

Abstract

The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to analyze the orientalist artwork of French painter Gustave Moreau in a context of orientalism and symbolism in the second half of the 19th century. The thesis focuses on comparing the representation of Orient in Moreau's art and its representation in painting in general, in particular in academic orientalism. Stylistic and thematic differences between traditional academic orientalism and the innovative approach of Gustave Moreau to the similar oriental subjects are examined. It also explores the position of Moreau's art in symbolist movement and his influence hereon.

The core research method used in the thesis is studying the works of art mentioned in it and their analysis from iconographic, iconological and semiotic points of view. The author also examines primary textual sources (mainly artist's own thinking about art) and secondary literature concerning the life and art of Gustave Moreau, orientalism and its political context, and works on symbolism.

The thesis consists of two parts. Part 1 deals with Moreau's orientalist art work within the frame of French orientalism of the second half of the 19th century, and it points out differences between Moreau's imaginary orientalism and the traditional academic orientalism. Chapter 1.1 describes the social and cultural sources of orientalist painting in France and divides orientalism in art into several categories.

Chapter 1.2 presents elementary characteristics of academic orientalism and basic typology of its works. Chapter 1.3 concentrates on the imaginary orientalism of Gustave Moreau. This chapter is further divided into seven sub-chapters. Sub-chapter 1.3.1 summarizes biographical data of Gustave Moreau relevant in respect of his work. Sub-chapter 1.3.2 is devoted to Moreau's theories and thinking on art and creativity. Sub-chapter 1.3.3 addresses his specific artistic expression, style and techniques. Sub-chapter 1.3.4 concerns his methods of work with sources of inspiration, especially his preference of imagination over ethnographic accuracy. Sub-chapter 1.3.5 analyzes how Gustave Moreau transformed the history of painting and what were the innovative aspects of his work. Sub-chapter 1.3.6 focuses on the oriental sources of inspiration that were unusual in academic painting but were important for Moreau's art (Indian, Persian, Mughal and Japanese inspirations). Sub-chapter 1.3.7 sums up conclusions of previous sub-chapters and highlights distinctions between representations of Orient in Moreau's art work and in academic orientalism.

Part 2 analyzes Moreau's art work in context of symbolism and it consists of two chapters. Chapter 2.1 presents an overview on symbolism in fine arts, its definition and Moreau's position within it. Chapter 2.2 is dedicated to links between Moreau's work and works of younger symbolist artists and to the question which inspirations and new impulses from Moreau's art work may have been influential in the relevant period. This chapter includes the sub-chapter 2.2.1 on Moreau's influence on the work of Odilon Redon and sub-chapter 2.2.2 regarding Moreau's students whose art may be considered as symbolist.

The conclusion of the thesis summarizes the analysis of the chapters mentioned above, and it accents that although Moreau's work is unambiguously a part of Salon and academic painting, namely history painting, it also overpasses stylistic conventions of academic painting of his age and heads to the modern art characterized by semiotic openness with plurality of interpretations. Moreau's artistic expression and plastic means took part in preparation of artists and public to the development of modern art in late 19th century and the beginning of 20th century.