SUMMARY

Félicien Rops in the context his works and time is a dissertation thesis dedicated to the life and work of one of the most important representatives of artistic decadence and symbolism of the 19th century. Félicien Rops (1833–1898) was a Belgian graphic artist, illustrator and painter, whose artwork significantly influenced how the sensual beauty of the female body, human sexuality and the darker sides of the human soul were interpreted. The dissertation thesis systematically describes and analytically interprets Rops’s life and work in historical, social and cultural context. The first part of the dissertation thesis discusses the early phase of Rops’s life, mentions his childhood, schooling and the beginnings of artwork from his time in Brussels until his arrival in Paris. Here I focus mainly on Rops’s activities in art circles, his attempts at raising the status of Belgian art within the wider European movement and his activity related to founding satirical periodicals. This phase of Rops’s life was defined by his political and social caricaturist work, and was heavily influenced by Flemish tradition and French modern art. I cannot omit Rops’s landscape-painting and following the tradition of Flemish and Dutch painting. Special attention is paid to Rops’s relation to travelling, sports and nature. The second part of the dissertation thesis presents Rops’s artwork in Paris and his first successes in the field of illustrating and graphic art. Cooperation with prominent publishers led to many important commissions for his work that won him recognition in the area of book illustrations and made him one of the best paid illustrators in Paris. In that period, Rops still cooperated with Belgian publishing houses. His frontispieces and illustrations accompanied books by French writers and poets such as Joséphin Péladan, Stephan Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Jules Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly, Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam or Rodolphe Darzens. Special attention is paid to Rops’s graphic cycles The She-Devils (Les Diaboliques) and The Satanic (Les Sataniques) or series Woman with a Puppet (La Dame au Pantin) and One Hundred Frivolous Sketches without Pretention to Delight Honest People (Les Cent Légers Croquis Pour Réjouir Les Honnêtes Gens). This part of the book emphasises the bond between literature and art in Rops’s work and his participation in events of Parisian artistic life. It goes on to describe his masterpieces such as Pornokrates – The Lady with the Pig (Pornocratès – La Dame au Cochon) or The Temptation of Saint Anthony (La Tentation de Saint Antoine). The dissertation thesis also presents and analyses other Rops’s artwork that was influenced by artistic, literary and philosophical trends of the second half of the 19th century.

Keywords: art, decadence, symbolism, literature, 19th century