle" of painters, which included artists, such as Wilhelm Trübner, Theodor Alt, and Carl Schuch, gathered around the painter Wilhelm Leibl, is a collective term for the style of realist painting in the second half of the 19th century. These artists eschewed the narrative and genre components of painting and focused on an acutely realistic rendering of their subject matter, whether portrait, still life or landscape.



Fig. 2: Ivana Kobilca: Grandmother and Granddaughter, ca 1886-1887 (Private Collection, Ciber et al., Ivana Kobilca).

Reflection or interpretation? Picturing the elderly people

The actual living conditions and circumstances of the elderly were highly varied and depended almost entirely on their occupational affiliation, but also on their wealth, education and, of course, their state of health. Until the middle of the 19th century, the most established and widespread practice was for elderly people or grandparents to lead an independent life, separated spatially, economically and emotionally from their children and grandchildren. Demographic changes in industrial societies resulting from the declining infant and child mortality rates, increasing living standards and the rejuvenation of society led to the elderly becoming an even larger minority within the overall population structure in the 19th century.⁹ Perhaps this is why in the art of the time, especially in the Realist movement of the second half of the 19th century, there is an increased interest in the motifs associated with old age, which is becoming a kind of exceptional old age status within an increasingly younger society, focused on the worship of youth.

Images of the elderly caring for their grandchildren and acting as a kind of mediator of the cultural memory of society mirrored the ideal to which society aspired at the time. These idyllic images of grandparents were disseminated in German-speaking countries and elsewhere in Europe, especially by the increasingly influential illustrated family weeklies such as the *Gartenlaube*, which was published between 1853 and 1943. From the Biedermeier period onwards, there was a re-evaluation and a strong idealisation of the family and the role of grandparents, which is also reflected in the paintings of the time, for example by Joseph Anton Koch, Carl Spitzweg and Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller.¹⁰

For the artists of the time, this kind of visual codification of values was also very interesting, if nothing else, as a kind of negative instance of bourgeois

9 Vögele, Jörg: Alter und Altern im demographischen Wandel des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. In: *Zum Sterben schön. Alter, Totentanz und Sterbekunst von 1500 bis heute* (von Hülsen-Esch, Andres, Westermann-Angerhause, Hiltrud, Knöll, Stefanie, eds.). Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner Verlag, 2006, 21.

10 Göckenjan, Gerd: *Das Alter würdigen. Altersbilder und Bedeutungswandel des Alters*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000, 174.

taste that they tried to transcend and deny. A characteristic pungent observation about this magazine and its illustrations can be found in the memoirs of Rose Pfäffinger, one of Ivana Kobilca's companions and her friend in the Parisian bohemian circle. In her memoirs, Pfäffinger wrote a kind of dialogue in which she emphasised that she had nothing to do with "*Gartenlaube* pathos";¹¹ she made it quite clear that the painters were very conscious of their own artistic path, which had to avoid these simplistic, widespread patterns of pathos and displays of emotion, and to deny the visual stereotypes prevalent at the time.

Gartenlaube, as the leading family newspaper, systematically visualised the world of the family idyll and the bourgeois family, which was its main mission. Moralising weekly newspapers before 1800 were only exceptionally different from the general literature of the time, which dictated customs and morals to its readers. The magazines *Gartenlaube* and *Daheim*, for example, published from 1865, promoted the concept of the family through their illustrations. At first, these did not differ much from the previous pictorial thematising of old age, but from the 1860s onwards, the presence of the elderly became omnipresent, including reproductions of romantic genre painting. The elderly thus represented a kind of intimacy, a spiritual world and the internalisation of the family, without being its centre. It is above all a visual staging of the discourse on old age, which was at the service of the idealised family ideology of the time.¹²

In this type of magazine press, the main *topos* of this discourse on old age is the image of the old mother or grandmother, which is the most common type of presentation of old women in this type of press. She is depicted reading to her grandchildren, often praying with them and carrying them in her arms; in short, she is most often depicted with her young grandchildren, whom she attends to with all her care and to the best of her ability. Thus, it is the image of the old mother that is presented as the emotional and spiritual-religious backbone in this new and idealised staging of the family. The image of old age, therefore, often depicts attempts to restore

11 Wolff-Thomsen, Ulrike (ed.): *Pariški bohémi (1889–1895). Avtobiografsko poročilo slikarke Rose Pfäffinger*. Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2014, 28.

