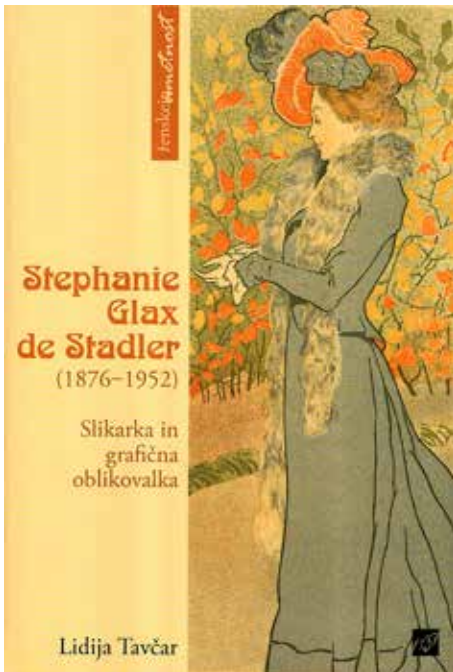


Stephanie Glax de Staedler (1876–1952) pioneer painter promoting the Opatija spa resort



Book cover of Stephanie Glax de Staedler
– the painter and graphic designer

Monarchic times often pushed experts who were not of Croatian nationality but did a great deal for local space and time in the national memory to the sideline. Austrian painter Stephanie Glax de Staedler, who has worked in Opatija for 40 years, is one of them. Despite the fact that she has done a lot for Opatija and the promotion of its spa tourism through her painting work, her name is scarcely found in Opatija's balneological history. Since she bore the seeds of progress and development, her father, the prominent Opatija balneologist Prof. Dr. Julius Glax (1846–1922), who settled with his family in Opatija in 1887, sent her to painting schools. Stephanie, who was very talented in the arts, became

the leading painter of the highly noted, lovable, and artistically important Opatija spa posters in art nouveau style, despite the fact that women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were rarely allowed to enter a patriarchal society. She was an illustrator of health guides and free publications promoting the Opatija Spa in multilingual and large-scale publications. In doing so, Stephanie Glax de Staedler contributed greatly to the balneological and thalassotherapy breakthrough of Opatija to become the leading monarchical seaside resort. In her cre-

ative opus, the painter added to this oeuvre of thematic spa and Opatija paintings lots of portraits, vedutas, still lives, and other motifs, which are preserved due to the extremely caring great grand-nephew Duša Fischinger, who has collected all the basic bio- and bibliographic materials through extensive archival work with doctors Janez and Aleš Fischinger. Based on the collected materials, the longtime curator of the National Gallery in Ljubljana, dr. Lidija Tavčar wrote a richly illustrated monograph on the overlooked artist Stephanie Glax de Stadler. The work is a true enrichment of the Croatian artistic work of female artists in Opatija in the first decades of the 20th century and is, therefore, especially valuable. It is also important for medicine because it brings many balneological-climatological and thalassotherapy motives. Even today, Opatija remembers the painter Stephanie through exhibitions of her posters at occasional tourist festivals. In the corridors of the Miramar Hotel, all posters of past exhibitions of Prof. Glax and Stephanie Glax are displayed. The monograph was published in collaboration with the Institute for the History of Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Ljubljana, the Mohor Publishing House from Celje, and the Scientific Society for the History of Health Culture of Slovenia in October 2019.

If Stephanie Glax, a native of Austria, lived in modern times, she would be a citizen of Slovenia, Croatia, and Italy. The territories of Austria-Hungary, of which she was a native, encompassed the territories of both the first, second, and parts of the third country. Furthermore, the geographical and political boundaries in the region often intermixed, especially after the two World Wars. The socialist ideology was not close to the motive of the bourgeois and aristocratic stratum, staged by Stephanie Glax in the algraphies. Also, her affiliation with the upper bourgeoisie was not in line with the socialist orientation, which could have led to the erasure of traces of the artist and her works of art. Stephanie Glax was born in Rogaška Slatina. The monograph of Ernst Hilarius Frölich spread the word about the place already in 1838, presenting healing springs, mineral water quality, and various healing treatments and therapies along Rogaška and its surroundings. The popularity of the healing springs attracted Dr. Julius Glax, Stephanie's father, who worked as a balneologist in Rogaška Slatina from 1875 to 1887 and was also a lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine in Graz. When Stephanie was 11, the Glax family moved to Opatija. With the development of Opatija, initiated by the Die k. k. priv. Südbahn-Gesellschaft in the 1890s, the place developed into one of the largest and most important spas in the Habsburg Monarchy; The mild Istrian winters are said to be a boon for patients with heart disease and tuberculosis. Thanks to its excellent promotion, Opatija has developed into a fashionable climate resort. In the late 1890s, it expanded its winter tourism industry to the summer season. In addition,

medical climatology, hydrotherapy, balneology, and thalassotherapy began to develop, and spa tourism was booming. The growing wave of tourism has attracted painters who have noticed the opportunity to make money. These included young Stephanie Glax, who, with her two younger sisters, participated in various seaside events such as swimming competitions and charity events.

