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Formation of the canon of Czech modern art history

Canon, as in terminology, may be viewed as the definitive amount of art pieces considered to be significant for the given topic. In this case for the term Czech modern art. Although the number of the art pieces in the canon should be limited by the definition, canon is always influenced by the circumstances around. There is a great stress on the research of the canon in the last decades caused by the analysis of the processes around. This analysis actually enables us to identify the discrepancy in the research of the canon, why some of the topics are emphasised and some are missed by the public or academy in the given era.

The goal of my PhD thesis is to analyse the accessible material and literature regarding the era of Czech modern art. This means to analyse the accessible material, literature and secondary literature, which might identify the main trends important for the determination of the formation of the canon of Czech modern art. Catalogues from the exhibitions should give me the main point of view, the literature should sum up the Czech modern art situation and secondary literature may help for the situation overview. From this material I want to identify the main trends that determine the formation of canon of Czech modern art. The main questions I want to discuss in my project is the influence of constitution the national identity on Czech modern art history, the position of female artists in the Czech modern art history and how it is connected with the change of approach. Moreover, there is a question what exactly is the Czech modern art or how it is located in the space and time, which might be explored further.

There are many factors influencing the canon in general, such as art historical factors or the factors connected with society. Actual methodological approach dominating the given time, accessible materials or the actual level of research about the concrete artist or artistic movement may bias the research. But there are also factors connected with the society, which we should not omit. Essential is the social-political situation. Although the art and art history as it was established in the beginning of twelfth century was understood as apolitical, the political and social situation had always a great influence on that.

The history of Czechoslovakia and the history of East Europe in general is actually very interesting study material. The social-political situation changed many times and in many

different ways during the twelfth century. Some of the key events transforming the society in that time, are common for the whole East Europe. For example the both world wars and the constitution of the national states after 1918. In the context of Czechoslovakia, it is also very important to mention the expulsion of Germans after the World War II. and the events around 1968. All these events were reflected in the art history either as the favouritism of a concrete artistic approach or in the choice of concrete artists.

The project is based on the heuristic analysis of accessible sources. The aim is to built the project on the processing of all informations of significant exhibitions. Exhibitions are very important in this approach because they held the specific position in art history. For the long time they were the only possibility how to mediate the art to the public. The main idea is that if any topic is tabooed the exhibition are the first place where it could be discovered it. Part of the project will be the database of the exhibitions with the list of all images that were discovered and with the information about the artists so it will be possible to easier analyse the main trends there.

The project may help to understand the difference between formation of canon in the East and West Europe. Also it should provide a great tool, the database, for the students that want to study the Czech modern through the exhibitions.