

---

# Sofiia Markova – Pursuing a Graphic Design Career after UJOP

---

## Sofiia Markova – Pursuing a Graphic Design Career after UJOP

Sofiia, a graduate of UJOP's [Arts and Architecture Foundation Programme](#), arrived in the Czech Republic from Ukraine at the age of seventeen with the ambition to pursue higher education in the field of art and design.

She is currently enrolled in the fourth year of the Bachelor's programme in Graphic Design at the Faculty of Art and Design of Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem. Alongside her studies, she has co-founded a creative [studio 21+21](#) and actively collaborates on professional [design projects](#). Her academic progress and professional development illustrate the effectiveness of **structured preparatory education** and the comprehensive support extended to international students at UJOP.

<iframe width="650" height="366" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/6XzBpBBBY64?si=GRGrqmyXGOvqQ6JN" title="YouTube video player" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture; web-share" referrerpolicy="strict-origin-when-cross-origin" allowfullscreen></iframe>

### Adapting to a New Environment

Upon her arrival, Sofiia faced the challenges typical for young international students beginning independent life abroad. She notes that "When I first arrived at the age of 17, there was some cultural shock, but I really liked it here." **The primary challenge, she explains, was living alone outside her home country:** "The most difficult part for me was being alone abroad. But over time I got used to it. I made friends here, and now I'd say I've put down some roots." Although cultural differences between Ukraine and the Czech Republic are not substantial, she recognized that learning to navigate through them was an important part of her integration.

### Academic Motivation and Choice of Programme

Sofiia's interest in visual arts began early. "I've always drawn and had an interest in creative fields, and I always wanted to do something in that direction," she explains. By the age of fifteen, she had already identified her **goal of becoming an illustrator or graphic designer**. However, she found the available educational opportunities at home insufficient for her ambitions. "The quality of art and design education in Ukraine didn't meet my expectations, so I decided to study in the Czech Republic."

With the support of her family and the systematic preparation offered at UJOP Charles University, she successfully **passed the competitive entrance examinations on the first attempt.**



## Professional Development During Studies

Sofia has actively pursued professional experience alongside her university studies. Following coursework, internships and exposure to different studio environments, she sought opportunities to apply her skills in practice. “Combining studies and work is a big challenge,” she acknowledges, which ultimately led her to establish a creative studio with her classmate. Her work focuses primarily on **visual identity and graphic design**. Notable projects include:

- Co-creating the visual identity for the UNESCO World Heritage site Žatec and the Landscape of Saaz Hops
- Preparing an exhibition in Litoměřice, including layout and text design
- Designing promotional materials and exhibition texts for the Museum of Art and Design in Benešov

Reflecting on this transition toward professional practice, she notes: “It is refreshing to finally do what I enjoy, and to do it with people I enjoy working with.”



## The Role of UJOP in Her Academic Success

Sofia identifies the intensive Czech language instruction as one of the most valuable aspects of her foundation year. “I reached a high level of Czech, and even now, after four years, Czechs often tell me that I speak very well — that always makes me happy.” **The programme also provided targeted preparation for the demanding admissions process** at Czech art faculties. She highlights the significance of:

- Art history and modern art history courses
- Portfolio preparation classes
- Extensive drawing practice, including figure drawing
- Guidance on the Czech studio-based education system
- Organised visits to universities and studios

A daily sketchbook assignment proved especially useful during the entrance exams: “At the time I didn’t understand why we were doing it, but in the end it helped me a lot. Sketchbook diaries often reveal a lot about a person and help studio heads understand the applicant.”

She praises UJOP’s teaching staff: “I would say **the teachers were great**. I never had any problems with them, and my results speak for themselves.”

She also expresses deep appreciation for the administrative support provided during her transition to life in the Czech Republic: “Without the help of the study department, it would have been very difficult for me. What I learned about visas, residence permits, and the system here helped me for years afterward.”

```
<iframe width="650" height="366" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/6vBWLvEPvS0?si=xCZDJHQ53Kxrsv6" title="YouTube video player" frameborder="0" allow="accelerometer; autoplay; clipboard-write; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture; web-share" referrerpolicy="strict-origin-when-cross-origin" allowfullscreen></iframe>
```

## Integration Through Cultural Education

An unexpected but particularly impactful element of her preparation was the course on Czech cinematography. “The course on Czech films helped me the most,” she explains. It enhanced both **cultural understanding and social integration**, as many films portrayed historical or cultural narratives that helped her interpret references and conversations in everyday life. In addition, she recalls positive experiences from **excursions to Czech cultural sites**, including Český Krumlov and Kutná Hora, which enriched her knowledge of the country and strengthened social connections with fellow students.

```
<script src="https://eu.zonerama.com/embd/Js/699081a7aa78233654cebb2f" type="text/javascript"></script> <div id="znrm-699081a7aa78233654cebb2f"><div style="height: 150px; padding-top:150px; border: 1px solid grey; background-color: lightgray; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">HTML galerie Zonerama<br />HTML galerie 1</div></div>
```

Sofia's academic trajectory and developing professional career demonstrate the **strong foundation provided by UJOP's Arts and Architecture foundation programme**. Her experience highlights the value of comprehensive language instruction, structured artistic preparation, personalised administrative support, and cultural education in enabling international students to succeed in the Czech Republic's higher-education system.

