

Abstract

The Acceptance of Works of Lucas Cranach the Elder in Painting of the First Half of the 16th Century in Bohemia

The thesis focuses on the personality and works of the Renaissance painter Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553) and the acceptance of his works and works of his workshop in painting in the first half of the 16th century in Bohemia. The art production in Bohemia, analogous to the 15th century, was concentrated in small centres and was mainly directed to the painting of neighbouring, mainly German speaking countries. Traces of Cranach's unmistakable aesthetics could be spotted in the Czech lands from the first decade to the almost seventh decade of the 16th century. The life of Cranach's style was so long because it was prolonged, among others, by his son Lucas Cranach the Younger (1515–1586). We can assert that no other author or his followers was so successful in such a large scale, for such a long period of time nor had customers of broad walks of life as Lucas Cranach the Elder. The reason for this was seen by earlier researchers in mass workshop production and certain "easy acquirement" of his style (Max J. Friedländer) that spread especially from the 1520's outside the borders of the Electorate of Saxony. His works were accepted firstly through his graphic masters, secondly through the import of his works from Saxony, and thirdly thanks to his pupils, followers and other continuators.

This thesis aims to draw attention not only to the aspects of artist's activities that caused such a strong response but also to the way they were reflected in the Czech lands. We have attempted to find out what all the aspects have in common and to offer an answer to the question "Why Cranach?".

The first responses to Cranach's activities do not seem to be related to the mass production but rather to the circle of humanist-oriented customers and their mutual international contacts thanks to which some of his own best works were brought to Bohemia – four panels, perhaps remains of altarpieces ordered by the Olomouc bishop Stanislav Thurzo, and an altarpieces of the Virgin Mary for St Vitus' Cathedral. In this respect, the key personality was undoubtedly Stanislav Thurzo and the local humanistic circle closely connected with Viennese humanists as well as with the royal court in Hungarian Buda and the Electoral Court of Saxony in Wittenberg. Prominent personalities of Czech nobility, e.g. the families of Švihovský of Rýzmbek, Hasištejnský of Lobkovice, did not naturally stay behind in their art self-representation and presumably, those painters who knew the works of Cranach and many of whom came from the surroundings of the Danube region or

southern Germany but most probably knew his Wittenberg workshop, were sought at Czech noble courts. It is possible that it was Lucas Cranach's exceptional position with prominent personalities in politics and culture at that time and perhaps, a kind of "Cranach fashion" which gradually spread from well-educated nobility to citizens, which helped to his independently working pupil known under the initials I. W. establish a painting workshop in Bohemia in 1520's. The workshop was continuously working until late 1540's, which cannot be said about any other painting workshop in the Czech lands at that time.

The structure of the presented thesis was selected with regards to its main objective, which is detailed mapping out of the ways of acceptance of particular "Cranach-oriented" works of art with an effort to comprehend not only the style parallels between individual paintings but also their cultural and historical context in comparison with the environment at the Court of Saxony.

On the one hand, the first part of the thesis focuses on the works of Lucas Cranach himself and his workshop, it tries to comprehend the major features of his works, their changes and circumstances of the changes; on the other hand, it shows methodical approaches of German research as it was formatted throughout history. The methodological part then logically continues with the summary of Cranach research in the Czech lands.

The second part of this work deals with particular "Cranach-oriented" works which can be less or more positively traced on the territory of Bohemia in historical times. The thesis excluded later imports or collection items preserved in Czech collections. Naturally, due to absence of archive materials, we could not draw the line with absolute certainty. We aim to trace art relationships between Bohemia and Saxony within the historical situation of the first half of the 16th century which were marginalized in earlier literature. We incorporated into the thesis the works from the beginning of Cranach's reflexions of the Danube region landscape pattern, the works of his pupils, to whom Master I. W. belonged, paintings of independently working masters of different schools freely inspired by graphics, and also paintings in style of Saxony provenience which could be found in Bohemia at that time.

We have succeeded, for example, in discovering mutual contacts or connections between some donators and through iconological interpretation reveal the way of their art presentation. It became apparent that a great part of sacral works ordered in the second third of the 16th century was used as epitaphs or was connected with the final resting place of donator or his family. The then frequent thought of the so-called good death is strongly expressed in those days. We witness formation of the function of a panel painting which later on prevailed in Bohemia and Moravia in the second half of the 16th century.

Apart from genuinely private purposes of ordering works of art, donators often expressed their religious feelings. Thus, another pursued function of painting was its content connection with the presentation of churchmanship or donator's confession, which played a crucial role in religiously divided Bohemia of the 15th and 16th centuries. In this respect, the activities of Lucas Cranach the Elder in Wittenberg from where Protestantism gradually spread over the Czech lands together with painter's visual interpretation of Lutheran theology formed an ideal stepping stone.

We also paid attention to relevant examples of profane premises decoration in which, but only rather distantly, was often reflected similar popularity of illusive trompe l'oeil and certain humanist-oriented moralistic motives as at the Electoral Court of Saxony. In this respect, we have to be aware of similar paintings existing at other European courts. They usually represented the efforts of joining the general humanistic Italian trend.

The last part of the thesis is formed by a catalogue of the treated works of art and completes the knowledge which cannot be found in the previous synthetic text. It is rather focused on stylistic context and literature search of present research. The catalogue part aims to precede fragmentation of the main text and at the same time deal with the treated works in detail. The text and the catalogue parts complete each other; we did not intend to repeat information in both parts.

The result of this thesis is a synthetic view on the personality of Lucas Cranach the Elder and treatment of cultural and art relationships between Saxony and the Czech lands through painters who in some respect reflected Cranach's works. The thesis brings overall knowledge of a particular segment of 16th century painting in Bohemia. Nevertheless, even this segment has revealed many characteristic features of art and culture in Czech society of early modern times.