12 Göckenjan, *Das Alter*, 169.

security and reliability. It is a collective rather than an individual lifestyle in a world that may be less and less able to satisfy such desires.¹³

The painter Hans Thoma (1839–1924), who in his Munich period (1870–1876) was often close to Leibl's circle of realist painters of the so-called "pure painting", became very well known in the Realist period for such idealised images of older people. With his idealised images, such as the oil painting *Grandmother, Child, and Cat* of 1878 (Neue Pinakothek, Munich), Hans Thoma found a highly appreciative audience, as this painter experienced immense popularity (Fig. 3).¹⁴ The painting contains a characteristic anecdotic gist that was otherwise alien to Leibl's circle. Thus, this work also contains characteristic allusions to religion and family ties, which are pronounced in both figures in the painting.

With the increasing proliferation of illustrations in newspapers and magazines, such images of family idylls, which depicted idealised genre scenes of everyday life in a realistic style, became widespread among the general public and served as models of behaviour. At least three social patterns can be identified within this type of iconography in the illustrations. Grandparents primarily function as advisers and teachers to their grandchildren, enriching them with their wisdom and life experience, and also fulfilling a religious function. In addition, they develop emotional bonds with their grandchildren and they are also characterised by a markedly kind character and a concern for security and closeness. Last but not least, grandparents are characterised by the fact that they focus all their life and activities in the sphere of the home. It is also their mission to share their traditions with their grandchildren, to preserve them and to pass them on to the younger generation. A typical work is Kobilca's painting *Grandmother's Chest* from around 1888, which depicts two girls looking admiringly at folk costumes, gloves and colourful shawls. They found all this in their grandmother's chest, which is almost an illustration of her role in preserving (national) traditions and customs.¹⁵

13 Göckenjan, *Das Alter*, 177.

14 Ruhmer, Eberhard: *Der Leibl-Kreis und die Reine Malerei*. Rosenheim: Rosenheimer Verlagshaus, 1984, 394.

15 Vrhunc, *Ivana Kobilca*, 125.



Fig. 3: Hans Thoma: Grandmother, Child, and Cat, 1878 (Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Ruhmer, Der Leibl-Kreis).

Concentrating on oldness: Kobilca's studies of heads

In any case, this painting and her *Grandmother and Granddaughter* are far from being the only examples of the theme of old age in Ivana Kobilca's work. It is highly significant that in this same, early period of the painter's activity, in the 1880s, a whole series of extremely moving and convincing studies and paintings of the heads of old people were produced, forming a very large and comprehensive group in the first decade of the painter's activity. A typical work is the painting by Ivana Kobilca entitled *Old Woman* from the 1880s, now in the National Gallery in Ljubljana (Fig. 4).¹⁶ This group of paintings is characterised by Kobilca's realistic dedication to and scrutiny of old age and the elderly, with their picturesque appearance and wrinkled faces, on which their long life paths are mapped out. It is thus also evident that such works, which confront the viewer with a kind of topography of the face, are about the representation of the iconographic type of the old woman and, more rarely, the old man. However, these characters are treated individually and offer the artist extremely vivid and attractive material for her study of the psychological aspects of a person or of the characteristics of old age. Individuals who have been worn down by an abundance of work or the hardships of life are presented in a kind of close-up, with all the fragility and vulnerability brought on by old age. These paintings certainly convey a certain amount of sympathy, or maybe closeness, that the painter experiences with her models, without her painting falling into the superficial sentimentalism that is common in the treatment of this subject in the second half of the 19th century. It is obvious that Kobilca's oeuvre contains a considerable number of heads and portraits of old people, which, under Leibl's influence, give us realistically detailed studies of faces. A characteristic formal feature of these studies is that the image of the face somehow stands out from the dark brown and strongly contrasting background.

This type of portrait is an artistic scheme that the painter adopted during her studies at the private painting school for women under Professor Alois Erdtelt in Munich between 1881 and 1889, where the curriculum

16 Ciber, Jaki, Simončič, *Ivana Kobilca*, 389.



Fig. 4: Ivana Kobilca: Old Woman, ca 1885 (National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana).

included, above all, the painting of the human figure, most often the busts and heads of people with distinct and interesting physiognomies.¹⁷ Such works were called *Charakterköpfe*, character studies of heads, which allowed the painter to provide a psychological outline of the sitter, who most often remained anonymous, but addressed the viewer with their marked presence and the emotions drawn on their faces, suggesting their life story.

In 1891, during her stay in Paris, Ivana Kobilca, having become more closely acquainted with contemporary French plein-air painting,¹⁸ including by Jules Bastien Lepage, about whom she was particularly enthusiastic, radically changed her colour palette, style and artistic outlook. Thus, she later wrote in her memoirs that at that time, she “got a premonition of a new ideal and I started to detest with all my might the black heads that we painted in Munich and that Erdtelt wanted to have”.¹⁹ After this Paris experience the images of older persons almost completely disappeared from her oeuvre.

