

Abstract

Alone in a Crowd:

Charles Baudelaire and 20th-Century and Contemporary Art

The dissertation called *Alone in a Crowd* explores the influence of the poet Charles Baudelaire's personality and work on 20th-century and contemporary art. Due to the field of study, the main focus is on the visual arts, but literature, music, philosophy, and film are also included to a large extent. This dissertation is divided into four substantive chapters. The first chapter, *The Inner Message*, introduces the poet's life, his family and acquaintances, as well as Baudelaire's poetry collection *The Flowers of Evil*. Themes of evil, ugliness, fear, death, and even a relationship to their mother, father and women are common for 20th-century and contemporary artists. This chapter presents Félicien Rops, James Ensor, Edvard Munch, Hans Bellmer, Francis Bacon, Joel-Peter Witkin, Kurt Cobain, members of the Young British Artists group, Lars von Trier, and others. The second chapter pursues the correspondence theory. The character of the Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg and his successor, William Blake, is followed by Baudelaire's understanding of sensual and spiritual correspondences, as his principles are adopted by modern artists in a distinct manner. The third chapter called "On the Edge of Society" covers the curse phenomenon, Baudelaire's spleen, and themes of loneliness and boredom. It introduces various examples of dandyism from the 19th century to the present day, and looks at intoxication as way of dealing with pain not only through the work of Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*. Théophile Gautier, Alfred Jarry, Joris Karl Huysmans, André Breton, Otto Dix, the Beat Generation, the punk subculture, David Bowie, Marilyn Manson, and many others have their place in this chapter. The last chapter is dedicated to Charles Baudelaire and his connection to the Czech environment. Even with references to artists of decadence, symbolism, surrealism, and the post-war period, special emphasis has been placed on the contemporary art scene. This chapter concludes with interviews with four selected artists whose work reflects on the legacy of Charles Baudelaire's era that stays very topical to this day.