

Abstract

In my dissertation I aim to outline certain aspects of the mutual interrelations, influences and affinities linking the Czechs and the South Slavs in the field of the fine arts during the period between 1861 and 1922. My interest in this subject stems primarily from my own personal experience and knowledge acquired through an active involvement in both of the selected cultural contexts. In particular I have focused my research on examining the role of individuals who played a significant role in both of the cultural contexts under analysis, and at the same time transcended them. The resultant treatise thus consists of three main chapters that follow the specific influences and relations of the artists selected, while at the same time reflecting the nature of the transformation of social discourse during the time period examined. In the first chapter I focus on several Czech artists who made artworks with a South Slavic theme during the second half of the 19th century. The frame of reference for interpreting these artworks consists of a specific Orientalism springing from the fertile ground of romanticism, which is at the same time underscored by, and tinged with, notions of Slavic solidarity. The painter Jaroslav Čermák is a key figure in this context. His example played an important role in the process of codifying paintings with a South Slavic theme not only within the Czech cultural context, but also the South Slavic one. The second chapter is devoted to the Croatian artist Vlaho Bukovac who was at the outset of his artistic practice significantly influenced by the work of Jaroslav Čermák. He was also a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague between 1903 and 1922. Since he is only given marginal mention in the history of Czech art, and yet belongs among the most distinctive artistic figures of the last third of the 19th century, I was provided with a challenging opportunity to compare existing interpretations of the artist and his work, taking both of the cultural contexts examined as my starting points. Thus my aim was to present the work of Bukovac within a new contextual framework. In this case the prerequisite for establishing new connections was to highlight certain hitherto unclarified moments in the artist's artistic practice and, in particular, to (re)contextualise them. In the final chapter I examine trips undertaken by Bukovac's students to Dalmatia. In particular I focus on 1908, when Václav Špála and three members of the *Osma* art group – Emil Filla, Bedřich Feigl and Emil Artur Pittermann-Longen – stayed in the vicinity of Dubrovnik. By using information preserved in archive resources and literature, and in particular by analyzing individual artworks and comparing them to contemporary reality, I have endeavoured to reconstruct their visits to the “South” and the motivation behind them. Last but not least, it was stimulating for me to compare the trips of “the founders of Czech modern art” with those undertaken by an older generation of Czech artists. Thus the aim of this dissertation is to draw attention to characteristic moments in the history of the complex and rich mutual relations between the Czech and the South Slavic cultural context.