In fact, Ivana Kobilca produced a large group of portraits, some twenty-five paintings, which are extremely realistic and insightful studies of old people. Thus, we can speak of a real, clear and obvious thematic focus of this painter. In terms of style, however, we can observe a division of the canvases into sketchy studies and fully finished, carefully detailed works, such as the famous *Coffee Drinker* of 1888 in the National Gallery of Slovenia, which Kobilca considered her finest work.²⁰ As I mentioned, this pictorial formula of a head set against a dark background was dictated by Kobilca’s studies at the painting school of the portraitist and studio genre painter Alois Erdtelt in Munich. The style and compositional conception of such studies of the head, set against a dark background, however, derive primarily from the contemporary realism of Wilhelm Leibl and his circle of painters. A typical work of this kind by Leibl is the painting

17 Mastnak, Tanja: “Ivana Kobilca in možnosti likovnega izobraževanja za ženske v 19. stoletju”. *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 32, 2004, 215–216, 93–107.

18 Brejc, Tomaž: “Primer iluzionizma v slovenskem slikarstvu do konca 19. stoletja”. *Sinteza*, 6, 1972, 23, 47–50.

19 Kobilca, Ivana: “Spomini – zapisal Stanko Vurnik”. *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, 3, 1923, 3–4, 107.

20 Menaše, Ljerka: “Umetniški razvoj Ivane Kobilce”. *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, 2, 1952, 124.

The White-Bearded Old Man from 1866, now in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne (Fig. 5).²¹ The parallels with the painting by Ivana Kobilca are obvious since in both cases, the same type of stylistic approach can be found in the image of the sitter's head, standing out from the dark, almost monochrome background.

Certainly, it is obvious that not all of Kobilca's paintings of this kind were the product of her study alone. Their quantity and quality also reflect the painter's purely personal interest, as well as her lively and pronounced desire to produce paintings with the motifs of old people. Thus, it would not be at all correct to claim that the numerous old women and old men in her paintings are merely the result of a stylistic orientation dictated by her study practice and her dedication to 'character heads'. The studies of psychologically outlined characters, as expressed on the faces of the elderly and captured in the painted image, were also the basis that, among other things, dictated the proliferation of these images of the elderly. Despite the fact that Erdtelt's courses took "much too long",²² as Kobilca wrote, to reach the point of a skilful mastery of the portrait head, the painter's transformation of the then-established motif left a series of paintings that form a clearly outlined group and also testify to her interest in the intensive and in-depth study of physiognomies.

Almost all of these dark paintings by Ivana Kobilca were done in the 1880s, especially in the second half of that decade. This series of studies and portraits of the elderly is rounded off by a portrait of the artist's mother from around 1893 or a little later (private collection). Such a large quantity of paintings with the motif of facial studies of the elderly is hardly to be found in the work of other Slovenian artists of the Realist period, i.e. in the oeuvres of the brothers Janez and Jurij Šubic, Jožef Petkovšek or Ferdo Vesel, and especially not in such large numbers. This type of motif only appears sporadically in these oeuvres, e.g., a few times in the work of Vesel, while in Kobilca's art, it was old age that was one of the most prominent

21 Von Maistein, Marianne, Von Waldkirch, Bernhard (eds.): *Wilhelm Leibl. Gut sehen ist alles!*. München: Hirmer Verlag, 2020, 118.

22 Čopič, Špelca: "Ivana Kobilca na slikarskem razpotju". In: *Ivana Kobilca, 1861–1926* (Vrhunc, Polonca, ed.). Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 1979, 32.

