Abstract

One of the main objectives of this thesis is not only to map the life of Czech sculptor Vladimir Astl, but also explore various inspirational sources he might have used when creating social oriented pieces. Those are critical in is work. Typical avatars of plastics with social context are Žízeň (Thirst), Smutek (Sadness) or Stará žena (Old Woman), all of them from the period of 1905 – 1910.

The initial chapter shortly discusses social problem which existed during the verge of 19th and 20th century and immediately influenced increasing use of social topics in art. Next chapter elaborates on these topics in more detail and focuses on changes of French society which were closely tied to the occurence of ambitious ideas to build monuments celebrating work of men. This chapter also discusses sculpture in France in more depth with focus on labor-oriented pieces from August Rodin, Jules Dalou and Henri Bouchard. The work of mentioned sculptors was dedicated to monuments celebrating labour. These formed a common inspiration source for social related themes in Czech sculpture of the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Next chapter continues to describe the foreign social tendencies and introduces a Belgian sculptor Constantin Meunier who made a significant impact on Czech lands with his pieces being presented at „Krasoumná jednota“ exhibitions held in Prague. The fifth chapter serves as an opnning to the second substantial part of this thesis which talks about sculptor Vladimir Astl and his work. For this reason I start with presenting what is currently publicly known about him. The remaining chapters then revolve around his path through life trying to create a more concise picture of the chosen topic. This thesis contains not only descriptions of Astl’s pieces but also measures his contribution to Czech sculpture and lastly compares his work with pieces done by other Czech sculptors. The thesis is brought to a close by a chapter which sets Astl’s work within a broader context of Czech sculpture. It also contains a list of Vladimir Astl’s pieces, a list of exhibitions where he participated and an image appendix. This thesis should create a more concise view of social oriented sculpture as understood by Vladimir Astl and his peers.

Key words: Vladimír Astl, Sculpture, Social Themes, Turn of 19th and 20th Century, France, Sculpture Thirst, Labour Monuments, Constantin Meunier