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Bronze casting in Cracow in the so called silver and golden age (1501 -1655).

Technology, production and artistic issues

In my future dissertation I want to focus on the time of greatest casting production since the beginning of the influence of Italian renaissance (however it is important to remember that Cracow was always under great influence of German art and production) until the time of Swedish Deluge when destruction and impoverishment put an end to further development.

At the beginning I want to concentrate on the symbolic meaning of bronze: where was it used in the past and what was it used for? Was it chosen intentionally? Did it carry any additional meaning? Then I would like to proceed to technical issues, to reconstruct the process of production from placing an order, through preparing projects, modeling until the final creation. I want to trace where Cracow's artists took inspiration and knowledge from: was the casting technique written down or was it transferred verbally, could one manufacturer manage both technical and artistic aspect of bronze casting or did he need to collaborate with woodcarvers or sculptors?

One of my aims, and the issue I am working on right now, is to gather as many as possible examples of bronze art objects (a catalogue) produced in Cracow (or imported at that time) and to evaluate their quantitative and qualitative level as well as artistic expression (I still ponder what reference material should be selected). I am gathering all the objects I can still find in situ, I go through old and latest catalogues, different publications and museum collections. I am still looking forward to investigate in archives. Important for my topic are also comparative studies concerning objects and artists working in the same (different?) material or those working in influencing Cracow European regions. Especially regions linked by trade and migration routes.

This will hopefully help me identify the founders (schools?) and their customers, and follow tracks of artistic transfer and inspirations-among those that lead to Nuremberg and Lithuania.

Since the very beginning I struggle with a difficulty to properly estimate quantitative level of production decreased e.g. by 17th and 20th century wars. The damages are noticeable both in archive material and in the amount of art objects. My concern is how to keep the outcomes nevertheless representative. My second concern is how to focus on local production despite such great scale of transfer.

That is, among many other reasons, why I find it very important to merge researchers from different countries. Processes and changes observed in a certain time in one country were and are influenced by the wide range of impulses both domestic and from abroad. Sooner or later it occurs that no artist works isolated and no production is local. Someone else's knowledge of local realities may never be overrated.

It is important for me to exchange ideas and listen to other, as no research can be limited now a days. That concerns also my topic.