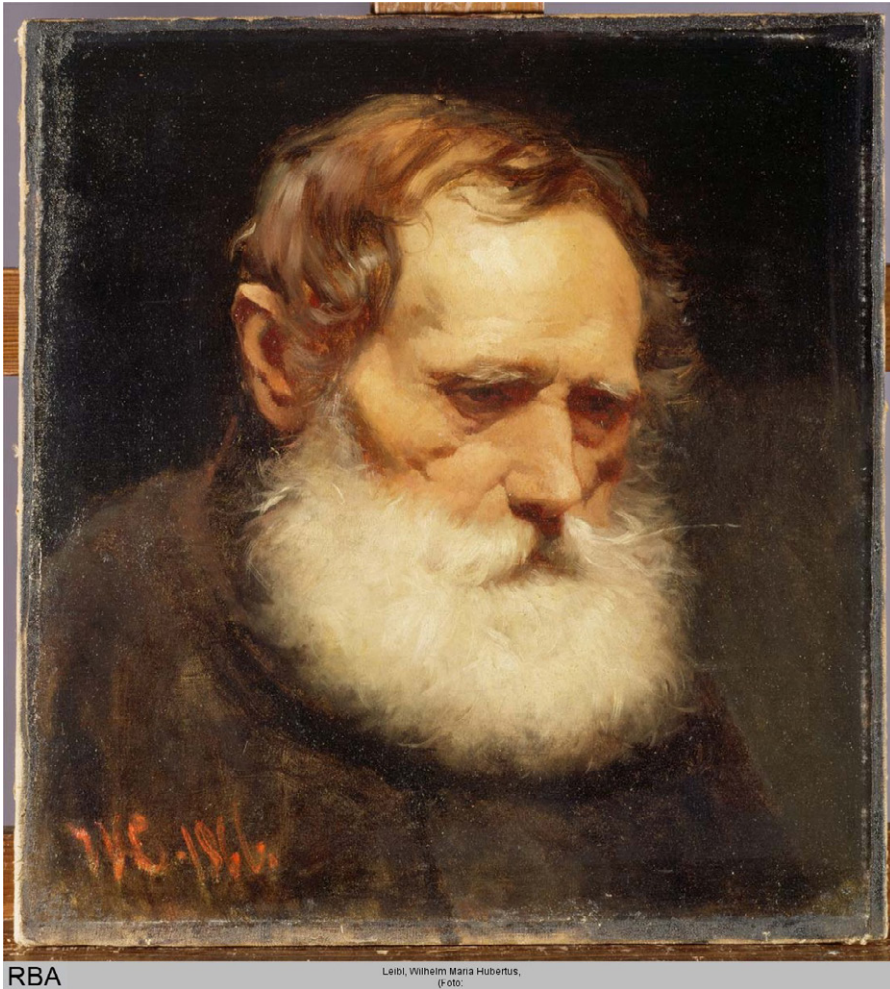


Fig. 5: Wilhelm Leibl: *The White Bearded Old Man*, 1866 (Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, Cologne, inv. no. dep. 0318. Photo: Historisches Archiv mit Rheinischem Bildarchiv).

motifs during the decade when her personal style and motivational preferences were being formed.

Kobilca's painting *The Old Man*, a study of the head of a grey-haired and bearded elderly man from the 1880s, is also very characteristic (Fig. 6). It is one of the most poignant studies of old age in the artist's oeuvre, and one can say that this painting had a special significance for the painter. While images of old men are somewhat less numerous in Kobilca's oeuvre than those of old women, this painting is still a characteristic image by the artist, whose naturalistic vision of old age emphasised the difficulties and conundrums of late life. Ivana Kobilca exhibited this exquisite study at her solo exhibition in Ljubljana in 1889, and it is characteristic that the convincing visualisation and the artist's insightful study of old age were already noted and highlighted in contemporary accounts of this painting.

In 1890, the critic Vatroslav Holz wrote in the magazine *Ljubljanski zvon* that among the exhibited studies, "the most famous was the old man with long grey hair and beard, whose face tells the whole odyssey of his difficult life".²³ According to the painter's own statement, the model was a man who, despite his old age, was still active and employed, working on the freight railway between Ljubljana and Trieste.²⁴

The painting, with its context and the life of the sitter, reminds us that in this time of industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century, a whole new "old people's proletariat" had emerged.²⁵ In this new situation, most of the elderly had to work for as long as they could if they wanted to survive. The industrialisation of society in some parts of Europe at that time did improve the living conditions and standards and, as a consequence, considerably increased life expectancy. On the other hand, this novelty also reduced the number of family members who could devote themselves to caring for grandparents, who were more often left to fend for themselves.

As a result, depictions of old, work-worn people and the obvious marks and traces of years of hard work on their faces were a common motif in

23 Holz, Vatroslav: "Ivana Kobilca in nje slike". *Ljubljanski zvon*, 1890, 54–57.

24 Vrhunc, *Ivana Kobilca*, 122–123.

25 Thane, Pat (ed.): *Das Alter. Eine Kulturgeschichte*. Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann Verlag, 2019, 229.



Fig. 6: Ivana Kobilca: The Old Man, ca 1885 (Private Collection; Ciber et al., Ivana Kobilca).

the naturalistic current in the realism of the second half of the 19th century in European art. What is characteristic, however, is the fact that Kobilca often and to a greater or lesser extent devoted herself to a kind of merely implied but still sufficiently noticeable bitterness, perhaps even tragedy of old age, which can be seen in the wrinkled and somehow resigned faces of the old in her paintings.