Her artistic gift did not go unnoticed, but she could not enrol in the Academy, as the door to the female gender was closed. At the age of 20, she enrolled as a hospice student in the painting class of Prof. Franz von Matsch at the Vienna School of Arts. Her talent was already noticed during the final piece entitled *Der Tag einer Dame*, which was awarded. The printing of the 25-copy cycle of algraphies was made possible by the Baron Albert Rothschild Foundation Award in 1901 at the publishing house Artaria in Vienna. She then went on to study with Professor Angel Jank at the Damenakademie in Munich. Her creativity was indirectly influenced by published illustrations in *Simplicissimus* and *Jugend* magazines. Above all, reminiscences of Die Scholle's artistic group can be detected in her oeuvre, and in some works the influence of Adolf Münzr is noticeable. She complemented her stay in Vienna and Munich with study trips to Paris, where she viewed exhibitions and maintained friendly ties formed during her education. Linked to the artistic influences of Vienna, Munich, and France, she introduced visual innovations in Opatija's paintings and graphic design, which are reflected mainly in exceptional tourist posters, as well as in watercolour motifs of seaside resorts, and also printed on postcards.

The tourism development of the Istrian towns and cities was influenced by the visioning of individuals, including the balneologist Prof. Dr. Julius Glax, Stephanie's father, with whom she collaborated to realize ideas of promoting Opatija as a health resort. In fact, under the father's direction, the health resort administration of the Opatija Spa and Wellness Centre was issuing free *Abbazia. Ein Führer für Kurgäste* (Opatija Travel Guides) for spa guests. Stephanie provided the fine art equipment and illustrations in the guides, which were used for advertising recognized and important spas in Austria-Hungary. Opatija guides were published annually in different languages, with a circulation of 15,000 copies. Stephanie Glax connoisseurs admit that she was talented and very successful in the field of tourism posters. Her marketing communications posters are a mirror of the time, space, and society in which they were created. The quality of her posters is reflected in the clarity and simplicity of the artistic message, which is further enhanced by colour contrasts and transparent typography. She has been exhibiting locally and has been brought to the international space mainly by Opatija guests, who have taken her handy, modern tourist guides home from their Istrian vacation. She has ex-

hibited her works at 30 exhibitions in Opatija, Koper, Vienna, Brno, Graz, Milan, Turin, Florence, Venice, and Rome. Not only did Stephanie Glax work in Opatija as a designer and painter, she was also the initiator and organizer of a rich social life, which was widely attended by guests from different parts of Austria-Hungary.

A life span with her husband, August de Stadler (1866-1947), and his daughter from the first marriage moved her away from her previous environment, especially after 1936, when they moved to Milan. From the beginning of the 20th century, when she created both cycles of algraphies, until the First World War, the painter's work can be traced to the design of Opatija guides and posters.

It would be appropriate if the important life mission of the painter's father, professor of balneology Dr. Julius Glax, who performed pioneering work in thal-assootherapy, climatology, and balneology at the Opatija Spa, fills the spa with a new spirit of utilizing the natural features of the place and its characteristics for preventive, curative, and rehabilitative health purposes. To his credit, Opatija was proclaimed a spa town in 1889. Many years of research into Glaxo's work and the Opatija Spa by the families of Glaxo's great-granddaughter, Duša Fischinger, have been presented at numerous meetings of medical historians named 'Rijeka and its Inhabitants in Medical History' (*Rijeka i Riječani u medicinskoj povjesnici*), and partly published in the journal AMHA. Opatija also evokes memories of the golden spa of the times with the *Wienerwoche* and *Wienerball* events.

Zvonka Zupanič Slavec



Fig. 1. In front of the Kvarner Hotel (algraphia, 1906).



Fig. 2. Guide to Opatija Spa in Croatian - title page, 1909.



Fig. 3. Guide to Opatija Spa in Croatian - back cover, 1909.

