

The personality of Master of the Litoměřice Altarpiece and his hypothetical activity in St. Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus' Cathedral in Prague

The master of the Litoměřice Altarpiece is the most significant figure in the plastic and graphic art of Jagellon Bohemia in the period of late Gothic. The election of Vladislav Jagello, who became King of Bohemia in 1471, the Bohemia state was added to their dynasty holdings. After death of his political enemy Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, Vladislav set up his permanent residence in Buda and on various occasions paid only shorter or longer visits to Prague. His son Louis also resided permanently in Buda and came to the Bohemian metropolis only once. For these reasons is very difficult question about king as a donator.

Numerous art historical literature dealing with this artist has offered two completely different hypotheses, some scholars believe in Czech origin artist who was strongly influenced by the so-called Danube school, others contented that the Master of the Litoměřice Altarpiece was born and trained abroad.

The starting point for any summary of the oeuvre of this anonymous artist is two key monuments of painting that date from the first decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and which survived in Bohemia. The first of these is a large cycle of murals in St. Vitus' Cathedral in Prague which is unique not only in Czech but in Central European painting and the second is a set of large panel paintings from a Marian and Passion cycle from a dismantled altarpiece known as the Litoměřice Altarpiece. The two most extensive chapters of the paper focus on these basic works of anonymous artist.

Some works that were later to be firmly attributed to the Master in the forties and the fifties described as anonymous works by Bohemian artists. Among them were the so-called Týn wings, the Holy Trinity Altarpiece and the Strahov Altarpiece, to which has been associated a painting of the Massacre of the Innocents in the 1990s.

In the forties and particularly the fifties, more works that were stylistically related to the art of the Master of the Litoměřice Altarpiece appeared on the market. Among them were panel paintings of the legend of St. Catharine of Alexandria and a Portrait of Albrecht of Kolowrat. In 1950 the Old Masters Collection in the National Gallery in Prague acquired The Mocking of Christ.

The further chapter deals with these works which were gradually attributed to the Master.

The personality itself however poses more controversial questions, is sure that his works have signs of the coming period, monumental conception of the picture, grandiose feeling of space, conception of the figures, ability to characterize the physiognomy,

interest in landscape and a well developed sense for colours. He achieved a great artistic synthesis of several styles and overcame the Late Gothic style and opened the new path to the Czech painting.