

The presented thesis deals with the French classicism theory of mechanism and representation of passions as the source of some art works created in the region of Bohemia around the year 1800.

The theory of mechanism and representation of passions was developed in Paris at Academie Royale de Peinture & Sculpture (Academy of Fine Arts) during the 17th century. The academicians were working on a project of creation of an universal model, which was based on the current scholastic discoveries and ancient Rome, to set a guideline to produce a piece of art which could „call“ the spectator, touch his heart, allow him to read the presented story and recognize passions which the figures were undergoing. The way to reach this complex aim was initiated by René Descartes in his writing “Passion of the Soul”. His writing was lately modified and enriched by illustrations of Charles Le Brun, the artist of the king’s court. Students of art were facilitated to learn and understand of the causes that lead in the expression of passions in the human face. Young artist were allowed to understand the passions, which were not publicly known because of the strict standards of social behavior. Le Brun’s drawings of the human face were mostly neutral so they could be used for both sexes in various contexts.

The Le Brun’s writing was launched in 1698 and translated into several languages and known across the Europe. However, it was rejected by the Le Brun’s successors in France at the end of 17th century. Roger de Piles and André Félibien criticized too detailed theoretical explanation of each passion that artists could not use in their practice. They were also critical about the book as such for becoming a substitute of the natural life model, whereas, they were suggesting to young artists to recognize the feeling of the passions of their own body in front of a mirror. This approach can be considered as a predecessor of the modern romantic theories of empathy in visual arts.

The Le Brun writing “Conférence sur l’expression générale et particuliere” also includes a short text about the human physiognomy. According the prevailing temperament the man was susceptible to undergo specific passions. If a passion was affecting the human soul for a longer time it made permanent changes in the human physiognomy, which visualized some invisible characters.