Given the traditional aesthetic norms, which realism thoroughly upsets, it is necessary for the portrait painter to make some kind of compromise between their mission to create the beautiful and the necessity to create an accurate portrait of a person based on resemblance. In the early modern period, the imperative of the desire for the beautiful dictated the artist's exclusion, disregard or at least mitigation of all that was 'ugly' in portraiture. However, since all facial features and characteristics of age were once considered ugly, portraitists were faced with the rather difficult task of finding a middle path between accurately imitating appearance and following the imperative of the beautiful, realistically portraying age on the one hand and idealising nature on the other.²⁶

For Kobilca, however, these restraints were almost non-existent, because in her realistic painterly confrontation with the model, she tried to bring out from the image of the old man or woman precisely those features that made the painted face a small drama, or at least a story about the (past) life of the sitter.

One of her most poignant paintings with this kind of subject is an early depiction of a seated old man in the small format painting *The Old Šibar*, created between 1885 and 1889 (Fig. 7). It depicts a former army deserter who managed to escape from the army three times. After the first two escapes, he was caught and punished by having to 'run through the gallows'. In all these attempts to escape and evade the army, he is said to have hidden in the forests of Gorenjska (Upper Carniola) for thirty years. His life story was told to the painter by a local village teacher while she was at the village Sv. Križ upon Planina near Jesenice.²⁷ With this painting of a distraught

26 Kampmann, Sabine: *Bilder des Alterns. Greise Körper in Kunst und visueller Kultur*. Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2020, 221.

27 Vrhunc, Ivana Kobilca, 132.



Fig. 7: Ivana Kobilca: The Old Šibar, 1885-1889 (National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana).

person whose very posture shows resignation, introverted pain and a kind of ennui with life, Kobilca has created a convincing image of old age and the suffering of the individual that goes with it. It is a depiction of the individual, of a person who has been crushed by society and is present before the viewer in the form of a broken, numb and life-weary old man. This work and a portrait study of the same person prove that Kobilca not only used the motif of old age to demonstrate her virtuoso mastery of painting but also that she often observed and analysed the faces of the elderly with great empathy and compassion, as well as in her own unique way.

Parallels can be found in the works of the Realist movement in 19th-century painting, where the motif of old age, its darker sides and the proximity of death was a widespread and almost typical motif.²⁸ The paintings of Jean-François Millet, Vincent van Gogh and many other painters, which realistically depicted the severe hardships and afflictions of the working and peasant classes of the time, are just some of the possible parallels for this poignant image.²⁹ A portrait of the head of this unfortunate and perhaps even tragic figure, created around the same time, has also been preserved.³⁰

Conclusion

The motif of old age is therefore strongly present in Kobilca's work, but especially in the earlier period of her career, in the 1880s and early 1890s. These years saw the production of a multitude of studies of the heads of old women and also of elderly men, characterised by the painter's concentration on the essential, realistically rendered features of the face in a kind of close-up, focusing on the details, and standing out distinctly and contrastingly from the dark monochrome background. This kind of artistic formula has resulted in a whole series of works by Ivana Kobilca, which, with their simplicity and direct expressiveness, offer a shocking plethora of figures of old, meticulously depicted and psychologically insightful people.

28 Nochlin, Linda: *Realism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971, 57–101.

29 Mikuž, Jure: "Ivana Kobilca v kontekstu evropskega umetnostnega dogajanja in slovenskih zapisov o njej." In: *Ivana Kobilca (1861–1926)*. „Slikarja je vendar nekaj lepega...” (Ciber, Nataša et al., eds.). Ljubljana: Narodna galerija, 2018, 68–69.

30 Ciber, Jaki, Simončič, *Ivana Kobilca*, 394.

Their lives and their troubles seem to be etched on their faces and with these studies, the painter has left a remarkable testimony to that era, and above all, a very personal, original artistic vision of old age. Its main quality is its direct, basic focus on the individual, who is presented on these canvases as a completely singular and unique personality with all the signs of age, which is also the main theme of this exceptional artist in her first decade. It is most probably with these paintings, which were initially created as a result of her study practice in the Munich period, that Kobilca went beyond this starting point and built on Erdtelt's study guidance, creating realistic and relentlessly detailed images of old people, which are an original contribution to the visualisation and appreciation of old age and another important component in the overall image of the typical realistic themes of old age and death in the nineteenth century.

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